



The Egyptian Society of Dermatology and Venereology

# EJDV

---

The Egyptian Journal of Dermatology and Venereology

Medknow

 Wolters Kluwer

Volume: 40    Number 1    January-June 2020    ISSN: 1110-6530

# Foreplay importance from the point of view of a sample of Egyptian women

Ihab Younis, Menha A. Ibrahim, Doaa M. El-Habbaq, Raghad K. Farag

Dermatology and Andrology Department,  
Faculty of Medicine, Benha University, Egypt

Correspondence to Ihab Younis, 6 Soria st,  
Mohandeseen, Giza, 12511, Egypt.  
Tel: 01017186419;  
e-mail: ihabyounis@hotmail.com

**Received:** 24 April 2019

**Revised:** 2 June 2019

**Accepted:** 30 June 2019

**Published:** 6 January 2020

**Egyptian Journal of Dermatology and  
Venereology** 2020, 40:53–58

## Background

Human beings engage in sexual intercourse not only for reproductive reasons but also for pleasure. So, it becomes important to study the effects of foreplay in facilitating sexual arousal as a means to increase the pleasurable aspects of sexual intercourse.

## Aim

To evaluate the importance of foreplay in a sample of Egyptian women and to assess sexual practices affected by foreplay.

## Patients and methods

The study was carried out on 200 married women with regular sexual practice using self-report questionnaires. The number of usable questionnaires was 200. Privacy was guaranteed for all the participants.

## Results

Most of the participants initiated foreplay in less than half of sexual encounters (44%). The most cited purpose for coitus was to obtain pleasure for both partners (54%). Overall, 33% of participants thought that their sexual life was unsatisfactory. Participants reporting that their husbands were interested in foreplay during love making comprised 72% of the whole sample. Half of the couples do foreplay almost every time of sexual intercourse (50%), and 51% reported that they play an active role in foreplay. Caressing is preferred by most of the participants (33%) followed by kissing (25%). Most of the participants could not obtain orgasm during foreplay (53%). Most of the participants reported that their husbands stimulate their clitoris during foreplay (64%), and 37% of them liked that their husbands stimulate their genitalia orally.

## Conclusion

This study has the potential to provide alternate ways through which the sexual experience can be enjoyed. Foreplay has a very important role in sexual life, as it strongly affects sexual desire, arousal, and orgasm. Ignorance of the importance of its role may have a negative effect on sexual activity and the overall sexual satisfaction.

## Keywords:

Egyptian, foreplay, women

Egypt J Dermatol Venereol 40:53–58

© 2019 The Egyptian Society of Dermatology and Venereal Diseases  
1110-6530

## Introduction

Foreplay is the name for a number of things people do before they have sex. These things do not need to be directly related to having sex, rather they are done to sexually arouse people and to make them want each other more. Not all of these acts are physical, some can also be psychological [1].

Foreplay is a behavioral pattern that demonstrates great variability around the world. Broude and Greene [2] coded the presence or absence of foreplay in 39 societies (including Egypt) and found that only 53.8% of these societies exhibited sexual patterns in which foreplay was an important component. Moreover, Clellan and Beach [3] in their classic book 'Patterns of sexual behavior' mentioned that the Indian ethnic groups 'Lepcha' and the 'Kwomra' as two societies where

foreplay is minimal and little contact takes place between partners before and even during intromission. At the other extreme, they cite the case of the people of Ponape (a Pacific island), where foreplay may last for hours before intercourse occurs.

In both sexes, sexual satisfaction with vaginal intercourse as well as kissing and petting was positively associated with relationship satisfaction [4].

---

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

'Chemical foreplay' is a term suggested by Belcastro and Nicholson [5] to describe the use of marijuana and alcohol by some cultures before coitus to enhance and culminate coital episode. They tested this idea in a group of university students and found that white females who used alcohol and marijuana before coitus had a sexual behavior profile that was in sharp contrast to those women who did not use these drugs before coitus.

Women always desire longer duration of foreplay and intercourse, whereas men desire a significantly shorter duration of foreplay and intercourse than women want [6].

As foreplay is an important component of the sexual act, this work aimed to study different aspects of foreplay and its importance in a sample of Egyptian women.

### Participants and methods

This is a cross-sectional study that included 200 sexually active married women. They were free from diseases known to affect sexual function and able to read and write to be able to fill the questionnaire independently.

Before proceeding with this study, an approval was obtained from the Department of Dermatology and Andrology and the Ethics Committee, Faculty of Medicine, Benha University.

### Data collection

The tool used in this study was a self-report questionnaire written in English and translated into Arabic. The questionnaire included 28 items designed by the investigators. Some items were selected from the female sexual function index [7].

The questionnaire included the following items: demographic data, for example, age and educational level (reads and writes, finished secondary school, or has a university degree); assessment of female sexual functions, for example, coital frequency, initiating coitus, orgasm, sexual satisfaction, and information about foreplay; and also interest in foreplay and its rate, presence of extragenital erogenous zones, and the degree of arousal that they give were assessed.

### Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was conducted using STATA version 11 (STATA Corporation, College Station, Texas, USA). Comparisons between the different

groups of the studied sample were carried out using simple univariate tests: the test of proportion (*Z*-test) to compare two proportions and the  $\chi^2$ -test and the Fisher's exact test to compare more than two proportions as appropriate. A *P* value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant, and a *P* value less than 0.001 was considered statistically highly significant.

### Results

Most of the participants belonged to age group 20–29 years (36.5%). Moreover, most of them had a university degree (58%). The most common duration of marriage was 5 years (32.7%), and most women (66.5%) were exposed to genital mutilation/cutting (Table 1).

The most common coital frequency was 2–3 times per week (60%), and most women found this frequency suitable (60%). Most participants initiated foreplay in less than half of sexual encounters (44%). The most cited purpose for coitus was to obtain pleasure for both partners (54%). Overall, 56% of women never masturbated and 33% of them thought that their sexual life was unsatisfactory (Table 2).

Most of the participants reported that their husbands were interested in foreplay during love making (72%). Half of couples do foreplay almost every time of sexual intercourse. Most of the participants (51%) reported that they play an active role in foreplay. The most preferred action in foreplay was caressing (33%) followed by kissing (25%). Most of the participants could not obtain orgasm during foreplay (53%). Only

**Table 1 Demographic data (n=200)**

	n (%)
Age (years)	
<20	16 (8.0)
20–29	72 (36.0)
30–39	70 (35.0)
>40	42 (21.0)
Educational level	
Can only read and write	6 (3.0)
Secondary school	78 (39.0)
University degree	116 (58.0)
Duration of marriage (years)	
<5	64 (32.0)
5–10	52 (26.0)
10–15	34 (17.0)
>15	50 (25.0)
Female genital mutilation/cutting	
Yes	138 (69.0)
No	62 (31.0)

**Table 2 Sexual activity of participants (n=200)**

	n (%)
Coital frequency	
Daily	26 (13.0)
2–3 times/week	120 (60.0)
Once/month	34 (17.0)
<Once/month	20 (10.0)
Suitability of frequency	
Yes	120 (60.0)
No I want more	40 (20.0)
No I want less	40 (20.0)
How frequent do you initiate coitus?	
More than one half the times	44 (22.0)
Less than one half the times	88 (44.0)
Almost never	68 (34.0)
Purpose of coitus	
Get pleasure	22 (11.0)
Husband's pleasure	70 (35.0)
Both	108 (54.0)
Masturbation	
Yes, before marriage	24 (12.0)
Yes, before and after marriage	28 (14.0)
No, but my friends do it	36 (18.0)
Never	112 (56.0)
Overall satisfaction with sexual life	
Unsatisfactory	66 (33.0)
Satisfactory	66 (33.0)
Outstanding	68 (34.0)

42% of participants' husbands do flirting during daily life. Almost half of participants (46.5%) admitted that absence of foreplay affects their marital relation (Table 3).

Breasts were the most sensitive extragenital erogenous zone for most of participants (54%). Most of the participants reported that their husbands stimulate their clitoris during foreplay (64%), and 37% of them liked that their husbands stimulate their genitalia orally (Table 4).

Interest in foreplay by participants' husbands decreased with age. The difference was statistically highly significant. Having an active role during foreplay was inversely proportional to women's age, and the same observation was found regarding ability to reach orgasm during foreplay (Table 5).

Husbands of women with marriage duration of more than 15 years seemed less interested in foreplay during coitus than those married for less than 5 years. Obtaining orgasm during foreplay was inversely proportional to duration of marriage (24% for women >15 years after marriage vs. 59.4% for those <5 years of marriage; Table 6).

**Table 3 Foreplay data (n=200)**

	n (%)
Is your husband interested in foreplay?	
Yes	144 (72.0)
No	56 (28.0)
Husband practice of foreplay during love making	
Almost all the times	100 (50.0)
More than one half times	48 (24.0)
Less than one half times	32 (16.0)
Almost never	20 (10.0)
Do you have active role in foreplay?	
Yes always	60 (30)
Sometimes	102 (51)
Never	38 (19)
The most preferred type of foreplay	
Kissing	50 (25.0)
Embracing	34 (17.0)
Caressing	66 (33.0)
Nibbling	50 (25.0)
Do you reach orgasm during foreplay?	
Yes	94 (47.0)
No	106 (53.0)
Is there any flirting between you during daily life?	
Yes	84 (42.0)
No	116 (58.0)
If no: does it affect your mood? (n=116)	
Yes, it makes me angry all the time	22 (19.0)
Yes, and I told him	20 (17.2)
Yes, this affects our relation	54 (46.5)
Never mind	20 (17.2)

**Table 4 Erogenous zones data (n=200)**

	n (%)
Does your husband stimulate your clitoris?	
Yes	128 (64.0)
No	72 (36.0)
Does your husband stimulate your breasts?	
Yes always	98 (49.0)
Rarely	56 (28.0)
Never	46 (23.0)
The most sensitive erogenous zone for you is?	
Breasts	108 (54.0)
Clitoris	62 (31.0)
Buttocks	30 (15.0)
Did your husband use oral stimulation for your genitalia?	
Yes but I did not like it	38 (19.0)
Yes and I liked it	74 (37.0)
No but I wish	40 (20.0)
No and I do not like him to try	48 (24.0)

## Discussion

This study addresses the importance of foreplay for women, clarifies the nature of sexual satisfaction, and considers the relationship between sexual and relationship satisfaction. Most of the participants (51%) reported that they play an active role in

**Table 5 Correlation between age and foreplay data**

Foreplay data	Age (years) [n (%)]				$\chi^2$	P
	<20 years (n=16)	20–29 years (n=72)	30–39 years (n=70)	>40 years (n=42)		
Is your husband interested in foreplay?						
Yes	14 (87.5)	60 (83.3)	56 (80.0)	14 (33.3)	FET	<0.001 (HS)
No	2 (12.5)	12 (16.7)	14 (20.0)	28 (66.7)		
Husband practice of foreplay during love making						
Almost all the time	10 (62.5)	32 (44.4)	42 (60.0)	16 (38.1)	FET	<0.001 (HS)
More than one half times	2 (12.5)	28 (38.9)	14 (20.0)	4 (9.5)		
Less than one half times	0	10 (13.9)	8 (11.4)	14 (33.3)		
Almost never	4 (25.0)	2 (2.8)	6 (8.6)	8 (19.0)		
Do you have active role in foreplay?						
Yes always	6 (37.5)	26 (36.1)	18 (25.7)	10 (23.8)	FET	0.03 (S)
Sometimes	4 (25.0)	34 (47.2)	44 (62.9)	20 (47.6)		
Never	6 (37.5)	12 (16.7)	8 (11.4)	12 (28.6)		
Do you reach orgasm during foreplay?						
Yes	4 (25.0)	54 (75.0)	28 (40.0)	8 (19.0)	40.32	<0.001 (HS)
No	12 (75.0)	18 (25.0)	42 (60.0)	34 (80.9)		

FET, Fischer exact test; HS, highly significant; S, significant.

**Table 6 Correlation between duration of marriage and foreplay data**

Foreplay data	Duration of marriage (years) [n (%)]				$\chi^2$	P
	<5 years (n=64)	5–10 years (n=52)	10–15 years (n=34)	>15 years (n=50)		
Is your husband interested in foreplay?						
Yes	56 (87.5)	38 (73.1)	20 (58.8)	30 (60.0)	14.16	0.003 (S)
No	8 (12.5)	14 (26.9)	14 (41.2)	20 (40.0)		
Husband practice of foreplay during love making						
Almost all the time	44 (68.7)	14 (26.9)	20 (58.8)	22 (44.0)	FET	<0.001 (HS)
More than one half the times	12 (18.7)	20 (38.5)	6 (17.6)	10 (20.0)		
Less than one half the times	2 (3.1)	14 (26.9)	4 (11.8)	12 (24.0)		
Almost never	6 (9.4)	4 (7.7)	4 (11.8)	6 (12.0)		
Do you reach orgasm during foreplay?						
Yes	38 (59.4)	30 (57.7)	14 (41.2)	12 (24.0)	17.40	0.001 (S)
No	26 (40.6)	22 (42.3)	20 (58.8)	38 (76.0)		
Is there any flirting between you and your husband during daily life?						
Yes	40 (62.5)	18 (34.6)	14 (41.2)	12 (24.0)	18.86	<0.001 (HS)
No	24 (37.5)	34 (65.4)	20 (58.8)	38 (76.0)		

FET, Fischer exact test; HS, highly significant; S, significant.

foreplay, and 72% of them reported that their husbands were interested in foreplay during love making. In agreement with these results is a study done by Millers and Byers [6] on 152 heterosexual couples that reported their actual and ideal duration of foreplay and intercourse, as well as their perceptions of their partners' desired duration of foreplay and intercourse. Furthermore, participants reported the duration of foreplay and intercourse that they felt most men and women wanted. Ideal length of foreplay did not differ for men and women. However, men reported a significantly longer ideal duration of intercourse than did their partners. The ideal duration of foreplay and intercourse was significantly longer than the actual duration for both sex. Women and not men significantly underestimated their partners' desired duration of foreplay and intercourse.

A shorter than required foreplay is a common complaint from women. Among 5665 Japanese women, 43.5% desired a longer duration [8]. Similar findings were obtained by Hisasue *et al.* [9]. In Egypt, Younis *et al.* [10] found that 20.7% of women fail to reach orgasm because of the short duration of foreplay.

Most of our participants (53%) could not obtain orgasm during foreplay. As for the sequence of foreplay, penetration, and intercourse followed by male orgasm, this might take too short time to give enough chance for women to reach orgasm. Female orgasm is almost always under the control of the male partner. In agreement with this result is a study on a sample of the Czech population, where 2360 women reported their ability to reach orgasm with their partners (from 'never' to 'almost every time'). The

study concluded that reaching orgasm is associated with penile–vaginal intercourse duration but not with foreplay duration [11].

Overall, 60% of our participants accepted when their husbands asked to orally stimulate their clitoris, and most of them (62.2%) said that their husbands wanted them to stimulate the penis by mouth. Other researchers suggested that women were less interested in receiving and giving oral sex than men [12,13].

The breasts and nipples were the most common erogenous zones as 54% of our participants reported high arousal by breasts/nipples stimulation. This confirms the results of Younis *et al.* [10], who found that extragenital areas that gave the highest exciting effect when stimulated were the breasts and nipples, followed by the lips, the neck and the nape of the neck, the ears, and the buttocks (84.6, 83.9, 75.5, 55.2, and 36.4%, respectively). Similar results were also obtained by Nummenmaa *et al.* [14].

Areas neighboring the genitalia (the buttocks, inner thighs, lower abdomen, and the pubis) would be higher in their ability to respond to tactile stimulation and thus are found to facilitate sexual arousal more than areas farther away [15,16].

Overall, 33% of our participants thought that their sexual life was unsatisfactory. Moreover, the overall dissatisfaction with sexual life increases with advance in age (25% for age group <20 years vs. 61.9% for age group <40 years). The same was noted by Laumann *et al.* [17] who found that there is a decrease in women's satisfaction with their sexual behavior with increasing age.

It was observed that marital duration is indirectly proportional to some sexual activities such as coital frequency, interest in foreplay, and orgasm. The same result was obtained by Durr [18] who confirmed that sexual desire in a relationship seems to diminish over time, possibly as a result of emotional merging, habituation, or boredom, or all three. Poor sexual techniques or unrealistic expectations of sexual skills may also lead to disappointment. This is also in agreement with Westheimer and Lopater [19] who reported that marital duration affects various aspects of a couple's relationship, including levels of emotional intimacy and time, which can result in boredom with sexual activities. They also noted the negative effect of habituation on the sexual activities in long-term relationships.

### Limitations

The number of women who participated in this work was small, which makes the results difficult to be generalized. In addition, illiterate women were excluded from the study, which limits the ability of the sample to be representative.

### Conclusion

This study has the potential to provide alternate ways through which the sexual experience can be enjoyed. Foreplay has a very important role in sexual lives as it strongly affects sexual desire, arousal, and orgasm. Ignorance of the importance of its role may have a negative effect on sexual activity and the overall satisfaction of sexual lives.

### Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

### References

- Denney NW, Field JK, Quadagno D. Sex differences in sexual needs and desires. *Arch Sex Behav* 1984; 13:233–245.
- Broude GJ, Greene SJ. Cross-cultural codes on twenty sexual attitudes and practices. *Ethnology* 1976; 15:409–429.
- Ford CS, Beach FA. *Patterns of sexual behavior*. New York, NY: Harper, and Paul Hoeber; 1951.
- Santtila P, Wager I, Witting K, Harlaar N, Jern P, Johansson A, *et al.* Discrepancies between sexual desire and sexual activity: gender differences and associations with and relationship satisfaction. *J Sex Marital Ther* 2008; 34:31–44.
- Belcastro PA, Nicholson T. Chemical foreplay among Black and White students. *J Drug Educ* 1982; 12:373–384.
- Miller SA, Byers ES. Actual and desired duration of foreplay and intercourse: discordance and misperceptions within heterosexual couples. *J Sex Res* 2004; 1:301–309.
- Rosen R, Brown C, Heiman J, Leiblum S, Meston C, Shabsigh R, *et al.* The Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI): a multidimensional self-report instrument for the assessment of female sexual function. *J Sex Marital Ther* 2000; 26:191–208.
- Nagao K, Tai T, Saigo R, Kimura M, Ozaki Y, Tanaka N, *et al.* Gaps between actual and desired sex life: web survey of 5,665 Japanese women. *J Sex Marital Ther* 2014; 40:33–42.
- Hisasue SI, Kumamoto Y, Sato Y, Masumori N, Horita H, Kato R, *et al.* Prevalence of female sexual dysfunction symptoms and its relationship to quality of life: a Japanese female cohort study. *Urology* 2005; 65:143–148.
- Younis I, Fattah M, Maamoun M. Female hot spots: extragenital erogenous zones. *Hum Androl* 2016; 6:20–26.
- Weiss P, Brody S. Women's partnered orgasm consistency is associated with greater duration of penile–vaginal intercourse but not of foreplay. *J Sex Med* 2009; 6:135–141.
- Laumann EO, Gagnon JH, Michael RT, Michaels S. *The social organization of sexuality: sexual practices in the United States*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; 1994.
- Herbenick D, Reece M, Schick V, Sanders SA, Dodge B, Fortenberry JD. Sexual behavior in the United States: results from a national probability sample of men and women ages 14–94. *J Sex Med* 2010; 7:255–265.
- Nummenmaa L, Suvilehto JT, Glerean E, Santtila P, Hietanen JK. Topography of human erogenous zones. *Arch Sex Behav* 2018; 45:1207–1216.
- Buonomano DV, Merzenich MM. Cortical plasticity: from synapses to maps. *Ann Rev Neurosci* 1998; 21:149–186.

- 16 Serino A, Haggard P. Touch and the body. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev* 2010; 34:224–236.
- 17 Laumann EO, Nicolosi A, Glasser DB, Paik A, Gingell C, Moreira E, Wang T, GSSAB Investigators' Group. Sexual problems among women and men aged 40–80 years: prevalence and correlates identified in the global study of sexual attitudes and behaviors. *Int J Impot Res* 2005; 17:39–57.
- 18 Durr E. A phenomenological inquiry into the lived experience of low sexual desire in women: implication for clinical practice. M.D. Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2008; p. 54.
- 19 Westheimer RK, Lopater S. *Human sexuality: a psychosocial perspective*. 2nd edition. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Williams; 2005.