

Masturbation and Its Relationship to Sexual Activities of Young Males in Korean Military Service

Yeong Jin Choi, Woong Hee Lee, Koon Ho Rha, Zhong Cheng Xin, Young Deuk Choi, and Hyung Ki Choi

Abstract

This study examined the masturbatory experiences and other sexual activities of young Korean males in military service. The actual status of masturbation and its relationship to sexual activities were surveyed in a sexual activity questionnaire. A total of 1,212 young males among military personnel in Korea were interviewed with sexuality questionnaires on masturbation, sexual intercourse and personal characteristics. We divided these subjects into four groups according to the age of initiation of masturbation and analyzed the relationship between masturbation and other sexual activities. The mean age of subjects was 22.03 ± 1.22 (19–27) years. The percentage of men who reported ever having masturbated was 98.1% (1189/1212) and the average age of initiation of masturbation was 14.26 ± 1.66 years. So we divided 1,212 males into four groups on the basis of the average age below and above one standard deviation. Overall, 67.7% (821/1212) had experienced sexual intercourse, and significantly, the earlier the initiation age of masturbation, the higher the coitus rate in each group ($p < 0.05$). About 21.5% of the men who were not virgins had experienced their first sexual intercourse with prostitutes. The mean age of first coitus, the incidence of sexually transmitted disease (STD) and the frequency of masturbation were closely linked to the initiation age of masturbation, respectively ($p < 0.05$). A masturbatory guilt feeling was seen in about 10.9% (132/1212) and there was no significant difference according to the types of religious worship ($p = 0.227$). On the basis of this study, sexual activities generally increased accordingly as the beginning of masturbation was earlier. Coital incidence in this study was 67.7% for young males in Korean military service, and 21.5% of them had their first sexual intercourse with prostitutes. Prostitution still plays an important role in the sexual lives of males in Korea. The incidence of STD was over 10% and homosexual manifestation was seen in 1.07% of subjects. Thus a proper and sound sex education at school during childhood is needed in Korea. A large scale survey of sexual behavior in various populations is essential for the improvement of correct sexual concepts.

Key Words: Masturbation, sexual behavior, young males, Korean military service

INTRODUCTION

Masturbation is the one form of sexual behavior in human beings which has come to be regarded as an appropriate sexual outlet for them.¹ Generally, males have been more experienced with masturbation compared to females. That is, the percentage of boys and girls at the age of 13 years who had ever reported masturbating were 63% and 33%, and between 18–24 years, 86% and 60%, respectively.² There have

been numerous reports in various countries which have surveyed sexual behavior and attitudes - masturbation, sexual desire and contact, etc. - in adolescence and young people.³⁻⁹ However, there have been few studies about the sexuality in Korea.¹⁰ Thus, this study examined the masturbatory experiences and other sexual activities of young males in Korean military service. The actual status of masturbation and its relationship to sexual activities were surveyed in a sexual activity questionnaire.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A total of 1,212 young males among military personnel in the Korean army were interviewed with sexuality questionnaires prepared by the Institute of

Received August 18, 1999
Accepted December 13, 1999
Department of Urology and Institute of Andrology, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea.
Address reprint request to Dr. Y. J. Choi, Department of Urology and Institute of Andrology, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul 135-270, Korea. Tel: 82-2-3497-3475, Fax: 82-2-3462-8887, E-mail: jinuro@yumc.yonsei.ac.kr

Table 1. Contents of the Sexual Questionnaire (by Institute of Andrology, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea)

Personal Characteristics	Masturbation	First Coitus	Others
Age	Age and moment of initiation	Yes or No	Libido
Height	Methods of masturbation	Age at first coitus	Frequency of coitus
Weight	Frequency of masturbation	Partner of first coitus	Regular sex partner
Marriage	Imaginary partner during	Situation at first coitus	Homosexuality
masturbation			
Religion	Orgasm during masturbation	Position of first coitus	Foreign body in prepuce
Smoking and Drinking	Guilty feeling about	Satisfaction of first coitus	Ejaculation latency
history	masturbation		
Medico-Surgical disease	Opinion of masturbation	Response of partner after coitus	Satisfaction of sexual life

Andrology, Yonsei University, College of Medicine. All subjects self-reported their sexual behaviors including masturbation, sexual intercourse and personal characteristics (Table 1). As well, their external genitalia were inspected for foreign bodies in their prepuceal sac by examiners. For elimination of environmental factors, the survey was undertaken in both pre- and post-enlisted sexual status, because the subjects were restricted within the organizing control of the army.

We divided these subjects into four groups according to the age of initiation of masturbation and analyzed the data with the SPSS program using Kruskal-Wallis test and chi-square test. When a *p* value was less than 0.05, it was regarded as significant.

RESULTS

The mean age of subjects was 22.03 ± 1.22 (19–27) years. The percentage of men who reported ever having masturbated was 98.1% (1189/1212) and the average age of initiation of masturbation was 14.26 ± 1.66 years. So we divided 1,212 males into four groups on the basis of the average age below and above one standard deviation.

Group 1 was the early start group (ESG) who had started masturbation below the age of 12 years. Group 2 was the average start group (ASG) who had started masturbation at the age of 13–16 years, and group 3 was the late start group (LSG) who had started masturbation over the age of 17 years. Group 4 was the non-start group (NSG) who had never experienced masturbation. The mean age of each

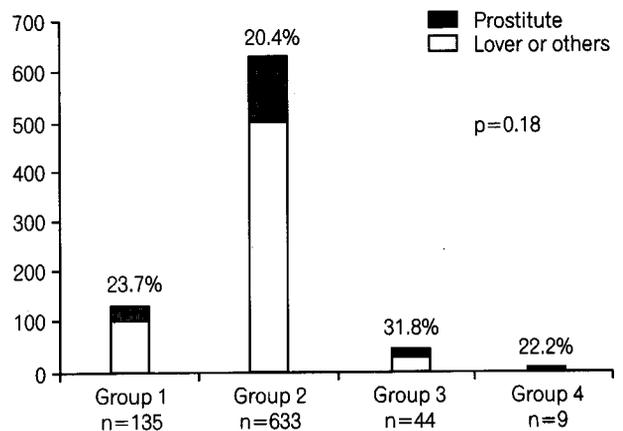


Fig. 1. The partner for the first coitus.

group was not significantly different ($p=0.39$).

The average frequency of masturbation was 5.9 times a month and the percentage of men who reported masturbating three or more times a week was 34.4%. The masturbatory frequency of each group was higher as the age of initiation of masturbation was younger ($p=0.035$, Table 2). A masturbatory guilt feeling was seen in about 10.9% (132/1212) and there was no significant difference according to the types of religion ($p=0.227$), although those with Protestant belief had a higher feeling of guilt (14.3%).

Overall, 67.7% (821/1212) had experienced sexual intercourse and the coitus rate of each group was significantly increased in relation to an earlier age of initiation of masturbation ($p=0.01$, Table 2). About 21.6% of the men who were not virgins had experienced their first sexual intercourse with prostitutes. The percentage of prostitutes as a first

Table 2. The Number of Subjects and Variables of Sexual Activities According to Each Group. Various Factors about Sexual Activities were Showed Statistical Significance According to the Age of Initiation of Masturbation

	Number (persons)	Frq of MB (Times/mo)	Coitus rate (%)	1 st coitus age (years)	STD (%)
Group 1	167	8.9/mo	80.8% (135/167)	18.10	17.96% (30/167)
Group 2	939	5.3/mo	68.1% (633/939)	18.68	10.75% (101/939)
Group 3	83	4.4/mo	53.0% (44/83)	19.58	6.24% (5/83)
Group 4	23	0/mo	39.1% (9/23)	20.60	4.3% (1/23)
Total	1,212	5.9±5.16	67.7%	18.65±1.76	11.3%
p-value	N-C	P=0.035	p=0.01	p=0.02	p=0.047

Frq of MB, the frequency of masturbation; 1st coitus age, the age at the first coitus; STD, sexually transmitted disease; N-C, not contributed.

sexual partner was not significantly different among each group ($p=0.18$, Fig. 1). The mean age of first coitus in each group was meaningfully lower as the age of beginning masturbation was lower ($p=0.02$, Table 2).

The incidence of sexually transmitted disease (STD) was 11.3% (137/1212) and major diseases (86.1%) were gonorrhea and nongonococcal urethritis. The incidence of STD in each group was also significantly increased in relation to the earlier masturbation was started ($p=0.047$, Table 2). The incidence of homosexual contact was 1.07% (13/1212). And three homosexual respondents were still active. About 1.9% (23/1212) of all subjects were reported to have foreign bodies inserted into the prepuceal sac and 56% had them removed. The common foreign body materials were silicon rings (12 cases), vaseline (6 cases) and paraffin (3 cases).

DISCUSSION

Masturbation as a sexual practice has a momentous role in the sexual lives of humans as an alternative or supplement to sexual intercourse. Nowadays, masturbation is a more generally accepted form of sexual behavior than it has ever been in the past, however, guilt feelings or anxiety about masturbation still continue in adolescence. There is a marked difference in the incidence of masturbation between adolescence females and males.²

The incidences of masturbation and intercourse among Korean army soldiers (98.1% and 67.7%,

respectively) is higher than the 60–85% reported in other countries. This may be due to the selection bias, since the subjects in this study were younger and healthier than the general population. The proportion of Australian high school boys who masturbate 3 or more times per week was 38.2% with 6.2 times per month.³ In China the average masturbation per month was 3.5,⁴ while it was 8.1 times per month in a West German study.^{5,6}

Coital incidence in this study was 67.7% for young males in Korean military service, and 21.5% of them had their first sexual intercourse with prostitutes. The incidences of sexual intercourse among Brazil and New York college students were 68%¹¹ and 93.9%,⁷ respectively. Great differences in sexual behavior are based on religion or customs or the survey techniques. Prostitution exists primarily because men are willing to pay for sex. Men seek out prostitutes for a variety of reasons. Some males are without sexual partners and others seek special techniques that their usual partner will not provide. Almost all of the subjects in this study were considered to have the former reason. Prostitution still plays important role in the sexual lives of males in Korea.

Most subjects had not learned about sexuality from formal education offered in schools or from parents, but usually from friends or movies and magazines. Actual sexual experience was often acquired from encounters with prostitutes.

On the basis of this study, sexual activities generally increased in relation to the earlier beginning of masturbation. This study showed that the incidence of STD was over 10%, homosexual manifesta-

tion was seen in 1.07% and foreign body insertion into the prepuceal sac due to incorrect concepts about penis size was found in 1.9% of subjects. In this aspect, proper and sound sex education at school during childhood is needed in this country.

A large scale survey of sexual behavior in various populations is essential for the improvement of sexual concepts.

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