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SEXUAL ABSTINENCE: HARM OR BENEFIT

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Relevance: Sexual abstinence is a common practice in various cultures and religions, but its impact on physical and mental health remains insufficiently studied. Athletes use abstinence practices to influence competition results. Teenagers and men isolate themselves from sexual activity for a month in many countries, which is gaining popularity to increase desire and positively affect potency. Women practice both active and passive abstinence due to partner distance or religious beliefs. Modern studies indicate that sexual abstinence can have both positive and negative effects on the body. Understanding how it affects physical and psychological health is important for overall well-being. How exactly does this practice affect potency? Does it influence arousal levels, and if so, how? Does it benefit or harm health? These and other questions are of interest to anyone who has heard of or planned to isolate themselves from sex and/or masturbation.

Research Objective: To determine the impact of sexual abstinence on the physical and psychological health of respondents from different countries and age groups, specifically residents of Ukraine, Latvia, Portugal, Brazil, Germany, Poland, Britain, America, Austria, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, Pakistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, the Philippines, Switzerland, and Bulgaria.

Materials and Methods: The survey was conducted anonymously among 150 respondents of different age categories using Google Forms. Questions included age, gender, the presence of sexual activity or masturbation, the fact of practicing sexual abstinence, reasons for starting, as well as feelings and changes in psychological and physical health in cases of abstinence or lack thereof.

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Results: Of the respondents, 43.3% were women and 56.7% were men. Respondents belonged to different age categories: 42.7% were aged 18-25 years, 28% were aged 26-35, 15.3% were aged 36-45, 6.7% were aged 46-55, 3.3% were aged 56-60, 1.3% were aged 61-65, 1.3% were aged 66-68, and 1.3% were aged 69-72 years.

Of those surveyed, 68% lead an active sexual life, and 63.1% masturbate. Meanwhile, 32% do not have a sexual life at all, and 36.9% do not masturbate. Among the respondents, 60% practice sexual abstinence, and the main reasons for this are: lack of a partner (34.4%), sports activities (10.4%), lack of desire (15.6%), religious beliefs (7.3%), lack of time (7.3%), personal beliefs (6.3%), health problems (3.1%), and 15.6% mentioned other reasons. Among the "other" reasons mentioned were: partner's hyposexuality, increased sexual desire, sublimation for career growth, partner's business trips, marital life without sex, and the war in Ukraine.

Regarding the impact of sexual abstinence on physiological indicators, 29.4% noted a change in weight, while 70.6% did not notice any effect. Regarding hair growth, 9.3% of respondents noted an increase, and 90.6% saw no effect.

Respondents also noted the impact of abstinence on psycho-emotional well-being: 14.3% reported positive changes, such as increased sexual desire, improved skin and body condition, stable psychological well-being, and reduced stress. 16.7% noticed negative changes, while 69.1% reported no changes. Among respondents, 16.7% noted significant changes, and 19% noticed minor negative changes. The most frequently reported issues included irritability, depression, increased aggressiveness, sexual aggression, erection in public places, and increased body hair growth.

An analysis of the impact of abstinence on male potency showed that 15.3% noted improvement, 23.7% recorded a negative effect, 8.5% noted a slight negative effect, and 20.3% did not notice any effect. Women, in their responses regarding arousal, noted that 28.6% felt a negative effect, 3.1% did not notice significant positive effects, and 40.5% noticed no changes.

Conclusions: The analysis of respondents' answers showed that the main reason for sexual abstinence is the absence of a partner. The impact on physiological indicators, such as hair growth, was minimal, and the positive effects of abstinence were rarely observed. Some respondents reported reduced stress and improved psychological well-being, but these effects were individual and not general. On the contrary, negative consequences prevailed: increased irritability, aggressiveness, depression, and unwanted erections in public places. The impact on male potency was mostly negative or not observed at all, although some respondents reported improvement. In women, the intensity of sexual arousal mostly remained at the same level, although in most cases, a slight increase was observed. An analysis of scientific studies on this topic showed changes in the

spermogram of the respondents: When comparing two sperm analyses from the same patient, it was found that all parameters remained unchanged except for the volume of sperm and the total number of motile sperm ($p < 0.001$).

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