

TESS has sponsored my studies in master's in counselling. By doing so I was given the opportunity to become a mental health practitioner and conduct a study of expertise in an area of interest, relationships.

Relationships are the staple of society, the way we interact and relate with others forms our social identity and this in turns impacts our own self-identity. With the introduction of divorce, women's rights, civil liberties and secularisation we have seen the dynamic of relationships shift. Additionally, relationship counselling and couples therapy continue to be on the rise especially in an ever growing globalised and individualised culture.

Sexual desire issues are one of the main reasons why couples go to therapy. Managing the balance of sexual desire whilst cohabitating in a long-term relationship is one of the challenges of modern relationships.

This study aimed to understand what makes for a healthy sexual relationship according to cohabitating couples, how the experience of eroticism whilst growing up impacts their current erotic space and how emotional desire impacts sexual desire and vice versa.

Findings show that a balance between autonomy and connection facilitates sexual desire maintenance. Communication of expectations, strengthened and shaped by the level of attachment, also impacts sexual desire levels. Furthermore, culture and social ambiance as well as support systems are external factors which affect relationship satisfaction and sexual desire maintenance.

Sexuality research and training is pertinent to counselling, as research has shown that training in this area encourages more open attitudes during discussion of these issues in the counselling room (Pillai-Friedman et al., 2015). As counsellors work with diverse clientele, one cannot ignore the complex systems of each individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Therefore, whether the client is an individual or a couple it is useful to take the socioecological approach into consideration during conceptualisation and intervention.

Sexual identity, much like other parts of our identity, such as gender identity, cultural identity or spiritual identity, is a journey. It requires exploration and re-evaluation. By exploring the concept of eroticism, this study aimed to promote the idea that we can sleep in the bedroom and play in it as well.