

SOME ASPECTS OF SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF LOCAL WOMEN RESULTS OF A SURVEY V SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

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SYNOPSIS

1012 females who were sexually active were interviewed regarding their sexual practices.

89.5 percent (ie. 906 women) were married at the time of interview and duration of marriage ranged from one to over 10 years.

54 percent had been married for up to 4 years and 64.8 percent of the total sample had sexual encounters for a duration of up to 4 years.

81.7 percent had coitus from one to three times per week (86.5% of married women and 55.7% of unmarried women).

The missionary position was the most frequently used. 91.7 percent of the total sample or 92.2 percent of the married and 88.7 percent of the unmarried women used this position.

11.9 percent of the total (96 married and 24 unmarried) had never ever attempted or experimented any other variation of positions.

A discussion of coital positions follows.

INTRODUCTION

Marital coitus is socially the most important of all sexual activities and coitus in marriage presents women a larger proportion of their total sexual outlet than any other single type of sexual activity (1).

The home is regarded as the basic unit of the social organization and marital coitus plays a role in the origin and maintenance of the home.

Society wants families to maintain homes for the children arising out of marital coitus and provide facilities for a regular sexual outlet for adults. This also helps to act as a means to control promiscuous sexual activity.

Society is interested to try and understand some of the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a home with an increased emphasis on training youth and adults to be more effective marital partners. It is in this context that the significance of sex education, premarital sexual outlets, non marital social activities of adults and the techniques and frequencies of marital coitus are being evaluated today.

A study to understand some of the factors in marital coitus and a discussion of coital techniques and effectiveness follows. Since the overwhelming population studied were married, no great effort is made in the discussions to separate the married and unmarried groups.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

1012 females who were patients of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Unit of Toa Payoh Hospital were interviewed with respect to their coital activities.

RESULTS

The ages of the sample varied from below 20 years of age to just over 40 years of age. All ethnic groups were represented. 89 percent were in the age group 20 to 34 years and 76 percent had over 10 years of education behind them.

89.5 percent (ie. 906 women) were married at the time of interview and so were indulging in regular sexual activities.

The duration of marriage of the married sample varied from below 1 year to over 10 years. 54 percent had been married for a duration of up to 4 years ie. they had opportunities for sexual experiences for that same period — a period during which they are likely to be very active sexually.

64.8 percent of the total sample had sexual encounters for a duration of up to 4 years.

Table I gives a breakdown of the coital frequency of the total sample.

Table I Coital Frequency of Total Sample

Frequency per week	Number of Persons	Percentage
Once	361	35.7
Twice	307	30.3
Thrice	159	15.7
Four	21	2.1
Five	8	0.8
Six	0	0
Seven	10	1.0
Once per 2 weeks	88	8.7
Once per month	38	3.8
Infrequent	20	1.9
Total	1012	100

The vast majority, 81.7 percent, tended to have coitus between one to three times per week. Those having infrequent coitus were because of lack of opportunity (eg. husband away or unmarried) or aversion to the act due to problems encountered. One women said she had no feelings whatsoever for her husband and so did not look forward to the act.

On seeing the frequencies of married and unmarried women (Table II & Table III) it is seen that of the married women a majority (86.5 percent) tended to have coitus from one to three times per week, whereas the unmarried because of their peculiar situation tended to occupy the lower levels

of frequency and (55.7 percent) have coitus once in two weeks or less. Only 41.5 percent of the single women had coitus from one to three times per week of which over a half had coitus once per week.

Table II Coital Frequency of Married Women

Frequency per week	Number of Persons	Percentage
Once	334	36.9
Twice	297	32.8
Thrice	152	16.8
Four	20	2.2
Five	8	0.9
Seven	8	0.9
Once in 2 weeks	61	6.7
Once per month	24	2.6
Infrequent	2	0.2
Total	906	100

Table III Coital Frequency of Unmarried Women

Frequency per week	Number of Persons	Percentage
Once	27	25.5
Twice	10	9.4
Thrice	7	6.6
Four	1	0.9
Seven	2	1.9
Once in 2 weeks	27	25.5
Once per month	14	13.2
Infrequent	18	17.0
Total	106	100

Once only — 2 persons
 Twice only — 1 person
 Thrice only — 1 person

The women were asked in which position they had coitus most often.

Table IV shows the position as used by the total sample.

Position	Number of Females	Percentage
Male superior	929	91.7
Female superior	29	2.9
Rear entry	23	2.3
Variable (No fixed position)	22	2.2
Lateral	9	0.9
Total	1012	100
No variation	119	11.7

Table V shows the positions in coitus frequently used by the unmarried females.

Position	Number of Females	Percentage
Male superior	94	88.7
Female superior	7	6.6
Rear entry	2	1.9
Variable (No fixed position)	3	2.8
Total	106	100
No variation	24	22.6

Table VI shows the positions in coitus as used by the married females.

Position	Number of Females	Percentage
Male superior	835	92.2
Female superior	22	2.4
Rear entry	21	2.3
Variable (No fixed position)	19	2.1
Total	906	100
No variation	95	10.5

The most frequently used position in coitus was the male superior (missionary) position. 91.7 percent of the total sample and 92.2 percent of the married and 88.7 percent of the unmarried used this most frequently.

119 women or 11.7 percent of the total (95 married and 24 unmarried) had never ever attempted or experimented with any variation except for using the male superior position. These comprised 10.5 percent of the married and 22.6 percent of the unmarried females. Some of these women were unaware that other positions were acceptable or possible in coitus. A small number of the unmarried and even married women had coitus in the standing or sitting position. These were used by the married couples from choice rather than from circumstances as in premarital coitus. The unmarried resorted to these because of hurried coitus or inability to get a suitable accommodation for coital purposes.

DISCUSSION

The incidence and frequencies of marital coitus had reached their maximum in the first year or two after marriage and then dropped to a minimum in the older age group.

Naturally coital experiences reach their maximum (close to 100 per cent) immediately after marriage. One of the reasons for marriage is for the purpose of indulging in uninhibited sexual intercourse.

The husband's preference is an important factor to determine coital frequencies and enormous differences in rates do exist. Desire for attention may be a reason for the higher sexual intercourse rates.

Average frequencies of once to thrice per week occurred in 86.5 per cent of the married women. Coitus occurs with a frequency unequalled by any other type of sexual activity. The male partner was often responsible for initiating and regulating the frequency of coitus and for demanding the act as well.

Individual variation of coitus has been considerable and often it occurred once to thrice per week for the younger women and dropped to infrequent contacts for the older woman. Some had indulged in coitus daily and one even four times per day over a few years.

The decline in the incidence of frequency of marital coitus for the older woman and of coitus to the point of orgasm is not due to the female aging in her sexual experience. It is

mainly due to the male's aging than the female's loss of interest or capacity that is responsible (1). There is little evidence that the woman ages in her sexual capabilities until late in her life.

Over the years the woman becomes less inhibited and develops interest in sexual relations but by then, however, the male's interest falls markedly and interest in coitus falls.

In later years many women express a wish that coitus would be more frequent than their husband's desire.

Virtually, over ninety per cent of the married women's total outlet had been derived from marital coitus. Masturbation and extramarital outlets become more important sources of outlets for the married females in later years. This did not hold true for this study. The incidence of masturbation was very low and extramarital affairs were admitted to by very few women, though this aspect was not particularly asked for.

According to Kinsey (1), married women masturbate once or twice per month and are likely to do so to assert their independence and desire for greater freedom in sexual matters and a desire for novelty. Sometimes there is a desire for a change in arousal patterns and the frequency of masturbation is determined by the balance between motivating and inhibiting factors.

There were few differences in the incidences and frequencies of marital coitus among females of different educational levels. In general, the younger and lower educated reached less orgasm in their marital coitus whereas the better educated groups reached orgasm in a higher percentage of their marital coitus.

A small proportion of the better educated females had access to extramarital or masturbatory outlets due to the fact that the older upper levels male is no longer interested in having coitus with high frequency or has become dependent on extramarital contacts or masturbation. Lower level males turn to these outlets less often (1).

Frequency of Experience

Individuals in the younger age group were having coitus with extreme frequency compared with the older females. This is mainly due to the older males being less desirous of coitus and being less often interested in seeing that their wives reached orgasm in coitus.

Younger couples often limit their frequencies according to their wives' desires whereas the older males were inconsiderate as far as their wives' desires were concerned.

Religion's Role

For most women, their religious devotion did not influence their coital frequencies or capability to reach orgasm.

Males mostly determine the rate of coitus in marriage and more males carry over their moral attitudes and keep the coital rate low in marriage. The male's level of religious devotion affects the rates of marital coitus, while the female's does not (1).

Two women, one a Catholic and the other a Muslim, said their sexual frequency was below their desire levels as their husbands were too inclined towards the church and the mosque respectively.

Coital technique in Marriage

A considerable variation was used and depended on the cultural group in part and their knowledge of and preferences for particular sexual techniques and these depended on their physical and physiological capacity and in part on age, health, energy and psychological state.

Two Muslim women said that their religion forbade them to use any other position in coitus besides the traditional male superior position.

Precoital Petting Techniques

Generally no union occurred without a minimal of sexplay. Some avoided any precoital sexplay at all and sexual contacts were limited to genital unions carried through to orgasms for the male, with little attempt to arouse the female sexually.

Some were aroused by precoital play while others found no benefit from such activity. Some had been restricted by some moral code to only indulging in whatever specifically was necessary for precreation.

The techniques in general were the same as for premarital petting with an increased tendency to oral stimulation of both male and female genitalia.

Since coitus was readily available, there was usually no necessity for extended precoital play. A feature was that the females were more inclined to manually manipulate the male genitalia after marriage.

Coital Positions

The intensity of pleasurable feeling in coitus is dependent to a large extent on the attitude and movements during that supreme union. As the grade and localization of stimulation are different according to the position of the partners, so does the sensations arising from such stimulation vary.

No pleasure is possible in sustained and repeated use unless adequate variety and shades of differences are introduced into it (2).

Men would seek different positions. 54.5 percent wanted different sexual positions when asked in a survey (3).

Most women recounted their initial experience of coitus with a feeling of confusion, guilt and irrationality. Many married women responded that they experienced no pleasure whatsoever when they first had sexual intercourse with their new husbands (4).

The male superior position with minor variation is the accepted norm. Whether this is a cultural or biological phenomenon or both is not known. In some parts of the world other positions are prototypes (5).

Couples should try various position for reasons of comfort, variety or enhanced gratification.

Genital size does vary among individuals but it should not influence a person's ability to experience arousal or to arouse his or her partner.

It is not necessary to have deep penetration during sexual intercourse for the women to experience pleasure or orgasm. Variations in position provide sensations by presenting deep or shallow penetration of the vagina. Most of the stimulation for the women at coitus comes from the stimulation of the clitoris either directly through touching or indirectly through pulling on the vaginal lips during thrusting (6).

It is not necessary that the male have a particular size or shape of his penis and the woman a particular size or shape of the vagina in order to experience pleasure or arousal. Pleasure and stimulation depend on what the couple do and feel for each other and not on the size of the sexual equipment (6).

Certain positions in coitus are uncomfortable because of the angle or depth of penile thrusts. Each position has a special satisfaction (9).

91.7 percent of the total sample and 92.2 percent of the married women had coitus in the male superior position. To many this may seem the only biologically normal position. 11.7 percent (10.5 percent of married women) had never ever had coitus in any other position.

2.9 percent (2.4 percent for married women) had coitus in the female superior position. Some male philosophers think there is evidence of a personality disorder with the role so reversed, but gynaecologists impressed by the mechanism of coitus, have been inclined to recommend that the female

superior position be used in order to effect the anatomic relationships which are most likely to bring the woman to orgasm (1).

The effectiveness of the female partner depends not so much on anatomic relationships as upon three other factors (1):

- a) Females who assume such a position are less inhibited in their sexual activity.
- b) She reduces her inhibition by accepting a non-traditional technique.
- c) Such a position gives her freedom to move more spontaneously than when the male superior position is used. In this position she is forced to actively participate in coital movements.

1.0 percent of the married women used the side to side position in coitus.

Vaginal entry from behind was effected in 2.3 percent of cases.

2.2 percent (2.9 percent of married women) used all types of positions and so had no particular preference as yet.

Sitting or standing positions were used very infrequently, more for novelty and experimentation than as a permanent pattern of coitus. Of the 11.7 percent who used no other position except the male superior position, many were unaware that other positions in coitus were acceptable or possible. Many of the women said they did not want to experiment with other positions because they would "feel tired" in those situation when they would have to be active.

The wildest experimentation was done in the earlier years of marriage.

Many males and females are psychologically stimulated by just considering the possibilities of positions which two human bodies can assume in coitus.

Use of a variety reflects a psychological acceptance of sex and this is some importance in marriage (1).

Time in Foreplay was variable varying from nil to about half hour or more. The duration of foreplay reflects the possibilities of sexual preferences. Many people have the impression that the intensity of ultimate orgasm is heightened by extended foreplay. Lower social groups and the less educated resorted to foreplay minimally.

Some views of the Different Coital Positions (2,4,5,6)

Male Superior Position

This is the position used by the vast majority. It provides a good deal of body contact and plenty of opportunity to hug, kiss and nuzzle throughout lovemaking.

The male has more control of thrusting and movement. Many variations of this position are possible. With a pillow under the buttock, extra clitoral stimulation from thrusting is provided. The woman can vary the position of her legs, either to be opened or closed. Also she can adjust and move her pelvis.

Clitoral stimulation is average with rhythmic to and fro traction on the clitoral head and shaft. This mechanism is less effective when the introitus gapes (5).

Heterosexual intercourse in the male dominant position was the sixth choice for women and ninth for men in Kahn's survey (4) of sexual preferences. This challenges the accepted assumption that women enjoy and accept a passive role in sex. Women like to initiate and assume some control in sexual activities.

Men found this conventional style less sexually interesting than a variety of other activities. They felt other activities more stimulating and exciting. Also in sexual intercourse, they prefer the female to be dominant.

Because of conditioning, convention and habit, men tend to assume this position as the one which most women prefer

in coitus. Women pretend to enjoy and fake an orgasm with this position while men take it as actual preference and pleasurable to women. So men continue to practise this form of coital position to the exclusion of other forms and other activities.

With this position exclusively, it is highly unlikely that experimentation and variety will occur. Yet women in the survey by Kahn (4) did reveal their desire and need for other sexual activities and preferences. Women know that men do not find this activity as stimulating as their practice of it would indicate.

What a man performs sexually is not mainly what he prefers sexually (4). Women did not find conventional sexual intercourse as stimulating as other activities, yet men assume that women prefer it. By remaining silent women have insured that the cycle of non-communication will continue (4).

Women thinking that men want them to like this conventional activity often fake their responses in an attempt to convince men that they actually do. Women feel it important that a man feel that he is in control and literally "on top of the situation". To protect a man's feelings a woman will lie about how much she likes this traditional form of activity, thus encouraging men to continue to act upon this traditionally false assumption.

Somewhere in our heads we are convinced that coitus in the male superior position is a world favoured activity (4). It is the largest form of intercourse requiring the least effort for the female.

Female Superior Position

Men do not always want to initiate sexual relations. They sometimes like to be seduced and led, to be passive or receptive and there are times when they gratefully accept the role of passivity in sexual relations. They enjoy being kissed, fondled, carressed and often prefer that the female take the role of aggressor in coitus (4).

Both males and females prefer this to the conventional position. This position gives the man access to the woman's breasts, genitals and buttocks. She can have access to his chest, thighs, testicles and both have a chance to look at each other and admire each other's bodies and talk. Most importantly this position allows the woman freedom to move around during intercourse and also she can easily guide the penis into the vagina and control how quickly or deeply the penis enters and also control the tempo of thrusting.

This position offers possibilities of a sound and more direct clitoral stimulation. There is added visual stimulation on seeing each other's bodies and responses. This position offers the woman the freedom to seek her own satisfaction and is the main reason why it is so effective for so many women.

This position challenges the cultural conception that men consistently favour being in a dominant, active role. The male enjoys being "acted upon" when his partner is on top of him. He can give himself over to the pleasure of his partner's motion and be increasingly stimulated in viewing her activity.

Women ranked it (ie coitus in Female Superior Position) as their fourth preference of sexual activities and men as their third choice in Kahn's survey (4).

Males tend to presume that women appreciate and enjoy sexual activities regarded as conventional, sexually desirable and acceptable and thus their reluctance to request for this position in coitus.

Rear Entry

Women tend to consider this position as humiliating, but in some cultures eg Scandinavia, this position is one of the more preferred positions (1).

The woman is on her knees and male enters the female from behind.

This is a good position for genital stimulation of the woman. The man can reach round and touch the woman's clitoris easily and this position allows for extrapenile depth. Also buttock stimulation is offered and the man has access to the female's breasts.

The rear view of female gives added pleasure to the male. Although rear entry does not give the woman as much total body movement as some other positions, it does allow her to move her hips freely and to receive a good deal of manual stimulation of the clitoris.

Lateral Position

The partners face each other while on their sides. The legs interwine like scissors and they have to adjust to find a comfortable way for the vagina to hold the penis.

There is freedom to stroke and touch each other and this position allows for a lot of different kinds of pleasuring.

A variation is where the woman has her back against the man's chest. This variation provides the man access to the woman's breasts, clitoris and allows for kissing and oral carressing of the neck and shoulders. This position is cuddly and provides for a feeling of closeness for both.

Coitus between married spouses is accepted although all other types of activity may be condemned. Coitus in marriage is both an obligation and a privilege. It is primarily accepted for its procreation potentials. In marriage sexual relationships serve a moral, social and religious function.

The Duration of Orgasm

In most studies (1), only about 30 percent of women orgasm regularly at sexual intercourse ie the majority do not regularly orgasm at sexual intercourse (thrusting alone, without added stimulation).

Orgasm will be discussed in detail in a separate paper.

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