Negative Attitudes Toward Masturbation

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Abramson and Mosher (1975) developed an inventory, Attitudes Toward Masturbation, as a measure of negative attitudes toward masturbation, to measure the construct of masturbation-guilt (Mosher, 1979b; Mosher & Vonderheide, 1985). Although the inventory is regarded as a homogeneous measure, a factor analysis conducted for descriptive purposes found three factors: (a) positive attitudes toward masturbation, (b) false beliefs about the harmful nature of masturbation, and (c) personally experienced negative affects associated with masturbation (Abramson & Mosher, 1975). Masturbation-guilt is regarded as a script—a set of rules for ordering a co-assembled family of scenes—learned scenes in which the negative affects of guilt, disgust, shame, and fear have reciprocally interacted with cognitions about masturbation (including general fantasies and sex myths). Masturbation-guilt, as a script, predicts, interprets, regulates, and evaluates conduct in scenes entailing masturbation or in scenes associatively linked through family resemblance of affect, objects, or scene features to past imagined masturbatory scenes.

Description

This inventory is a 30-item (10 of which have reversed scoring), 5-point Likert-type scale anchored by not at all true for me to extremely true for me. Because items were taken from college subjects’ responses to open-ended questions about the consequences of masturbation (Abramson, 1973), the items are useful with educated populations of men and women.

Response Mode and Timing

Respondents can circle the number indicating the relative truth of the statement for them, but the more common scoring has had the subjects indicate response choices on machine-scoreable answer sheets. The scale requires approximately 7 minutes to complete.

Scoring

The 10 items with reversed scoring are 3, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, 22, 27, and 29. To obtain an index of masturbation-guilt, scores are summed to yield a score from 30 to 150.

Reliability

A corrected split-half reliability of .75 was reported for the original sample of 198 male and female college students (Abramson & Mosher, 1975). A Cronbach alpha of .94 was found for a sample of 186 college women (Mosher & Vonderheide, 1985).

Validity

The scale has successfully predicted decreased frequency and lower percentage of orgasm to masturbatory behavior (Abramson & Mosher, 1975; Mosher & O’Grady, 1979); less subjective sexual arousal and more negative affective responses to explicit films of male and female masturbation (Mosher & Abramson, 1977); less positive projective stories to films of masturbation (Abramson & Mosher, 1979); less subjective sexual arousal and more negative affects to films of male homosexuality and male masturbation (Mosher & O’Grady, 1979); less pelvic vasocongestion, as measured by thermography, in women reading an erotic story (Abramson, Perry, Rothblatt, Seeley, & Seeley, 1981); more negative affect when recalling a memory of past masturbation (Green & Mosher, 1985); and more negative attitudes toward contraceptives and avoidance of selecting the diaphragm as a method of birth control (Mosher & Vonderheide, 1985). Although masturbation-guilt and sex-guilt (Mosher, 1966, 1968, 1979a) can be viewed as measuring a latent construct of guilt over sexuality, there is also evidence of discriminant validity from sex-guilt (which is a more general sexual script) in a number of the studies cited above.

References


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Exhibit

Negative Attitudes Toward Masturbation

The following 30 items sample diverse opinions and attitudes about masturbation. Masturbation means stimulating your own genitals to enjoy the pleasurable sensations or experience orgasm. Answers are to be marked on the separate answer sheet. Marking 1 means the item is not at all true for you; marking 2 means it is somewhat untrue; marking 3 means you are undecided; marking 4 means it is somewhat true; marking 5 means it is strongly true for you.

1. People masturbate to escape feelings of tension and anxiety.
2. People who masturbate will not enjoy sexual intercourse as much as those who refrain from masturbation.
3. Masturbation is a private matter which neither harms nor concerns anyone else.
4. Masturbation is a sin against yourself.
5. Masturbation in childhood can help a person develop a natural, healthy attitude toward sex.
6. Masturbation in an adult is juvenile and immature.
7. Masturbation can lead to homosexuality.
8. Excessive masturbation is a needless worry, as it is physically impossible.
9. If you enjoy masturbating too much, you may never learn to relate to the opposite sex.
10. After masturbating, a person feels degraded.
11. Experience with masturbation can potentially help a woman become orgasmic in sexual intercourse.
12. I feel guilty about masturbating.
13. Masturbation can be a “friend in need” when there is no “friend in need.”
14. Masturbation can provide an outlet for sex fantasies without harming anyone else or endangering oneself.
15. Excessive masturbation can lead to problems of impotence in men and frigidity in women.
16. Masturbation is an escape mechanism which prevents a person from developing a mature sexual outlook.
17. Masturbation can provide harmless relief from sexual tension.
18. Playing with your own genitals is disgusting.
19. Excessive masturbation is associated with neurosis, depression, and behavioral problems.
20. Any masturbation is too much.
21. Masturbation is a compulsive, addictive habit which once begun is almost impossible to stop.
22. Masturbation is fun.
23. When I masturbate, I am disgusted with myself.
24. A pattern of frequent masturbation is associated with introversion and withdrawal from social contacts.
25. I would be ashamed to admit publicly that I have masturbated.
26. Excessive masturbation leads to mental dullness and fatigue.
27. Masturbation is a normal sexual outlet.
28. Masturbation is caused by an excessive preoccupation with thoughts about sex.
29. Masturbation can teach you to enjoy the sensuousness of your own body.
30. After I masturbate, I am disgusted with myself for losing control of my body.