

# Relax! Don't do it...

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# VALORISATION

Humans are naturally provided with curiosity and exploratory behaviour. Along with its particular intellectual skills, humanity has gained a sophisticated and considerable amount of knowledge. Much of this knowledge is useless, but that does not mean that it is meaningless or negligible. Knowing that there is a supermassive black hole at the centre of the Milky Way or that dinosaurs inhabited Earth hundreds of million years ago may be useless (by now), but still fascinating. Therefore, the request of 'create value from knowledge' may seem redundant as knowledge already has value itself.

Much of the sophisticated technology used nowadays evolved from observations of natural phenomena that had no apparent application. For instance, when Heinrich Hertz was asked about what the electromagnetic waves could serve for he replied: 'Nothing, I guess'. Thus, it is uncertain to tell and predict what could be the use of certain knowledge.

We may, however, talk about a utilitarian valorisation of knowledge. For this purpose, we have to ask who decides what is valuable, for whom and on what basis. According to the values of society and institutions, the emphasis may be put on the benefits on individuals' quality of life and in society, on financial gains, or on reputation, among the most common ones. In this sense, it is relevant to reflect where do we put the emphasis and why.

Science may always lead us to go faster, higher and further. In today's world, not only machines can land in Mars or beat human calculations but they are now designed to execute precise surgeries, and to learn to learn. Still, machines cannot answer the most fundamental questions, like what is this for? Where are we going? What are our priorities? And why?

In this utilitarian valorisation, I will argue on how the present research can be of social value. The need to understand the mechanisms that allow human beings to control their sexual cognition and sexual behaviour is fundamental, as by today, sexual harassment and sexual offenses are still present even in the most modern societies. Moreover, the sequelae of these offenses involve long-term effects on the mental life of the victim.

It has been proposed that in today's society there is an increased risk of developing a sexual disorder given the increase in the accessibility of sexual material. The overconsumption of sex on the internet has different consequences, like undermining the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, diminishing the ability to perform and enjoy regular sex, and portraying unequal gender representations (i.e., objectification of women's sexuality). The lack of control over sexual material consumption does not only jeopardise the

quality of life of individuals. In some cases, the overconsumption of sexual material may escalate to real-life behaviours that may compromise the integrity of other individuals.

Far beyond, illegal pornography is directly linked to world large crimes implying human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and children abuse. Human trafficking for sexual exploitation, is an alarming problem, as it has been estimated that there are 4.8 million persons for forced sexual practices, which involves street prostitution, night clubs, escort sites, and the pornography industry, among others.

Thus, given the large accessibility of sexual consumption, the increased risk of developing sexual disorders, and the large amount of effects derived from the lack of control of sexual behaviour, the need to understand the psychological and physiological processes underlying the regulation of sexual behaviour is essential in order to improve the prevention and treatment of sexual disorders. One of these processes is sexual inhibition, as this comprises the ability to inhibit sexual arousal and associated behaviours. A balance in sexual inhibition is essential, as this process is necessary to restrain inappropriate sexual behaviour, but an excess can lead to other problems such as sexual dysfunction or relationship problems.

The studies here presented investigated the basic processes of sexual regulation and sexual inhibition in a sample of healthy young men. The conclusions derived from this thesis may help to create psychological profiles of individuals at risk for developing sexual disorders. Such profiles may include the characterization of different sexual inhibitory and excitatory processes and traits, emotion regulation, self-control, and hormone levels. This characterization can serve as a first step to develop concrete guidelines to further improve the diagnosis, prognosis and intervention programs.

An individualized treatment could make use of different techniques depending on the area of impairment. Accordingly, treatment protocols can be directed towards different targets such as increasing self-control, emotion regulation training, training awareness and control of autonomic responses, or hormonal interventions.

The development of non-invasive brain stimulation protocols represents an important treatment alternative, given the invasive side-effects caused by some medicaments used to treat sexual disorders. Given that sexual inhibition is not a unitary construct and that the underlying processes are sensible to individual differences, the study of the associations between neural and endocrine mechanisms and individual differences in specific processes is indispensable to design and improve those protocols.

Finally, a better characterisation of (individual differences in) inhibition could help to improve the prognosis of individuals with sexual problems and help to maximize therapeutic benefits. This is highly relevant to prevent harmful consequences.

The present work investigated the fundamental mechanisms of sexual inhibition in a sample of young healthy males. Whereas there is no warranty that every fundamental research study will lead to a crucial transformation in reality applications, it is highly dubious that a social impact can occur without it. To this regard, it is noteworthy that a recent study showed that the creation of the most transformative medicines between 1985 and 2009 had their origins in fundamental research. Likely, this principle is suitable for research in mental health as well, as by understanding the aetiology and underlying mechanisms of certain behaviour, we can design more effective interventions by targeting specific processes.

