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Why Don't Heterosexual New Alternative Masculinities Choose Enchained Women for Either Sporadic or Long-Term Relationships?

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Abstract

Research on the reproduction of disdainful and toxic models of heterosexual relationships shows their negative effects on people's health status. Contrarily, the preventive socialization process illustrates the development of alternative relationships, which are directly related to egalitarian, passionate and non-violent values and have been demonstrated to produce positive effects on health. The present study focuses on the socialization process, analyzing how men choose their affective and sexual relationships and examining the influence of the new alternative masculinities (NAM) approach on these choices. The defining characteristics of these men are self-confidence, solidarity, and strength to face violence and any discrimination. The investigation has used a qualitative methodology with a communicative orientation. Firstly, seven semi-structured interviews with men who follow the NAM's approach have been conducted. Secondly, a content analysis has been conducted focused on discourses and messages shaped on internet forums and songs about how men explain their choices and interests in their relationships. The results reveal the existence of men who prefer women that get excited with egalitarian men and not with chauvinist and violent men. These kinds of choices show an improvement in heterosexual men's affective and sexual relations as well as in their health status.

Keywords

New alternative masculinities, relationship choices, attraction, double standards, health

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¿Por qué las Nuevas Masculinidades Alternativas Heterosexuales no Eligen a Mujeres Encadenadas para Relaciones Esporádicas o Duraderas?

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Resumen

La investigación sobre la reproducción de modelos despreciativos y tóxicos en relaciones heterosexuales muestra sus efectos negativos sobre la salud, mientras que el proceso de socialización preventiva ilustra relaciones alternativas directamente relacionadas con valores igualitarios, pasionales y no violentos, que han demostrado producir efectos positivos sobre la salud. Esta investigación analiza el proceso de socialización estudiando cómo eligen los hombres sus relaciones afectivo-sexuales y cómo influye el enfoque de las nuevas masculinidades alternativas (NAM), que se definen por la confianza en sí mismos, la solidaridad y la fortaleza para enfrentarse a la violencia y a cualquier tipo de discriminación. Desde una metodología comunicativa, en primer lugar, se han realizado siete entrevistas semiestructuradas a hombres que siguen el enfoque NAM. En segundo lugar, se ha realizado un análisis de contenido centrado en discursos y mensajes en foros de internet y canciones sobre cómo los hombres explican sus elecciones e intereses en sus relaciones. Los resultados revelan que existen hombres que prefieren mujeres que se sienten atraídas por hombres igualitarios y no por hombres machistas y violentos. Este tipo de elecciones muestran una mejora en las relaciones afectivas y sexuales de los hombres heterosexuales, así como en su estado de salud.

Palabras clave

Nuevas masculinidades alternativas, opciones en relaciones, atracción, doble moral, salud

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Violent and toxic intimate relationships lead to gender-based violence, because they are based on domination and disdain (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020), which is why this is an important issue that has become a matter of global concern, due to the social and health repercussions that are generating. International reports recognize that 35% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their relationships, by partner or non-partner; one in two women exposed to violent relationships triggers depression, abortion and acquiring HIV (UN Women, 2021). In addition, 7% of women report having been sexually assaulted by non-partner. (WHO, 2021)

According to the literature on men's studies, non-violent men develop two positions in front of this type of relationship, depending on their attitudes. On the one hand, men could be weakened by their oppressed responses, attitudes, and decisions, and then they would be a part of the problem without any contribution to overcoming the violence against women. On the other hand, men can contribute to overcoming the violence against women through their clear and firm positions against violence, with strength and confidence, and by seeking satisfactory relationships based on values (Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014).

Hook-ups, understood as intimate and sporadic relationships, in which non-violent men are looked down upon by women, lead to psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and poor mental health, which is strongly linked to insecurity (Napper et al., 2016). In principle, hook-up relationships improve the boys' self-esteem through the social success it implies for boys (Fielder & Carey, 2010), but when these relationships are not satisfactory for boys, they also experience negative consequences on mental health, causing depression and anxiety, and reducing their confidence (Napper et al., 2016).

However, the investigation about men that follow the NAM's approach thus deepens the impact of relationship choice criteria both on men's well-being and on encouraging or reducing gender-based violence. The NAM approach highlights the importance of considering and valuing men's elements such as values, attractiveness, self-confidence, and courage to reject the double standard, to generate an effect on the contribution to overcome gender violence and improve men's health status (Flecha et al., 2013; Joanpere & Morlà, 2019). Thus, drawing on this knowledge, this research aims to widen the existing data about how egalitarian heterosexual men, who follow the NAM's approach, do not choose relationships with women who are attracted by violent men, and how this choice influences their affective and sexual relations as well as their health status.

To fulfil this objective the following article is divided into five sections: (1) Introduction; (2) State of the art that presents two main themes: on the one hand, the different social and health consequences of toxic and disdainful relationships and, on the other hand, the impact of the egalitarian, passionate and non-violent relations framed on the analysis of men's studies; (3) Methods, in which the research tools for data collection and analysis are explained; (4) Results of the investigation, considering transformative and exclusionary dimensions of the men's choices in their affective and sexual relations; (5) Conclusions and implications of this research for the future.

State of the Art

The socialization process has a key role in the shaping of attraction models which influence sexual-affective relationships. In many cases, in social networks, television, songs, movies, and online chats, hegemonic masculinity, which, according to scientific literature, is related to sexist, violent and dominant attitudes, is seen as attractive (Gómez, 2015). The existence of a coercive dominant discourse (Puigvert & Flecha, 2018) where men with violent attitudes are promoted as attractive, contributes to learning intimate, affective, and sexual relationships that establish a link between desire and violence (Gómez, 2015). Recent research has demonstrated this link between attraction and violence, which arises from the existing socialization that causes men with dominant attitudes to be perceived as more attractive. This process leads to the choice and desire for affectionate, intimate and sexual relationships with men who despise and treat women badly, both in sporadic and stable relationships (Gómez, 2015; Flecha et al., 2013; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021; Puigvert et al., 2019).

This gender socialization framed on a violent attraction has a huge influence, not only on social interactions and behavior but also on health and mental issues. In this regard, scientific research has demonstrated that while good-quality relationships have positive effects on health, toxic affective-sexual relationships have negative repercussions (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021). In women's cases, negative effects that are described are linked to mental and physical health outcomes, depression, anxiety, posttraumatic diseases, self-esteem problems, suicidal thought, eating disorders and emotional concerns (Ackard & Neumar-Sztainer, 2002). In men's cases, there is significant research that evidences how men, to demonstrate their manhood, adopt unhealthy beliefs as well as take on positions of power and violence against women and other oppressed men (Courtenay, 2000; Mahalik et al., 2007). In fact, the type of masculinity adopted by men also influences their own health (McVittie & Willock, 2006; Ganle, 2016). Furthermore, toxic or violent relationships have negative consequences on mental health, such as high levels of anxiety and an increased risk of depression. This is true for both stable and sporadic relationships. Therefore, the health consequences are related to the quality of the relationship, not the duration of the relationship (Vrangalova, 2015).

This socialization process in which violence is strongly linked to hegemonic masculinities produces damage and harmful situations (Serrano & Ríos-Gonzalez, 2019). Otherwise, the coercive discourse about manhood has influenced non-violent men who select affective and sexual relationships with disdainful women showing unhealthy marks, both in stable and sporadic relations (Thien & Del Casino, 2012). Anxiety and fears related to their sexual validity, depression, pressure for their manhood role of force and insensitivity, are some of the effects that are reproduced in nonviolent boys and men in this type of relationship (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). Research that assesses the negative consequences of hook-ups with disdain between young adults emphasizes the presence of negative consequences on men and boys, like poor mental health, psychological distress, and loss of self-esteem (Napper et al., 2016). Scientific research has evidenced that, although there are male peer cultures that include a rejection of violence among their characteristics (Anderson & McCormack, 2016), Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM) are today the hegemonic masculinity, that is the culturally dominant pattern (Mahalik et al. 2007; Connel & Messerschmidt, 2005; Yang, 2020). DTM have dominance, power, and non-egalitarian values at their core, and therefore they perpetuate

gender-based violence and exercise their double standard actions within their affective and sexual relationships. In the same way, Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM), who are non-violent men with egalitarian values but lacking in security and self-confidence, do not contribute to the overcoming of gender violence and respond against DTM because they do not dare to face those situations, although they have egalitarian values. Considering the relationship between violence and attraction in traditional relations, research has shown that DTMs usually are seen as more attractive than OTMs (Gómez, 2015).

On the other hand, since these are issues stemming from socialization, not unchangeable issues, these types of attraction and choice related to violence can be transformed through communicative processes that link attraction with egalitarian values, that is, with the possibility of having relationships in which desire and ethics are united (Joanpere & Morlà, 2019). Preventive socialization of gender-based violence (Puigvert, 2014) considers competencies in attraction, choice and equality to create environments, relationships and interactions that contribute to overcoming gender-based violence and its consequences (Gómez, 2015).

In this sense, NAM promote other types of relations in their environment aimed at confronting DTM. Their behaviour is framed on self-confidence and the rejection of double standards (Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014). Indeed, those attitudes and actions are built in the framework of a language of desire, that is linked to the language of ethics, which makes NAM desirable, that is to say, men who are struggling against gender-based violence and constructing egalitarian and passionate relationships (Soler, 2012). These men, that follow the NAM's approach, base their relations on desire, values, and feelings and demonstrate courage to defend these ideas in their interactions with others.

The scientific literature identifies the competencies of attraction, choice and rejection of double standards and inequality as the keys to building environments, relationships and interactions in which violence is prevented through preventive socialization, and from a men's studies perspective, it is the NAM who contribute to this (Joanpere & Morlà, 2019).

Drawing on previous findings on NAM's approach, data show the relevance of fostering masculine friendships based on NAM's values to improve men's mental and physical health. In this sense, some elements are detected in these friendships: solidarity, egalitarian dialogue, and healthy practices. Men, who establish these relations framed on support and trust, improve their emotional well-being, which means important progress in self-confidence and positive beliefs about themselves (Ríos-González et al., 2021).

Method

The present study is based on the Communicative Methodology (Nazareno et al., 2022) aimed at collecting and analyzing data related to how egalitarian men, who follow the NAM's approach, do not choose relationships with women who feel attracted to violent men. This methodology pursues reflexive and communicative environments to establish an egalitarian and intersubjective dialogue (Roca-Campos et al., 2022) that promotes a profound analysis of people's affective and sexual relationships as well as the health effects of these relationships.

Intersubjectivity is the principal goal of this methodology in the process of sharing information (Ruiz-Eugenio, 2020). Researchers distribute their scientific knowledge in the dialogue, and the researched people contribute with their opinions and experiences to the investigation. In this way, the experiences of the investigated subjects contrast scientific knowledge in the joint creation of meaning. This type of communication-oriented research seeks scientific impact and social transformation by including the voices of the subjects (Redondo-Sama et al., 2020; Torras-Gómez et al., 2019).

The present research is guided by the communicative methodology to analyze how attractive egalitarian men do not choose relationships with women who feel attracted by violent men. Therefore, the choices of egalitarian masculinities who follow the NAM's approach in affective and sexual relationships, in hook-up or stable relations, have been studied in detail. In the same way, the research examines changes in the framework of the socialization process within sexual and affective relationships and the influence of the NAM's approach in this regard (Ríos-González et al., 2021; Díez-Palomar et al., 2014). At the same time, the effects of these relationships on health status are also explored.

Participants and Instruments

Two strategies for the data collection were followed a) semi-structured interviews with a communicative orientation (Gómez et al., 2006) and b) content analysis of internet forums and songs that are related to our abovementioned objectives. The semi-structured interviews were developed with a sample of seven men that are involved in an egalitarian men's movement which follows the NAM's approach: Men in Dialogue. This strategy has taken place following all the ethical considerations prioritizing subjects' consent and confidentiality. The researchers have guaranteed respect for the privacy (identity and personal data) of all the participants and have taken care of documents and data to ensure the protection of the information. Thus, the research has been validated by the Ethical Board of the Community of Researchers on Excellence for All (CREA) providing the identification code 20210720.

The sample of men chosen for the development of the research (Table 1 next here), was made intentionally based on criteria established in the scientific literature. The men selected had to meet the following criteria: 1) to know the key competencies of the preventive socialization of gender violence: attraction, choice, and equality; 2) to know the keys of the NAM: self-confidence, courage and rejection of double standards; and 3) to recognize themselves as men who follow the NAM approach. These criteria are appropriate for this research to be able to analyze the existing links in sporadic or stable relationships in which there is or is not disdain and the consequences for health that derive from them. All this with the purpose of being able to determine which ones contribute to socialization that fosters an attraction to violence or socialization that unites desire and ethical values and thus contributes to overcoming gender violence. In Table 1 ages and professions of these men are summarized:

Table 1
Interviewees Profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Profession
Gabriel	41	Primary teacher
Diego	45	Primary teacher
Adrián	37	Primary teacher
Miguel	40	Primary teacher
Pere	44	Secondary teacher
Carlos	40	Secondary teacher
Roberto	68	University Professor

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the data collected

Those men are related to the NAM's approach and are involved in the Men in Dialogue groups in Valencia and Barcelona (Spain). They met once a month to dialogue about scientific articles and publications connected with masculinities, paying particular attention to articles linked to the abovementioned approach. Thus, they described themselves as men who follow the NAM's approach. All the men interviewed had degrees related to teaching in primary and secondary education, higher education, and research.

The questions introduced in the interviews have been related to three specific themes obtained deductively from the scientific literature of preventive gender violence socialization and NAM, linked to the purpose of the research: 1) attraction and election: the type of people who have turned out to be attractive in the different affective and sexual relationships, and the type of people who have been chosen and the reasons that have led to those choices in relationships; 2) rejection of the double standard, meaning attitudes of taking a stand against and rejecting violence and disdain in any type of relationship, both towards themselves and towards others; and, finally, 3) the effects and consequences that these types of attraction and choices have on men's health. These are the questions that have been formulated for the interviewees:

- What kind of women do you think are the most attractive?
- What kind of women attracted your attention in the past, and now, has it changed, and why?
- Have you had or do you know guys who have had a relationship with a woman who is hooked on relationships with disdain? Did you/he/she like it? Or did she/he repulse it? Can you give details?
- What kind of women do you choose for a relationship? What kind of treatment exists on an affective and sexual level?
- What consequences do you think that these sexual and affective relationships can have on health?

- Do you know of any cases of affective-sexual relationships where there has been an impact on health? Can you give details?

The collected data have been preserved in reserved devices and have been examined, transcribed verbatim, and classified within the categories that have been created (See Table 2) considering key findings from the previous scientific literature. Therefore, the analysis of the data has been focused on the exclusionary and transformative dimensions of the attraction, election, and health effects on the people involved in affective and sexual relationships, with or without disdain.

On the other hand, the second strategy to collect data was the content analysis of internet forums and songs related to the research questions and objectives. Some information was obtained from the Internet Forum Forocoches (in Spanish) in which there are men who explain and expose their compromise to take care of the relations, express their commitment to overcome gender-based violence, and choose relations with women that are not attracted to violent men. In the same way, with the same aim, this type of analysis has been performed with popular songs where men's choices regarding their relationships have been examined.

Data Analysis

The process to codify the information has been structured considering different steps. Firstly, the research team prepared deductively the guidelines for the semi-structured interviews based on the analysis of the scientific literature aimed to ensure the highest possible rigour. Secondly, and drawing on this deductive process, an analytical grid was created divided into three different categories which responded to the main aspects identified in the scientific literature connected to our research objectives: attraction and election, rejection of double standard, and effects of affective and sexual relationships in health status. On the other hand, in this analytical grid, two main dimensions were included following the premises of the communicative methodology: exclusionary and transformative. The first ones refer to these barriers that make improvements difficult, the second ones are those realities that contribute to overcoming these difficulties (Puigvert-Mallart, et al. 2022). The last step of this analytical procedure was the implementation of the content analysis which was deductively conducted considering the same categories and dimensions explained above and which are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Analytical Grid

Categories	Dimensions	
	Transformative	Exclusionary
Attraction and election	1	2
Rejection of double standards	3	4
Effects on health	5	6

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the data collected

The fieldwork was conducted during October, November, and December 2020. In the content analysis of songs and internet forums, posts were collected from different sources. The main objective of the search carried out was, on the one hand, to check whether forums and songs with comments and lyrics position themselves against violence and disdain in affective, intimate, and sexual relationships, and, on the other hand, to study their characteristics as socializing agents that foster NAM masculinities. The study of these contents has been carried out considering the deductive categories of analysis described above. On the Forocoches website, data were collected from chats in which participants discuss different topics such as the reasons why dominant and abusive men were attractive and successful. These chats were held in 2015. Likewise, the search for songs was carried out by asking the people studied about songs that they knew well and related to the NAM perspective, and from the songs mentioned by the interviewees, the two songs that best met the required characteristics were selected: "No te quiero ver más" by Mr Chen or "Stitches" by Shawn Mendes.

Results

The results are presented by grouping the data obtained according to the categories of the study deductively defined from the scientific literature. The categories are as follows: attraction and election (which are presented separately for ease of understanding), rejection of double standards, and health consequences of having sex with or without contempt. In each of the categories, the results of the current research are presented here starting from the voices of the investigated subjects, always named with pseudonyms, after which the posts from internet forums and the lyrics of the pop songs are presented. Thus, the information presented in this section is a selection of people's quotes, posts and parts of the lyrics.

Attraction

In some of the semi-structured interviews, men involved in Men in Dialogue state that, to feel attractive themselves, they do not need to get involved in relationships or hook up with women who desire dominant models of masculinity. Therefore, when they talk about what attracts them, how they choose, and whom they perceive to attract, superficiality and non-sense relationships are not prioritized. Contrarily, they prefer to start a relationship that makes them feel free to decide at any moment. That is, they do not succumb to a coercive dominant discourse that links attraction to violence:

...self-confidence to choose based on his own principles, his criteria about... women, partners, more or less sporadic or stable partner, don't be in a hurry (Miguel).

In fact, they do not force themselves to like anyone to feel attractive. Their self-confidence brings them the security that allows them to freely reject the relations that they do not like. This kind of reaction is illustrated by Miguel's words:

I felt attractive, it is evident in the context, you have recognition... and I didn't take profit of this situation... and when I had to reject this kind of women, that didn't bother me, I haven't had problems...

Similarly, other interviewed men reflect on the role of self-confidence as a key element that helps them to foster a relationship with women who feel attracted to the type of men who do not despise women and base their relations on profound feelings:

Self-confidence brings you attractiveness, when you feel more secure, more positioned, on a clear path, more defined, I woke up much more attractive... (Diego).

The same approach is perceived in some examples in internet forums, where men with self-confidence rejected opinions that linked and justified the attraction towards violent male models. In the following quote, collected in the forum of Forocoches, virtual interactions between two users show this man's disinterest in a woman hooked by traditional men:

A: I've hooked up with him again.

B: Ok, it's your life.

A: I can't avoid it... I know that this hurts me, but it's out of my control...

B: I don't want to know about your stories, and I don't say it spitefully because I don't like you, ... you can do what you want with your life.

Election

The kind of choices that men realize, as several interviewees confirmed in their statements, has a clear effect on the election that they display in their relationships. They express that they are not willing to choose those women who desire boys who treat them badly:

It doesn't match my tastes at all, I never had a poster of any singer or artist, nor did I feel attracted to them, as did other friends. In fact, I don't use the word pretty, much less the word ugly. However, I did notice that the women that others considered more beautiful felt more attracted to me, they treated me very well, and they had a much better time with me in every way (Roberto).

From an analogous point of view, other interviewees are very clear about what they do not like in a relationship with a woman. In this sense, they affirmed that motivation increases when desire and transformative feelings are directly connected:

Women who attract me... are sure of how they are, and that makes them attractive." (Adrian).

This same perspective can be found in songs that focus on this rejection towards women who are attracted, due to a coercive discourse, to dominant men. Mr Chen's song, for example, represents the harmful situations that those men had to feel and, at the same time, takes a stand in favour of rejecting the coercive discourse which links violence to attraction:

I don't want to see you anymore". However, interviewees go beyond this rejection, and argue that their elections are based on passion and devotion: "With my wife, we fell in love at first sight, and we have already had decades of growing passionate love, without any anger, making every minute wonderful" (Roberto).

As it was confirmed by interviewees, this construction of passionate affective and sexual relationships with women that have demonstrated no attraction to boys who showed power and domination through other people, allows shaping relationships where passion and love potentially increase:

I have had better relations with women who were not attracted to the dominant guys, those are the coolest memories... One cool thing is that you think the relationship, being very good, can be even better, so that you think we can do things that help make every day better and lead to make it better (Diego).

These elections become crucial in the life of most of the interviewees because they imply learning how people can construct satisfactory relationships. This type of process is identified in Roberto's words and the kind of feelings shared with the women that he chose:

That has allowed me to have very free and egalitarian relationships with those who for me are the best women, those who also want and practice freedom and equality. A friend criticized me for always having relationships with pretty women (she does use this word) and that in the end I had married a more beautiful woman than those singers or artists, but she acknowledged that they were the ones who treated me best. I replied that I only felt desire for those who treated me well and that if we all did the same, contempt and abuse in relationships would disappear and the world would be much better (Roberto).

Rejection of Double Standards

Juan, one of the interviewees, includes in their reflections a rejection of the dominant roles of reproduction of the double standard, in which desire and ethics are separated. Many times, he identifies several situations where conflicts emerge without any sense, that is, some women he met in his life regularly want to start an argument only for sexual instrumentalization. These kinds of situations profoundly demotivate Juan:

Something that you can see in some relationships with companions, she looks for troubles. Not only at a sexual level, but in relations... That is, they see problems, she looks for them, if not they are boring. What happens to me is that it makes me lazy. Something that disgusts me a lot is these people who want to seem sexually liberated and make sexual comments that do not come to mind and no one has asked them... The subject was like an instrumentalization of sexual relations, like a posture. It's just a little bit like traditional men have done all their lives, and it repulses me (Juan).

Furthermore, he also explains how these details from these women, attracted by disdainful relations, do not generate desire or attraction. It makes him feel a deep rejection:

If there are no problems, there's no excitement, if you want to ride it well, it is the opposite, if there are moves then you get off. The conciliation crew is a hoax, it's an excuse (Juan).

In some cases, as interviewees argued, they reject this kind of interaction because it contributes to their demotivation and loss of desire. Thus, when a disconnection of love and passion occurs this causes great discomfort in them. That is why in the interviews, men who follow the NAM's approach reject this kind of interaction and relations. Pere comments on this regard:

She told me, "As you can see you had a role in the hey with a lot of girls", but I hadn't. In fact, I think it was with the second one whom I had a role in the hey, that already gave me a feeling of superficiality, very strange. The thing was degenerating, then it was... She told me "We will meet on Thursday at 10 am, because there's no one at my parent's house and we will have a roll in the hey". I remember one morning I went there. I was at the door with underwear, and she was a girl who was physically attractive, but then, of course, emotionally, because to me this generated tension, then, everything that she mounted, had been very sexy, to enjoy, but at the moment of truth when we were in bed, I was not excited. I couldn't penetrate her, because inside I felt that she wasn't treating me well, I couldn't do it, I didn't feel desire and I wasn't attracted, the whole context was right, but I couldn't (Pere).

On the other hand, Pere also explains that satisfactory affective and sexual relations were possible because of deep feelings, confidence, and intensive passion. This kind of relationship allows him to share and bring out positive feelings and interactions that enhance the connection with his partner.

When I was with women who loved me, and who were very dedicated to me, the feeling is that you are on a cloud because you have a connection, it makes you happy and makes you give your best to do anything with this person to enjoy a sexual level in some ways, because you know that this person loves you and values you, and gives you peace of mind to let you go very big and gives you the certainty that this person will give her best. You connect with yourself, but you connect with the other person, and it's because the other is giving you this emotional feedback, you get sexual pleasure and emotional intensity that's a blast (Pere).

Effects on Health

Drawing on previous research on the effects of toxic relations on health status [13,14,15] in the form of anxiety, depression, physical somatizations, loss of self-esteem, hormonal lack, etc, men interviewed have recognized some of these parameters in their close friends' couples or relationships they have had. They suffered this type of reaction in preceding unsatisfactory and harmful relationships:

Yes, I remember being sad, being sad emotionally, and that affected me physically, I didn't feel like going out with friends, because, of course, there were times when I wasn't being treated well and I wasn't feeling well. I felt lower and, of course, I got more colds, I got injured, I was an athlete all my life, then I got injured more easily because I was tense (Pere).

Another issue that arose in the fieldwork was related to how the election, based on love and passion, enables the transformation of hard situations in health, in other words, to a significant improvement that promotes the overcoming of health difficulties:

My way to understand the relationships have changed in the last six years... from there, it has improved and the relation with my partner has changed a lot, radically in those moments... after cancer I had depression and after the accident... I think that I am alive thanks to her, or the relationship that she and I had at that time, in the way she said things to me that helped me to see life differently (Gabriel).

Likewise, the comments on health improvement are highlighted in the interviews when men have maintained affective and sexual relationships based on feelings and desire:

Mentally you're on another level, you're freaking out, and I think it must affect you physically, you're more active with more energy. When I'm with a girl who loves me, I'm on a cloud. (...) When it comes to health, you eat better, you do more sport, because you also notice that you want to be liked a lot and you also want to be super attractive. All the things you do that you think can help you to be more attractive (Pere).

The effects of these transformative relationships at the psychological level are perceived in the interviews as something clear and logical that provides emotional, sexual, and physical well-being:

...self-confidence is totally... I mean, I don't know... to know all about this, it brings you self-confidence that makes you face relations differently and it gives you calm that affects you psychologically... I see it as very logical...you are sure, you are much calmed... (Gabriel).

As most of the interviewed men share, those benefits are linked to the calm to live a free relationship, without tensions that demotivate, without complaints nor reactions that highlight the loss of desire. They affirmed that this type of life is possible and implies an increase in the intensity of their pleasure in intimate relationships. For them, that is the well-being that reenchants the persons with self-esteem improvements, fewer somatizations, and physical well-being.

Conclusion

This research gathers the evidence shown in the scientific literature on the effects that affective and sexual relationships, whether sporadic or stable, have on people's health. Relationships in which there is disdain have negative consequences, causing different types of health problems, both physical and mental (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Napperet al. 2016; Ackard & Neumark-Stzainer, 2002; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021). This study provides evidence on how affective and sexual relationships impact the health of heterosexual men who follow the NAM's

approach, analyzing the type of attraction and choice they develop in their relationships that are based on the rejection of double standards.

The results show the effects of the categories analysed in this research: a) Attraction and election; b) Rejection of double standards; and c) Effects on health; among which, it is essential to highlight the importance of attraction and choice to maintain a relationship, whether sporadic or stable. Men who have been interviewed and follow the NAM's approach are not attracted to women who are chained to dominant traditional men because they recognize the negative consequences for their relationships and well-being. These men are attracted to and prefer to choose women who are based on deep feelings and who do not use disdain and disenchantment in their relationships.

Another category that is analysed from the scientific literature, and which appears in the results, is how the rejection of double standards contributes to detecting situations that lead to relationships in which ethics and desire are separated. These situations demotivate them and make them reject such relationships. On the other hand, when interactions are based on positive feelings, trust and intense passion, these men are motivated and committed to the relationship to increase its intensity and to connect with their partner.

In the category associated with health parameters, this article provides the positive effects that occur in relationships where heterosexual men, following the NAM's approach, choose women who are not chained to toxic relationships. Improvements in mental and physical well-being are the effects that are linked to the type of relationships they have, which, as they express in their voices, keep improving by promoting more satisfying and meaningful affective and sexual relationships. These effects, according to the accounts of the men interviewed, translate into increased self-confidence, greater courage to confront injustices, improvement in overcoming personal, work, or social difficulties, greater personal satisfaction and an intensification of the meaning of life. These effects contribute to mental and physical improvement.

The contribution presented in this article has limitations related to the sample chosen, a group of men with a medium-high level of education and an average age of 45 years. Furthermore, the results are also limited to the link between these men and the NAM's approach, so it is not possible to generalize the results to other egalitarian men's movements.

This study opens lines of future research that can contribute to the improvement of sexual and affective relationships. Firstly, in the further exploration of the effect of these choices on the prevention of gender-based violence and, secondly, research on the elements to be considered in order to obtain an education that socialises free choices within relationships without hook-ups and violence, as well as for the prevention of negative health effects.

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