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# Bondage–Discipline, Dominance–Submission and Sadomasochism (BDSM) From an Integrative Biopsychosocial Perspective: A Systematic Review

[Nele De Neef](#)<sup>1</sup>, [Violette Coppens](#)<sup>2</sup>, [Wim Huys](#)<sup>3</sup>, [Manuel Morrens](#)<sup>4</sup>

Affiliations

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, and sadism and masochism) increasingly receives attention from the scientific community. Where earlier research efforts mainly focused on epidemiologic characteristics, psychological and biologic factors driving BDSM preferences have recently gained interest as well.

**Aim:** To bring together all the existing scientific literature on BDSM from a biopsychosocial perspective.

**Methods:** Based on the PRISMA guidelines, the current systematic review brings together all the existing literature on BDSM from a biopsychosocial perspective.

**Main outcome measure:** Prevalence rates of BDSM interests were investigated in the literature, as well as the associations between BDSM interests on one hand and personality traits, adverse childhood experiences, education levels, sexual orientations and biological markers on the other.

**Results:** Biologic factors such as gender identity, sex hormone levels, and the neurologic constitution of the brain's pain and reward systems influence BDSM orientation. With regard to psychological factors, both personality traits (eg, higher levels of openness or extraversion) and the presence of a personality disorder have been associated with a heightened interest in BDSM, although only limited supporting evidence is available. Additionally, sensation-seeking levels and impulsivity seem to contribute, because they presumably guide one's drive to explore new or more-intense kinks. Whereas attachment styles impact couple dynamics, they also influence willingness to explore limits in a BDSM context. Lastly, education levels impact relational and sexual dynamics.

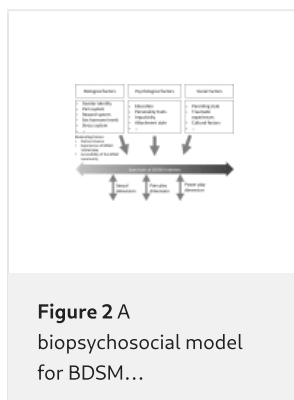
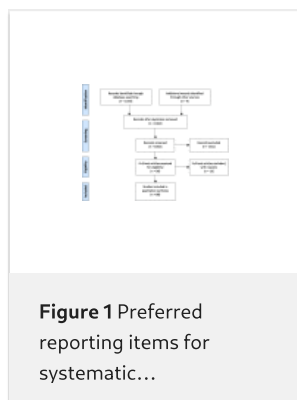
**Strengths and limitations:** The limitations of the current review reflect those of the topical scientific literature. Although the number of studies focused on all aspects of BDSM is exponentially growing, most of these are only descriptive, and very few focus on underlying driving processes.

**Conclusion:** From this biopsychosocial perspective, we offer a dimensional approach while integrating the factors driving the onset and evolution of BDSM interests. De Neef N, Coppens V, Huys W, et al. Bondage-Discipline, Dominance-Submission and Sadoomasochism (BDSM) From an Integrative Biopsychosocial Perspective: A Systematic Review. Sex Med 2019;7:129-144.

**Keywords:** BDSM; Biopsychosocial; Kink; Masochism; Sadism; Sadoomasochism.

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