

# Does Employment Affect Female Sexuality?

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**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Female sexual dysfunction (FSD) is a multifactorial condition that has anatomical, physiological, medical, psychological and social components. With increasing trend in the participation of women in the work force and due to the competing demands between work and family, the metaphor of work family conflict (WFC) as an increasing pressure in professional life has emerged. WFC seems to be more in women than men due to more overload and stress. **Aim of the work:** to compare female sexuality between employed women and unemployed ones. **Subjects and methods:** The current study was a cross sectional study. The subjects of this study were sexually active married women. The tool of the study was a self-report questionnaire. **Results:** Employed women were higher in coital frequency than unemployed ones (60.2% & 39.4% respectively). Spontaneous desire was reported by 41% of employed women to occur once per week compared to 34.7% of unemployed ones. Among the employed women, 38.2% could reach orgasm in almost all their sexual encounters compared to 12.7% of unemployed ones. Among unemployed women,

10.4% reported sexual pain compared to 3.6% among employed ones. **Conclusion:** Employed women have better sexual functioning than unemployed ones. Employed women have more coital frequency, more occurrence of spontaneous desire and are more able to obtain orgasm than unemployed women.

**Keywords:** employment, sexual dysfunction, women.

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## Introduction

Female sexual dysfunction (FSD) is a multifactorial condition that has anatomical, physiological, medical, psychological and social components [1].

Unemployed women have more female sexual dysfunction, they are subjected to stressful economic conditions that may interfere with sexual functioning [2].

Working nonstandard hours has been thought to introduce unique stressors into marital relationships, and these hours have been linked to higher levels of work family conflict and to married workers experiencing strain [3].

Job stressors (working long hours, low work experience) are related to indices of female sexual function [4].

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## Subjects and Methods:

The study was conducted as a cross sectional study. It was performed on 502 married women attending the Dermatology and Andrology outpatient clinic in Zagazig general Hospital and Maternal and Childhood care units from July 2018 to January 2019. The tool used was a self-report questionnaire designed by the investigators. The work was started after obtaining

approval from the research ethics committee in Benha Faculty of Medicine.

## Statistical analyses

The collected data were analyzed by computer using Statistical Package of Social Services version 19 (SPSS) Armonk, NK: IBM Corp. Data were represented in tables and graphs, categorical qualitative variables were expressed as absolute frequencies (number) & relative frequencies (percentage).

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## Results

**Table 1** shows that most of the studied group belonged to age group 30 to 39 years. Most of them married at 20-29 years of age and employed women had a university degree (96%) compared to only 42.2% among unemployed ones. About three fourth of employed women were living in a city (74.6%) compared to 60.6% of unemployed ones.

**Table (2)** shows that 69.7% of employed women worked for less than 8 hours, 47% had 5-10 years of experience, 51% reported that their work environment was satisfying, 57.4% of employed women paid both physical and mental efforts

**Table 3** shows that employed women were significantly higher in coital frequency 2-3 times per week when compared to the

unemployed ones (60.2% versus 39.3% respectively). Among the employed women, 41% had weekly desire compared to 34.7% of the unemployed ones while 38.2% of employed women could reach orgasm in more than 50% of times compared to only 12.7% in unemployed group.

**Table 4** shows that 69.1% of the employed group reported that work impacted sexual

satisfaction. 53.8% of them reported that work has an impact on sexual desire. The majority of the studied participants reported that dealing with male colleagues doesn't have any effect on desire. Among the employed women 31.1 % could reach orgasm easily in more than half of times while 32.3% of the employed women thought that their work affected their sexual activity.

**Table (1):** Demographic data of the studied groups

Item	Employed group (no=251)		Unemployed group (no=251)	
	no	%	no	%
<b>Age</b>				
<20 years	1	0.4	18	7.2
20-	77	30.7	84	33.5
30-	142	56.6	84	33.5
40-	22	8.8	55	21.9
≥50 years	9	3.6	10	4
<b>Age at marriage</b>				
<20 years	10	4	62	24.7
20-	225	89.6	184	73.3
30-	12	4.8	5	2
40-	4	1.6	0	0
≥50 years	0	0	0	0
<b>Education</b>				
Read and write	0	0	0	0
Secondary school	10	4	145	57.8
University student	241	96	106	42.2
<b>Residence</b>				
City	188	74.9	152	60.6
Village	63	25.1	99	39.4

**Table (2):** Employment data of the studied group

Item	Studied group (no=251)	
	no	%
<b>Work experience:</b>		
• <5 years	90	35.9
• 5- years	118	47
• 10- years	39	15.5
• >20 years	4	1.6
<b>Working hours per day:</b>		
• <8 hours	175	69.7
• 8- hours	73	29.1
• >12 hours	3	1.2
<b>Effort:</b>		
Physical	9	3.6
Mental	98	39
Both	144	57.4
<b>Work environment:</b>		
Good	95	37.8
Satisfying	128	51
Bad	28	11.2
<b>Balance between work and personal life:</b>		
Yes	211	84.1
No	40	15.9
<b>Motivation for work:</b>		
Financial independence	79	31.5
Self-realization	157	62.5
Sole breadwinner of family	15	6

**Table (3):** sexual activity of the studied groups

Item	Employed group		Unemployed group	
	(no=251)		(no=251)	
<b>Coital frequency</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>%</b>
Daily	25	10	20	8.1
2-3 times per week	151	60.2	97	39.3
2-3 times per month	65	25.9	73	29.6
Once per month	6	2.4	32	13
<1 per month	4	1.6	25	10.1
<b>Is it satisfactory</b>				
Yes	184	73.3	100	39.8
No	67	26.7	151	60.2
<b>Spontaneous sexual desire</b>				
>1 per day	1	0.4	3	1.2
Once per day	13	5.2	3	1.2
2-3 times per week	56	22.3	20	8
Weekly	103	41	87	34.7
Once per month	32	12.7	36	14.3
Less than that	21	8.4	45	17.9
Almost never	26	10.3	58	23.1
<b>Reaching orgasm</b>				
Almost every time	73	29.1	28	11.2
>50% of times	96	38.2	32	12.7
<50% of times	53	21.1	93	37.1
Rarely	29	11.6	98	39
<b>Causes of inability to reach orgasm</b>				
Insufficient time for foreplay	113	45	175	69.7
Pain	22	8.8	75	29.9
Tired from work	80	31.9	0	0
Work problems	36	14.3	1	0.4
<b>Sexual pain</b>				
Almost every time	9	3.6	26	10.4
>50% of times	16	6.4	41	16.3
<50% of times	48	19.1	88	35.1
Rarely	178	70.9	96	38.2

**Table (4)** Effect of work on sexual activity of employed group

Item	Studied group (no=97)	
	No	%
<b>Impact of work on sexual satisfaction:</b>		
Yes	67	69.1
No	30	30.9
<b>Studied group (no=251)</b>		
	<b>no</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Impact of work on sexual desire:</b>		
Yes	44	17.5
No	135	53.8
Sometimes	72	28.7
<b>Effect of dealing with male colleagues:</b>		
Dealing with colleague enhances the desire	46	18.3
Dealing with colleague inhibits the desire	99	39.4
Dealing with colleague does not affect the desire	106	42.2
<b>Easiness of reaching orgasm after work:</b>		
Almost every time	57	22.7
>50% of times	78	31.1
<50% of times	70	27.9
Rarely	46	18.3
<b>Work effect on sexual activity:</b>		
Yes	81	32.3
No	170	67.7
<b>Sexual harassment at work:</b>		
Yes, several times	18	7.2
Yes, once	24	9.6
Never	209	83.3

## Discussion

The most common coital frequency was 2-3 times / wk., employed women had significantly higher coital frequency when compared to the unemployed ones (60.2% & 39.4% respectively). Also, they were highly satisfied about that rate compared to their counterparts. It was reported that career-oriented women had more frequent sex and coital frequency was greater among educated employed women who work for reasons other than money [5].

In contrast, it was reported that dual income couples have lower levels of marital sexual activity, they explained that finding by role-overload, increased fatigue from work and fixed time commitments which reduce interest and time for sex [6]. Also, wives, who frequently work full time outside the home were found to spend more time doing housework [7]. More than half of employed women reported that, work impacted their sexual satisfaction. This is consistent with

Fahs et al. [8] who reported that working class women had low satisfaction and high sexual activity. It was showed that fatigue from long work hours, work-related stress, or job dissatisfaction strongly predicted less satisfaction for employed women [6]. However, it was found that employment status did not predict differences in sexual satisfaction [9]. Our results may be due to the fact that more than half of employed women paid both physical and mental efforts. A study of 100 Iranian women showed that, unemployed women reported lack of sexual desire more frequently than employed ones [10]. This result is in agreement with our study regarding spontaneous sexual desire, 41% of employed women had a weekly desire compared to 34.7% of unemployed ones. This could be explained in a way, that these women enjoy their marriage because of their employment and feel job satisfaction, financial security and good self- esteem. In contrast, a study in Norwegian couples conducted to identify factors associated with loss of sexual desire, found that negative work-to-home interference was related to loss of sexual desire [11]. This finding is not in harmony with our results as 84% of our respondents in employed group reported ability to make a balance between their work and home. As regarding dealing with male colleagues, 42.2% of our participants reported no effect on sexual

desire, while 39.4% reported inhibited desire. This finding disagrees with previous studies which reported women's enjoyment from sexual interactions initiated by co-workers. It was found that sexualized work culture was consensual which helped men and women employees to cope with the stressful nature of their work [12]. Also, it was found that some women enjoyed and even profited from sexualized interaction at work [13]. Also, it was suggested that working woman socialized, interacted and relaxed with her male colleagues and such intense involvement was a potential breeding ground for both sexual attraction and romantic relationships [14]. This difference could be explained by restrictive cultures, society and religious values. A previous study [15] agrees with our result as they found that women tended to dislike sexual behavior at work; they found it harmful and bothersome. It was reported that men and women enjoy the sexualized elements of their work lives, but they drew boundary lines between enjoyable, tolerable and unacceptable sexual behavior [16]. Among the employed women, 38.2% could reach orgasm in almost all sexual encounters compared to 12.7% of unemployed ones. This finding is consistent with a study which reported that unemployed women had higher rates of sexual dysfunctions (desire, orgasm and sexual satisfaction) than employed women

[10]. In contrast, a previous study [4] found a significant relationship between job stressors (working long hours, low work experience) and indices of sexual function, 32.4% of participants reported difficulty in reaching orgasm. This was explained by sympathetic dominance and release of adrenergic substances (epinephrine and nor-epinephrine) which have negative effects on the process of orgasm. This difference may be because our participants reported average working hours and only 1.2% worked more than 12 hours

It is clearly obvious that insufficient time for foreplay was found to be the commonest cause for failure to reach orgasm and it was significantly higher among unemployed women: 69.7% compared to 45% among employed ones. This finding is consistent with a study which reported that 'too little foreplay' before intercourse is the most common difficulty [17]. Pain and loss of interest were the main causes of failure to reach orgasm [18], while, the commonest cause of failure to reach orgasm was being not interested (28.2%), feeling tired (23.9%), lack of time for foreplay (20.7%), pain during coitus (13.6%) [19]. Our study showed that orgasm was more frequent in young aged employed and unemployed women than old aged ones; orgasm was reached easily after work with younger age

than older age. Also, there was statistically significant difference in the cause of failure to reach orgasm in relation to age group. This is due to both physical (hypo estrogenic state which cause decreased libido) as well as psychological impact due to marital discord, and these results agree with Simon [20]. These results may be due to the fact that young women are more sexually active and most of our participants are highly educated and aware with sexual needs in contrast to older women who have less sexual interest and decrease of vaginal lubrication which make sexual process less pleasurable. This is in agreement with a study which suggested that older women may experience orgasm difficulty due to changes in their body and the belief that, at an older age, sexual desire and activity are improper [21]. Also, it was found that low sexual desire, orgasmic problems are age dependent disorders possibly resulting from physiological changes associated with aging process, in addition to hormonal alteration, psychosocial and interpersonal factors [22].

In contrast, it was found that the frequency of orgasm was greater for older groups of women and lowest for women at younger age [23]. They attributed this to differences in the sexual experience as younger women had less experience.



In the present study, among unemployed group, 10.4% reported sexual pain compared to 3.6% among employed ones. This is consistent with a study which found that unemployment was a significant risk factor in reporting sexual problems, desire 60%, and pain problems 36.8% [24]. This result disagrees with another study[4] who reported sexual pain in working women to be 26.7% and suggested that there was a strong relation between job stress, anxiety and sexual dysfunction.

In our study, 7.2% of employed women experienced sexual harassment several times at work place. This finding is consistent Cochran and co-workers, [25] who revealed a reporting rate as low as 2%. In contrast, a study based on more than 86,000 respondents in the US, 58% of women reported having experienced potentially harassing behavior and 24% reported having experienced sexual harassment at work [26].

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## Conclusion

Employed women have better sexual functioning than unemployed ones. Employed women have more coital frequency, more occurrence of spontaneous desire and are more able to obtain orgasm than unemployed women.

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