

## A Preliminary Survey of Middle Adulthood Sexuality

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This is a preliminary and an exploratory study conducted to determine the sexual enjoyment of middle-aged college faculty members from an educational institution in Angeles City vis-à-vis studies done abroad. The present study surveyed 36 full-time faculty members coming from different colleges: 26 females, and 10 males all within the age range of 40 to 55 (mean age is 46.81). The results suggest that sexual enjoyment is generally conceptualized as being for the young. Both genders in the present study also suggest they are not enjoying sex in their current ages, contrary to findings abroad. Somehow women tend to offer contradicting responses, thus leading to contradicting results. For instance, to the statement "menopause connotes or means decrease in sexual activities" many *strongly disagreed*, likely implying that they are sexually active after all. Women also gave more 'undecided' responses in almost all the options in the questionnaire.

"Many people associate the middle years with negative experiences and the proverbial mid-life crisis. But the middle years can also be experienced as a delightful, liberating, exhilarating period" (Abrenica, 1996, p. 99). Is sexual enjoyment included?

Sex is generally regarded as something for the young, healthy and the beautiful as constantly demonstrated in and by the mass media. Many people in our culture see sexual activity as appropriate only for the young (Reiss, 1988). This belief falls within a constellation of unfounded cultural myths about sexuality among older people, which include the notions that older people are sexless, older people with sexual urges are abnormal, and older men with sexual interests are "dirty old men" (Nevid, Fichner-Rathus, & Rathus, 1995). But a startling discovery made by many mature married folks themselves reveal that they are not

only having nearly as much sex as the kids are, they are having fun too. This confirms the view that sex is also for the grown-ups (Mithers, 1999). But when normal individuals—both sexes—reach middle adulthood, do they really enjoy sex or do their sexual activities improve? According to Kaplan (1990):

Although it is widely believed that sex no longer matters after middle age, the opposite is true, and sex often become more and not less important as a person grows older. Because sex is among the last pleasure-giving biological processes to deteriorate, it is potentially an enduring source of gratification at a time when these are becoming fewer and fewer, and a link to the joys of youths. These are important ingredients in the elderly person's emotional well-being (pp.185, 204)."

To enjoy sex connotes sexual activity. The operational definition of to *improve sex* in this present study is an enhanced sexual activity, experience, emotionality, responsiveness, or orgasm. *Middle adulthood* and *midlife* refer to the age range 40 to 55 years.

Because this is a preliminary study, several questions were raised attempting to explore the concepts and presence of sexual pleasure among selected middle adult Filipinos. Specifically, the present study answers the following questions:

1. Is sex is for the young, healthy and beautiful?
2. Is it shocking for elderly to engage in sexual relationships?
3. Do you enjoy sexual relationships, did you enjoy sex when you were younger, and are you sexually active today?
4. Is intimacy present in your sexual relationship?
5. Is your sex life is much better today (i.e., more enjoyable, more orgasm)?
6. Did the length of time being with your partner increase your sexual activity?
7. Does menopause connote or mean decrease in sexual activities for you?
8. When did you most enjoy sex?
9. Are you currently under medication? If yes, for what condition?

However, this present study ultimately hopes to propose a counseling program in the future to better understand this “last pleasure-giving biological processes... and a link to the joys of youth” for the elderly.

### **Biology and Orgasm**

Survey of 160 midlife women by Lillian Rubin in 1982 found that the most characteristic pattern was of *improving sexuality*. Rubin noted that although women had to overcome sexual inexperience and cultural prohibitions against female sexuality when they were younger, by midlife, women were better able to relate sex to their own wishes and needs rather than to participate in sexual activity principally to please their partners.

Thus, Rubin found that midlife women take the sexual initiative more often than they previously had done – although, paradoxically, some of these women became concerned with putting sexual pressure on their husband or partners by initiating sex too often. As early as 1971, Kaplan and Sager reported that despite biological changes, women could retain their ability to achieve orgasm well into their advanced years. Indeed, many women in their eighties have been found to experience orgasm as often as women in their early twenties.

A six-year longitudinal study by Palmore (1981) of older married couples found that one in five actually increased their coital frequency over time. Research by Starr and Weiner (1982) does not support the belief that people lose their sexuality as they age. Nearly all (95%) of the elderly people in one sample reported that they liked sex, and 75 percent reported that orgasm was essential to their sexual fulfillment.

### **Changes and Repertoire**

Masters and Johnson also reported similar findings in 1985 when they noted that men of 40-55 age bracket – middle adulthood – are apt to show a strong sense of self-confidence and control and engage in

behavior geared toward showing their power and proficiency while women tend to be more dependent, passive and lacking in confidence. By their late fifties, however, a decided shift occurs: Men seem to move away from their need to demonstrate power and mastery and begin to show more concern for emotional sensitivity and interpersonal relations. At the same time, women frequently begin to show more self-confidence and assertiveness, in effect reversing the earlier roles that had been observed.

In fact, according to Brecher (1984), couples may accommodate to the physical changes of aging by broadening their sexual repertoire to include more diverse forms of stimulations. Many respondents to a *Consumer Reports* survey reported using oral-genital stimulation, sexual fantasy, sexually explicit materials, anal stimulation, vibrators, and other sexual techniques to offset problems in achieving lubrication or erection.

Kinsey (Kinsey et al., 1953), a pioneer in sex research report; that 94 percent of men and 84 percent of women remained sexually active at the age of 60 as early as 1948-1953. Even the very elderly tend to maintain a sexual interest. Half of the 60- to 91-year-olds surveyed by Starr and Weiner (1981) reported sexual relations on a regular basis of which half indicated a frequency of at least once a week. A study by Bretschneider and McCoy (1988) of 200 healthy 80- to 102-year-olds reported that 30 percent of the women and 62 percent of the men still engaged in intercourse.

### **Satisfaction and Culture**

Despite these general trends, according to Knox (1988), sexuality among the elderly is variable; many elderly people engage in intercourse, oral sex, and masturbation at least as often as when younger; some become disgusted by sex; others simply lose interest. Coital frequency, according to Nevid (1995), is not synonymous with sexual satisfaction. In a Canadian study by Libman (1989) of 215 married people who were middle-aged and older (51 to 81 years of age) those age 65 or above showed lower coital frequency than younger respondents. However, *no sizable differences emerged in the level of sexual satisfaction between older and younger groups* (emphasis—Arenas). The subjective experience of

orgasm also remains highly satisfying, despite the lessened intensity of muscular contractions due to aging (Katchadourian, 1987).

However one study by Ade-Ridder (1985) of spouses married for more than 50 years showed that nearly half (47%) had discontinued intercourse, and 92 percent reported a decline over the years. Several factors played a role in declining activity, including physical problems, boredom, and cultural attitudes toward sex among the aging. People who are exposed to cultural views that sex among older people is deviant may renounce sex as they age. Those who remain sexually active may be bothered by guilt (Reiss, 1988). Thus, according to Nevid (1995), "sexual activity among the elderly, as among other groups, is influenced not only by physical structures and changes, but also by cultural expectations" (p. 442).

### Health and Sex

Social scientists from the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago embarked on a landmark survey of America's sex life, which was catalogued in the book *Sex in America: A definitive survey* (Warner Books, 1995). The study showed that while 61 percent of women between ages 18 and 24 said that they always or usually reached orgasm with their primary partner, *by age 40 it was a whopping 78 percent* (emphasis – Arenas).

It was also noted by James W. Maddock, Ph.D., professor of family social science at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul (Mithers, 1999) that by the time men were in their twenties, most of them had much more sex – most of it through masturbation – than women have. At that age, however, sex may be less than mind-blowing for women, who are still learning what pleases them and their partners.

It should be stressed that aging alone generally does not diminish female sexual interest or the potential of the woman to be sexually responsive if her general health is good. Specific physiological changes do occur, however, in the sexual response cycle of postmenopausal women. These changes do not appear abruptly or in exactly the same fashion in each woman (Masters & Johnson, 1985). In the same context, sex therapist Helen Singer Kaplan (1990) concludes:

The loss of sexuality is not an inevitable aspect of aging... The results of these studies are remarkable in their consensus: Without exception, each investigator found that, providing they are in good health, the great majority of people remain sexually functional and active on a regular basis until virtually the end of life. Or, to put it more succinctly, 70 percent of healthy 70-year-olds remain sexually active, and are having sex at least once a week, and typically more often than.

Nevertheless, studies over the years have demonstrated again and again that women become more sexually responsive with time, until they reach a peak in their thirties or forties—after which they plateau (Mithers, 1999).

These findings made abroad thus become in part the benchmark of this study. However, doing a comparative analysis of the sexual behaviors abroad and in the Philippines have many delimitations and limitations due to myriad factors, i.e., from demographic to cultural and even individual differences. This study is a minor attempt to untangle indigenous-sexual complexities.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study employed the survey-descriptive, and exploratory method of research. Through a questionnaire, it surveyed the selected sexual concepts of the respondents who were currently in middle adulthood. Data of the selected respondents for the present study were obtained from the Human Resource Development Center of the participating educational institution which provided computer-generated names of those within the required age ranges.

This study was conducted to determine the selected sexual concepts and attitudes of the 36 middle-aged adult college faculty members vis-à-vis the surveys conducted outside the Philippines on middle adulthood sexuality focusing on the idea that “sex is for the grown ups too.” Middle adulthood refers to the age range of 40 to 55 years old.

## **Participants**

The subject pool was the middle aged (40–55 years) full time faculty members of a university in Angeles City. There were 42 individuals who qualified. However, six (6) were excluded in the survey: three were single; one widowed for eight years now; one was out of the country, and one did not respond. The breakdown of the total respondents by age are as follows: 16 or 44.44 percent within the 40–45-age range; 11 or 30.56 percent aged 45–50, and 9 or 25 percent aged 50–55. The average age of the respondents is 46.81 years.

## **Instrument**

A single-page-questionnaire was prepared which contained ten questions relating to sexual concepts and attitudes of middle adulthood. The questions were based on the related studies presented. There was no attempt to integrate interviews and other methods. The questionnaire was shown and validated by six psychology professors of the participating institution and pre-tested among 20 professors from different colleges of the same participating institution.

## **Procedure**

One method of administering a survey is through the self-administered questionnaire, in which respondents are asked to complete the questionnaire themselves (Babbie, 2001, p. 253). The researcher personally administered and retrieved the questionnaires. No other research procedures were applied. There were four (4) disqualified individuals, and two (2) who failed to respond.

The Human Resource Development Center of the participating educational institution provided the computer-generated list of the selected respondents, excluding those who were outside the required age range and those not on a full-time status. The frequency and percentage distributions as well as the weighted mean were the only descriptive statistical tools applied.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What follows are the results and discussions of the study. The responses to each of the questions are sequentially presented and discussed.

**Sex is for the young, healthy and beautiful**

Sex is generally regarded as something for the young, healthy, and the beautiful, an idea constantly affirmed by the mass media. The media usually link love, sex, and romance with the young (Haffner, 1994). There is even a tacit assumption that it is not quite acceptable for older people to have sexual needs. With such widespread denial of the validity of sexual expression in the "golden years," it is not surprising that many individuals are confused about aging and sexuality (Crooks & Baur, 1996; Billhourn, 1994). Thinking of an elderly couple engaging in sexual relations usually provokes embarrassment or even discomfort. *Kadiri* (nauseating) is the local term typically associated with such acts.

Even in America the idea of sexual partners in a nursing home seems shocking and immoral to most people (Masters & Johnson, 1986). According to Gordon and Snyder, (1989) and Pratt and Schmall (1989), perhaps nowhere is sexuality among the elderly subject to greater distortions than in nursing homes and "old-age" homes. The staff of these facilities tend to treat the residents as sexless beings and may be stunned to discover them involved in sexual activity. In many cases sexual activities among residents are actively discouraged.

The data obtained from the 36 middle-aged college faculty member respondents reveal the following trend with regard to the statement *sex is for the young, healthy and beautiful*.

As seen in Table 1, the responses of the 36 well-educated-middle-adult Filipino faculty members thus reaffirm the findings of Crooks and Baur (1996) and Billhourn (1994) which assume older people have no sexual needs due to widespread denial of the validity of sexual expression among the elderly.



Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of responses on *consideration 1*: Sex is for the young, healthy, and beautiful

Choice	N	%
Strongly agree	18	50.00
Agree	13	36.11
Undecided	1	2.78
Disagree	2	5.56
Strongly disagree	2	5.56
TOTAL	36	100%
Weighted mean	4.19	
Descriptive interpretation	Agree	

### Elderly couples engaging in sexual relationship is shocking

The next table illustrates the trend regarding the respondents' concept of elderly couples engaging in sexual relationship as shocking:

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of responses on *consideration 2*: Elderly couples engaging in sexual relationship is shocking

Choice	N	%
Strongly agree	18	50.00
Agree	13	36.11
Undecided	4	11.11
Disagree	0	0.00
Strongly disagree	1	2.78
TOTAL	36	100%
Weighted mean	4.31	
Descriptive interpretation	Agree	

The responses under this consideration are very reflective of the findings in Table 1 which show that sex among the elderly is less accepted among Filipinos and even among individuals of the same age brackets. Could these two sexual concepts towards the elderly be attributed partly to physical unattractiveness?

Cultural negativism about sex and romance in the geriatric years is a reflection of an attitude called *ageism*, a prejudice against people because they are old. Butler and Lewis (1972) say the ageist sees older people in stereotypes: rigid, boring, talkative, senile, old-fashioned in morality and lacking in skills, useless and with little redeeming social value.

However, findings by Declaire (2003), who surveyed 1000 wedded Americans, reveal that the importance of having good sex which peaks among women between the ages of 44 to 56. A woman's increased interest in sex may be driven as much by a need to affirm her desirability. According to Gottman, co-founder of the Gottman Institute and its Marriage Clinic, a husband who makes his wife feel especially sexy and attractive at this age will have a much happier marriage.

The responses of the 36 well-educated middle-adult Filipino faculty members are similar to findings of Masters and Johnson (1985), which averred that ageism in relation to sexuality is the ultimate form of desexualization: if you are getting old, you're finished. A detailed discussion is presented under the section *length of time with partner increases sexual activity*.

### **Middle-aged adults enjoy sexual relationship; Enjoyed sex when younger; and Sexually active today**

Overall, the concept of the respondents is that middle-aged adults do not enjoy sexual relationships. Again, further elucidation may be gleaned when analyzing the overall responses of the respondents given in Table 3. This could also be a reflection of how reticent the respondents are about sex.

One may deduce from the data regarding the sexual concepts of the respondents against three considerations presented below that middle-aged adults do not enjoy sexual relationships; they did not enjoy sex when they were younger, and they are not sexually active today. This particular set of respondents therefore have an inactive sex life.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of responses on consideration 3 (For both sexes): Middle-aged adults enjoy sexual relationship; enjoyed sex when younger; and sexually active today

Item	SA*	A	U	D	SD	Total
a. Mid-adults enjoy sex	0	3	5	17	11	36
Percentage	0.00	8.33	13.89	47.22	30.56	100%
Weighted mean			2.00			
Descriptive interpretation			Disagree			
b. Enjoyed sex when younger	0	8	8	11	9	36
Percentage	0.00	22.22	22.22	30.56	25.00	100%
Weighted mean			2.42			
Descriptive interpretation			Disagree			
c. Sexually active Now	3	1	7	16	9	36
Percentage	8.33	2.78	19.44	44.44	25.00	100%
Weighted mean			2.25			
Descriptive interpretation			Disagree			

\*Legend: SA- Strongly agree; U-Undecided; A-Agree; D-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree

The researcher segregated the male and female respondents and came up with the following results and interpretation.

These data again show that even among the all-male respondents, the majority are of the opinion that middle-aged adults are not enjoying sex. On the *enjoyment of sex when younger*, the weighted mean response of 2.10 still means that the male respondents generally disagree with the item stating they enjoyed sex when they were younger.

In Table 4 the weighted mean of 2.10 for item c shows that the male respondents generally disagree with the item on being sexually active today.

Table 5 shows female responses for Question No. 3.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of Responses on Consideration 3 (For Male): Middle-aged adults enjoy sexual relationship; enjoyed sex when younger; and sexually active today

Item	SA*	A	U	D	SD	Total
a. Mid-adults enjoy sex	0	0	0	7	3	10
Percentage	0.00	0.00	0.00	70.00	30.00	100%
Weighted mean			1.70			
Descriptive interpretation			Disagree			
b. Enjoyed sex when younger	0	3	0	2	5	10
Percentage	0.00	30.00	0.00	20.00	50.00	100%
Weighted mean			2.10			
Descriptive interpretation			Disagree			
c. Sexually active now	0	3	0	2	5	10
Percentage	0.00	30.00	0.00	20.00	50.00	100%
Weighted mean			2.10			
Descriptive interpretation			Disagree			

\*Legend: SA- Strongly agree; U-Undecided; A-Agree; D-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree

Female respondents, like males, generally disagree that middle-aged adults enjoy sexual relationships. On current sexual activity, the table shows that more than half of the female respondents are not sexually active. The responses seem to contradict the results presented in Table 9.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of responses on consideration 3 (For Female E): Middle-aged adults enjoy sexual relationship; enjoyed sex when younger; and sexually active today

Item	SA*	A	U	D	SD	Total
a. Mid-adult enjoys sex	0	3	6	9	8	26
Percentage	0.00	11.54	23.08	34.61	30.77	100%
Weighted mean			2.23			
Descriptive interpretation			Disagree			
b. Enjoyed sex when younger	0	5	9	8	4	26
Percentage	0.00	19.23	34.62	30.77	15.38	100%
Weighted mean			2.58			
Descriptive interpretation			Undecided			
c. Sexually active Now	2	1	7	10	6	26
Percentage	7.69	3.85	26.92	38.46	23.08	100%
Weighted mean			2.35			
Descriptive interpretation			Disagree			

\*Legend: SA- Strongly agree; U-Undecided; A-Agree; D-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree

### Intimacy is present in sexual relationship

According to Maddock, the trend is clear – the longer, more steady in all respects of the relationships, the more likely the incidence and consistency of orgasm. In other words, “a long-term relationship fosters an intimacy that gives lovemaking intensity and richness that isn’t available to us earlier in our lives” (Mithers, 1999, p. 74). This may also mean that the best constant aphrodisiac between partners is prolonged and constant togetherness.

Table 6 presents the results on the presence of intimacy in the respondents' sexual relationship:

Table 6. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of responses on consideration 4: Intimacy is present in my sexual relationship

Choices	N	%
Strongly agree	0	0.00
Agree	4	11.11
Undecided	1	2.78
Disagree	12	33.33
Strongly disagree	19	52.78
TOTAL	36	100%
Weighted mean	1.72	
Descriptive interpretation	Disagree	

The 36 respondents generally disagree that intimacy is present in their sexual relationship. The result again contradicts studies made abroad; the respondents of the present study appear to be less intimate with their sexual partners.

Research reveals that middle aged men experience a decrease in sex drive following a drop in testosterone levels. Their lovemaking becomes much more leisurely and touch-oriented, and that translates into more pleasure for their wives (Mithers, 1999, pp. 69-73). This simply shows the powerful effect of the body's biochemicals in taming lovemaking, which obviously does not appear in the results of this study.

### **Sex life is much better today (i.e., more enjoyable, more orgasm)**

According to a survey done by Kinsey in 1948 and 1953, the average American couple has intercourse two or three times (3) per week in their twenties (20) and thirties (30), after which the frequency slowly declines. The survey also says that those who are past age fifty (50), coital frequency averages once a week or less.

Thirty-eight years after the Kinsey statement, Masters and Johnson aver

that “average” frequencies do not tell the whole story. In each study on the frequency of marital coitus, a broad range of individual variation was found. Some young married couples have no coital activity, while other couples have intercourse several times a day. While, in general, coital frequency rates decline with the length of marriage, *some couples clearly develop better sexual relationship as time goes by and may be more coitally active after 15 or 20 years of marriage than they were early in their marital lives* (emphasis – Arenas).

However, it may be noted, according to Schiavi, (1990) following orgasm, erection subsides more rapidly than in younger men. A study of 65 healthy men ages 45 to 74 showed an age-related decline in sexual desire, arousal, and activity. Yet there were no differences between younger and older men in level of sexual satisfaction or enjoyment. Older people may produce less ejaculate, and it may seep rather than shoot out. Though the contractions of orgasm still begins at 0.8-second interval, they become less weaker and fewer. Still, the number or strength of spasms does not translate precisely into subjective pleasure. “An elderly male may enjoy orgasm as thoroughly as he did at a younger age. Attitudes and expectations can be important as the contractions themselves” (Nevid, et al., 1995, p. 444).

Relative to these findings among the Americans, Table 7 shows whether the sex life of the Filipino respondents are much better today than when they were younger.

The respondents generally seem undecided whether their sex life is much better today or not. This could be reflective of the Filipino respondents’ reservations in divulging their “sexual life” or confusion brought about by the widespread denial of the validity of sexual expression among the elderly as expressed by Crooks and Baur (1996) and Billhourn (1994).

Table 7. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of responses on consideration 5: Sex life is much better today

Choices	N	%
Strongly agree	2	5.56
Agree	9	25.00
Undecided	10	27.78
Disagree	7	19.44
Strongly disagree	8	22.22
TOTAL	36	100%
Weighted mean	2.72	
Descriptive interpretation	Undecided	

### **The length of time being with partner increases sexual activity**

As previously mentioned, a long-term relationship fosters an intimacy that gives lovemaking intensity and richness that is not available to us earlier in our lives (Mithers, 1999).

In 1976 The Hite Report claimed that nearly a third of the predominantly young female sample wanted sex daily or more than once a day. Another 15 percent wanted sex three to five times a week. For women married an average of 13 years this desire rate is much higher than the actual average frequency of two to three times a week for women in their late 20s; once or twice a week for women in their 30s; six times a month for women in their 40s; and once a week for women over 50 (Bell & Bell 1972, as cited from Francoeur, 1984, p. 277).

The availability of a sexually interested and supportive partner may be the most important determination of continued sexual activity (Nevid, et al., 1995). In one survey, the most common reason women gave for discontinuing sexual activity was the death of their husbands (Pfeiffer et al., 1972). Lack of a partner is a special concern for women. Women's life expectancy exceeds men's by an average of seven years (71.3 years for men versus 78.3 years for women). This is one reason that one older woman in two lives without a spouse as compared to one man in five (Gordon & Snyder, 1989). About 50 percent of all women over



the age of 65 have been widowed, as compared to only 13 percent of men over age 65 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987). Not surprisingly, loneliness was the problem most frequently reported (55%) among a sample of 36 widows (Haas-Hawkings, 1985).

Table 8. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of responses on consideration 6: Length together increases sexual activity

Choices	N	%
Strongly agree	0	0.00
Agree	12	33.33
Undecided	6	16.67
Disagree	10	27.78
Strongly disagree	8	22.22
TOTAL	36	100%
Weighted mean	2.61	
Descriptive Interpretation	Undecided	

Table 8 shows that the respondents are likewise generally undecided on whether length of time being with partner increases sexual activity. But comparing the data against Table 3, a disparity emerges: do the respondents tend to have a sexual life after all?

The response of the well-educated middle-adult-Filipinos corresponds with findings of *The Reader's Digest Survey of Marriage in America* that in many ways, sex and romance become more significant to marital happiness over time, and sexual satisfaction is much more important during midlife than in early marriage (see Declaire). The disparity could again be attributed to confusion engendered by denying the validity of sexual expression among the elderly.

### **Menopause connotes or means decrease in sexual activities**

Recent investigation from a *physiological perspective* done by Leiblum (1983) and co-workers found that sexually active postmenopausal women had less shrinkage of the vagina and higher levels of androgens and pituitary gonadotropins (LH and FSH) than sexually inactive women. Thus,

research has shown that the decrease in vaginal lubrication in post-menopausal is the direct result of diminished vaginal blood flow that, in truth, is caused by low estrogen.

This suggests that regular sexual activity may provide at least some 'extension' against the physiologic changes of aging in relation to female sexual anatomy (Masters & Johnson, 1985). The *use it or lose it* adage somehow applies.

From a *psychological perspective* experts claim that by the time women reach their thirties, most of them have honed their skills. Consider this testimony of a 38-year-old woman, married for eight years, to Mithers (1999, p. 73): "I hate to sound clinical, but only seventeen years of having sex could have taught me how men like to be touched, how I like it, what positions work."

Alvin Baraff, Ph.D., a therapist and director of Men Center Counseling in Washington D.C. who has treated and surveyed hundreds of men, says: "With time, men learn a greater appreciation of activities like kissing, petting and hugging – things that women have wanted all along" (Mithers, 1999).

The table demonstrates that 42.3 percent (11) *disagreed* that menopause does not connote or mean decrease in sexual activity. This implies that many of the respondents falling within the 'menopausal phase' are actually sexually active after all, contrary to findings depicted in the other tables.

Table 9. Frequency and percentage distribution, weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of responses on consideration 7: Menopause connotes or means decrease in sexual activities

Choices	N	%
Strongly agree	1	3.85
Agree	7	26.92
Undecided	7	26.92
Disagree	7	26.92
Strongly disagree	4	15.38
TOTAL	26	100%
Weighted mean	2.85	
Descriptive interpretation	Undecided	

### Enjoy sex most during this age (‘Enjoy’ is distinct from ‘intensity’ in this context)

As earlier mentioned, the *ageist*, they say, sees older people in stereotypes: rigid, boring, talkative, senile, old-fashioned in morality and lacking in skills, useless and with little redeeming social value; they are also thought to be decreasing in attractiveness.

When it comes to accepting physical imperfections, men are forgiving, according to Mithers. In 1996, Baraff surveyed one hundred men about what they most longed for in marriage, but they never mentioned anything specific about their spouses’ appearance. And the National Opinion Research Center survey found that 67 percent of men over forty-five said they still got great enjoyment from watching their mates undress.

Relative to this, the responses demonstrate the following trend:

*Table 10. Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents by the age they most enjoyed sex*

Age	N	%
15-20	0	0.00
20-25	3	8.33
25-30	10	27.78
30-35	4	11.11
35-40	5	13.89
40-45	7	19.44
45-50	1	2.78
No response	6	16.67
TOTAL	36	100%

The data show that it was between the ages 25-30 that most of the respondents enjoyed sex, followed by the ages 40-45. Six or 17 percent did not respond, which could easily offset the very minor disparity. Otherwise, the responses of the 36 well-educated middle aged-adult Filipinos do not veer too much from findings abroad, which demonstrate that sexual satisfaction is much more important during midlife than in early marriage (Declaire, 2003).

## Medications: Other Considerations

There are some 200 drugs recognized to cause impotence. Some of the most common are antidepressants, antihistamines, antihypertensives, diuretics, tranquilizers, narcotics, nicotine, sedatives, and stomach acid inhibitors (antacids) (Sy, 1999).

This was not overlooked in the study. Thus, the medical conditions, specifically the medications being taken by the respondents were also surveyed. Out of the 36 respondents, 22 or 61.11 percent said they were not under any medication; nine (9) or 25 percent on the other hand, claim to be under medication and; five (5) or 13.89 percent gave no response.

In terms of medication, 55.56 percent (5) were taking medicine for heart and blood pressure conditions; 44.44 percent (4) for allergy (one for asthma and three not specified). These two specific conditions are discussed below.

### Heart Condition

Many of the medications used to treat high blood pressures cause sexual difficulties for men and women. For example, *Aldomet* (alpha-methyl dopa), the drug most commonly used to treat this condition, causes erectile dysfunction in 10 to 15 percent of men at low doses and in up to half of men in high doses. Decreased libido and impaired sexual arousal is found in similar proportions for women using this drug. There is even a drug called *Ismelin* (guanethidine) that inhibits ejaculation in more than half of the men using it. Usually these difficulties disappear within a week or two after discontinuing medication (Master & Johnson, 1985).

### Allergy

Antihistamines, used in allergy pills and sinus medications, can affect sexuality in two ways. Drowsiness is a prime side effect and one not likely to improve the quality of sex. In women, these drugs often cause a reduction in vaginal lubrication so they may sometimes cause painful intercourse (Masters & Johnson, 1985).

The implications of these conditions relative to and with the results presented are not further discussed in this study. They are recommended for inclusion in future studies.

## CONCLUSION

World-renowned sexologists aver that despite cultural myths, the psychological need for intimacy, excitement, and pleasure does not disappear in old age, and there is nothing in the biology of aging that automatically shuts down sexual function.

In the United States, where there is little preparation or education for aging, it is not surprising that many people are uninformed about physiological changes in their sexual function in their sixties and seventies. They may mistakenly view these normal "slowing down" processes as evidence of imminent loss of sexual function.

Masters and Johnson (1986) advice that brief preventive counseling in middle age might result in significant changes.

A long-term relationship fosters an intimacy that gives lovemaking intensity and richness that is not available earlier in life. But sex is a birthright that can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

Some findings in this study may not quite lucidly match those conducted abroad. This only proves that the study of human sexuality is made more complex by demographic, cultural, and even individual differences.

In sum, most physical changes do not bring a man or a woman's sexual life to a grinding halt. People's attitudes, sexual histories and partners are usually more important factors in sexual behavior and enjoyment; it is also influenced by cultural expectations (Nevid, et al., 1995).

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