

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gssr
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gssr.2025(X)
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2025(X.IV)

p-ISSN: 2520-0348

e-ISSN: 2616-793X



GSSR

GLOBAL SOCIAL SCIENCES REVIEW

HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

www.gssrjournal.com

Global
Social Sciences Review
exploring humanity

Volum X, ISSUE IV FALL (DECEMBER-2025)

Article Title

Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation Among Young Adults

Abstract

Masturbation is a widespread and under-researched phenomenon of sexual living, usually defined in a very limited manner as a reaction to the biological sexual drive. It is a qualitative research that examines psychological, emotional, and situational antecedents of masturbation in young men of adult age, which preempts their self-perception of the reasons and time of masturbation. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with 13 male students between the ages of 17-25 were carried out and analyzed through an interpretive thematic approach. The results indicate that emotional conditions like stress, anxiety, boredom, and emotional overload often provoke masturbation, and the situational factors comprise solitude, nighttime activities, and online activities. Participants described masturbation as an emotionally reactive and habitual practice as a form of self-regulation, habit, and self-care, and no longer as a sexual release.

Keywords: Sex, Sexuality, Masturbation, Young Adults, Biological Drive

Authors:

Suleeman Hussain: (Corresponding Author)

Visiting Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.
(Email: suleemanhussain2@gmail.com)

Muhammad Intizar Raza: Civil Teacher, Garrison Human Resources Development Centre (HRDC), Cantt Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Amber Javed: Visiting Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Pages: 161-171

DOI:10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV).13

DOI link: [https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025\(X-IV\).13](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV).13)

Article link: <https://gssrjournal.com/article/sex-is-rare-and-sexuality-is-everywhere-exploring-the-triggers-of-masturbation-among-young-adults>

Full-text Link: <https://gssrjournal.com/article/sex-is-rare-and-sexuality-is-everywhere-exploring-the-triggers-of-masturbation-among-young-adults>

Pdf link: <https://www.gssrjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/3urVl0A2.pdf>

Global Social Sciences Review

p-ISSN: [2520-0348](#) **e-ISSN:** [2616-793X](#)

DOI(journal):10.31703/gssr

Volume: X (2025)

DOI (volume):10.31703/gssr.2025(X)

Issue: IV Fall (December-2025)

DOI(Issue):10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV)

Home Page

www.gssrjournal.com

Volume: X (2025)

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/Current-issue>

Issue: IV-Fall (December 2025)

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/issue/10/4/2025>

Scope

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/about-us/scope>

Submission

<https://humaglobe.com/index.php/gssr/submissions>



Visit Us



Citing this Article

13	Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation Among Young Adults		
Authors	Suleeman Hussain Muhammad Intizar Raza Amber Javed	DOI	10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV).13
		Pages	161-171
		Year	2025
		Volume	X
		Issue	IV
Referencing & Citing Styles			
APA	Hussain, S., Raza, M. I., & Javed, A. (2025). Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation Among Young Adults. <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , X(IV), 161-171. https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV).13		
CHICAGO	Hussain, Suleeman, Muhammad Intizar Raza, and Amber Javed. 2025. "Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation Among Young Adults." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> X (IV):161-171. doi: 10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV).13.		
HARVARD	HUSSAIN, S., RAZA, M. I. & JAVED, A. 2025. Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation Among Young Adults. <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , X, 161-171.		
MHRA	Hussain, Suleeman, Muhammad Intizar Raza, and Amber Javed. 2025. 'Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation Among Young Adults', <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , X: 161-71.		
MLA	Hussain, Suleeman, Muhammad Intizar Raza, and Amber Javed. "Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation among Young Adults." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> X.IV (2025): 161-71. Print.		
OXFORD	Hussain, Suleeman, Raza, Muhammad Intizar, and Javed, Amber (2025), 'Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation Among Young Adults', <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , X (IV), 161-71.		
TURABIAN	Hussain, Suleeman, Muhammad Intizar Raza, and Amber Javed. "Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation among Young Adults." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> X, no. IV (2025): 161-71. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV).13 .		



Global Social Sciences Review

www.gssrjournal.com

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr>



Pages: 161-171

URL: [https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025\(X-IV\).13](https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV).13)

Doi: 10.31703/gssr.2025(X-IV).13



Cite Us



Title

Sex Is Rare, and Sexuality Is Everywhere: Exploring the Triggers of Masturbation Among Young Adults

Authors:

Suleeman Hussain: (Corresponding Author)

Visiting Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

(Email: suleemanhussain2@gmail.com)

Muhammad Intizar Raza: Civil Teacher, Garrison Human Resources Development Centre (HRDC), Cantt Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Amber Javed: Visiting Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract

Masturbation is a widespread and under-researched phenomenon of sexual living, usually defined in a very limited manner as a reaction to the biological sexual drive. It is a qualitative research that examines psychological, emotional, and situational antecedents of masturbation in young men of adult age, which preempts their self-perception of the reasons and time of masturbation. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with 13 male students between the ages of 17-25 were carried out and analyzed through an interpretive thematic approach. The results indicate that emotional conditions like stress, anxiety, boredom, and emotional overload often provoke masturbation, and the situational factors comprise solitude, nighttime activities, and online activities. Participants described masturbation as an emotionally reactive and habitual practice as a form of self-regulation, habit, and self-care, and no longer as a sexual release.

Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Research Objective](#)
- [Research Questions](#)
- [Literature Review](#)
- [Sexual Subjectivity, Identity, and Meaning-Making](#)
- [Methodology](#)
- [Results](#)
- [Discussion](#)
- [Tediousness, Routine and the Banality of Masturbation](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [Recommendations](#)
- [Future Directions and Limitations](#)
- [References](#)

Keywords:

Sex, Sexuality, Masturbation, Young Adults, Biological Drive

Introduction

Masturbation is among the most prevalent yet contradictory under researched sexual behaviors in the modern field of sexuality. Although epidemiological researches continuously indicate that it is highly prevalent among all genders, ages, and cultures (Herbenick et al., 2023; Kaestle & Allen, 2011), the idea of masturbation is still conceptualized mainly as the answer to biological sexual drive or hormonal stimulation. This

simplistic framing conceals the multifaceted nature of the ways in which masturbation is enshrined in the daily emotional living, social worlds and processes of meaning-making. Sexuality is not an exclusively physiological phenomenon as Abramson and Pinkerton (2002) maintain it is a highly contextualized human experience that is influenced by cognition, affect, culture and situation. Nevertheless, even though there is an increasing acceptance that sexuality is ubiquitous,



there is a relative lack of scholarly interest in the issue of masturbation as a psychologically significant, but ordinary practice.

New studies indicate that masturbation often fulfills non-sexual roles, such as emotional regulation, a way to reduce stress, curiosity, self-exploration, and a method of coping with the loneliness or boredom (Carey, [2023](#); Leistner et al., [2024](#)). Research among young adults has revealed that masturbation is usually coupled with instances of anxiety, affective congestion or rest time over and above spontaneous sexual desire (Hogarth & Ingham, [2009](#); Shapiro, [2008](#)). Behavioral decision-making studies also indicate that sexual behaviors are quite susceptible to situations characterized by hot emotional and situational states and therefore, notorious to assumptions about rational or entirely desire based sexual behaviors (Ariely & Loewenstein, [2006](#)). Much of this work is however based on survey-based techniques to simply list reasons why people masturbate, and nothing is said about how individuals make sense of them and explain them in their lives (Barron, M., & Kimmel, M. [2000](#)).

The situation and technological background also make it more difficult to comprehend masturbation in young adults. Sexual scripts, expectations, and solo sexual practices have been transformed by digital connectivity, specifically, access to online sexual content (Bridges et al., [2016](#); Cooper, [1998](#)). Teenagers often report pornography consumption and masturbation as part of a routine of scrolling at night or being alone or as an emotional release instead of intentional sexual activity (Attwood et al., [2018](#); Watson & McKee, [2013](#)). The fact that digital access has become normal and there is no distinction between arousal, curiosity, distraction, and habit has made it harder to distinguish the sexual desire among the overall psychological conditions (Golemееva, [2022](#); Orenstein, [2020](#)). However, mainstream social discourses and mainstream academic discourses tend to pathologize or moralize masturbation especially when coupled with media use rather than investigate the way people make sense of such practices in their own lives (Dines, [2010](#); Gill, [2012](#)).

Most importantly, there is still no qualitative research that involves the personal interpretations of the young adults about what triggers them to masturbate and why this practice becomes relevant

at the specific times (Modu, P. R., & Huwae, A. [2023](#)). The existing qualitative research refers to masturbation as a location of sexual subjectivity, autonomy, and identity construction (Foust et al., [2022](#); Morales et al., [2016](#)), yet not a single one of them explicitly focuses on the psychological, emotional, and situational antecedents that precede the very act of masturbation. Seeing masturbation as a practice of place-making-place, the practice that arises at the meeting-point of affect, location, and personal story provides a possibility to get out of biologically deterministic paradigm and into subtler explanation of everyday sexuality (Yule, M. A., Brotto, L. A., & Gorzalka, B. B. [2014](#)).

The current qualitative research fills this gap and discusses the expressions of masturbation triggers, their interpretation, and rationalization by young adults in their daily lives. The research is informed by the assumption that sex might be infrequent in practice and yet sexuality in everyday life is pervasive, posing the research questions as: (1) what are the psychological and emotional states that lead to masturbation, (2) under which circumstances are young adults most likely to engage in masturbation and (3) how young adults themselves make sense of these elicitors of masturbation beyond biological sexual drive. This study focuses on providing an input to the modern branch of sexuality studies by foregrounding the narratives of the participants, as a way of redefining masturbation as an affective, context, and interpretative practice, in what is otherwise termed as normal life.

Research Objective

- To investigate the psychological, emotional, and situational antecedent factors of masturbation among young adults who are not affected by biological sexual motivation.

Research Questions

1. Which psychological and emotional conditions (e.g., stress, boredom, anxiety, curiosity) are associated with masturbation amongst the young adults?
2. What role does situational contexts (e.g. being alone, being digitally connected, routines at night) play in deciding to masturbate or not?

3. What is the personal perception and rationalization of young adults regarding these triggers in their daily life?

Literature Review

Masturbation has traditionally been placed in the biomedical and sexological paradigm as one of the behaviors that are mostly shaped by physiological stimulation and sexual desire. Masturbation was frequently the subject of early sex research focusing on frequency, gender variations, and hormonal or stimulus-related reasons (Schmidt, [1975](#); Reuben, [2000](#)). Even though modern survey studies are still recording its occurrence and links with partnered sex (Herbenick et al., [2023](#); Kaestle & Allen, [2011](#)), these approaches often make masturbation an outcome rather than the process through which people come to practice it.

Biologically reductive models are criticized on the ground that sexual behavior cannot be rationally comprehensible out of psychological, emotional and social contexts (Abramson & Pinkerton, [2002](#)). Qualitative and interpretive researchers point out that masturbation is not simply a reaction to sexual arousal but is a part of a larger experience of affect, identity and daily living (Shapiro, [2008](#); Zamboni & Crawford, [2013](#)). This change has generated the opportunity to view masturbation as a multipurpose activity- one that can either be paired with partnered sex, supplemental to its absence, or to satisfy non-sexual desire, like relaxation, emotional control, or self-discovery (Hogarth & Ingham, [2009](#); Leistner et al., [2024](#)).

Masturbation Psychological and Emotional Stimuli

A new literature shows an emphasis on the psychological and emotional states as promoting masturbation. A review of literature in young adults always points to stress, boredom, loneliness, anxiety, and curiosity as the typical reasons to indulge in solo sexual activity (Carey, [2023](#); Leistner et al., [2024](#)). Masturbation is not a spontaneous desire as it is usually performed at the time of emotional peak or affective downtime implying that it may serve as a coping or self-calming mechanism (Shapiro, [2008](#)).

This point of view is further confirmed by experimental and behavioral decision-making

studies that show that sexual behavior is very conditional on the current emotional states. Ariley and Loewenstein (2006) demonstrate that sexual arousal and affect do not only influence decision-making processes dramatically but they negate the assumptions that sexual conduct is a manifestation of consistent preferences or rational decisions. This work applied to masturbation implies that because of emotional hot states, thresholds to state engagement can be reduced, and masturbation therefore becomes an easy way out of changing moods instead of a sexualized aim (Barron, M., & Kimmel, M. [2000](#)).

The qualitative studies extend this knowledge by preempting the self-perceptions of individuals as to the reasons why they masturbate. Masturbation is frequently discussed by respondents as a way of relieving tension, getting rid of intrusive thoughts, or returning to an emotional balance (Carey, [2023](#); Foust et al., [2022](#)). These results make dominant discourses which discuss masturbation as simply a result of sexual desire rather than as a part of broader emotional economies of everyday life difficult.

In addition to internal psychological conditions, situational situations are also important in influencing the practice of masturbation. Loneliness, the unstructured of time, nighttime activities are repeatedly found to be circumstances that support masturbation (Herbenick et al., [2023](#); Hogarth & Ingham, [2009](#)). Solitude also grants the space of privacy as well as time and emotional spaces where a person can focus on sensations, thoughts or feelings of the body which otherwise are repressed.

The digital settings also contribute to the increased influence of these dynamic situations. The easy access to internet sexual material has changed the methods by which the young adults are exposed to arousal, fantasy, and sexual interest (Cooper, [1998](#); Golemeeva, [2022](#)). It is possible that pornography use studies indicate that masturbation is frequently integrated into online browsing, scrolling, and consumption of media as opposed to being a distinct sex act (Attwood et al., [2018](#); Watson & McKee, [2013](#)). Not only does the sexual scripts developed by digital media affect the way of pleasure and arousal, but also when and even whether masturbation is required (Bridges et al., [2016](#)).

Meanwhile, scholarship emphasizes conflicts in these settings. Though there are researchers who stress the normalization of masturbation due to exposure to the media, others highlight the moral worries and gender discourse that models masturbation especially when it is associated with pornography as excessive or damaging (Dines, 2010; Gill, 2012). Such contradicting narratives influence the ways in which people perceive their own actions, and in most cases, they have to compromise between pleasure, guilt, normalization, and self-control (Macintyre, A. K., et al. 2015).

Sexual Subjectivity, Identity, and Meaning-Making

There is an increasing amount of qualitative literature that underlines the importance of masturbation as a location of sexual subjectivity/identity development. Work with a diverse population (women, people with disabilities, people with autism) demonstrates the connection between masturbation and autonomy, bodily experience, and self-identity (Beato et al., 2024; Morales et al., 2016). In specific cases, especially among young adults, masturbation is often referred to as an experimental, curious, and discovery area of understanding what one would like to enjoy without the limits of partnering expectations (Foust et al., 2022; Kaestle & Allen, 2011).

Nevertheless, the cultural ambivalence of masturbation long since determines the way in which it is made meaningful. In the past, masturbation has been associated with moral panic, pathology, and developmental anxiety, especially as it is applied to youth (Neuman, 1975). Modern discourses can be more liberal, but the stigma remains and is usually re-introduced into the narrative of addiction, self-discipline, or overconsumption (Fiaveh, 2024; Orenstein, 2020). Because of that, people often resort to justificatory talk and approach masturbation as a way of stress relief, self-care, or need and not as a want (Zamboni & Crawford, 2013).

Regardless of this wisdom, a significant part of the existing literature concentrates on reported reasons mating masturbation instead of how people associate emotional experiences, situational prompts, and personal significances in the real-

time (DeKeseredy, W., & Corsianos, M. 2015). It is still possible that there is relatively little qualitative research that explicitly analyzes the process of masturbation as a daily interpretive practice, which is conditioned by immediate situational circumstances and rationalizations (Hald, G. M., et al. 2013).

Combined, current studies prove that masturbation is widespread, multifaceted, and entrenched within the emotional and situational contexts. Nevertheless, there are three major gaps. One, the preponderant models still perpetrate the inclination to prioritize biological or frequency-related descriptions to the detriment of lived experience. Second, psychological factors and situational factors are not often explored in the context of their integration in the real world, though they are discussed considering each other. Third, the personal accounts of young adults regarding the reasons why masturbation is relevant in particular situations are not well studied.

The current research fills these missing gaps with the help of a qualitative research design that focuses on how the young adults perceive the psychological, emotional, and situational antecedents of masturbation. The ways in which participants recount and justify these experiences by analyzing the stories given by them makes this research an extension of the current body of work and offers a more specialized perspective of masturbation as a normal but significant part of modern sexual life.

Methodology

This paper was qualitative and interpretive research, to determine how young adults conceptualize and describe the psychological, emotional, and situational antecedents of masturbation in their lives. There were 13 male students aged between 17 and 25 years in the study, an indication of a development stage characterized by the continued sexual exploration and identity establishment. The participants were identified using purposive sampling in order to get a detailed and experience-based report and not necessarily to reach any statistical generalization. Data were produced by using in depth, semi structured interviews that would inquire about instances, moods, and settings in which they engaged in masturbation, and what they thought those

experiences meant. The study was guided by an interpretive analytic orientation, which stressed on the importance of subjective explanations and language of participants to comprehend masturbation as a situated, meaning-making practice situated in the daily emotional and social surroundings. The method is consistent with the qualitative sexuality scholarship which values depth, reflexivity and contextualized knowledge more than measurement or causal generalization.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant ID	Age	Student Status	Settlement	Living Arrangement
P1	17	Undergraduate	Rural	With family
P2	18	Undergraduate	Urban	With family
P3	18	Undergraduate	Urban	Hostel
P4	19	Undergraduate	Urban	Hostel
P5	20	Undergraduate	Rural	Shared apartment
P6	20	Undergraduate	Rural	Shared apartment
P7	21	Undergraduate	Urban	Hostel
P8	22	Undergraduate	Rural	Alone
P9	22	Undergraduate	Rural	Shared apartment
P10	23	Postgraduate	Urban	Alone
P11	24	Postgraduate	Urban	Alone
P12	25	Postgraduate	Rural	Shared apartment
P13	25	Postgraduate	Urban	Alone

All the participants were male students who were currently enrolled in higher education. The age group was between 17 and 25 years and this was the late adolescence and the onset of adulthood.

Theme 1: Masturbation as Emotional Control

The participants often reported that they masturbated when responding to emotional conditions, like stress, anxiety, frustration, or emotional overload. Instead of positioning

Results

Interpretation of the data obtained during the interview process produced four themes that are interconnected and that reflect the manner in which young men of adult age explain and understand the psychological, emotional, and situational stimuli of masturbation in their daily lives.

masturbation as the result of sexual desire by itself, most of the respondents placed it within the framework of calming the mind, alleviating tension or just avoiding distress in the short term.

Some of the participants underlined that the highest frequency of masturbation was during the times of academic stress, personal conflict, or emotional burnout. The effect of the act was termed to offer a feeling of relief, control or mental silence.

Table 2

Theme 1: Emotional control as a precipitative factor in masturbation

Subtheme	Description
Stress relief	Masturbation used to reduce academic or life stress
Anxiety management	Used to calm racing thoughts or emotional unease
Emotional escape	Temporary distraction from negative feelings

Illustrative Quotes

- “It is not usually due to me being horny most of the time. It is when I get stressed or my mind is busy and all I want is everything to slow down.” (P6, age 20)
- “After a bad day or a fight, that is when it normally occurs. It kind of resets my mood.” (P11, age 24)
- “When I am nervous, particularly before an examination it helps me to calm down to the point that I sleep.” (P4, age 19)
- “It's like releasing pressure. Not talking to someone emotionally, but actually physically doing something that will make them stop temporarily.” (P9, age 22)

Theme 2: Idleness, Monotony and Time Wasting

The boredom was a major cause or trigger especially when there was no form of structure. The respondents explained that masturbation is something that wastes time or happens naturally when there was minimal external stimulation. This trend, with time, tended to become a regular practice and not a sexual act that has been adopted consciously.

A considerable number of participants conceptualized masturbation as an act that just occurs in the situations of doing nothing, and the behavior was routinized.

Table 3

Theme 2: Boredom and Routine Stimuli

Subtheme	Description
Idle time	Occurs during unoccupied moments
Habit formation	Masturbation as an automatic response
Routine behavior	Embedded in daily or weekly schedules

Illustrative Quotes

- “It is something that I do at times simply because I have nothing left to do.” (P2, age 18)
- “It's kind of a habit now. Whenever I am alone and I am bored, my mind would go there.” (P7, age 21)
- “I would not even say that I planned it. It is as though brushing your teeth before going to sleep.” (P10, age 23)
- “Boredom is a big factor. It is nothing profound, it is simply time going by.” (P5, age 20)

Theme 3: Digital Cue and Situational Privacy

Situational elements, specifically, alone time, night time, and online activities, had a high impact on the participants in deciding to masturbate. Privacy was discussed as a triggering necessity whereas smartphones and internet material were frequent prompts which elicited arousal or interest.

Respondents emphasized that digital places made the boundary between passive scrolling and sexual activity too thin, where masturbation became instead context-sensitive instead of self-initiated.

Table 4

Theme 3: Digital and Situational Context

Subtheme	Description
Privacy	Being alone enables masturbation
Nighttime routines	Occurs before sleep
Digital cues	Triggered by phones, social media, or pornography

Illustrative Quotes

- “Well, when I am alone in my room at night that is when it mostly happens.” (P1, age 17)
- “It starts with my phone. One thing leads to another.” (P8, age 22)
- “At night your guard is down. You are exhausted, scrolling, and it simply occurs.” (P12, age 25)

- “The greatest factor is being alone. I do not even think of it when there is somebody around.” (P3, age 18)

Theme 4: Rationalization and Meaning-Making

The reason behind the masturbation used by the participants was actively rationalized by them in most cases in a way that made it sound normal,

necessary, or useful. These stories served to absolve the guilt and to separate the action and moral consideration and to place masturbation as an act of self-care or individual choice but not as an excess.

Some of the participants were comparing masturbation with partnered sex focusing on autonomy, control, and emotional safety.

Table 5

Theme 4: Interpretation and Rationalization

Subtheme	Description
Normalization	Framed as common and acceptable
Self-care	Linked to wellbeing
Personal control	Autonomy over sexual experience

Illustrative Quotes

- “I tell myself it's normal. Nobody does not do it, and so why worry about it?” (P6, age 20)
- “It is my way of being able to take care of myself without drawing someone into the picture.” (P13, age 25)
- “It is safe, even safer than sex, sometimes. No expectations.” (P9, age 22)
- “I don't see it as a problem. It is simply something to assist me to work.” (P4, age 19)

Discussion

This research was aimed at examining the psychological, emotional, and situational antecedents of masturbation among young adult men that are encountered in everyday life and is no longer based on biologically deterministic factors in sexual behavior. The conclusions prove that masturbation should be rather regarded as an affective, contextual, and interpretive practice which is a part of the everyday life than as a direct reaction to sexual desire. Throughout the themes, the participants explained masturbation as arising at the point of emotionality, situational dynamics and the creation of meaning about sexuality in their own lives, corroborating and building upon the existing qualitative research on sexuality as a lived and socially situated event (Abramson & Pinkerton, 2002; Shapiro, 2008).

Masturbation as Emotional Taming as opposed to Sexual Urge

In line with previous studies, participants often justified masturbation as an emotional control mechanism (especially in reaction to stress, anxiety, and emotional burden) (Carey, 2023; Leistner et al., 2024). Instead of focusing on sexual arousal as a driving force, the study participants explained masturbation as a method of calming down, relieving pressure, or re-establishing some sense of control. This is in line with the findings of the researchers, Hogarth and Ingham (2009) who discovered that the masturbatory activity in most cases had a psychological and emotional role and particularly at a time when stress levels were high.

These results also are supported by the work of Ariely and Loewenstein (2006) about the hot states that show that affective conditions play a significant role in sexual decision-making. Emotional distress in this research was seen to reduce the masturbation threshold and thus it became an easy way out. Notably, the respondents were not always seeing this trend as problematic, but in many cases, they normalized the masturbation as an effective, albeit temporary, emotional alleviation (DeKeseredy, W., & Corsianos, M. 2015). This serves as a challenge to the hegemonic accounts which equate the frequency of masturbation with too much desire or diminished self-control but instead locates it on the other order of emotional economies of daily life (Shapiro, 2008; Zamboni & Crawford, 2013).

Tediousness, Routine and the Banality of Masturbation

These factors resulted in boredom and unstructured time as some of the primary precipitators, emphasizing the idea of masturbation as a routinized action instead of something that is actively sexual. Respondents often narrated the experience of masturbation as an activity that occurs by default especially when one is idle. This is in line with a study by Leistner et al. (2024), which states that one of the most popular reasons behind masturbation by college students is boredom.

The temporal and routine nature of the habit outlined by the respondents regarding masturbation points to the significance of time and habit in the development of sexual activity (Hald, G. M., et al. 2013). Masturbation may be practiced as a part of daily rhythm instead of an act of conscious sexual activity, as Watson & McKee (2013) argue. This reutilization challenges biomedical determinations that hold that sexual behavior is based on unique instances of desire but proposes that masturbation may serve as a back-up mechanism to idle time, like any other habitual self-soothing behavior.

Sexual Scripts, Situational Privacy, and Digital Environments

Another important point brought out in the findings is the paramount influence that situational factors, especially privacy, night time environments, and the digital connection have on the development of masturbation behaviors. The participants repeatedly emphasized that masturbation required being alone, which supported the results of previous studies that correlated solitude with the possibility of sexual self-gratification and exploration (Herbenick et al., 2023; Hogarth & Ingham, 2009).

The digital space also contributed to the obscuration of arousal, inquisitiveness, and destructiveness. According to the statements made by participants, they tended to engage in masturbation after having used the phone casually or scrolling at night, which is consistent with the available research, which places masturbation in the context of more interconnected digital media consumption (Attwood et al., 2018; Cooper, 1998). Online-mediated sexual scripts seem to not only

popularize masturbation but also democracy it in the daily routine of digital users (Bridges et al., 2016; Golemeeva, 2022).

Meanwhile, the results make polarized discussions on pornography and masturbation complex. Participants did not define pornography by defining it as one cause or harm, but instead, digital content was one of a multitude of situational cues that interplayed with emotional states and privacy (Liu, V. (Ed.). 2023). This subtle narrative disrupts moralizing or anthologizing rhetoric's that consider masturbation as an almost exclusively media-induced result (Dines, 2010; Gill, 2012) and anticipates the agency of participants in working through the digital sexualities.

One of the important contributions of this research is that it aims at understanding how the young adults explain and justify their masturbation. Members were actively engaged in the process of framing masturbation as a normal, needy or helpful process by frequently calling upon discourses of self-care, autonomy, and emotional wellbeing. These justifications served to justify guilt and destigmatize masturbation, reminiscent of the conflicts in the past and present about the practice (Neuman, 1975; Fiaveh, 2024).

This sense-making process is consistent with qualitative research that theorizes masturbation as an object of sexual subjectivity and self-construction (Foust et al., 2022; Morales et al., 2016). Through the element of control, safety and independence, participants defined masturbation as different to partnered sex and as an area where expectations and vulnerabilities could be handled by participants themselves. These stories are indicative of the greater changes in negotiating masculinity, intimacy and sexual responsibility among young men in modern settings (Orenstein, 2020).

The combination of the findings contributes to an integrative perspective on masturbation as a practice, which is influenced by the affective states, circumstances, and interpretive concepts. The study makes a contribution to the existing literature since it shows how psychological, emotional, and contextual triggers co-occur in real time and how young adults themselves describe these relationships. The focus on participants makes the study go beyond surveys on how people attribute a reason of masturbation, and this

represents a more sophisticated examination of how sexuality is embedded in everyday life (Abramson & Pinkerton, [2002](#)).

Conclusion

The present research aimed at examining psychological, emotional and situational antecedents of masturbation in male students in the early years of their adult lives, in contrast to biologically deterministic explanations of sexual behavior. The research results prove that masturbation is most accurately perceived as a usual, place-based practice implicated into the rhythm of ordinary life as opposed to a direct reaction to sexual desire by itself. Participants always portrayed masturbation as a result of emotional experiences such as stress, boredom and anxiety, which were mediated by situational factors such as privacy, nighttime activities and online experiences and explained by stories of normalcy, control and self-care.

This study offers a valuable contribution to qualitative studies of sexuality with emphasis on meaning-making, affect and context in the explanation of sexual practices by foregrounding their own explanations. These results are in line with theoretical approaches that theorize sexuality as socially acquired, emotionally controlled, and a narratively constructed phenomenon and project how young men actively justify and naturalize masturbation in more extensive cultural scripts. By so doing, the work infringes upon moralized and anthologizing discourses which approach masturbation as excessive, deviant, or merely biological.

Despite the small, homogeneous sample, the paper provides important ideas about the role of masturbation in the lives of young men at a developmental stage in life. Future studies may build on this study by researching more diverse populations, studying longitudinal trends, or the effect of emotional regulation and digital space on solo sexual behavior in diverse cultural settings. Finally, acknowledging masturbation as an important and contextual element of daily sexual life makes it possible to have a subtler, humane, and empirically based knowledge about the modern sexuality.

Recommendations

On the basis of the research results, some recommendations are offered in relation to research, sexual health education, and professional practice. To start with, sexuality education programs can cease biologically oriented models and include the discussion of emotional regulation, stress, boredom, and daily situations where the sexual activities, such as masturbation, can be performed. The promotion of healthier self-understandings and the reduction of the shame and misinformation among the young adults may be achieved by framing masturbation as a standard and valuable part of sexual development.

Second, the student support services, counselors, psychologists should appreciate the fact that masturbation can be a coping tool or self-soothing mechanism and not necessarily be perceived as problematic or compulsive. This might be enhanced by non-judgmental, context-based approaches taken by the practitioners working with young adults and exploring the emotional and situational meanings that people assign their sexual behaviors and especially relating to the stress levels and anxiety as well as the usage of digital media.

Lastly, communities and policymakers ought to embrace all-inclusive, evidence-based sexual health models in normalizing the solo sexual acts but with critical reflexivity on the impact of media and emotional health. These methods may help make the educational and the general health environment of sexuality more inclusive, realistic, and stigma free.

Future Directions and Limitations

Although this paper gives a very valuable insight into the life of young men, it has certain weaknesses due to the small gender-homogenous sample of male students incorporated. The potential avenue of future studies might be examining how such triggers are experienced and perceived by women, non-binary individuals, or non-students, and in diverse cultural settings. The longitudinal or diary-based qualitative approaches can further enrich the knowledge regarding interaction of emotional states and situational cues through time.

References

- Abramson, P. R., & Pinkerton, S. D. (2002). *With pleasure: Thoughts on the nature of human sexuality*. Oxford University Press.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Ariely, D., & Loewenstein, G. (2006). The heat of the moment: The effect of sexual arousal on sexual decision making. *Journal of behavioral decision making*, 19(2), 87-98.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/bdm.501>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Attwood, F., Smith, C., & Barker, M. (2018). 'I'm just curious and still exploring myself': Young people and pornography. *new media & society*, 20(10), 3738-3759. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818759271>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Barron, M., & Kimmel, M. (2000). Sexual violence in three pornographic media: Toward a sociological explanation. *Journal of Sex Research*, 37(2), 161-168. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490009552033?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate.net%26utm_medium%3Darticle
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Beato, A., Sarmiento, M. R., & Correia, M. (2024). Experiencing intimate relationships and sexuality: A qualitative study with autistic adolescents and adults. *Sexuality and Disability*, 42(2), 439-457. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11195-024-09838-x>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Bridges, A. J., Sun, C. F., Ezzell, M. B., & Johnson, J. (2016). Sexual scripts and the sexual behavior of men and women who use pornography. *Sexualization, Media, & Society*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2374623816668275>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Carey, H. (2023). *The pleasure is all mine: a qualitative study on women's personal experiences and perspectives of masturbation: a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology*, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand (Doctoral dissertation, Massey University).
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Cooper, A. L. (1998). Sexuality and the Internet: Surfing into the new millennium. *Cyberpsychology & behavior*, 1(2), 187-193. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.1998.1.187>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- DeKeseredy, W., & Corsianos, M. (2015). *Violence against women in pornography*. Routledge.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Dines, G. (2010). *Pornland: How porn has hijacked our sexuality*. Beacon Press.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Fiaveh, D. Y. (2024). Scoping review of discourses on masturbation in Africa: an afrofeminist analysis. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 33(8), 1021-1038. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2023.2300420>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Foust, M. D., Komolova, M., Malinowska, P., & Kyono, Y. (2022). Sexual subjectivity in solo and partnered masturbation experiences among emerging adult women. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 51(8), 3889-3903. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-022-02390-9>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Gill, M. (2012). Sex can wait, masturbate: The politics of masturbation training. *Sexualities*, 15(3-4), 472-493. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460712439655>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Golemeeva, E. I. (2022). *Sexual exploration in the 'Digital Age': How the internet informs the sexuality of young people in contemporary Britain* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Huddersfield).
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Hald, G. M., Malamuth, N. N., & Lange, T. (2013). Pornography and sexist attitudes among heterosexuals. *Journal of Communication*, 63(4), 638-660.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Herbenick, D., Fu, T. C., Wasata, R., & Coleman, E. (2023). Masturbation prevalence, frequency, reasons, and associations with partnered sex in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic: Findings from a US nationally representative survey. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 52(3), 1317-1331. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-022-02505-2>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Hogarth, H., & Ingham, R. (2009). Masturbation Among Young Women and Associations with Sexual Health: An Exploratory Study. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 46(6), 558-567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490902878993>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Kaestle, C.E., Allen, K.R. (2011) The Role of Masturbation in Healthy Sexual Development: Perceptions of Young Adults. *Arch Sex Behav* 40, 983-994. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-010-9722-0>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Leistner, C. E., Briggs, L., Lippmann, M., & Lawlor, N. (2024). Reasons for and for not engaging in masturbation among college students in the United

- States. *Sexuality & Culture*, 28(3), 929-949.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10156-1>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Liu, V. (Ed.). (2023). *Bang!: Masturbation for People of All Genders and Abilities: Masturbation for People of All Genders and Abilities*. Microcosm Publishing.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Macintyre, A. K., Montero Vega, A. R., & Sagbakken, M. (2015). From disease to desire, pleasure to the pill: A qualitative study of adolescent learning about sexual health and sexuality in Chile. *BMC public health*, 15, 945. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-2253-9>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Modu, P. R., & Huwae, A. (2023). Sexual Self-Disclosure on Adolescents Who Do Porn, Masturbate, and Orgasm (PMO) on Social Media. *Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 5(2), 134-147. <https://doi.org/10.51214/00202305579000>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Morales, E., Gauthier, V., Edwards, G., & Courtois, F. (2016). Women with disabilities' perceptions of sexuality, sexual abuse and masturbation. *Sexuality and Disability*, 34(3), 303-314. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11195-016-9440-1>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Neuman, R. P. (1975). Masturbation, madness, and the modern concepts of childhood and adolescence. *Journal of Social History*, 8(3), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/8.3.1>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Orenstein, P. (2020). *Boys & sex: young men on hook-ups, love, porn, consent and navigating the new masculinity*. Souvenir Press.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Reuben, D. (2000). *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex: But Were Afraid To Ask*. Macmillan.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Schmidt G. (1975). Male-female differences in sexual arousal and behavior during and after exposure to sexually explicit stimuli. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 4(4), 353-365. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01541721>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Shapiro, T. (2008). Masturbation, sexuality, and adaptation: Normalization in adolescence. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 56(1), 123-146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003065108315687>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Watson, A. F., & McKee, A. (2013). Masturbation and the media. *Sexuality & Culture*, 17(3), 449-475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-013-9186-1>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Yule, M. A., Brotto, L. A., & Gorzalka, B. B. (2014). Sexual fantasy and masturbation among asexual individuals. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 23(2), 89-95. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjhs.2409>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Zamboni, B. D., & Crawford, I. (2013). Using masturbation in sex therapy: Relationships between masturbation, sexual desire, and sexual fantasy. In *Masturbation as a means of achieving sexual health* (pp. 123-141). Routledge.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)