

SOME ASPECTS OF SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF LOCAL WOMEN RESULTS OF A SURVEY II FEMALE MASTURBATION

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SYNOPSIS

The second article in this series defines female masturbation and outlines the techniques used.

Only 9.3 percent of the 1012 surveyed admitted to masturbatory practices.

16.1 percent knew about male masturbation.

21.9 percent were unaware that females could practise masturbation.

90.4 percent carried on masturbation till orgasm.

63.5 percent said that orgasm at intercourse felt better than that achieved by masturbation, while 15.3 percent said that orgasm by both these activities felt the same.

A general discussion of masturbation and its significance follows.

INTRODUCTION

Masturbation may be defined as deliberate self stimulation which effects sexual arousal. The term has been extended to include all activities which bring satisfaction through the rubbing, scratching, pressing or stroking of the breasts, thighs, legs or other parts of the body including even the nose and ears, thumb sucking, biting of one's fingernails, the chewing of gums, bed wetting, fast automobile driving, high diving and still other activities (1).

Motivations for the activity lie in the conscious realization that erotic satisfactions and some release from tensions may thus be obtained.

Masturbation may or may not be pursued to the point of orgasm and it may or may not have orgasm as its objective.

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TABLE I EXPERIENCE OF MASTURBATION IN 1012 WOMEN

Activity/Knowledge	Number of Persons	Percentage
Practised Masturbation	94	9.3
Did Not Practise Masturbation (Though They Knew It Possible)	533	52.7
Did Not Know Masturbation Was Possible or Was Practised by Women	222	21.9
Knew or Heard of ONLY Males Practising Masturbation	163	16.1
Total	1012	100

MATERIALS AND METHOD

1012 woman patients of the Obstetric and Gynaecology Department of Toa Payoh Hospital were interviewed personally by the author regarding their knowledge, experiences and practices of masturbation.

Only 9.3 percent of the women said that they had ever masturbated or were still masturbating at the time of interview (Table I).

16.1 percent had knowledge of its practice by males and 21.9 percent did not know such an activity occurred or that masturbation could be practised by females.

52.7 percent of the females did not practise masturbation for various reasons or did not feel the desire or urge to practise it.

Table II shows the period in their lives when the women started to masturbate.

TABLE II ONSET OF MASTURBATING ACTIVITY

Time	No. of Persons	Percentage
Adolescence or Prior to Marriage	35	37.2
After Marriage only	19	20.2
Adolescence and through Marriage	40	42.6
Total	94	100
Pregnancy only	4	
Before and After Sexual Intercourse	3	

42.6 percent of the women had carried on with masturbation from the time of adolescence right up to the time of interview.

20.2 percent only learnt to masturbate or practised it only after marriage.

37.2 percent had only masturbated during their adolescence or prior to their marriage and had subsequently discontinued.

The women who masturbated were questioned as to whether they carried on with the activity till orgasm.

Table III gives a breakdown of their replies.

TABLE III MASTURBATION AND ORGASM

End Point of Activity	Number of Persons	Percentage
Orgasm	85	90.4
No Orgasm	5	5.3
Not sure about Orgasm	4	4.3
Total	94	100

90.4 percent of the women carried on with masturbating activity till they achieved orgasm.

5.3 percent said they reached a stage of satisfaction although orgasm did not occur.

4.3 percent were unsure what orgasm was and whether they had ever achieved it.

Those females who achieved orgasm were asked whether they felt any difference in the appreciation of orgasm achieved by masturbation compared to orgasm at sexual intercourse.

Table IV gives a breakdown of their appreciation of orgasm.

TABLE IV ORGASM AT MASTURBATION AS COMPARED WITH ORGASM AT SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Orgasm	Number of Persons	Percentage
Masturbation Better	18	21.2
Intercourse Better	54	63.5
Both Same	13	15.3
Total	85	100

63.5 percent said that orgasm at intercourse felt better than that at masturbation.

21.2 percent felt that orgasm at masturbation felt better than that at sexual intercourse.

15.3 percent said that both types of orgasms felt the same.

DISCUSSION

Masturbation is the one type of sexual activity in which the second largest number of females engage in both before and after marriage. Heterosexual petting has a larger number of females before marriage (1).

Among all types of sexual activity masturbation is however the one in which the female most frequently reaches orgasm.

In ninety-five percent or more of all her masturbation, the female does reach orgasm due to the fact that the techniques of masturbation are especially effective in producing orgasm and offers the female the most specific and quickest means for achieving orgasm.

Many males, tend to over-estimate the incidences and frequencies of masturbation among females and poorly understand the techniques by which females masturbate.

Techniques of Masturbation (1)

Females tend to choose their masturbating techniques from a larger list of techniques than what the males utilise.

In this sample, virtually all had depended on a single technique.

In Kinsey's study, more than a half had depended upon a single technique, but in various groups a quarter to a half of the females utilised a second or still more effectual techniques.

Clitoral and Labial Techniques

Most frequently masturbation involves some manipulation of the clitoris and/or the labia minora. Except for two women, all in the sample had depended on this practice.

The female usually moves a finger gently and rhythmically over the sensitive areas and applies rhythmic or steady pressure with several of her fingers or with her whole hand.

The clitoris and labia minora are the areas of the genitalia which are best supplied with end organs of touch.

The minimum use of deep penetration of the vagina is due to the fact that the walls of the vagina itself are practically without nerves in most females although there are some sensory nerves close to the entrance of the vagina in some individuals.

Labia majora per se is less often involved in female masturbation. Generally pressure is applied to the whole area.

Thigh Pressures

Crossing of the legs and appressing them to exert steady or more rhythmic pressures on the whole genital area. Such pressures affect the clitoris, the labia minora and labia majora.

One woman admitted that she got aroused when she wore rather tight jeans and thus had an opportunity to rub her thighs together unwittingly.

Thigh pressures may be applied with or without simultaneous manipulation of the genitalia with the hand.

The pressures exert tactile stimulation and also help to develop muscular tensions.

Muscular Tensions

A relatively infrequent but important method depends on the development of muscular and nervous tensions throughout the body.

The female lies face down either in a prone or with

her knees drawn up against the belly. Her buttocks then move forwards and rhythmically and against each other in a slow or fast motion.

When prone the female may press her genitalia against the bed on which she lies, or against a pillow or some other object placed under her pelvis or between her legs and thus the clitoris and other parts of her genitalia are stimulated. The muscular action involved when a female masturbates in this fashion is typical of the copulatory movements of the male and of the uninhabited female when she assumes a position on top of the male in coitus.

One woman used a bolster against her genitalia during late pregnancy when her urge for sexual intercourse was very intense.

Breasts

The breasts, especially the nipples, are erotically sensitive in some women.

Manual pressure or pressing them against the bed or some other object while simultaneously manipulating her genitalia is another technique.

Vaginal Insertions

Twenty percent in Kinsey's study (1) had used vaginal insertion, usually with the finger. Only a very limited number had used any object.

Most males imagine that female masturbation must involve vaginal insertion, by finger or objects.

None of the females admitted to this practice.

Fantasy Alone

None in this sample had reached orgasm by fantasizing erotic situations, without stimulating their genitalia or other parts of their bodies.

Other Techniques

Some rub their genitalia against pillows, clothing, chairs, beds or other objects.

Douches, streams of running water, vibrators, urethral insertions, enemas, other anal insertions, sado-masochistic activity, are still other methods. One woman in this study used a vibrator to masturbate.

Kinsey (1) reported that forty-five percent of women who masturbated reached orgasm within three minutes or less.

Many who took long to reach orgasm did so deliberately in order to prolong the pleasure of the activity and not because they were incapable of responding more quickly.

21.2 percent of the masturbators said that orgasm derived by masturbation was better than that reached at sexual intercourse. This was due to this desire to take their own time to reach orgasm at their own pace.

15.3 percent thought that both types of orgasm felt identical while 63.5 percent said that orgasm at intercourse felt better.

Masters and Johnson (2) have shown that anatomically there is no difference in responses of the pelvic viscera to effective sexual stimulation regardless of whether the stimulation occurs due to clitoral body stimulation or mons area manipulation, natural or artificial coition or specific stimulation of any other erogenous area of the female body.

Many who masturbated and had orgasm complain-

ed of feeling a sense of "emptiness". This shows that orgasm has a physical and emotional element involved. The physical element can be contributed by masturbation but the emotion factor of being wanted can only be achieved by intercourse.

According to the Kahns report (3) more mature women are opting for the pleasure of clitoral stimulation and orgasm over full vaginal penetration by the penis. Interestingly women rarely articulate or acknowledge this preference to men.

In this series, only 9.3 percent of the women admitted to masturbation as compared to 62 percent in Kinsey's report (1) and 82 percent in Hite's report (4).

90.4 percent said they achieved orgasm by masturbation while only 58 percent in Kinsey's report (1) admitted to this and 96 percent did so in Hite's report.

It would be unwarranted to conclude on the basis of available information that the incidences or frequencies of masturbation among American females are any higher than local women.

Kinsey (1) had shown that the more educated a woman is, the more likely is she to practice masturbation. This was the same finding in this survey.

It is often suggested that parents should view masturbation by their children as an alternative to sexual intercourse especially during the years 13 to 17 when the desire for sexual activity is very intense (3).

Masturbation provides a healthy physical release of sexual tension with none of the harmful and negative by product of sexual intercourse. It causes no harm to anyone and acts as a 'rehearsal' or 'practice' function, so that later sexual activity can be more comfortable and enjoyable (3).

Most women who masturbated said they enjoyed masturbation physically but not psychologically. Psychologically they felt guilty, unwanted, dirty, ashamed, empty, bored silly or generally bad.

Some felt it helped them to have better sex with a person (3).

Kaplan (5) states that while virtually all males masturbate 30 to 40 percent of females report that they do not do so at all or did not start to do it until after they had had a sexual experience which had led to orgasm or intense arousal.

Most of the females had discovered how to masturbate as a result of their own exploration of their own genitalia.

Many women are ignorant of sexual activities which are outside their own experience even though, they may be common in the population at large.

38 percent did not know that masturbation was practisable by females.

In this sample 20.2 percent had only started to masturbate after having had sexual intercourse experiences and had learnt thereby from their pre-coital petting experiences that self stimulation could also bring about sexual satisfaction.

Although masturbation is practised among women, it occurs with low frequency among those who are married and have regular sexual intercourse opportunity available to them. In this study only 68 percent of the masturbators continued to masturbate through adolescence and marriage. 37.2 percent had discontinued this practice for some reason or other.

Some women who fail to reach orgasm in coitus are then stimulated to orgasm manually by their husbands or they masturbate themselves until they reach orgasm. There were three such women in this study.

Some of the married women on the other hand confine their masturbation to periods when their husbands are away from home or during late pregnancy when coitus is inconvenient. There were four such women in this sample.

A few Catholics and Muslims said their religion forbade masturbation.

Significance of Masturbation

Physiological

Most females who masturbated did it for the sake of immediate satisfaction which they may attain. It is a means of resolving the physiologic disturbances which arise when they are sexually aroused and are restrained by social custom from having sociosexual contacts.

Lack of Physical Harm

Some report fatigue as an after effect of masturbation but this is no greater than that following any sort of sexual activity.

Occasionally some women complain of genital irritation following masturbation.

Those with moral objection are the ones likely to insist that physical and mental damage result from this activity.

Moral Interpretation

Religious condemnation is based on grounds that masturbation is a perversion of the primary purpose of sex i.e reproduction.

Psychological Significance

If no guilt feeling is involved, the physical satisfaction of masturbation leaves an individual well adjusted psychologically.

Social Significance

Premarital experience contributes to the females capacity to respond to her coital relations in marriage i.e increases her sexual efficiency.

A large part of sexual maladjustment in marriage is due to the female being inorgasmic in her marital coitus. Many factors account for this and the most significant is the females inexperience in orgasm prior to marriage (1).

Those females who had never experienced orgasm prior to marriage are the ones who fail to respond after marriage as often (three times) as the females who had had a fair amount of orgasmic experience before marriage (1).

Multiple factors contribute to a woman's motivation to masturbate. She will turn to it when other forms of sexual gratification are not available.

She may do it to express her independence or as a way of introducing novelty into her life.

Most likely, most wives conceal their masturbation and rarely talk openly about it probably so as not to distress their partners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My sincere thanks to Family Planning Nurse, Grace Ong Geok Eng for her help in gathering the subjects.

I wish to record my sincere thanks and appreciation to Dr Tay Boon Lin, Head, Obstetric and Gynaecology Department, Toa Payoh Hospital for his permission, support and encouragement to do this study and to all the Registrars, Medical Officers, House Officers and nurses for their co-operation.

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ERRATUM

Table II on page 136 of Dr Atputharajah's first article on "Some Aspect of Sexual Knowledge and Sexual Behaviour of Local Women Results of a Survey, 1 General Sexual Knowledge and Attitude to Abortion, Pregnancy and Contraception" should read as follows:

TABLE II RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Group	Number of Persons	Percentage
Buddhist	334	33.0
Muslim	264	26.1
Christian	179	17.7
Agnostic	131	12.9
Hindu	104	10.3
All Groups	1012	100%