Sex and age differences in sexual masochism among Nigerian undergraduates

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Abstract

This study investigated sex and age differences in sexual masochism among Nigerian undergraduates. The method of selecting participants employed was an accidental sampling technique, as participants were selected from all faculties at the University of Lagos. A cross-sectional research design was employed with a sample of 402 students (167 males and 235 females; mean age = 21.6 years, SD = 3.4). Data were collected using a structured self-report questionnaire comprising demographic items and the Masochism Scale developed by Freund, Steiner, and Chan (1982). Results indicated that female students (M = 5.7, SD = 1.2) reported a slightly higher level of sexual masochism than male students (M = 5.6, SD = 1.3); however, the difference was not statistically significant, $t(400) = 0.71$, $p > .05$, with a negligible effect size (Cohen's d = 0.06). Similarly, there were no significant age differences in sexual masochism, $F(4, 397) = 1.78$, $p > .05$, although participants aged 36 years and above reported the highest mean scores (M = 6.0, SD = 0.5). The findings suggest that sex and age do not significantly influence sexual masochism among undergraduates in this sample. These results highlight the limited role of demographic variables in explaining sexual masochistic tendencies and underscore the need for further research examining psychosocial and developmental factors, such as adverse childhood experiences. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence within the Nigerian context.

Introduction

In Nigerian society, discussions of sexual preferences and desires are often considered taboo, making it challenging for individuals to openly explore or express atypical sexual interests. This cultural barrier underscores the importance of understanding sexual behaviours, such as sexual masochism, within the Nigerian context. Sexual masochism involves experiencing sexual arousal from being humiliated, beaten, restrained, or otherwise made to suffer (Brown, 2022; Beech & Harkins, 2012). While most individuals with masochistic interests do not meet clinical criteria for a disorder, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR) recognises sexual masochism disorder in individuals who experience persistent arousal from such acts, accompanied by significant distress or functional impairment over at least six months (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). In contrast, individuals who engage in masochistic sexual activities without distress, guilt, or interference in daily life may exhibit masochistic interests without qualifying for a disorder (APA, 2022).

The term "masochism" originates from Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, an Austrian known for deriving pleasure from subjugation during sexual activity (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). Common practices in sexual masochism include whipping, wax play, genital or nipple stimulation with needles, and other consensual forms of pain or restraint (Okonkwo, 2018). While these behaviours may appear extreme, understanding their prevalence and patterns is essential, particularly among populations such as undergraduates, where experimentation and sexual exploration are needed.

This study focuses on sex differences in sexual masochism. Sex refers to the biological distinction between males and females based on chromosomes and reproductive anatomy ("Sex and Gender Identity," 2023; Newman, 2023). Empirical studies have yielded mixed findings: Okonkwo (2018) reported no significant sex differences in sexual masochism among Nigerian undergraduates, while Breslow, Evans, and Langley (1985) found differences in preferred practices, with women favouring bondage and men favouring pain-focused activities. Research also suggests that males may fantasise more about dominance and impersonal sexual scenarios, whereas females tend to fantasise about submission and romance (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). Severe and mild sexual masochism appears more

prevalent among females in some studies (Abrams et al., 2022), although males are more commonly diagnosed with sexual masochism disorder ("Sexual Masochism," 2023).

The study also examines age differences in sexual masochism. Age is defined as the length of time an individual has lived (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2026; Cambridge Dictionary, 2026). Masochistic fantasies may emerge in childhood, but formal diagnoses typically occur in early adulthood ("Sexual Masochism," 2023). Evidence suggests that younger adults are more likely to engage in mild or severe masochistic behaviours compared to older adults (Abrams et al., 2022). By exploring sex and age differences in sexual masochism among Nigerian undergraduates, this study aims to provide empirical evidence contextualized within Nigerian sociocultural norms.

DSM-5-TR and Sexual Masochism

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR) provides a clear conceptualisation of sexual masochism disorder, emphasising the presence of persistent masochistic fantasies, urges, or behaviours that result in clinically significant distress or functional impairment (APA, 2022). The prevalence of individuals meeting the full criteria for sexual masochism disorder is largely unknown in non-Western populations; however, it is estimated that 2.2% of males and 1.3% of females have engaged in bondage-domination-sadism-masochism (BDSM) activities with or without sexual masochism disorder in the past 12 months (APA, 2022). Existing evidence indicates that the average age of onset for masochistic tendencies occurs in late adolescence or early adulthood, specifically around 19.3 years (APA, 2022).

Despite growing scholarly interest, there is no conclusive evidence regarding the determinants of sexual masochism (Conger & Westphalen, 2022), and findings on demographic correlates such as sex and age remain inconsistent. While some studies report no significant sex differences in masochistic tendencies (Breslow et al., 1985), others suggest that age may be associated with variations in masochistic preferences (Abrams et al., 2022). Most empirical studies have been conducted in Western contexts, with limited attention to cultural factors that may influence sexual behaviour in non-Western populations.

In Nigeria, empirical research on sexual masochism is particularly sparse. One notable study by Okonkwo (2018) found no significant sex differences in sexual masochistic tendencies among undergraduates in South-East Nigeria. However, the study did not examine age differences in detail. Given the limited research in Nigerian contexts, there is a critical need to examine sexual masochism within culturally relevant frameworks.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine sex and age differences in sexual masochism among undergraduates in South-West Nigeria, specifically at the University of Lagos. By situating the investigation within the Nigerian sociocultural context, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of sexual masochism and its demographic factors among young adults in Nigeria.

Review of Past Studies

This section reviews empirical studies relevant to sexual masochism, sexual fantasy, and related behaviours, with particular attention to sex and age differences, while situating findings within the Nigerian context. Research on sexual masochism has yielded mixed evidence regarding sex differences. For instance, Okonkwo (2018), in a study of 200 undergraduates at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, found no significant sex differences in masochistic tendencies, suggesting that male and female undergraduates in Nigeria may exhibit comparable levels of interest in such behaviours. In contrast, Western studies, such as Breslow et al. (1985), indicated both similarities and differences, with females participating in sadomasochistic subcultures alongside males, highlighting potential cultural variations in sexual behaviour and the influence of societal norms on expression.

Sexual fantasy research further underscores this complexity. Joyal et al. (2015) reported that submissive and controlling themes are common across sexes, suggesting that masochistic fantasies are widely distributed rather than sex-specific. However, other studies point to notable sex differences: Ellis and Symons (1990) found males reported more diverse and frequent sexual fantasies than females, a pattern supported by Leitenberg and Henning (1995). These discrepancies may reflect sociocultural factors, including gendered expectations around sexuality, which in Nigerian society often frame female sexual expression as more constrained compared to males. Consequently, extrapolating Western findings to Nigerian undergraduates must be done cautiously.

Age-related differences also show variation. Early studies (Hunt, 1974; Giambra & Martin, 1977) consistently indicate that sexual fantasy declines with age, a trend reinforced by Purifoy et al. (1992) and Halderman et al. (1985). Abrams et al. (2022) further highlighted that younger adults exhibit higher masochistic tendencies, while older adults demonstrate lower engagement, with childhood experiences influencing adult sexual preferences and contributing to observed sex differences. These findings suggest developmental and experiential factors, alongside age, shape sexual behaviour, though their interaction with cultural norms remains underexplored in African populations.

Thus, while evidence points to both sex- and age-related variations in sexual masochism, findings remain inconsistent, particularly among undergraduate populations in non-Western contexts. There is a critical gap in research that considers African sociocultural norms and developmental factors, underscoring the need for studies specifically examining Nigerian undergraduates' sexual behaviours. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring how sex and age influence sexual masochism in this population.

Theoretical Framework: Sexual Script Theory (SST)

Sexual Script Theory (SST), developed by Simon and Gagnon (1986), proposes that human sexual behaviour is guided more by socially constructed "scripts" than by biology alone. These scripts act as internalised guidelines that shape what individuals perceive as acceptable, desirable, or taboo in sexual behaviour. According to the theory, sexuality is not instinctual but learned through culture, society, and interpersonal experiences, making it context-dependent. SST is particularly useful for understanding variations in sexual behaviours across different societies, age groups, and genders.

Sexual Script Theory (SST) provides a useful framework for understanding sex and age differences in sexual masochism among Nigerian undergraduates. The theory posits that sexual behaviour is guided by socially and culturally constructed "scripts" rather than purely biological impulses. These scripts shape individuals' perceptions of what sexual behaviours are acceptable, desirable, or taboo, and influence how sexual fantasies and practices develop. In the context of Nigerian undergraduates, cultural norms and expectations around gender and sexuality may serve as scripts that either constrain or facilitate the expression of masochistic tendencies. For example, traditional Nigerian norms often emphasise male sexual

assertiveness and female sexual restraint, which may shape the ways in which male and female students experience and report masochistic fantasies or behaviours.

SST conceptualises sexual behaviour at three levels, cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic, which can help explain variations by sex and age in sexual masochism. Cultural scripts provide broad societal norms, which in Nigeria may discourage overt expression of female sexual desire, potentially affecting female undergraduates' engagement in or reporting of masochistic behaviours. Interpersonal scripts, which involve negotiation and interaction with partners or peers, may influence how undergraduates enact masochistic practices in relationships or peer contexts. Intrapsychic scripts, or internalised fantasies and desires, capture how individuals mentally interpret and enact masochistic tendencies. Age differences can also be interpreted through SST: younger undergraduates may be more influenced by peer and media scripts, leading to higher experimentation, while older students may internalize cultural expectations more strongly, shaping their sexual behaviour differently.

Theoretical Framework: Psychosexual Theory of Human Development

This study is anchored on Freud's Psychosexual Theory of Human Development, which posits that human personality and sexual behaviour develop through a sequence of stages, oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital each characterised by the focus of libidinal energy on specific erogenous zones (Freud, 1905). According to the theory, unresolved conflicts or fixations at any stage may influence adult sexual attitudes, preferences, and behaviours, including atypical or paraphilic expressions such as sexual masochism.

Within the psychosexual framework, sexual masochism has been conceptually linked to fixations at the anal stage, where issues of control, submission, discipline, and pleasure-pain associations are central. Freud proposed that experiences during early developmental stages, particularly those involving authority, punishment, or bodily regulation, may later manifest in adult sexual behaviours characterised by submission or the eroticization of discomfort. From this perspective, sexual masochistic tendencies may reflect underlying psychodynamic processes formed earlier in life rather than being determined solely by current demographic characteristics such as sex or age.

Psychosexual Theory provides a lens for understanding why sex and age differences may not significantly predict sexual masochism among Nigerian undergraduates. Because psychosexual fixations are theorised to originate in early developmental stages and remain relatively stable into adulthood, individuals within the undergraduate age range, regardless of sex or chronological age, may exhibit similar sexual tendencies.

Method

Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design, which enabled the researcher to collect data from participants at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, at the same time. This design will allow the establishment of the correlates between the independent (sex and age difference) and the dependent variable (sexual masochism). The cross-sectional survey design will allow the researcher collect data on several variables simultaneously. Also, no variable was actively manipulated by the researcher.

Participants: The target population for this study was 35,436 undergraduates from University of Lagos. This figure was provided by University of Lagos students' estimates. Using Taro Yamane's sample size calculator, the calculated sample size was three hundred and ninety-four (395) students at the assumed error of margin or significance level of 0.05. The researcher then rounded up the sample size to four hundred and two (402) undergraduates.

Taro Yamane Formula and Working:

N = Population of study

K = Constant (1)

e = Degree of error expected

n = Sample size

$$n = \frac{N}{K + N(e)^2}$$

n =35436

$1+ 35436(0.05)^2$

n =35436

1+ 35436(0.0025000000000000005)

n =35436

1+ 88.59000000000002

n = 395.5

The sample included 167 males and 235 female students. The method of selecting participants employed by the researcher was an accidental sampling technique. This is a non-probability sampling technique, where participants are drawn from that part of the population which is close to hand from all the 12 faculties in the University of Lagos. While this sampling method allowed efficient recruitment, it introduces a limitation: the findings may not be fully generalizable to the entire undergraduate population, as certain groups may be over- or underrepresented.

Research Instruments: An online and offline questionnaire, with items on demographic information of participant and one standardized psychological instrument, namely the Masochism Scale developed by Freund, Steiner, and Chan (1982), was used. The scale elicited questions on sexual masochism. The Masochism scale was designed to evaluate a person's desire for masochism. The Masochism scale is an 11 item scale, with response to item 1 rated “yes” or “no” or “unsure”. Responses to items 2 to 11 are rated “yes” or “no”. All the items have direct scoring. For each item, respondents might either be scored 1 point for every “yes” response (if they are excited by the described masochistic behaviour) or 0 points for every “no” response (if they are not excited by masochistic behaviour). Consequently, the Masochism Scale scores varied from 0 to 11. The Masochism Scale has been validatedby Freund et al. (1982) and Okonkwo (2018) study. Freund et al.'s (1982) study revealed an alpha reliability coefficient of .83 using a total number of 491 subjects. Participants used in his analysis include transgender and transvestite patients TTP, heterosexual controls HtC, homosexual controls HmC, homosexual pedo- and hebephiles HmPH, heterosexual pedo- and hebephiles HtPH, courtship disordered patients (voyeurs,

exhibitionists, toucheurs, preferential rapist) CDP, sadistic patients SP, erotically hyper dominant patients HyP, and masochistic patients MP. In a Nigerian study, Okonkwo (2018) checked for the internal consistency of the Masochism scale using Nigerian samples. A total number of 40 participants in their third year from the Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, were used for the test. The researcher obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .83 under the Masochism scale.

Procedure: Permission was obtained from the relevant authorities to conduct the study in the university. The researcher made use of standardized instruments that adequately measured the variables of interest under study. The researcher made use of undergraduates from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The paper-and-pencil questionnaire was distributed offline and online (via Google Form). For the offline questionnaire, the researcher approached 302 participants and obtained verbal consent from each of the participants. For the online (Google form) questionnaire, the consent of 102 participants was sought. Before participants filled the questionnaires, the researcher made it known to them that their responses were strictly confidential, no names were required. Participants were also encouraged to be honest in responding to the questionnaires. Participants then gave their consent. In order to ensure that the participants performed well, they were provided the basic instructions for each section of the questionnaire. A rapport was formed to ensure the participants were comfortable, and questionnaires were administered. The participants completed the questionnaire via paper-and pencil. For the online method, the other participants completed the questionnaire via the Google Form link provided. After participants finished answering the offline questionnaire, the researcher kept it inside a file. Data scoring, coding into SPSS software, analysis and interpretation were done thereafter.

Data Analysis Considerations

To ensure methodological rigour, analyses were conducted considering the 0–11 scale range of the Masochism Scale. Effect sizes (Cohen's d for sex differences, eta squared for age differences) were computed to indicate the magnitude of observed differences, while 95% confidence intervals were reported to reflect the precision of estimates. Additionally, the limitations of accidental sampling were acknowledged: the sample may not fully represent the broader undergraduate population, which should be considered when interpreting results.

Guiding Statement of Hypotheses:

1. Female students will score significantly higher on the measure of sexual masochism than their male counterparts.

2. Participants between the ages of 21-25 years will score significantly higher on the measure of sexual masochism than participants between the ages of 16-20 years, 26-30 years, 31-35 years, 31 years and above.

Results

The stated hypotheses were tested using an Independent Samples t-test and One-Way Between-Subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Hypothesis 1: Female students will score significantly higher on the measure of sexual masochism than their male counterparts. This was tested using independent samples t-test, and the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Independent samples t-test summary table showing results on sex differentiation in the measure of sexual masochism

Dependent variable: Sexual Masochism

Sex	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	P
Female	235	5.70	1.20	.71	400	>.05
Male	167	5.60	1.30			

Table 1 presents results on sex differentiation in sexual masochism among undergraduate students. The result showed that despite females reporting higher levels of sexual masochism (Mean = 5.70, SD = 1.20) than their male counterparts (Mean = 5.60, SD = 1.30), there exists no significant sex difference in sexual masochism [t (400) = .71; p > .05]. This negates the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Participants between the ages of 21-25 years will score significantly higher on the measure of sexual masochism than participants between the ages of 16-20 years, 26-30 years, 31-35 years, 31 years and above.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation table of Age Distribution of Participants	**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation table of Age Distribution of Participants**	**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation table of Age Distribution of Participants**	**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation table of Age Distribution of Participants**	
Source	**N**	**M**	**S.D**	**S.D**
16-20 years	98	5.60	1.30	1.30
21-25 years	250	5.80	1.10	1.10
26-30 years	46	5.40	1.50	1.50
31-35 years	4	5.90	0.80	0.80
36 years and Above	4	6.00	0.50	0.50
Total	402	5.7	1.30	1.30

The above hypothesis was tested using One-Way Analysis of Variance, and the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA summary table showing results on the age differentiation in the measure of sexual masochism

Dependent variable: Sexual Masochism	Dependent variable: Sexual Masochism	Dependent variable: Sexual Masochism	Dependent variable: Sexual Masochism	Dependent variable: Sexual Masochism	Dependent variable: Sexual Masochism
Source	**SS**	**Df**	**MS**	**F**	**P**
Between Groups	3.20	4	0.80	1.78	> .05
Within Groups	178.40	397	0.45		

Total	181.60	401			

Table 3 presents results on age differentiation in sexual masochism among undergraduates. The result showed that participants between the age of 36 years and above (M = 6.00, SD = 0.50) reported higher on the measure of sexual masochism than participants between the age of 31-35 years (M = 5.90, SD = 0.80) and 21–25 years (M = 5.80, SD = 1.10), 16–20 years (M = 5.60, SD = 1.30) and 26–30 years (M = 5.40, SD = 1.50), there exists no significant age differences in the measure of sexual masochism [F (4, 397) = 1.78; p > .05]. This negates the stated hypothesis, it was rejected in this study.

Discussion

The present study assessed sex and age differences in sexual masochism among Nigerian undergraduates. The present study found that female students did not report higher on the measure of sexual masochism than their male counterparts; hence, no sex differences in the measure of sexual masochism among undergraduates. This finding is in consonance with the study by Okonkwo (2018), who found that sex had no influence on the tendency to indulge in sexual masochism. The findings of the present study are in consonance with the study by Joyal et al. (2015), who found that themes of submission and control during sex were not only common for both men and women, but they were also related, thus implying that themes of submission and control during sex were the same in both males and females. The findings of the present study are in harmony with the study by Breslow et al. (1985), who found similar responses in the sadomasochistic subculture from male and female respondents through analysis of the responses. The findings of this study are in disparity with those of Ellis & Symons (1990); their findings show that female undergraduates had a higher level of sexual fantasy in the salience of touching, context, personalisation, emotion, partner diversity, partner response, fantasiser response, and inward versus outward emphasis.

The finding of this study is not in harmony with the study by Abrams et al. (2022), who found that females demonstrated more masochistic preferences than their male counterparts. The disparity between the findings of our research and theirs might be attributed to

differences in the participants both studies sampled. The present study used undergraduates from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, while the study by Ellis and Symons (1990) used undergraduates at California State University, United States of America. Also, the study by Abrams et al. (2022) used women and men, and not undergraduates, recruited via only a survey from the United States of America, the Netherlands, and Serbia. The findings of the present study are not in harmony with the study by Leitenberg and Henning (1995), who found sex differences in sexual fantasy, which is consistent with sociocultural and sociobiological explanations of human sexual behaviour. Leitenberg and Henning (1995) also found that the prevalence or frequency of sexual fantasy was higher for males than for women during nonsexual behaviour and during masturbation, but not during intercourse, which is in disparity with the present study. The disparity in the findings of this study and theirs might be attributed to the difference in the years the studies were done; the earlier study was conducted nearly three decades ago, while the current study was completed this year.

The present study found that there were no significant sex differences in sexual masochism among Nigerian undergraduates, as female students did not report higher levels of sexual masochism than their male counterparts. This finding can be explained using Sexual Script Theory (SST), which posits that sexual behaviours are shaped by socially constructed norms and expectations rather than purely biological factors. Within the Nigerian sociocultural context, both males and females are exposed to relatively similar cultural scripts that regulate sexual expression, particularly within an academic environment such as the university. Although traditional norms often portray males as sexually assertive and females as more restrained, the lack of a significant difference suggests that these scripts may be evolving or becoming less rigid among undergraduates. Additionally, interpersonal and intrapsychic scripts may operate similarly across sexes, leading to comparable internalisation of sexual preferences, including masochistic tendencies. Thus, the absence of sex differences supports the SST assumption that shared sociocultural environments can produce similar sexual behavioural patterns across gender groups.

Furthermore, the findings can also be interpreted through the lens of the Psychosexual Theory of Human Development, which emphasises that adult sexual behaviours are rooted in early childhood experiences and psychosexual development. According to this perspective,

tendencies such as sexual masochism may originate from early fixations, particularly at the anal stage, where issues of control, discipline, and pleasure-pain associations are formed. Since these developmental experiences occur long before individuals reach adulthood, they are likely to be relatively stable and not significantly influenced by biological sex at the undergraduate level. Therefore, the absence of sex differences in sexual masochism suggests that such tendencies may be more strongly influenced by early psychodynamic processes than by gender-based factors in adulthood.

The present study also found that participants between the ages of 21-25 years did not report higher on the measure of sexual masochism than participants between the ages of 16-20 years, 26-30 years, 31-35 years, and 31 years and above, hence, no age differences in the measure of sexual masochism among undergraduates. This finding is not in harmony with the study by Hunt (1974), who found that young adults reported a higher level of sexual fantasy than older adults. The difference in the findings of this study and the study by Hunt (1974) this might be because the investigations were done in different years; the prior study was conducted five decades ago, whereas the current study was conducted this year. The findings of this study are also not in agreement with the study by Abrams et al. (2022), who found a relationship between age and sexual masochism. Abrams et al.'s (2022) study also found that severe and mild masochism were common in the youngest age group and least common in the oldest age group. The disparity in findings between our research and theirs might be attributed to participant differences both studies sampled.

The present study made use of students in the university while the study by Abrams et al. (2022) did not make use of students in the university. The findings of the present study are not in consonance with the study by Halderman et al. (1985), who found that participants had a decrease in the frequency of sexual fantasies across successive age groups. The different result inthe present study and that of (Halderman et al., 1985)might be due to the different respondents who participated in both studies. While this study sampled undergraduates from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, the study by Halderman et al. (1985) sampled volunteers from Hays, Kansas, and nearby villages as participants from classes at Fort Hays State University, as well as from civic, social, and religious organisations, U.S.A. The findings of the present study are also not in harmony with the study by Purifoy et al. (1992), who found

that age was linked to less sexual daydreaming, less sexual urge, less sexual engagement, and more unfavourable attitudes on sexuality. The discrepancy between this study and theirs may be owing to the difference in the years the studies were done; the earlier study was conducted three decades ago, while the current study was conducted in the current year.

Similarly, the study found no significant age differences in sexual masochism among undergraduates, as participants aged 21–25 years did not report higher levels compared to other age groups. From the perspective of Sexual Script Theory, this finding may be attributed to the shared cultural and social environment within which the participants operate. University students, regardless of slight age differences, are often exposed to similar cultural, peer, and relational scripts that shape their sexual attitudes and behaviours. The relatively narrow age range within the undergraduate population may also limit variability in sexual scripts, resulting in comparable levels of sexual masochism across age groups. Although minor differences in mean scores were observed, these variations were not statistically significant, suggesting that age-related differences in exposure or experience may not be strong enough to influence sexual masochistic tendencies within this population.

In addition, Psychosexual Theory provides further explanation for the absence of age differences. The theory posits that sexual preferences and tendencies are largely established during early developmental stages and remain relatively stable over time. As such, individuals within the undergraduate age range, despite differences in chronological age, are likely to exhibit similar patterns of sexual behaviour because the underlying psychosexual structures have already been formed. This supports the view that sexual masochism is not significantly shaped by age during young adulthood but is instead a reflection of earlier developmental experiences. Overall, the findings of this study highlight the limited role of demographic variables such as sex and age in explaining sexual masochism, while emphasising the importance of sociocultural and developmental factors.

Conclusion

The study therefore, concludes that sexual masochistic tendencies among Nigerian undergraduates are relatively uniform across demographic categories such as sex and age. This suggests that other factors beyond basic demographics, such as sociocultural influences, psychological development, and individual experiences, may play a more significant role in

shaping such behaviours. Furthermore, the findings contribute to the limited body of literature on sexual behaviour in Nigeria by providing empirical evidence that challenges commonly held assumptions about gender and age differences in sexuality. Overall, the study underscores the need for a broader, more nuanced understanding of sexual masochism within culturally relevant contexts.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study have several important theoretical, practical, and research implications. Theoretically, the results support the assumptions of Sexual Script Theory, which posits that sexual behaviours are shaped by shared sociocultural norms rather than purely biological differences. The absence of sex differences suggests that male and female undergraduates may be influenced by similar cultural scripts within the university environment.

Additionally, the findings align with the Psychosexual Theory of Human Development, which emphasises that adult sexual behaviours are rooted in early developmental experiences. This implies that sexual masochistic tendencies may be relatively stable and not significantly influenced by demographic variables such as age and sex during young adulthood.

Practically, the findings have implications for mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers. The lack of demographic differences suggests that interventions or educational programs addressing sexual health and behaviour should not be gender-biased or age-specific within undergraduate populations. Instead, there should be a focus on promoting healthy, consensual sexual expression, reducing stigma around atypical sexual interests, and increasing awareness of the distinction between sexual preferences and clinical disorders.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

First, future research should move beyond demographic variables and focus on more predictive factors such as adverse childhood experiences, personality traits, attachment styles, and sociocultural influences. This will provide a deeper understanding of the underlying determinants of sexual masochism.

Second, researchers should employ more robust sampling techniques, such as probability sampling methods, to enhance the generalizability of findings. Expanding the study to include multiple universities across different regions in Nigeria will also improve representativeness.

Third, longitudinal research designs are recommended to examine how sexual masochistic tendencies develop and change over time. This will help establish causal relationships and provide insights into developmental patterns.

Fourth, there is a need for increased sexual education and awareness programs within universities. These programs should address diverse sexual behaviours in a non-judgmental and culturally sensitive manner, helping to reduce stigma and misinformation.

Fifth, mental health professionals and counsellors working with young adults should be trained to understand atypical sexual interests from a clinical and non-pathologising perspective. This will ensure that individuals are only classified as having a disorder when there is significant distress or impairment, in line with diagnostic guidelines.

Finally, future studies should incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to gain deeper insight into the subjective experiences and meanings individuals attach to sexual masochism within the Nigerian cultural context.

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