

Psychological Effects of Impotence on Men in the Middle East

Patriarchy is the social system that has historically manifested itself in the social, political and economical organization of Middle Eastern societies. Having males as the primary authority figure implies their privilege, power and influence over women. The concept of masculinity has been given grave significance due to its association with strength, courage and integrity. One of the main Middle Eastern criteria of masculinity is a man's sexual performance. However, what happens if a man's sexual performance is inadequate?

Sexual dysfunctions are difficulties experienced by individuals during sexual activities. One type of male sexual dysfunction is erectile dysfunction, commonly known as impotence. Impotence is defined as the male's inability to get or maintain an erection for a complete sexual activity. An erection is due to a sexual stimulation which causes certain chemicals and hormones to increase the blood flow to the penis. Disruptions in the functioning of these chemicals and hormones will impair an erection, thus indicating impotence.

Impotence is a very common condition among men and can occur because of a variety of medical or psychological reasons. Some of the general physical causes of impotence include: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity or side-effects of medications. On the other hand, various psychological causes can include: exhaustion, depression, relationship problems, sexual preferences or anxiety.

Despite the physical disadvantage, impotence imposes a huge psychological effect on men diagnosed with it. This could be traced back to the fact that impotence has traditionally been a high social stigma in the Middle East. As a result, erectile dysfunction is a lapse of dignity for men suffering from it. Countless men, directly couple their sexual performance to their self-esteem. Thus, the inability to maintain a sexually adequate performance might leave a negative impact on a man's confidence and his sense of masculinity.

Impotence often drives men to feel scarce in their roles creating feelings of hopelessness and humiliation. Thus, these men tend to physically isolate themselves from their partners and steadily become withdrawn. This isolation is based on the fear that any physical affection will initiate a desire for intercourse from their partner. In turn, this request will set off a reminder of their inability to achieve an erection.

Furthermore, men with erectile dysfunction suffer from guilt. This increased sense of guilt is linked to their inability to sexually satisfy their partner. The partner's disappointment induces feelings of despair, frustration and anger in the man often leading them to depression.

Due to the fact that men are usually more introverted, they prefer keeping their feelings to themselves without truly expressing them. Impotence, often leads men to become emotionally distant from their partners because they are terrified to talk about their weaknesses. Moreover, their feelings of self-blame and embarrassment pushes them to deny the existence and need to discuss their sexual problem.

In addition to denying their impotence, feelings of defeat might push men to cope by unconsciously desexualizing their partner. By projecting their problem on their partner, men will be able to protect themselves against the fears of abandonment and being perceived as a failure in the eyes of others.

Sexual dysfunctions in men are considered a disgrace and a shame in Middle Eastern societies. This social stigma creates enormous emotional pressures on men who fail to meet the masculine gender roles set by norms and cultures. As a result, customs of secrecy and protectiveness are constructed in order to shield what's left of their perceived manhood. However, this fear of sexual failure mixed with performance anxiety will only lead to a cyclic and constant erectile dysfunction.

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