

Reexamining the Ethical Criteria Related to the Normal amount of Sex with an Emphasis on the Principles of Sexual Behavior in Islam

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Knowledge of sexual behavior has been developed to provide a behavioral pattern for human sexual relationship to control sexual behavior and make it purposeful. Accordingly, this knowledge examines the behavioral norms in sexual behavior. One of the important issues in this regard is the desirable amount of sex. In this respect, some studies have been conducted from different medical and psychological perspectives, but the ethical borderlines of a good relationship have not been examined from the perspective of Islam. The present study attempts to reexamine the ethical criteria related to the normal amount of sex with an emphasis on the principles of sexual behavior in Islam.

Methods: The present study is library-based analytical, conducted based on Islamic sources (Quranic verses and narrations from Imams and the Prophet). Considering the fact that the present study relies on the Quranic verses and narrations, a large number of original and old sources were examined, but in analyzing and classifying the collected information, the contemporary views as well as the method of interpreting the religious texts were considered. The authors reported no conflict of interests.

Results: From the written documents and their analysis, four classes of narrations were found in relation to the topic under investigation. Based on their analysis, a number of ethical principles and codes were obtained and, then, the ethical borderlines for sexual relationship were explained.

Conclusion: Based on the ethical codes presented, a desirable sexual-emotional relationship between the partners is to be controlled by an ethical framework. Paying attention to the ethical borderlines of this relationship not only makes it a noble and virtuous practice, but helps to stabilize the family and the sexual relationship.

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Summary

Background and Objective

One of the important issues about sexual behavior is concerned with determining the desired rate and the type of relationship. Given the relative nature of the issue, little and much can be considered as

an extreme, but determining its limit within the religious and Islamic texts requires a deep analysis. On the one hand, numerous criteria can be introduced for a desirable relationship without going to extremes, but the present study seeks to examine the ethical criteria related to the normal frequency of sex (1, 2).

Generally, sexual behavior and increased and decreased sexual desire depend on many factors and are influenced by different factors (1). Determining the hidden aspects of the issue of sexual behavior requires detailed codes and explaining its just and unjust examples. What is meant by ethical codes is a list of the ethical obligations and commitments that is developed as a behavioral pattern (3) and determines in detail a person's ethical commitments taking into account a particular situation and certain obligations (4).

Methods

The present study is library-based analytical, conducted based on Islamic sources (Quranic verses and narrations from Imams and the Prophet). Considering the fact that the present study relies on the Quranic verses and narrations, a large number of original and old sources were examined, but in analyzing and classifying the collected information, the contemporary views as well as the method of interpreting the religious texts were considered. In order to obtain new findings, first the related narrations in this regard were examined and were exposed to normative evaluation. The narrations were extensively searched using the key and frequently used terms in this field including lust, intercourse and marriage, pleasure, chastity, and the spouse's rights. After searching for the keywords, the narrations related to the found cases were examined. Finally, the ethical codes related to the desirable amount of sex from the perspective of the Islamic ethics were presented.

Results

Normative analysis of the narrations related to the issue

In the present study, only the narrations that were directly related to the amount of good (halal or legitimate) sex were examined. These narrations can be classified into four categories: consequence-oriented narrations, virtue-oriented narrations, the narrations that have determined the amount of sex by setting examples, and, finally, the narrations related to the sexual duties of the partners.

The first category is concerned with considering the consequences concerning sexual desire or lust. These narrations can be divided into two groups: first, the narrations that refer to the spiritual and negative consequences of lust and, second, those focusing on the harmful effects of going to extremes in having sex. In analyzing the former, it can be found that a virtuous personality should be free of extremism and outburst without

spirituality. In addition, s/he should enjoy such virtues as good interaction, patience, and chastity in sex. However, this group of narrations has not determined the criteria for the minimum or maximum amount of sex. An analysis of the second group of narrations points to the conclusion that, at least for two reasons moderation is necessary in a sexual relationship: first, to observe chastity and sufficiency and, second, to observe justice in relation to oneself and the spouse.

The second class of the narrations involves attention to virtue in sexual desire, which includes the narrations that are naturally next in order after the first class. They present general criteria in self-restraint and enjoying the sexual instinct referring to its ethical function after disapproving lust and extremism. These narrations emphasize the development of a transcendent personality and virtues like modesty, self-restraint, self-control, chastity, contentment, and patience.

An analysis of this class of narrations indicates that the virtue of chastity and piety helps a moral person to avoid the false demands of the self and be happy with natural and real satisfaction of his/her needs. Needs refer to the sensual desires. However, self-restraint does not mean ignoring the personal and social needs, but means using every blessing in line with the legitimate personal and social needs.

The third class involves describing real examples in good sexual relationship. In these narrations, the prophets' behavior and good moral features have been referred to as if their behavioral pattern is so admirable that other people should try to approach it (5-7).

In analyzing this class of the narrations, it can be stated that the interpreters of the narrations have tried to explain the meaning of frequent sex and in some cases, the narrator has even translated and interpreted the Imams' intention after narrating their statement.

What matters is that the Imams' statements refer to frequent sex. It has been repeated in the narrations in different ways. First, it has been considered as the prophets' practice. Second, it has been considered as characteristic of the prophets. Third, it has been considered as an ethical behavior of the prophets.

The fourth class of the narrations refers to the sexual duties and the minimum sexual practices. These narrations can be sub-classified into two categories: the first category concerns the narrations related to women's duties and the second category concern men's sexual duties.

With regard to this class of the narrations, it can be stated that observing justice is one of the most important ethical principles in these narrations. Another ethical principle that can be drawn from these narrations is to respect and to observe human dignity. The third principle that can be inferred from these narrations is related to the marital rights, which is love and affection. In addition to the positive effects on reinforcing this relationship, this mutual love leads to sexual attraction, sex, and, consequently, childbearing as the positive outcomes of love and affection, as the main philosophy behind the attraction between man and women and their marriage (8, 9).

Conclusion

Based on the narrations related to the topic of investigation, the general principles related to sexual behavior were inferred. Using these principles, a person can better determine the ideal and correct amount of sex for him/herself. These principles include justice, respect and dignity, chastity, and love and affection.

As a transcendent measure, ethics helps not only to determine the borderlines in sexual behavior, but to make it regulated. In this way, the first hypothesis of the study “Ethics and ethical life have a positive effect on the level of desirable sexual relationship” was confirmed. Although the ethics code of the present study was based on determining the ethical borderlines in the partners’ sexual relationship and the minimum and maximum level of the relationship, in terms of fixedness, the mentioned principles can be applied and generalized to other issues related to sexual behavior.

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Conflict of interest

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Authors’ contribution

Research background: first author; method: second author; discussion and conclusion: third and fourth authors.

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