



# Nigerian Youth and the Problem of Masturbation: Case Study of Northern Yobe State”.

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Date of Submission: 13-02-2023

Date of Acceptance: 27-02-2023

## Abstract.

This work attempts to understand the prevalence and practice of masturbation among the youth of Northern Yobe State, Nigeria. Descriptive method is adopted for the work. The instrument for Data collection is a semi-structured interview of five hundred (500) youth participants who hail from various local governments of the area. The work found that despite the excessive and history long in acceptability of practice of masturbation in the area due to prohibition by religion and culture, some youth in recent times have started to embark on the act. This however, is linked to the spread of pornographic and similar online channels that have conquered cell phones of the youth. Parents, educators and religious leaders need to double their efforts to be able to curtail the acceptability of such practice to the minimal and save the youth in the area from advertisers and promoters of the act.

## I. Introduction

I will like to introduce this work by mentioning the chosen meanings of some important words contained in this work, i.e. masturbation, perception, practice, youth and northern Yobe. Dictionary definition (Oxford Advanced Learner's) of the word "masturbation" is 1- to give yourself sexual pleasure by rubbing your sexual organs. 2- to give somebody sexual pleasure by rubbing their sexual organs. This lingual definition however, seems to be restrictive in terms of the processes involved in masturbation. Contemporary writers such as Vanden Bos, G.B. (2015) defines Masturbation as "The manipulation of one's genital organs, typically the penis or clitoris, for purpose of sexual gratification" Walter O. Bockting, (2002) defines masturbation as "an act of exciting one's sexual organs by rubbing, stroking, pressing, folding or any other form of manipulation to reach orgasm". This wider concept on masturbation is the choice of

this work. Masturbation is usually accompanied by deep thinking about sex or erotic literature, videos, pictures, etc. and may also include the use of mechanical devices, sex toys vibrators, etc. Masturbation if practiced by one person alone is called "solo masturbation" but when it happened with a participation of another person, then, it is called "mutual masturbation".

Perception is "An idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something."

Practice is defined as "action rather than idea".

Youth is "the time of life when a person is young, especially the time before a child becomes an adult". This definition too seems to be neglected in policy making of various countries, as there seem to be no universally agreed international definition of the young age group. According to the United Nations, (2022) "youth"; are "those persons between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four". In Britain, the end of young age is forty (40) years, eight (8) month and two (2) weeks. (goggle). According to developmental theorist, Erick Erickson, youth ends at forty. (goggle).

In Nigeria, in the 2019 policy forward, the minister of youth and sports development, Solomon Dalung, pointed-out that "A major thrust of the current review is regarding the age bracket for the classification of youth from existing grading of 18-35 years to 15-29 years". (Punch, 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2019).

Considering the differences with regard to the meaning of the word "youth", this work prefers to go by the Nigerian official context of the word, i.e. 15-29 years old. Northern Yobe state, is officially called zone c. It is the most distant area from the state capital. It comprises of six local governments areas, namely: Bade, Jakusko, Karasuwa, Nguru, Machina and Yusufari.



Masturbation has been in many earlier generations, shameful and sinful practice as it was considered to go against natural order and causes many social and psychological problems. Masturbation is prohibited by all Abrahamic religions and is considered shameful in many cultures. Through masturbation one focuses only on body pleasure and contributes nothing for procreation which is the wisdom behind the spread of mankind on the earth. This is one of the reasons, Islam made the practice of masturbation “Haram” forbidden.

Until 1950-1970s when secular movements were powerful enough to effect huge secular changes in social life of America and Europe in the name of liberation, masturbation was a taboo in such societies. Those movements were however, fully supported by capitalists who aim to achieve economic and financial gains from the change of perception in sexuality. For example, the advertisers and promoters of masturbation were able to open sex stores across United States of America in early 1970s and later spread same in many other countries. They allowed for easy access to pornographic and masturbatory materials. Sex toys that are used to facilitate human sexual pleasure were invented. Many sex toys are designed to resemble human genitals and may be vibrating. There are also erotic electro-stimulation devices, erotic furniture, general penetrative devices, nipple toys and other devices. Lubricants and Moisturizers that are aimed to broaden the cultural acceptance of masturbation in recent times are exhibited. One of the famous sex stores “Good Vibration” was established in California in 1977, and continues to prosper through the sales of sex products (Jennifer, 2016). Many youth of nowadays become exposed to masturbatory devices from the media or friends who “do not have appropriate knowledge of it, most of which are harmful, dangerous and life-threatening (Musa, A.)

In contemporary times, many practices and ideologies are easily spread through internet. Some studies found that there is link between masturbation and pornography. (Harper & Hodgins, 2016.), others concluded that, watching online pornography is the most prevalent online sexual activity and its problematic use became associated with solitary-arousal activities, i.e. “masturbation”. (Wery & Billieux, 2016.).

Images in the entertainment media (spread through the internet) imply that masturbation is risk free and that majority of people are doing it; this fake information led some youth to practice masturbation and many other sexual behaviors that resulted in

loss of human values and decline in moral character. The youth in many societies have turned-away from the Divine teachings with regard to sex and sexuality and embarked on self-satisfying methods without thinking of consequences.

It is an undoubted fact that youth in northern Yobe state of Nigeria, are using internet services, it is also undoubted fact that online has become a dumping ground of all the good, bad and ugly. Cell phones have conquered almost every house and the youth are the fore-front users of online services. For this, it is of paramount importance to carry-out this study, so as to understand if danger of masturbation exists within the youth of this area; and look for the way forward to curtail it.

#### **Problem statement/Justification.**

Youth in northern Yobe state, engages themselves in social media, they watch channels and make friends in and out- side the region through their cell phones. The advocates of different ideologies and practices, (masturbation inclusive), found internet an easiest way of reaching to a large number of supporters. Pornographic advertisers and promoters use online channels as ground to their ideas. For this, this work hopes to explore the gravity of the practice of masturbation in this part of Nigeria. And suggest ways as may be guided by Islamic regulations and views of experts on how to curtail the practice among the youth.

#### **Objectives of the study.**

- 1- To how masturbation is perceived among the youth in Northern part of Yobe State.
- 2- To find the reason of resorting to masturbation among youth of the region and identify its gravity.
- 3- To identify the role of pornographic channels through cell phones in spreading the act of masturbation in the region.

## **II. Literature Review**

Jennifer, L. Klein.(2014) in her book titled: “Encyclopedia of Social Deviance”. Opined that, masturbation is a safe sex life activity that can improve the health of the practitioner and suggested that Clinicians have recommended masturbation as a way for individuals to fulfil their sexual needs and improve the ability of woman to attain orgasm. Betty, Dodson.(1972) in her book “About Feminism and Sexuality” chaptered a topic “Liberating Masturbation”. In her opinion, “seeking sexual satisfaction is a basic drive (in sex) and masturbation of course, is (the) first natural activity,



it is the way (especially for women) to discover erotism, learn to respond sexually, build self-esteem and learn to love themselves". The author considered masturbation as one way in which women can also be polygamous as men. She condemned societies for not recognizing women masturbation, considered that as inequality of sexes, inferiority of women and playing double standard. Religious Authorities such as Roman Catholics were also accused by the author. In her words, "The Roman Catholic Church is straight forward about it and openly condemns masturbation. Quite consistently, the Catholic Church also openly denies women equal participation or the right to control their bodies. But our supposedly democratic societies at large is completely hypocritical about equal rights for women. Denial of the women's phallus has for centuries been the essence of male dominance and female asexuality and subjugation....." Nantje Fischer & Co. in their work "Prevalence of Masturbation and Associated Factors Among Older Adults in Four European Countries.", realized that even in European countries where laws on masturbation were weakened in the name of "Liberalization", the act of masturbation is still "stigmatized and tabooed" especially among older population who were socialized in more religious and cultural environments. Musa, A. (Department of clinical Nursing, Sir **Muhammad Sunusi Specialist Hospital, Kano**) in his paper titled: "Sex Education in Nigeria: Attitudes of Secondary School Adolescents and the Role of Parents and Stakeholders" (2020) mentioned some effects of masturbation as follows: 1- Lower sperm count 2- General body weakness 3-Erectile dysfunction 4- Addiction 5- Social stigma 6- Droeseiness 7- Sensory impairment 8- Transmission of infections (Stds,Pids and Utis) via sex toys. 9- Death,burn,cardiac arrest and tissue damage caused by electro-stimulation devices (estim). 10-Traumatic lacerations caused by glass sex toys and heavy weight devices. Sajad Ahmad Para ( Department of Urology, Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Srinagar, India.)& co. (2021) In their paper titled "Management of Accidental Penile Incarceration due to Unusual Masturbation Practice" pointed out that using penile devices can cause incarceration of the sex gentiles. They cited metallic rings, plastic and glass bottles, iron pipe, ball-bearing washers, nuts and rubber bands as objects responsible for penile incarceration. Some of these objects are for sure being used to obtain sexual gratification and prolonged erection through masturbation. The authors observed that most victims to these objects were presented to hospitals

late because of "the embarrassment associated with it ". They recommended that the case " being a urology emergency should be recognized immediately and intervened urgently to decrease the rate of complications".Eric, Ogechi Chikweru.(2020) in an article titled: " Tertiary Institutions' students perception of masturbation practices As A normal Sexual Behavior: A Study of State Tertiary Institution in River State", pointed out that practice of masturbation among tertiary institution students in Rivers State Nigeria, is becoming normal sexual behavior and that vast majority of students, males and females engage in the act, so as to relief themselves from "sexual tension". Iranian Authors, ( Shakarey, A. & co.(2011) in their article: "Masturbation: Prevention & Treatment". Opine that, masturbation is a controversial activity that teenagers in Iran engage themselves in especially among University students. They call the attention of educators and other stake holders to pay "much attention" in order to curtail the number of teenagers engaged in masturbation.

Razwan Hasan Khan Chowdhury & Co.(2019). In their article "Masturbation Experience: A case study of undergraduate students in Bangladesh"found that despite the act of masturbation is considered impious in Bangladesh, there are clear evidence that free access to internet pornography has led to high incidences of masturbation, especially among the youth. The article revealed that masturbation among students in Bangladesh was getting accepted and becoming a normal activity. Muhammad Salih Al-Munajjid, in his book "Ruling on Masturbation and How to Cure the Problem" discussed masturbation from Islamic Point of View. He quoted some verses from the Holy Qur'an and some texts from the sayings of **Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)** upon which scholars of Islam based their rulings that masturbation for both of man and woman is "Haram" i.e. forbidden. One of the verses is Q:23: 5-7 which the meaning is interpreted as " And those guard their chastity (i.e. private parts, from illegal sexual acts) Except from their wives or ( the captives and slaves) that their right hands possess,- for then,they are free from blame. But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors". In the explanatory notes he pointed, "the verses are clear in forbidding all illegal sexual acts (including masturbation) Except for the wives or that their right hand possess. The second verse he quoted is Q:24:33 which is interpreted as: "Let those who find not the financial means for marriage keep themselves Chaste, Until Allah enriches them of His bounty". In explanation to this verse, al-Munajjid



pointed: “this verse also clearly orders whoever does not have the financial means to marry to keep himself Chaste and patient in facing temptations (including masturbation) until Allah enriches them. Al-Kawthari, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad, in his book “Islamic Guide to sexual relations” discussed in details about sexuality in Islam, and in the modern worlds How the issue of sexuality is institutionalized in school curriculum, how growing number of youth are becoming addicted to pornography, Islamic rulings on solo masturbation, Islamic rulings on mutual masturbation among married couples and Islamic views in using sex aids and toys among Muslim couples. On the issue of solo masturbation, al-Kawthari maintains the popular verdict about the act being “haram” i.e. forbidden. But in the case of mutual masturbation among married couples, (man and woman) he pointed: “There is nothing wrong in touching, stroking and fondling the genitals of one’s spouse, as part of fore play, it is encouraged to stroke and play with each other’s private part. The wife may stroke her husband’s penis, while the husband may fondle her vagina. It is an effective means to prepare one’s spouse for sexual intercourse. Al-Kawthari referred this scholastic views to imam Abu Hanifa in an answer to his disciple Abu Yusuf as cited in “ Al-Fatawa al-Hindiya” vol.5, p:328. With regard to the wisdom behind the permissibility of mutual masturbation among married couples in islam, al-Kawthari presented a detailed analysis as forwarded by imam Ibn Abidin as mentioned in his book “Radd al Muhtar ala- Durr al- Mukhtar” vol.2 p:399. Ibn Abidin differentiated between masturbation among married couples where “ one is satisfying oneself with that which is permissible to gain satisfaction from, namely a part of one’s spouse, who one is entitled to seek sexual satisfaction from her entire body, where as in solo masturbation one is seeking pleasure from what is not permitted. In the issue of sex aids and toys that may be used among married couples to trigger or enhance sexual arousal, al-Kawthari mentioned that Islamic law permits that as long as

- 1-The aids/toys does not harm either or both of the spouse.
- 2- The aid is not figured in the form of animated life.
- 3-Lubricants lotions gels and creams are all accepted if only they cause no harm.
- 4-Using vibrators to stimulate any part of body or outer private parts of the wife including her clitoris are permitted as long as the vibrator are used by one’s spouse not the persons themselves. If the vibrators are used by one’s self, then, it is considered as a form of masturbation that is haram,(forbidden).
- 5- Inserting vibrators or a dildo into the inner private part of wife for her to have an orgasm is not permitted, even if it is by the husband It is also not permitted for the husband to use masturbators or realistic vaginas to ejaculate even if he is accompanied by his wife. This is because Shariah does not permit couple to masturbate in front of each other using another objects.

### III. Methodology

This work adopts Descriptive Method. Five hundred (500) participants hail from all local governments across northern Yobe State were randomly selected for a semi-structured interview. Four hundred, representing 80% of the participants are students of senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions while one hundred, representing 20% are non- formal school students who are found abundantly in the area. The age of participants ranges from 15-29 years. Three hundred and fifty (350), representing 70% are males and one hundred and fifty (150), representing 30% are females. Instrument used in data collection was a semi-structured oral interview, channeled through the widely-spoken language in the area (Hausa), and later translated the meaning of acquired data into English. This is essential in enabling the work communicate with large number of participants who are unable to speak English language as well as those that are not fluent enough to communicate. The interview took place from 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2022, to 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2023.

**Table 1**

			Frequency	Percentage
Do you know Masturbation	Males	Yes	324	64.8
		No	26	5.2
	Females	Yes	132	26.4
		No	18	3.6
			500	100%



Table 1 reveals that, out of five hundred (500) youth participants selected for this work, 44, representing 8.8% from both gender showed having

no any knowledge on what masturbation is. These are mostly youth between the age of 15-17 who are newly enrolled into senior secondary schools.

**Table 2**

			Frequency	Percentage
How do you come to know about masturbation?	Males	Through internet	259	79.93%
		Through peers	65	20.06%
			324	100%
	Females	Through internet	23	20.17%
		Through friends	91	79.82%
		114	100%	

Table 2 reveals that youth (males) with knowledge on masturbation acquired such mostly from the internet. 259, representing 79.93% answered as having acquired their knowledge on masturbation through online channels. 65, representing only 20.06% acquired such knowledge from their friends. In (females) youth, the table reveals that 91, representing 79.82% of the participants had their knowledge on masturbation

from their friends, and only 23 representing 20.17% had their knowledge from the internet. This however, shows that male youth in the area of study are more influenced by the internet in this regard than the female youth who are mostly subjected to more supervision of parents /guardians, in addition to their commitments to the daily chores in the house, as well as inadequate financial capability in purchasing data all the times.

**Table 3**

			Frequency	Percentage
Do you practice masturbation?.	Males	Yes I practice masturbation.	7	2.16%
		No, I don't practice masturbation.	306	94.44%
		I did it only once.	5	1.54%
		I was, but no more	6	1.85%
			324	100%
	Females	Yes, I practice masturbation.	2	1.75%
		No, I don't practice masturbation.	108	94.73%
		I did it only once.	2	1.75%
			2	1.75%
		114	100%	

Table 3 reveals that out of 324 (males) youth, only 7, representing 2.16% accepted practicing masturbation. 5, representing 1.54% accepted doing it once. 6, representing 1.85% accepted to have engaged in the practice sometimes earlier but have seized. And 306, representing 94.44% answered as never engaged in masturbation. This, however is an indicator that opened acceptance of practicing masturbation is not

condoned in the area and may subject the person to be considered an out-cast. The table still reveals that there is a slide difference between males and females youth in the area who involves in the practice of masturbation. To the males youth. It is 5.55%, while to the females it is 5.26%. But still the number of those who do not practice masturbation surpasses the number of those practicing. It is 94.52% against 5.47%.

**Table 4**

			Frequency	Percentage
Why do you practice masturbation	Males	To ease sexual pressure.	5	27.77%
		In response to pornography	10	55.55%
		For pleasure.	3	16.66%
			18	100%
	Females	To ease sexual pressure.	3	50%



		In response to pornography.	1	16.66
		For pleasure.	2	33.33%
			6	100%

Table 4 reveals that out of 18 male youth who responded as engaged in the practice of masturbation now or in the past, 5, representing 27.77% do it to ease sexual pleasure. 10, representing 55.55 % do it in response to arousal emanating from watching pornographic images (pictures, movies, etc.) 3 respondents, representing 33.33% do practice masturbation for pleasure. In females youth, 3 respondents, representing 50%

answered to practice masturbation to ease sexual pressure. 1 respondent, representing 16.66% do it in response of watching pornographic images. 2 respondents, representing 33.33% do it for pleasure. This reveals that, the drive to masturbation varies from males to females. 55.55% do masturbation in response to arousal from watching pornographic images in males participants and 50% of females participants do it to ease sexual pressure.

**Table 5**

			Frequency	Percentage
Why don't you practice masturbation.	Males	Is against my religious teachings.	232	75.81%
		Is not condoned in my culture.	48	15.68%
		I feel too ashamed to do it.	15	3.92%
		I fear it's consequences.	11	3.59%
			306	100%
	Females	Is against my religious teachings.	25	23.14%
		Is not condoned in my culture.	72	66.66%
		I feel too ashamed to do it.	8	7.40%
I fear it's consequences.		3	2.77%	
		108	100%	

Table 5 reveals the reasons of the participants who do not engage in the practice of masturbation. Out of 306 males youth participants, 232, representing 75.81% cited religious (Islam in this case) prohibition as the motive for not practicing masturbation. 48, representing 15.68% cited culture moralities as their reason for masturbating. 15 participants, representing 3.92% consider masturbation as a shameful act. 11 participants, representing 3.59% mentioned fear for diseases as the ground for them to abstain from masturbation. In the females 108 respondents, 25, representing 23.14% mentioned religious prohibitions as their reason for not practicing masturbation. 72 participants, representing 66.66%

mentioned culture moralities as their reason. 8 participants, representing 7.40% consider masturbation a shameful act. 3 participants, representing 2.77% mentioned fear from likely diseases as ground for their abstinence. The highest percent of males do not masturbate for religious grounds and the highest percent of females do not masturbate for cultural moralities. It is worth-noting that, most cultural moralities in the area were drawn from religious teachings to the extent that only widely-knowledgeable in religious teachings can know. Islam spread in the area for more than one thousand years back and the vast majority in the area are Muslims for several generations.

**Table 6**

			Frequency	Percentage
Do you know a friend/colleague practicing masturbation.	Males	Yes I know	43	13.27%
		No, I don't know	275	84.87%
		No answer	6	1.85%
			324	100%
	Females	Yes, I know	8	6.06%
		No, I don't know	120	90.90%
No answer		4	3.03%	
		132	100%	



Table 6 reveals the knowledge of participants to other friends/colleagues who engage in practice of masturbation. This gives this work a wider understanding in the prevalence of masturbation practice in the area of study outside it's participants. However, the result shows that out of 324 males, 43, representing 13.27% answered to have known a friend/colleague that practice masturbation. 275, representing 84.87% of participants have not known any friend/colleague that practice masturbation. 6 participants, representing 1.85% were silent to this question. Among the female participants, out of 132, eight (8), representing 6.06% have known other friends/colleagues that masturbate. 120, representing 90.90% have not known a friend/colleague masturbating. 4 participants, representing 3.03% kept mute to this questions.

#### Result of the study

- 1- Masturbation practice is considered a taboo among the vast majority of youth in Northern Yobe State Nigeria, because of the firmly grounded teachings of Islam adopted as cultural moralities in the area for several centuries.
- 2- Despite the fact that masturbation is not condoned in Northern Yobe State by the vast majority, the practice, (thou in minimum capacity in the time being) is making it's way into the life of some youth.
- 3- Male youth in Northern Yobe State are more vulnerable to accept the practice of masturbation due to their exposure to outside world.
- 4- Pornographic channels through the internet are contributing immensely to the spread of masturbation practice in Northern Yobe State, Nigeria.

#### Recommendations

- 1- Youth in northern Yobe should desist from masturbation as it is against religion and their cultural background.
- 2- Masturbating youth should embrace the lawful substitute to it ( marriage).
- 3- Watching pornography/blue films by some youth should be restrained and spend times in more meaningful ways.
- 4- Parents/guardians, educators and religious leaders need to invent ways to enlighten the youth about negative effects of masturbation.

#### IV. Conclusion:

Practice of masturbation is a highly abominable topic to discuss in a religious and

grounded cultural society like Northern Yobe State Nigeria. Lack of any previous work on the topic can be part of manifestation to it. Some youth in recent years have started to embark on some morally unacceptable behaviors, masturbation inclusive. This requires parents/guardians and all stake holders to be more considerate to affairs of the youth and take proper measures to curtail the menace of masturbation through adequate supervision, monitoring and speeches.

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