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RESEARCH

Preferences in marital sexual practices and the role of pornography[☆]



W. Husain^{a,*}, Z. Qureshi^b

^a COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Department of Humanities, Islamabad, Pakistan

^b BOATS, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

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Summary What are the preferred sexual practices of married men and women? Do men and women differ in these preferences? Do men and women understand the sexual preferences of their partners? Do the married consume pornography? Are their sexual practices influenced by consuming pornography? All these questions had no valid answers in the existing scientific literature which inclined the current study to inquire this important area of human behavior. A specific questionnaire was developed to gather data. The participants of the study were 100 married men and women who were selected through snowball sampling technique. The findings revealed certain interesting facts about the preferences in sexual practices and the possible influence of pornography in this regard. Vaginal sex, being the top most priority for both men and women, was ranked 1 followed by oral sex, sex-provoking talks and voices, and sexual fantasies. The preferences of men and women differed very slightly. Men and women both had a sufficient understanding about the likes and dislikes of their sexual partners. Women, however, had a better understanding in this regard. Men and women were found to be equally interested in pornography. Marriage, however, decreased this interest for men and increased the same for women.

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Humans have been exhibiting sexual behaviors since the very beginning of their existence as sexuality has remained an extremely important and common part of their daily lives.

Human sexual behavior is usually defined as any activity that could induce sexual arousal and is considered a mean to experience and express ourselves as sexual beings (Rathus et al., 1993). People involve themselves in a variety of sexual activities based on their personal interests. Each sexual activity can be specifically helpful for any of the four well established sexual phases in humans i.e. excitement, plateau, orgasm and resolution. Human sexuality has been broadly affected by the access and consumption of pornography in our times. Apart from a rich debate on the pros and cons of pornography, it can be simply defined as the sexually explicit material aimed to produce sexual arousal.

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: drsukoon@gmail.com (W. Husain).

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Pornography, as explained in different dictionaries, refers to any printed or visual material which contains exhibition of sexual organs or activities and intends to stimulate sexual excitement. Analysts (e.g., Slade, 1984; Winick, 1985; Palys, 1984, 1986; Brown and Bryant, 1989; Prince, 1990) have explored the content of pornographic material, especially video films, from a psychosexual perspective and have explained that pornographic contents contain almost all the possible forms of sexual practices ranging from conventional intercourse till anal sex, lesbianism, group sex, oral-genital contact and visible ejaculation.

Research on sexuality has been a taboo in many cultures. The studied conducted on human sexuality so far have not addressed the preferences in sexual practices in committed relations; hence the researchers have tried to get basic information about the frequencies of sexual practices. What people actually do in bed is still not explored scientifically. There are several cultural and moral limitations which hinder in studying the preferred sexual practices among individuals in committed relations. The current study, in this regard, would possibly be considered very unique in its nature as it has tried to explore the interests and preferences of married individuals in relation to their sexual life. The study was primarily aimed at exploring the preferred sexual practices of married men and women. The study further intended to assess the nature and intensity of the interest of married men and women in pornography. Finally, the study desired to compare the prevalent sexual practices of married men and women with their religious values.

Method

Participants

The study included 100 participants. All the participants were adults (aged 21 to 66 years), married, and educated (mostly graduates). They included both males ($n=41$) and females ($n=59$) and belonged to different cities of Pakistan. The selection of the participants was carried out through snowball sampling technique i.e. initial participants helped out and referred the researchers to prospective participants.

Instrument

A specific questionnaire was developed to collect data for the current study. A pilot study was conducted on 10 purposively selected participants along with a focus group discussion of 5 psychologists to obtain the possible sexual practices in local context. The participants of the pilot study and the focus group discussion concluded 11 possible sexual activities in the understudied culture. These possible activities were vaginal sex, anal sex, oral sex (male to female), oral sex (female to male), sexual fantasies (day dreaming about sexual activities), sexually provoking talks, sexual provoking sounds during sex, phone sex (talking on the phone sexually), cyber sex (chatting on the net sexually), threesome (2 males, 1 female), and threesome (2 females, 1 male). Based on these 11 possible choices, the questionnaire designed for the current study demanded the

Table 1 Allocation of scores to respondents' preferences.

Preference received	Score allocated ^a
1	16.67
2	15.15
3	13.64
4	12.12
5	10.61
6	9.09
7	7.58
8	6.06
9	4.55
10	3.03
11	1.52

^a Total Score for a respondent against 11 possible preferences = 100.

respondents to rank these activities in accordance with their personal interests. Every participant, thus, ranked his/her personal preferences within the range of 1 to 11. Participants who did not like some of the activities at all did not respond to those not-liked activities. It was, therefore, not a compulsion for the respondents to forcefully prefer all the activities; hence they only ranked the activities which were liked and preferred by them and left the rest blank. The instructions clearly mentioned that 1 would mean the top most preference and 11 would mean the least preferred choice. The respondents, furthermore, were also asked to rank the same sexual preferences on behalf of their spouses so that their perception about the sexual preferences of their partners could also be measured. The questionnaire also included the demographic questions e.g. age, gender, marital status, educational qualification and location of the participants.

The responses, after getting the data back from 100 participants, were then changed into scores on the basis of their ranks. First preference, for instance, was scored as 16.67 based on its proper value in a total score of 100. Based on the same score, the data was analyzed in terms of frequencies, means, ranks, percentiles, etc. as would appear in the results of the study (Table 1).

Procedure

Data collection was initiated with the help of the 10 initial participants of the study who further identified prospective participants who could be willing to participate in the study. The questionnaire of the study was sent electronically to the prospective participants. The data received back was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences and the desired calculations were tabulated accordingly.

Findings and discussion

Humans use a variety of ways to get sexually aroused. The existing scientific literature was missing valid information on the actually happening sexual practices among the married couples. The current study, very uniquely, explored the same. The study has produced its findings from different interesting dimensions.

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