

# The Psychology of Orgasm Authenticity: Motivations, Gender Dynamics, and Relational Consequences

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**Abstract-** Faking orgasms, the deliberate simulation of sexual climax without experiencing it, is a common but complex behavior influenced by psychological, relational and cultural factors. This paper synthesizes research across domains, including motivations for faking orgasms, gender differences, attachment dynamics, self-esteem, communication patterns, cultural sexual scripts, relationship context, and psychological consequences. Findings reveal that individuals primarily fake orgasms to avoid conflict, protect partner feelings, or end unsatisfying sexual encounters. Women report higher rates of orgasm faking than men, largely due to societal expectations and gendered sexual scripts. Attachment insecurities and low self-esteem further predict this behavior, while poor sexual communication exacerbates its prevalence. Cross-cultural analyses highlight variations in orgasm authenticity shaped by collectivist versus individualist norms. Finally, the psychological outcomes of faking orgasms—such as sexual frustration, diminished intimacy, and relational dissatisfaction—underscore its long-term implications for relationship quality and mental health. These findings emphasize the importance of sexual authenticity, open communication and culturally sensitive interventions to enhance intimacy and reduce deceptive sexual practices.

**Index Terms-** Faking orgasms, sexual authenticity, attachment styles, self-esteem, gender differences, sexual communication, cultural sexual scripts, relationship satisfaction, psychological consequences, intimacy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Faking orgasms—deliberately simulating sexual climax—remains a prevalent yet understudied behavior in romantic partnerships, with important implications for individual and relational well-being. Recent research shows that approximately 13% of individuals currently fake orgasms, 28% have done so in the past, and 51% report never engaging in this behavior, according to a large-scale European study involving 11,541 respondents. This behavior was associated with significantly lower sexual, relationship and life satisfaction (Why Did You Stop, 2024). Findings suggest that faking orgasm is not simply an isolated sexual act but a multifaceted psychological phenomenon rooted in individual insecurities, attachment dynamics,

communication patterns and societal expectations. Understanding these dynamics is essential for improving sexual authenticity and relational well-being. Multiple motivations drive this phenomenon. Hevesi et al. (2022) found that orgasmic difficulties and lower relationship satisfaction both predict a higher frequency of faking orgasms, while feelings of insecurity—particularly fear of being perceived as sexually inadequate—serve as mediators. Similarly, Rubinsky and Ambrus (2023) framed the behavior within Multiple Goals Theory, revealing that approximately 32% of participants reported faking orgasms in their current relationships for both instrumental reasons (e.g., ending intercourse) and partner-oriented reasons (e.g., boosting a partner's ego).

Attachment styles also play a significant role. Láng et al. (2019) discovered that women with insecure attachment orientations were more likely to fake orgasms; those with avoidant tendencies did so to terminate sex more quickly, while those with anxious tendencies aimed to preserve harmony by making their partners feel competent. Additionally, research on sexual emotional labor highlights that women disproportionately engage in faking orgasms to maintain partner satisfaction and emotional equilibrium, often influenced by internalized gendered sexual scripts and objectification norms (Elliott & Umberson, 2016). Further, recent studies indicate that partner-objectification predicts more frequent sexual labor behaviors such as faking orgasm, as well as fewer actual orgasms in heterosexual couples (Objectification and Sexual Labor, 2025).

## II. PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS BEHIND FAKING ORGASM

### Introduction

Faking orgasms—deliberately simulating sexual climax during sexual encounters—represents a complex behavioral phenomenon with significant psychological and relational implications. Although orgasm is often framed as an indicator of sexual fulfillment, research indicates that many individuals report pretending to climax for reasons extending beyond personal pleasure.

Recent studies demonstrate that approximately one-third of individuals admit to faking orgasm at least once in their current relationship (Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023), suggesting the behavior is neither rare nor trivial. Understanding the underlying psychological motives for this behavior is crucial, as these motivations are often interwoven with gendered expectations, attachment dynamics, and relationship satisfaction.

### **Psychological Motivations for Faking Orgasm**

Several psychological drivers have been identified in contemporary literature. Commonly reported reasons include avoiding conflict, preserving a partner's self-esteem, and accelerating the conclusion of sexual activity (Hevesi et al., 2022; Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023). For many, faking orgasm is not an isolated behavior but a strategy to navigate gendered sexual scripts that privilege partner satisfaction, particularly male pleasure, over individual sexual needs (Wood et al., 2022).

### **Gender Differences**

Gender plays a pivotal role in shaping orgasm-related behaviors. Women report significantly higher rates of faking orgasm than men (Why Did You Stop, 2024). Societal norms that associate female sexual responsiveness with partner validation contribute to these gendered patterns (Elliott & Umberson, 2016). Conversely, men who fake orgasms often cite fatigue, performance anxiety, or a desire to conclude unsatisfactory intercourse (Loftus et al., 2021). These findings underscore the intersection of cultural expectations and gender identity in influencing orgasm authenticity.

### **Attachment Styles and Orgasm Authenticity**

Attachment theory provides a robust framework for understanding interpersonal dynamics in sexual behavior. Individuals with anxious attachment orientations are more likely to fake orgasms to maintain intimacy and avoid perceived rejection, reflecting a hyperactivation of relational strategies (Láng et al., 2019). Conversely, avoidantly attached individuals may engage in orgasm faking as a means of emotional distancing or terminating sexual interactions quickly (Láng et al., 2019). These patterns suggest that attachment insecurity heightens vulnerability to performative sexual behaviors, driven by underlying fears of inadequacy or loss.

### **Relationship Satisfaction and Sexual Authenticity**

Research consistently links orgasm authenticity to higher sexual and relational satisfaction. Faking orgasm, while intended to preserve harmony, often correlates with diminished satisfaction for both partners over time (Hevesi et al., 2022). Individuals who routinely fake orgasms may experience lower sexual self-esteem and increased relational strain, creating a paradox where a short-term strategy to maintain closeness undermines long-term intimacy (Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023). This dynamic illustrates the importance of open sexual communication in mitigating deceptive practices and fostering authentic intimacy. The act of faking orgasm reflects a convergence of psychological, relational, and sociocultural factors. Gender norms, attachment insecurities, and relational quality collectively shape this behavior, suggesting that orgasm authenticity cannot be examined in isolation from broader interpersonal dynamics. Future research should explore interventions promoting sexual communication and dismantling restrictive sexual scripts, thereby reducing reliance on deceptive strategies for maintaining relational equilibrium.

### **The Impact of Faking Orgasms on Relationship Satisfaction**

Sexual satisfaction is a central component of romantic relationship quality, predicting both relational stability and overall well-being (McNulty et al., 2016). Within this domain, orgasm authenticity has received increasing scholarly attention due to its strong association with emotional intimacy and sexual fulfillment (Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023). Faking orgasms—deliberately simulating sexual climax without experiencing it—emerges as a common phenomenon, with approximately one-third of individuals reporting engaging in this behavior in their current relationship (Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023). While this act is often rationalized as a strategy to preserve harmony, avoid conflict, or enhance a partner's ego, recent research suggests that the implications of such behavior may extend beyond the sexual sphere into the broader relational context (Hevesi et al., 2022).

### **Effects on Relationship Satisfaction**

Empirical evidence indicates that faking orgasms can negatively affect both partners' sexual and relational satisfaction. In a large-scale study spanning multiple European countries, individuals who reported ceasing to fake orgasms demonstrated significantly higher levels of relationship and life satisfaction compared to those who continued to engage in the behavior (Why Did You

Stop, 2024). This suggests that orgasm authenticity may play a crucial role in sustaining long-term relational quality. Furthermore, Hevesi et al. (2022) found that the frequency of faking orgasm was inversely correlated with relationship satisfaction, and this link was mediated by perceptions of sexual competence and communication openness.

### **Impact on Emotional Intimacy and Trust**

Faking orgasms may also undermine emotional intimacy, as it introduces an element of deception into a domain that often signifies vulnerability and authenticity (Elliott & Umberson, 2016). Sexual encounters are frequently perceived as expressions of mutual trust; thus, repeated inauthenticity may erode emotional closeness over time (McNulty et al., 2016). Additionally, when the behavior becomes habitual, it can reinforce cycles of sexual miscommunication, limiting opportunities for partners to address real issues regarding desire, arousal, or orgasmic function (Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023).

### **Risk of Long-Term Dissatisfaction or Breakup**

While faking orgasms is often intended as a short-term strategy to protect relational harmony, its long-term consequences may include decreased satisfaction and increased breakup risk. Individuals who habitually fake orgasms report higher levels of sexual frustration and lower overall relational happiness, which, over time, predict greater likelihood of relationship dissolution (Láng et al., 2019). These findings align with research on sexual authenticity, which emphasizes that openness and honest communication are critical to maintaining both emotional and physical intimacy in enduring partnerships (Wood et al., 2022).

The literature suggests that faking orgasms, although often viewed as a benign or altruistic act, may compromise relational well-being by diminishing trust, reducing sexual communication, and eroding intimacy. Given these implications, further research is warranted to examine whether interventions targeting sexual honesty and communication could mitigate the relational risks associated with orgasm deception.

### **Gender Differences in Faking Orgasms**

Empirical studies consistently indicate that women report faking orgasms at higher rates than men, with estimates suggesting that between 50–70% of women and 20–30% of men have engaged in this practice at least once in their lifetime (Loftus et al., 2021; Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023). These discrepancies invite critical inquiry into the sociocultural and psychological

mechanisms contributing to gendered patterns of sexual authenticity.

### **Societal Expectations and Gender Norms**

Cultural norms and gendered sexual scripts exert considerable influence on orgasm-related behaviors. In heterosexual contexts, traditional sexual scripts often prioritize male sexual pleasure and performance while framing women as caretakers of male ego and relational harmony (Wood et al., 2022). Consequently, women may internalize expectations that equate their desirability and partner satisfaction with their perceived sexual responsiveness, leading to behaviors such as faking orgasms to maintain these ideals (Elliott & Umberson, 2016).

Men, conversely, experience societal pressure to perform sexually and achieve orgasm consistently, yet their lower rates of orgasm faking suggest that masculine sexual scripts emphasize visible performance markers (such as ejaculation) that make deception less feasible (Loftus et al., 2021). This structural difference underscores the asymmetrical social consequences attached to sexual authenticity across genders.

### **The Role of Sexual Scripts and Partner-Pleasing Motives**

Women frequently cite partner-oriented motives—such as avoiding conflict, maintaining emotional closeness, and bolstering a partner’s self-esteem—as primary reasons for simulating orgasm (Hevesi et al., 2022). These motives align with research on sexual emotional labor, wherein women disproportionately assume responsibility for managing their partner’s sexual confidence and satisfaction (Elliott & Umberson, 2016). Men, when they do fake orgasm, often report self-focused motives, such as fatigue or a desire to end unsatisfactory sexual activity (Loftus et al., 2021).

#### **Implications for Sexual Authenticity and Equality**

The gendered nature of orgasm deception has implications for both sexual authenticity and relational equity. Patterns of faking orgasms reflect enduring cultural narratives that prioritize men’s sexual pleasure while marginalizing women’s needs for genuine sexual fulfillment (Wood et al., 2022). Addressing these disparities necessitates challenging heteronormative sexual scripts and fostering open communication to reduce reliance on deceptive practices as a relational maintenance strategy.

### **Faking Orgasms and Communication Patterns**

Sexual communication is widely recognized as a key determinant of relationship satisfaction and sexual well-

being (Byers & Macneil, 2006). Within intimate partnerships, the ability to openly discuss sexual needs and preferences facilitates mutual understanding and enhances the quality of sexual encounters. Conversely, the absence of such communication may contribute to deceptive behaviors such as faking orgasms. Defined as simulating sexual climax without experiencing it, faking orgasm is a strategy employed by individuals for multiple reasons, including avoiding conflict and maintaining partner satisfaction (Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023). However, scholars have begun to question whether this behavior reflects deeper relational communication deficits.

Empirical findings suggest that individuals who report low levels of sexual self-disclosure are more likely to engage in orgasm faking (Mark et al., 2018). This association indicates that poor communication may perpetuate misconceptions about sexual satisfaction, reinforcing a cycle of deception and unaddressed sexual needs. Moreover, sexual inauthenticity undermines emotional intimacy by introducing an element of dishonesty into a domain that often serves as a foundation for trust and vulnerability (Elliott & Umberson, 2016).

Open discussions about sexual pleasure, by contrast, have been linked to higher orgasm frequency and reduced reliance on performative behaviors (Rosen et al., 2021). These findings underscore the potential of communication-focused interventions for reducing orgasm faking and fostering authentic intimacy within romantic relationships.

### III. CORRELATION BETWEEN FAKING ORGASMS AND SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem, particularly sexual self-esteem, plays a critical role in shaping individuals' experiences of intimacy and authenticity during sexual encounters (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). Low self-esteem and negative body image are associated with reduced sexual confidence, which may increase the likelihood of deceptive sexual behaviors such as faking orgasms. This act, often intended to maintain partner satisfaction or avoid feelings of inadequacy, reflects underlying concerns about personal sexual performance and desirability (Hevesi et al., 2022).

Research indicates that individuals with lower sexual self-esteem are significantly more likely to engage in faking orgasms as a means of preserving relational harmony or avoiding rejection (Morrison et al., 2019). Gendered patterns emerge in these dynamics, as women report higher rates of faking and cite body image concerns and partner-pleasing motives as primary

drivers (Wood et al., 2022). Additionally, body surveillance—a key aspect of objectification theory—has been shown to predict lower orgasm frequency and greater likelihood of orgasm faking (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Impett et al., 2020). These findings suggest a strong psychological link between self-perception and sexual authenticity, highlighting the need for interventions that promote positive body image and self-compassion to foster genuine sexual experiences.

### IV. ATTACHMENT STYLES AND FAKING ORGASMS

Attachment theory provides a compelling framework for understanding sexual behaviors within romantic relationships. Secure attachment is characterized by comfort with intimacy and open emotional communication, whereas insecure attachment styles—*anxious* and *avoidant*—are associated with heightened relational concerns (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Faking orgasms, defined as simulating sexual climax without experiencing it, has been identified as a behavior linked to these attachment dynamics. Research suggests that individuals with anxious attachment orientations often fake orgasms to maintain closeness and avoid rejection, reflecting hyperactivating strategies in response to fears of abandonment (Láng et al., 2019). Conversely, avoidantly attached individuals may engage in this behavior to minimize emotional involvement or terminate sexual activity more quickly, aligning with deactivating strategies (Birnbaum, 2018). Empirical studies confirm these patterns, demonstrating that insecure attachment predicts higher frequencies of orgasm faking compared to secure attachment (Láng et al., 2019). These findings highlight the role of emotional security in shaping sexual authenticity and underscore the need to address attachment-related concerns in interventions aimed at improving relational and sexual well-being.

### V. FAKING ORGASMS AND SEXUAL SCRIPTS IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

Cultural norms and sexual scripts shape individuals' expectations and behaviors in intimate relationships. Sexual scripts refer to socially constructed guidelines that dictate how sexual interactions should unfold, influencing attitudes toward pleasure, orgasm, and authenticity (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). In collectivist societies, where relational harmony and family honor are prioritized, individuals—especially women—may feel compelled to fake orgasms to avoid conflict and uphold gendered expectations of compliance (Carpenter, 2010). Conversely, individualist cultures that emphasize

personal fulfillment and autonomy may foster greater openness in discussing sexual dissatisfaction, potentially reducing reliance on deceptive practices (Mark & Jozkowski, 2013).

Cross-cultural research indicates significant variation in orgasm authenticity across cultural contexts, underscoring the importance of examining these behaviors within their sociocultural frameworks (Wood et al., 2022). Understanding these differences can provide insights into how cultural values shape intimate experiences and inform culturally sensitive sexual health interventions.

#### Psychological Consequences of Faking Orgasms

Sexual authenticity—the ability to express one’s sexual experiences honestly—is essential for fostering intimacy and sustaining relational well-being (Impett et al., 2020). When authenticity is compromised through behaviors such as faking orgasms, the psychological consequences can extend beyond the sexual domain into broader aspects of emotional and relational functioning. Defined as the deliberate simulation of sexual climax without experiencing it, faking orgasms is often motivated by short-term goals such as avoiding conflict, preserving a partner’s ego, or ending an unsatisfying sexual encounter (Hevesi et al., 2022; Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023). However, these motives obscure potential long-term consequences, including sexual dissatisfaction, emotional disconnection, and increased relational tension.

Research indicates that faking orgasms correlates negatively with both sexual and relationship satisfaction (Why Did You Stop, 2024). This association may be mediated by factors such as sexual frustration and perceived dishonesty, which undermine trust and authenticity within intimate partnerships (Mark et al., 2018). Over time, this pattern can foster resentment, reduce emotional intimacy, and contribute to psychological distress, including feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and relational ambivalence (Impett et al., 2020). Furthermore, habitual inauthenticity in sexual contexts can exacerbate gendered power dynamics, reinforcing sexual scripts that prioritize performance over genuine pleasure (Wood et al., 2022).

These findings underscore the need to examine faking orgasms as not merely a benign relational strategy, but as a behavior with significant implications for mental health and relationship quality. Understanding these psychological consequences is essential for developing interventions that promote sexual honesty and enhance relational satisfaction.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of faking orgasms is far more complex than a simple act of deception; it reflects an intricate interplay of psychological, relational, and sociocultural factors. Across studies, motivations for faking orgasms include avoiding conflict, preserving a partner’s self-esteem, and ending unsatisfactory sexual activity (Hevesi et al., 2022; Rubinsky & Ambrus, 2023). Gender differences are prominent, with women consistently reporting higher rates of orgasm faking, largely due to societal expectations, sexual scripts, and pressure to please male partners (Wood et al., 2022).

Attachment dynamics further illuminate these behaviors, as anxiously attached individuals often fake orgasms to maintain intimacy and avoid rejection, while avoidant individuals do so to minimize emotional engagement or terminate sexual encounters (Láng et al., 2019; Birnbaum, 2018). Similarly, low self-esteem, negative body image, and internalized objectification are strong predictors of orgasm faking, underscoring the psychological link between self-perception and sexual authenticity (Impett et al., 2020; Morrison et al., 2019).

Communication emerges as a critical moderator, with poor sexual communication strongly associated with greater reliance on orgasm deception, whereas open discussions about pleasure reduce this behavior and foster authentic intimacy (Mark et al., 2018; Rosen et al., 2021). Cultural norms also shape this phenomenon, as collectivist societies often reinforce compliance and harmony, whereas individualist cultures tend to promote autonomy and sexual assertiveness (Simon & Gagnon, 1986; Carpenter, 2010).

Finally, the consequences of faking orgasms are not trivial. Habitual inauthenticity can erode trust, reduce emotional closeness, perpetuate sexual dissatisfaction, and contribute to relational instability (Why Did You Stop, 2024). These dynamics suggest that faking orgasms, while often framed as a short-term relational maintenance strategy, may lead to long-term psychological and relational costs. Future research should adopt a multidimensional perspective, examining how gender norms, attachment insecurities, communication patterns, and cultural contexts interact to influence orgasm authenticity. Interventions focusing on sexual education, communication training, and body-positive practices are crucial to mitigating the negative outcomes of this widespread behavior.

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