

SOME ASPECTS OF SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF LOCAL WOMEN — RESULTS OF A SURVEY VI — EXTRAMARITAL COITUS

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SYNOPSIS

This article discusses extramarital coitus.

This aspect of sexual behaviour was not specifically asked for but six women (of the 906 married women) did volunteer the information.

Their ages ranged from 26 to 36 years of age. Two had only progressed to the stage of petting while the other four had engaged in coitus.

Three of these four had had multiple partners.

The reasons for extramarital coitus and its effects are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Many males failing to get satisfaction in their coital relations with their wives, turn to other women for coital outlet. Some females too have a similar desire, but this behaviour in females is less obvious to the general public (1, 2, 3).

Males understand why other males turn to extra-marital source for sexual gratification. They themselves may not turn to extra-marital sources for sexual gratification on moral and social grounds.

Even then, these males know that sexual variety, new partners and new situations might provide satisfaction no longer found with coitus with one single partner, ie the wife alone (1, 3). Males understand the desire for variety but females are unable to understand why happily married males would want to do such a thing.

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MATERIALS, METHODS AND RESULTS

906 married women, who were patients of the Obstetrics and Gynaecological Unit at Toa Payoh Hospital were interviewed with respect to their sexual knowledge, attitude and behaviour.

Extra marital coitus was not specifically asked for but six women revealed that they had had extra marital relationships or were still indulging in such relationships. The ages of the women ranged from 26 years to 36 years and duration of marriages ranged from 3 years to 10 years.

Two had had only had extra-marital petting experiences, while the remaining four had had extra-marital coitus.

Three of the women had had multiple extra-marital coital partners.

DISCUSSION

The desire of some males and some females for extra-marital activities is evidence of the similarity of the desires of both sexes for these matters.

Extra-marital coitus can only occur in situations where "marriages" occur. In baboons/rhesus, the females attack their new male partners when they are discovered in coitus or their partnership is about to be discovered or such activities cease altogether. In humans a high proportion of "rape" involves similar episodes (1).

Males, as in higher animals, become violently upset by their mate's sexual infidelity. Cultural and social pressures may account for some of this behaviour.

A prime factor for seeking extra-marital outlets is probably boredom or fatigue (1).

Most cultures recognise the male's desire for extra-marital outlets and many provisions have been made to meet such demands and at the same time keep the family unit intact. Some cultures allow liberal non-marital relationships between the sexes but no culture allows complete sexual freedom outside marriage. Extra-marital coitus for the male acts as a safety escape value to relieve the pressures and insistence of society that marriage be a stable partnership. However, these groups less often permit extra-marital coitus for the female (1).

Most societies subtly condone extra-marital coitus for the male provided it is carried out secretly and without the possibility of the family unit breaking up. However, women are denied this privilege (2).

Some cultures allow free extra-marital coitus for the female on special occasions with a special person. Others, although publicly forbid it for females, allow some laxity provided it is carried out secretly and if the husband is not too disturbed by its occurrence. Still others strictly forbid it for females and severe and harsh punishment is meted out for the offence. However, even with these penalties, extra-marital coitus does occur and males though not willing to allow their wives to indulge in it, will themselves resort to it with other's wives! (1)

Women are prevented extra-marital coitus on the grounds that social conventions are broken by it and that the husband's privileges to frequent and regular coitus are disturbed. Also such activity by the females brings disgrace to the husband and his kin. The women may neglect their homely duties and obligations to children and husband. Further there is the possibility of extra-marital pregnancies with all its social implications. Finally it may lead to marital discord and divorce (1).

All religions condemn extra-marital coitus as morally wrong and a sin.

In general younger women are less inclined to indulge in extra-marital activities as they have still strong relationships with their husbands and further the younger husbands guard their marital rights jealously (1). When young they consider such behaviour immoral. However in time, their views on these matters change and when middle aged or older, more women are inclined to accept extra-marital relationship. Also when the husbands are older, they are less likely to raise objections, as they themselves may be having such outlets (1,2).

It is generally believed that men prefer sexual relations with a young, charming female but actually as far as extra-marital contacts go, men prefer middle aged or older females. The younger females are inexperienced and likely to be emotionally attached or upset by such a relationship. Further socially trouble may result from such a relationship. Older females on the other hand are more experienced in sexual techniques and emotionally are inclined to accept extra-marital activities without much trouble to either partner. All these factors account for tendency to extra-marital coitus in mid-thirties and early forties (1).

INFLUENCE OF AGING

Highest frequency of extra-marital affairs is between age 36 to 40. The woman's sexual desires and interests are often high due to a strong sex drive. Further she has by now lost many of her sexual inhibitions that influenced her when she was younger.

Further many husbands have a decreased sexual drive and interest.

Women may find middle age upsetting so they may want to prove to themselves (and others) that they are still desirable and extra-marital affair is one way of doing it (3).

Orgasm occurs in a high proportion of extra-marital contacts (and did so in the six females) either from petting or coitus. Some got orgasm more often than with their husbands. Part of the reason is that the new partner, new situations and newer techniques are very stimulating for the female (and male also) and many who were inorgasmic or had infrequent orgasm with their husbands, tend to respond with more frequent orgasms (1).

FREQUENCY OF EXTRA-MARITAL CONTACTS

Extra-marital contacts are usually infrequent and depends on opportunity. Further there is difficulty to find a suitable time and place for coitus without being discovered. Also there is a necessity to avoid emotional involvement. So contacts are infrequent and partners multiple.

The females involved are usually of the higher educational groups (this was so in this sample too). Further the husbands of these sort of women are more acceptable to these sort of activities (as they themselves may be involved in such). Further these sort of females have more opportunity for making contacts easily.

Religious doctrine in general tends to restrict and forbid extra-marital activities.

Coitus is usually had under conditions as marital coitus. Usually the partners are married males and the tendency is for coitus in a quiet secluded place, usually a hotel out of town or lonely bungalow etc.

EXTRA-MARITAL PETTING

Many females will accept petting though they refuse to have coitus (1). Two women in this study were willing to be masturbated or masturbate their partners or allow and have mouth genital contacts but refused coitus.

Extra-marital petting is on the increase in recent years and it is accepted as it offers satisfaction, pregnancy danger is avoided and usually facilities for petting are easier to come by than for coitus. Some petting is accepted in social circles and even condoned by some husbands who themselves may be indulging in such activities.

Petting techniques extra-maritally are same as in pre-marital petting, but there is increased acceptance for breast and genital stimulation with hands or mouth.

Females who have had premarital coitus are more inclined to accept extra-marital coitus. There may be a cause and effect relationship as those who indulge in premarital petting and coitus are more prepared psychologically to accept extra-marital coitus later on after marriage.

Morally and legally extra-marital coitus is more restricted than premarital coitus.

Socially attitude to extra-marital contacts are disapproved and subject to malice, spite and envy. Envy is more often seen in the male.

Female are tolerable to extra-marital activities by other women's spouses but not their own.

Most who object vigorously to extra-marital contacts are males and females who have never had such experiences. Those who have had such contacts usually say they would have more.

Social significance of extra-marital coitus is hard to assess. However a balance has to be struck between moral issues and the desire for a variety of sexual experiences.

Extra-marital contacts allow a variety of experience to be got from the new partner. Most males tend to use more extensive petting and novel coital techniques in extra-marital coitus than they have ever had with their own spouses. Because of this most females found extra-marital relations satisfying and tended to be orgasmic more often (1,2).

Females who indulge in extra-marital contacts, consciously or unconsciously, attempt to enhance or acquire social status through their contacts. Usually the males are of a higher social status than the females involved (1).

Some females indulge in extra-marital coitus as a favour for a friend. Some do it to spite their spouses and as retaliation for their spouse's involvement in an affair. Further some females want to exert their independence and enhance their self image (1,3).

Sometimes emotional satisfaction derived from extra-marital contacts helps to improve the female's

relationship with her spouse. However, some do develop guilt reactions and sexual difficulties after such contacts (1).

In some cases, extra-marital relationships caused interference with the woman's relations with her spouse and led to her neglecting her home and children (1).

Some women's sexual relations with their spouses had improved as a result of their extra-marital experiences.

Least difficulty was encountered if the other spouse was not aware of their partner's activities. In cases where the spouse was aware, marital difficulties may develop later (1).

Extra-marital pregnancy is a cause for concern.

In some cases the husbands encourage the wife to indulge in extra-marital affairs, so that it would give them (ie the husbands) an excuse to do likewise (1,3).

In some cases, the husbands encourage it as the wife could bring in extra income from her activities. One woman in the study did work as a social escort with her husband's encouragement.

Most husbands however, encourage their wives to indulge in extra-marital affairs so that their wives could have additional sexual satisfaction (1,3).

Extra-marital coitus is a factor in divorce proceedings usually.

Usually, a male's indulgence in extra-marital activities does less damage to a marriage. It is possible that many wives are more tolerant or it may be that the wives are unaware of the depth of their husbands' involvement in extra-marital activities.

Males are often the more jealous and disturbed and are likely to institute legal action.

In conclusion it maybe said that it is difficult to reconcile the desire for coitus with a variety of partners and the necessity to maintain a stable marriage. The extent of this problem is not fully realised by society.

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