

Sexuality in Islam

¹Umar Sulayman H.

¹Department Of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Shika-Zaria, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author:

Umar Sulayman H., Department Of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Shika-Zaria, Nigeria. Email:

hajaratuumar@yahoo.com

Sexuality and sexual right in the 21st century

Sexuality is defined as one's sexual orientation, sexual activity and capacity for sexual feeling. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are examples of sexuality. Sexual right is a controversial term that has become pervasive in the 21st century description of human sexuality.¹ In the light of such pervasiveness, minorities sexual discussions predominates. Sexual minorities are people whose sexual desires or identities challenge the normative heterosexual structures of society. They include Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexual people, Transgender people and transvestites (LGBT), as well as sex workers. This calls for the need to recognise the intersection of ethnicity, gender, age and culture in influencing the fluidity of sexual identities.

Sexuality and health among sexual minorities

Sexual preference and its practices do carry some health risk. Sexual minorities seem to be experiencing more health problems than the heterosexuals. It has been documented

that gays and bisexual men experience higher and increasing rate of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) than heterosexual men.² These STDs include Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, Genital Herpes, Bacterial vaginosis, Trachomoniasis, HIV/AIDS, Human Papilloma Virus and Pubic Lice. Lesbians on the other hand experienced more rates of heart diseases, cancer, polycystic ovarian syndrome, anxiety and depression and some form of STDs (like bacterial vaginosis) compared to heterosexual women.³

Sexuality in Islam

Sexual relationship is highly sacred and highly recommended religiously (so long as it is within the bond of marriage). However discussing sex is considered shameful and even sinful by many. Allah (SWT) said in the Qur'an:

"...Your Lord created you of a single soul and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women" (4:1)⁴

“They are a vestment for you and you are a vestment for them”... So now lie with them, and seek what Allah has prescribed for you” (2:187)⁴

Benefits of sex in Islam

The benefits of lawful sexual intercourse include protecting one’s eyes from looking at what is unlawful, preserving one’s chastity and controlling one’s desire and lust against what is unlawful, and providing the same for one’s spouse.

Forbidden sexual acts

Among the forbidden sexual acts in Islam are: homosexuality, lesbianism, masturbation, intercourse during menstruation, anal intercourse even with one’s wife and pornography. The use of instruments, tying and chaining of one’s spouse as well as inflicting any form of injury or distress to one’s partner before sexual intercourse is a form of sexual disorder and forbidden in Islam as it goes against the purpose of sexual relationship.

Rape, incest, male relative of husband sleeping with the wife, wife sharing, sex with wife as entertainment for guests as seen in some cultures in our society are all prohibited in Islam.

Homosexuality:

This is a sexual practice characterised by directing erotic desire or romantic behaviour towards people of the same sex.

Theories on the causes of homosexuality:

These include the existence of a homosexual gene, sexual abuse and trauma, hormonal

imbalance, sexual orientation which is said to be influenced by prenatal levels of testosterone and oestrogen which determines one’s sexual preference at birth. In spite of these theories, most findings have been largely inconclusive.

Islamic ruling concerning homosexuality:

Allah considers homosexuality as a sexual deviation leading to a perverted act that goes against the natural order Allah perfected for mankind. It is a corruption of the man’s sexuality and a crime against the opposite sex. Therefore, the Islamic Shari’ah strictly prohibits it.

Prophet Lut (AS) in Suratul Shua’ara said to his people: “Of all the creatures of the world, will you approach males, and leave those whom Allah has created for you to be your wives? Nay, you are a trespassing people!” (26: 165-166)⁴

But their answer to Prophet Lut, (AS): “...Bring us the Wrath of Allah if you are telling us the Truth.” (Ankabut 29:29)⁴ And so Allah gave them the punishment they deserved: “And we rained on them a rain of torment. And how evil was the rain of those who had been warned.” (26:173)⁴

Muslim scholars have ruled that the punishment for this act should be the same as for zina (i.e. one hundred whiplashes for the man and woman who had never married, and death by stoning for the married man and woman). Some have even ruled that it should be death for both partners of homosexuality, because Rasulullah (SAW), said: “Kill the doer and the one to whom it was done.”

Misconception on sexuality in Islam

There are allegations that Islam is a religion of sexual suppression and shame. This includes wrong thoughts about Islamic concepts of sexuality, believing that sex in Islam is aimed only at having children. Surely Islam is the religion in accordance with human nature and reality because it provides appropriate solutions in conformity with everyday situations and aims to remove hardships and difficulties.

Almighty Allah says: “Allah wills for you ease and He does not will difficulty.” (2:185)⁴ He also said: “And has imposed no difficulties on you in religion.” (22:79)⁴

Sex as Sadaqa: Rasulullah (SAW) said: “In the sexual act of each of you there is a sadaqa.” The Companions replied: “O Messenger of God! When one of us fulfils his sexual desire, will he be given a reward for that?” And he said, “Do you not think that were he to act upon it unlawfully, he would be sinning? Likewise, if he acts upon it lawfully he will be rewarded.” (Muslim)⁵

Sex for pleasure: According to a hadith narrated by Daylami: “Not one of you should fall upon his wife like an animal; but let their first be a messenger between you.” “And what is that messenger?” they asked, and he replied: “Kisses and words.”⁶ These “kisses and words” do not just include foreplay once intimacy has commenced. To set the right mood, little signals should begin well in advance, so that the wife has a clue as to what is coming, and is pleasantly expectant, and also has adequate time to make herself clean, attractive and ready.

Challenges within the home:

- a. The presence of a hymen (the membrane covering external vaginal opening) is a sign of virginity but this is not absolute as hymen may be lost during vigorous exercises, accidents and aging.
- b. There is a lot of ignorance on what is allowed or forbidden in Islam. As an example gays are seen as normal people in the Western world while there is no controversy in Islam that homosexuality is forbidden.
- c. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STI) and Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) are common in our polygamous homes. This may not necessarily reflect promiscuity but may be due to the different organisms among the different partners and treatments should be done for all partners at the same time to prevent complications which includes infertility.
- d. Brothers are perceived to have very high libido by sisters and this may be because they only have their legitimate wives to fulfil their natural desires. Hence sisters are advised to be patient and understanding.
- e. Many sisters complain of anorgasmia (inability to reach orgasm [i.e. climax of sexual enjoyment] despite adequate sexual stimulation) and this may be due to lack of fore play which may be occasioned by lack of communication amongst spouses. Improved expression of feelings and desires to one’s partner will bridge this gap.

- f. There is a profound increase in adultery and fornication in our society today especially adultery among married women. This is not unconnected with the materialistic tendencies which are the order of the day. One should fear Allah in dealing with the opposite sex and observe the limits set by Islam.
- g. The social media (facebook, whatsapp, face time, Skype and the likes have contributed immensely to immorality. There is now what is called cybersex which can occur without being in physical contact. The gravity of the sin is the same as adultery/ fornication.

Recommendations

Fear Allah in relation to your wife/husband. Rasulallah (SAW) said that: “the best of you is the best to his wife and I am the best to my wife.”^{5,6} The importance of communications cannot be over emphasized. One should try to please one’s partner sexually, it is one of the ways to the heart that is halal and has a lot of rewards.

Conclusion

Sexual relationship between Muslim couples is highly rewarding and should be enjoyed as one of the gifts of Allah (SWT) to mankind. Better communication about this

act in our homes will improve the lives of Muslim couples in general and prevent them from falling into the errors of the forbidden sexual acts.

References

1. Family Watch International. Sexual rights defined; on: http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fw/i/documents/Sexual_Rights_Defined.pdf. Accessed 21-06-2016.
2. Center for disease control and prevention. Gay and bisexual men’s health; on: <http://www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/std.htm>. Accessed on 21-06-2016.
3. Cochran S. Lesbian and bisexual health fact sheet; on: <http://womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/lesbian-bisexual-health.html>. Accessed on 21-06-2016.
4. Yusuf A. Translation of the Holy Qur’an.
5. Sahih Muslim
6. Sahih Bukhari

Conflict in interest: Nil