Women’s Sexuality Questionnaire

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The Women’s Sexuality Questionnaire (WSQ) is a structured interview with rating scales devised to assess the frequency and subjective experience of female orgasm and activities leading to orgasm.

Description

To allow for rapport to be established, as well as to collect information on potentially confounding variables, the WSQ begins with 16 questions concerning demographics and the subject’s reproductive and genital health. The second section is devoted to a brief sexual history concerning masturbation and noncoital and coital sex with a partner. Information collected includes the subject’s age when beginning to engage in the activity under question, frequency, and techniques of stimulation. The third section is the heart of the questionnaire. Questions concern the frequency of orgasm during various sexual activities in addition to scales asking subjects to rate the subjective quality of the orgasmic experience and of the stimulation leading to orgasm. Information obtained in the first two sections allows the interviewer to screen for variables that would reduce the probability of orgasm, such as drugs, dyspareunia, or inadequate stimulation. Although there are a variety of question formats, the major questions in Sections II and III are on ordinal scales.

Response Mode and Timing

The WSQ is designed to be administered in a private interview of approximately 45-60 minutes duration. The interview format allows the experimenter to develop rapport and to explore answers so as to yield more careful, thoughtful answers. Experience with the interview has shown that many women are confused by sexual terms and need explanations to give valid responses. Interviewers can also provide education about sexuality in the context so that the subject truly benefits from taking part in research.

Scoring

Items are used as single-item scores with 1-5 or 1-7 ordinal scales, or as simple ages or frequencies. Items 22-25 are reverse scored.

Reliability

Test-retest reliability was established on a sample of 38 women reinterviewed by a second interviewer from 6 to 8 weeks after the first interview (median = 6 weeks). Space limitations preclude the listing of the reliability coefficient for each item, but they are available from the authors. Items concerning personal history, such as the subjects’ age when first having intercourse and the frequency of sexual behaviors, were highly reliable. Pearson correlations ranged from .80 to .98, with the exception of the item concerning noncoital genital sex play with a partner, r = .37, p < .03.

Reliability of the remaining (ordinal) items was assessed by Kendall’s tau. Taus for frequency of orgasm with clitoral stimulation by partner or self, coitus accompanied by clitoral stimulation, and coitus not accompanied by clitoral stimulation were .42, .74, and .61, respectively. Based on subjects’ feedback, the item for clitoral stimulation has subsequently been rewritten to yield two items: orgasm through masturbation and orgasm through partner stimulation. Additional reliability data have yet to be collected. Although the reliability of the other two items is somewhat lower than would be desirable, we believe the subjects’ responses largely reflect true variance due to the reactive nature of the interview itself rather than mostly measurement error. Interviewers provided information and reassurance on the basis of which, according to subjects’ reports on retesting, the subjects made changes, often substantial ones, in their sexual behavior. Taus on items concerning the subjects’ perception of the intensity and pleasurability of coitus and the orgasmic experience generally reflected good reliability, ranging from .57 to .87 (median tau = .78).

Validity

The WSQ items possess high face validity and have been examined for construct validity through a series of correlational analyses. Using a community sample of 90 heterosexual women, Chambless and Lifshitz (1984) found that, as predicted, frequency of orgasm on the WSQ was related to higher arousal on the previously validated Sexual Arousalability Inventory (Hoon, Hoon, & Wincze, 1976; tau = .18, p < .03). In further research with these 90 women, plus 12 lesbians, we have found predictable relationships among WSQ items. For example,
higher frequency of coital orgasm was related to greater emphasis on vaginal stimulation in reaching orgasm (\(\tau = .50, p < .001\)) and the higher ratings on the pleasurability of vaginal sensations during the nonorgasmic phase of coitus (\(\tau = .28, p < .01\)). Higher frequency of orgasm through clitoral stimulation was related to a greater emphasis on clitoral stimulation in reaching orgasm (\(\tau = - .29, p < .005\)). Additional information concerning WSQ item correlations is available from the authors. Although further validation work is deemed desirable, data collected to date support the construct validity of the items.

**Other Information**

The WSQ, as well as accompanying information on reliability and validity, is available at no charge from Dianne Chambless.

**References**


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**Exhibit**

**Women’s Sexuality Questionnaire**

**Section I**

1. Date of interview _________________
2. Assessment no. _________________
   Interviewer _____________________
3. S.S. Number ________________________ 4. D.O.B. __________________________
5. Occupation (do not inquire about place of employment) _______________________
6. Highest grade completed ________________
7. Affiliative status:
   Single    Married    Divorced    Separated    Cohabiting
8. Steady sexual partner: YES  NO
9. Looking over your whole life, would you say your primary sexual orientation is:
   bisexual    heterosexual    lesbian
10. What drugs do you usually take (including alcohol, caffeine, street drugs, prescribed drugs)
   In what amount and how often do you take these?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   Are any of these taken at times you plan on having sex? If so, in what way?
   ______________________________________________________________________
11. What is your present method of contraception? Do you have any problems with it?
   ______________________________________________________________________
12. Have you ever been pregnant? YES  NO
   a. Number of full-term deliveries ___________
      how long ago was each? _______________
      Number of vaginal _______  Number of caesarean _______
   b. Number of premature deliveries ___________
      how long ago was each? _______________
      Number of vaginal _______  Number of caesarean _______
   c. Number of spontaneous or induced abortions ___________
      how long ago was each? _______________
      how many weeks pregnant with each? _______
13. Have you ever undergone any surgery involving the vagina, other sexual organs, or organs closely related to sexual organs (i.e., anus, urethra, kidneys, bladder)? YES  NO
   If so, please describe:
   ______________________________________________________________________
14. Do you have any physical problems with interfere with your sexual functioning or pleasure? YES  NO
   If so, please explain (including chronic illnesses, infections, vaginal tears)
   ______________________________________________________________________
   Specifically, do you get a lot of vaginal infections, and if so, how long do they usually last?
15. Have you ever done exercises for the vaginal muscle? (Show a diagram) If so, explain and describe. ______________________

16. When not pregnant, do you ever leak urine when you cough or sneeze? ________________

Section II

17. Masturbation:
   a. How long ago did you begin to masturbate regularly? ____________________________
   b. On an average over the last 6 months, how often have you masturbated? ______
   c. How many times would you estimate you’ve masturbated?
      ____ under ten times
      ____ 10–25
      ____ 26–100
      ____ 101–500
      ____ over 500
   d. How do you usually masturbate?
      ____ by inserting object into vagina
      ____ by using vibrator on external genitalia
      ____ by stimulating clitoral area with fingers, etc.
      ____ by manipulating the mons (define if necessary)
      ____ by pressure against object or pressure from thighs
      ____ by stimulating the entrance of the vagina (introitus)
      ____ other (please describe unless it makes you uncomfortable) ______________________

Do you need to be in one particular position to reach orgasm? YES NO
If so, please describe: ______________________________________________________________

18. Sex with partner excluding intercourse:
   a. At what age did you begin having genital sex with another person excluding intercourse (including manual, oral stimulation, etc.)? ______
   b. How often do you do so now? ______
   c. Roughly how many times have you done so? ______

19. Intercourse (defined according to woman’s orientation as insertion and thrusting of penis, fingers, or objects by partner):
   a. At what age did you begin having intercourse? ______
   b. How often do you do so now? ______
   c. How many times, roughly, have you done so? ______
   d. What positions do you usually use? ______
      Do you generally get simultaneous clitoral stimulation while in this/these positions? If so, how? ______________________

20. On the average, what is the duration of sex play (defined as prior to intercourse if you have intercourse)?
    ____ no sex play
    ____ 11–19 minutes
    ____ less than 5 minutes
    ____ 20 or more minutes
    ____ 5–10 minutes

21. If you have intercourse, are you sufficiently lubricated at the time of insertion so that no artificial lubricant is needed for your comfort? YES NO If not, to what does this seem due? Likely factors are anxiety, insufficient stimulation, irritation from local contraceptives, menopause, infections, vaginal deodorant sprays, overwiping after diaphragm insertion, unlubricated condoms, postpartum estrogen imbalance (particularly likely if nursing), and oral contraceptive. In addition, intercourse may be uncomfortable despite lubrication during early experiences due to tightness of the vaginal entrance. ______________________

Section III

22. If you have intercourse, how long does it last on the average from the beginning of thrusting until thrusting stops? (Counts as one occasion if intercourse disrupted only long enough to change position or pause to prevent ejaculation)

Out of all occasions of intercourse how often do you come to an orgasm, with simultaneous clitoral stimulation (include both pressure and manipulation as clitoral stimulation): ______________________
23. Out of all occasions of intercourse how often do you come to an orgasm, without simultaneous clitoral stimulation (defined as pressure or manipulation)?

- Almost always 90–100%
- Sometimes 1–29%
- Most of the time 60–89%
- Never 0%
- Often 30–59%

24. Out of all occasions of clitoral stimulation (defined as pressure or manipulation) during masturbation, how often do you come to orgasm?

- Almost always 90–100%
- Sometimes 1–29%
- Most of the time 60–89%
- Never 0%
- Often 30–59%

25. If after having an orgasm you continue to receive stimulation, how often do you have sequential orgasms (a series of peaks and releases of tension)?

a. During stimulation of clitoris (exclusively)?

- Almost always 90–100%
- Sometimes 1–29%
- Most of the time 60–89%
- Never 0%
- Often 30–59%

b. During intervaginal stimulation (intercourse) with clitoral stimulation (defined as pressure or manipulation)?

- Almost always 90–100%
- Sometimes 1–29%
- Most of the time 60–89%
- Never 0%
- Often 30–59%

c. During intervaginal stimulation (intercourse) exclusively?

- Almost always 90–100%
- Sometimes 1–29%
- Most of the time 60–89%
- Never 0%
- Often 30–59%

26. Out of all occasions of clitoral stimulation by your partner (manual or oral, but excluding intercourse), how often do you come to orgasm?

- Almost always 90–100%
- Sometimes 1–29%
- Most of the time 60–89%
- Never 0%
- Often 30–59%

27. In attaining orgasm for you, what is the most accurate statement:

- 1. Clitoral stimulation contributes much more than vaginal stimulation.
- 2. Clitoral stimulation contributes somewhat more than vaginal stimulation.
- 3. Clitoral and vaginal stimulation are about equal in contribution.
- 4. Vaginal stimulation contributes somewhat more than clitoral stimulation.
- 5. Vaginal stimulation contributes much more than clitoral stimulation.

28. (If you have orgasms) which statement best describes your physical sensations during orgasm with intercourse with clitoral stimulation (defined as pressure or manipulation):

- 1. A slight pulsating feeling in the vagina
- 2. A distinct pulsating feeling in the vagina
- 3. A very strong pulsating feeling in the vagina with sensation spreading to the legs
- 4. An intense feeling throughout the abdomen and legs with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
- 5. An intense feeling traveling throughout the entire body with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
- 6. Other, specify: ________________________________

29. For me, having an orgasm during intercourse (with clitoral stimulation) is:

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<td></td>
<td>blah experience</td>
<td>most intense experience possible</td>
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30. What kind of feeling do you typically experience in the vagina during intercourse without direct clitoral stimulation (defined as pressure or manipulation)?

- 1. Experience an unpleasant feeling the entire time
- 2. Experience an unpleasant feeling which eventually changes to no particular feeling at all
- 3. Experience an unpleasant feeling which eventually increases to a pleasant feeling
- 4. Experience no particular feeling the entire time
5. Experience no particular feeling which eventually increases to a pleasant feeling
6. Experience a pleasant feeling the entire time
7. Experience a pleasant feeling which eventually increases to a more pleasant feeling
8. Other, specify:

31. (If you have orgasms) which statement best describes your physical sensations during orgasm with intercourse without direct clitoral stimulation? (include pressure, manual manipulation, etc. as clitoral stimulation).
   1. A slight pulsating feeling in the vagina
   2. A distinct pulsating feeling in the vagina
   3. A very strong pulsating feeling in the vagina with sensation spreading to the legs
   4. An intense feeling throughout the abdomen and legs with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   5. An intense feeling traveling throughout the entire body with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   6. Other, specify: _______________________________________________

32. For me, having an orgasm during intercourse (without clitoral stimulation, defined as pressure or manipulation) is:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   A slight pulsating feeling in the vagina
   A distinct pulsating feeling in the vagina
   A very strong pulsating feeling in the vagina with sensation spreading to the legs
   An intense feeling throughout the abdomen and legs with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   An intense feeling traveling throughout the entire body with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   Other, specify: _______________________________________________

33. (If you have orgasms) when a partner stimulates your clitoris (defined as pressure or manipulation) to orgasm (no entry into the vagina) which statement best describes your feelings?
   1. A slight pulsating feeling in the vagina
   2. A distinct pulsating feeling in the vagina
   3. A very strong pulsating feeling in the vagina with sensation spreading to the legs
   4. An intense feeling throughout the abdomen and legs with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   5. An intense feeling traveling throughout the entire body with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   6. Other, specify: _______________________________________________

34. For me, having an orgasm when a partner stimulates (defined as pressure or manipulation) my clitoris (no entry into vagina) is:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   A slight pulsating feeling in the vagina
   A distinct pulsating feeling in the vagina
   A very strong pulsating feeling in the vagina with sensation spreading to the legs
   An intense feeling throughout the abdomen and legs with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   An intense feeling traveling throughout the entire body with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   Other, specify: _______________________________________________

35. If you have orgasms when you stimulate your clitoris (masturbate via pressure or manipulation) (nothing in vagina) what best describes your physical sensations?
   1. A slight pulsating feeling in the vagina.
   2. A distinct pulsating feeling in the vagina.
   3. A very strong pulsating feeling in the vagina with sensation spreading to the legs.
   4. An intense feeling throughout the abdomen and legs with rhythmic contractions in the vagina.
   5. An intense feeling traveling throughout the entire body with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   6. Other, specify: _______________________________________________

36. For me, having an orgasm through masturbation (nothing in vagina) is:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   A slight pulsating feeling in the vagina.
   A distinct pulsating feeling in the vagina.
   A very strong pulsating feeling in the vagina with sensation spreading to the legs.
   An intense feeling throughout the abdomen and legs with rhythmic contractions in the vagina.
   An intense feeling traveling throughout the entire body with rhythmic contractions in the vagina
   Other, specify: _______________________________________________