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NATURAL APHRODISIAC USE AND MALE SEXUAL HEALTH OUTCOMES: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF DATES, TIGERNUTS, AND WATERMELON AMONG MALES IN LIMBE, SOUTH WEST REGION, CAMEROON

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Abstract**Introduction**

Natural aphrodisiacs such as dates, tigernuts and watermelon are widely consumed for their perceived benefits on male sexual health. However, there is limited evidence supporting their effectiveness.

Purpose

This study assessed the consumption of natural aphrodisiacs and their association with sexual health outcomes among males in Limbe Cameroon.

Materials and Methods

A mixed methods study was conducted among 500 males aged 25-45 years selected using a consecutive sampling technique. Quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire and qualitative data through focus group interviews with 100 participants who consumed natural aphrodisiacs. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 26.0 and qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

Results

Overall, 74.4% of the study participants reported consuming natural aphrodisiacs with watermelon being the most commonly consumed. Sexual health disorders were reported by 64.8% of participants predominantly premature ejaculation (54.0%). Daily consumption of dates was associated with higher libido, tigernuts consumption with improved erectile function and watermelon consumption with greater sexual satisfaction. Qualitative findings revealed cultural beliefs, perceived health benefits, traditional practices, and misconceptions as major themes influencing the consumption of natural aphrodisiacs.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of incorporating traditional knowledge into modern health practices, advocating for increased awareness and research into natural dietary sources that can support sexual health.

Keywords: Reproductive Health, Natural aphrodisiac, Sexual Activity, Limbe, Cameroon

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INTRODUCTION

Male sexual health encompasses a wide range of physiological, psychological, and emotional factors that contribute to a man's sexual function and overall wellbeing. Issues such as erectile dysfunction (ED), premature ejaculation, low libido, and infertility are prevalent and can have significant impacts on mental health, relationships, and social functioning (Urolife, 2025). The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 150 million men globally suffer from some form of sexual dysfunction, with erectile dysfunction alone affecting about 1 in 10 men (Kitaw et al, 2024).

The pursuit of enhancing male sexual health has long been a topic of interest across various cultures, with natural aphrodisiacs often spotlighted for their potential benefits. In recent years, there has been a growing trend towards the use of natural substances to promote wellbeing, driven by an increasing awareness of holistic health practices and a desire to reduce reliance on synthetic pharmaceuticals. Africa and Cameroon in particular with her rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, presents a unique context for examining these natural aphrodisiacs, which are traditionally consumed in various forms. Dates and tigernuts have been used in local diets for their nutritional and energizing properties, while watermelon is often lauded for its hydrating effects and potential benefits for sexual health (Mohammed et al, 2022 and Rotimi et al, 2023). Despite the cultural significance and dietary prevalence of these foods, empirical research exploring their specific impacts on male sexual health remains limited.

This mixed-methods study seeks to bridge this gap by employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods to assess the usage of these natural aphrodisiacs among men, as well as their self-reported effects on sexual health outcomes. Thus, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these natural food items are perceived, their consumption practices, and the potential physiological and psychological benefits they may confer.

METHODS

Study Design

This study employed a mixed-method study design combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Study Setting

This study was carried out at New Town Limbe. Limbe initially known as Victoria is a seaside city in the South West Region of Cameroon, Fako Division. It has an estimated population of between 126,000 and 143,000 inhabitants (World Population Review, 2026). The city is administratively divided into three (03) districts, Limbe I, II and III. It hosts the Limbe Botanical Garden and other touristic sites which attracts thousands of tourists to the city every year.

Study Population and Sampling

The study included males aged between 25 and 45 years. A consecutive sampling technique was employed to select 500 participants into the study.

Participants Eligibility

Male residing in New Town Limbe aged between 25 and 45 years and willing to participate in the study were included. Men with a previous diagnosed health issue that may affect sexual health and those who were unable to comprehend the study's requirements were excluded.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and focused group interviews.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire included sections on demographic information, usage of natural aphrodisiacs, perceived effects on sexual health, and any side effects experienced. The structured questionnaire was administered via surveys, utilizing both online platforms and face-to-face interviews, depending on participant accessibility and preference.

Focused group Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants (100) who use natural aphrodisiacs. Interview questions aimed to elicit detailed narratives about participants' motivations for using natural aphrodisiacs, perceived benefits, and any challenges they may have faced, related to their use.

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Data Management and Statistical Analysis

Questionnaires were assessed for consistency and completeness. Data was entered on Microsoft Excel version 2016 and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.0. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were performed and findings presented on frequency tables and charts. A p value <0.05 was considered statistically significant. Thematic analysis served as the primary framework for analyzing qualitative data collected from interviews and focus group discussions.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits before participation. This study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of the Faculty of Theology, Religious Sciences and Philosophy of Christosis International Theological and Professional University.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic characteristics of study participants

A total of 500 males aged between 25 to 45 years participated in the study. The largest age group was 41-45 years (28.8%), while 53.0% were single. Half of the participants (50.0%) had attained tertiary level of education, 56.0% were self-employed, and 53.0% had children (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of study participants (N=500)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age group (years)	25-30	129	25.8
	31-35	129	25.8
	36-40	98	19.6
	41-45	144	28.8
	Total	500	100.0

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Marital status	Married	182	36.4
	Single	265	53.0
	Divorced	23	4.6
	Widower	30	6.0
	Total	500	100.0
Level of education completed	No formal education	30	6.0
	Primary	45	9.0
	Secondary	175	35.0
	Tertiary	250	50.0
	Total	500	100.0
Employment status	Formally Employed	167	33.4
	Self-employed	280	56.0
	Business	53	10.6
	Total	500	100.0
Having children	Yes	265	53.0
	No	235	47.0
	Total	500	100.0

Natural aphrodisiac consumption among males in New Town Limbe, April 2026

Among the study participants, 372 (74.4%) reported consuming natural aphrodisiacs and 128 (25.6%) were not consuming. Among participants who consumed natural aphrodisiacs, the most commonly consumed type was watermelon alone (22.8%) (Figure 1)

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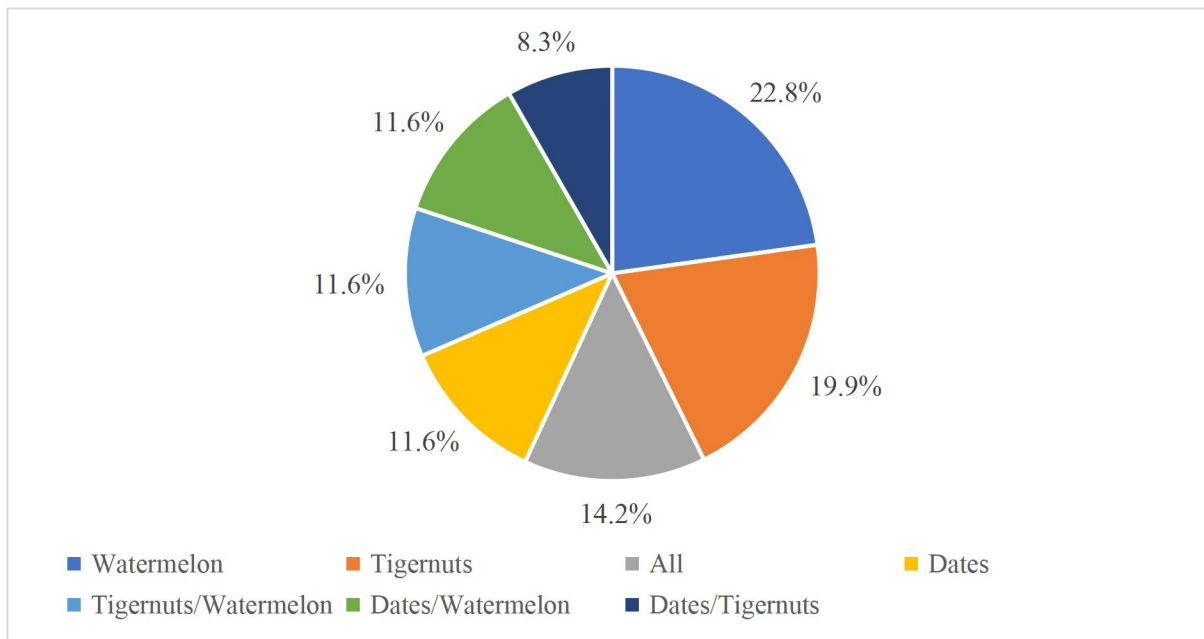


Figure 1: Type of Natural Aphrodisiac consumed by males in New Town Limbe (n=372), All: Watermelon, Dates and Tigernuts

Sexual disorders among study participants

A total of 324 (64.8%) participants were diagnosed with at least one sexual disorder, with premature ejaculation (54.0%) being the most frequently reported (Figure 2).

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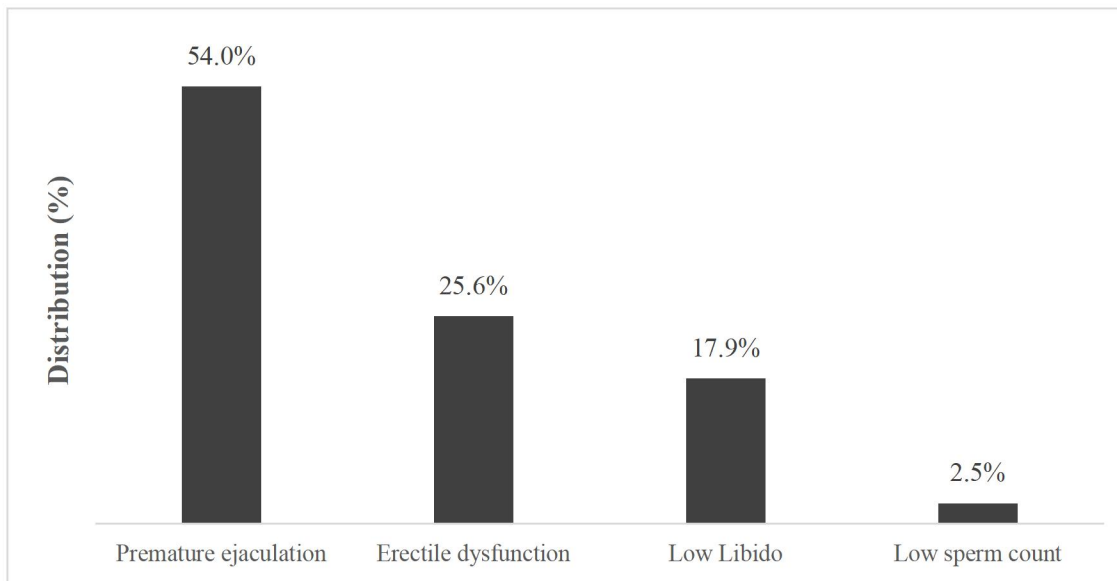


Figure 2: Sexual disorders among study participants (n=324)

Sexual health Outcomes among males consuming natural aphrodisiac in New Town Limbe, April 2026

The association between natural aphrodisiac consumption and sexual health outcomes are presented in Table 2. Daily consumption of dates was associated with higher libido scores. Frequent consumption of tigernuts was associated with improved erectile function, while frequent watermelon consumption was associated with higher sexual satisfaction scores. Participants who consumed watermelon, dates, and tigernuts daily had the highest (4.5) overall sexual satisfaction rating.

Table 2: Sexual health Outcomes among males consuming natural aphrodisiac in New Town Limbe, April 2026

Outcome	Natural aphrodisiac	Comparison	Results
Libido score	Dates	Daily consumption vs less than once/week	8.2 vs 5.5 $p < 0.001$
Erectile function (IIEF)	Tigernuts	Consumers vs non-consumers	20.5 ± 5.3 vs 15.2 ± 6.1
Erectile function (IIEF)	Tigernuts	Frequent vs Infrequent consumers	20.4 vs 13.6
Sexual satisfaction score	Watermelon	Frequent vs less frequent consumers	8.5 ± 1.4 vs 6.2 ± 2.0
Sexual satisfaction rating	Watermelon	≥ 2 times/week vs infrequent consumption	4.3 vs 3.1
Sexual satisfaction rating	Watermelon, dates and	Daily consumption of all three	4.5

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tigernuts

foods

IIEF: International Index of Erectile Function

Participants Perceptions of Natural Aphrodisiac Consumption

Qualitative analysis of participants' responses identified four major themes regarding the consumption of natural aphrodisiacs.

Theme 1: Cultural beliefs supporting natural aphrodisiacs use

Participants frequently associated these foods with enhanced virility and sexual performance, reflecting deep-rooted cultural narratives that celebrate natural remedies for sexual health.

"Natural foods like tigernuts and dates have always been known in our community to improve a man's strength and sexual performance."

Theme 2: Perceived health and sexual benefits

Participants reported that consuming natural aphrodisiacs improved libido, erectile dysfunction, energy levels and overall sexual satisfaction. Several respondents also believed these foods contributed to their general well-being.

"It makes me more energetic during sex and I always have very strong erection".

Theme 3: Traditional practices and personal experiences

Some participants shared indicated that natural aphrodisiacs formed part of family traditions and personal routines aimed at improving sexual health and maintaining intimate relationships.

"Regular consumption of tigernuts has enhanced not only my sexual confidence but also fostered a deeper emotional connection with my partner."

Theme 4: Misconceptions and social stigma

Some participants expressed doubts about the effectiveness of natural aphrodisiacs and preferred pharmaceutical alternatives. Others reported that discussing sexual health openly was often discouraged due to fear of embarrassment or social judgment.

"I have doubts about the potency of these foods in improving sexual outcomes, I prefer pharmaceutical options, mentioned by one participant".

DISCUSSION

Historically, the use of natural aphrodisiacs can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where they were esteemed not only for their nutritional benefits but also for their purported enhancement of sexual function. The current study aimed at assessing the consumption of natural aphrodisiacs (dates, tigernuts and watermelon) and evaluating its effects on sexual outcome among males in Limbe.

In this study, a substantial proportion of participants reported regular consumption of dates, tigernuts, and watermelon. Specifically, 22.8% consumed watermelon, 19.9% consumed tigernuts, 11.6% used dates and 14.2% reported consuming all the food items. These results indicate that a good number of males residing in Limbe do consume natural aphrodisiacs. Previous reports on the consumption of dates, tigernuts and watermelon by males are limited but in line with the observation if this study, it is generally believed that males frequently consume tigernuts, dates, and watermelon due to their reputation as a potent sexual enhancer.

Sexual disorders were common among the study participants including premature ejaculation (54.0%), erectile dysfunction (25.6%), low libido (17.9%) and low sperm count (2.5%). The reported prevalence of premature ejaculation in the current study is higher than the 37.1% prevalence reported by an earlier study among males in and Somalia, Egypt (Mohammed et al, 2021, Hanafy et al, 2019 and Serofoglu et al, 2012). The prevalence of premature ejaculation varies among studies due to the lack of a universally accepted definition and diagnostic tools, as well as the social hypersensitivity of the disease, and the various methods of data collection and analysis. The prevalence of erectile dysfunction observed in the current study was lower than the 31.6% prevalence reported by a study conducted among males in Malaysia (Rezali et al, 2023). This difference in prevalence may reflect actual demographic differences and cultural differences in the perceptions and attitudes toward erectile dysfunction.

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The consumption of natural aphrodisiacs was associated with improved sexual health outcomes. Daily consumption of dates was associated with higher libido scores. Dates have a long-standing association with fertility and vitality in Middle Eastern cultures, and similar beliefs are echoed among Muslims in Limbe. Dates have been cultivated for over 6,000 years in the Middle East and are often mentioned in historical texts for their fertility-boosting properties and significance in various cultural rituals (Al-Karmadi and Okoh AI, 2024). In Islamic tradition, dates are regarded as a blessed food, frequently consumed during Ramadan, which highlights their role in maintaining physical vitality and health, including reproductive health (Muslim Welfare Canada). The frequent consumption of tigernuts was associated with improved erectile function. Tigernuts, known locally as "achi," are often regarded as a restorative food that boosts energy and sexual potency. Tigernuts are rich in nutrients, particularly Vitamin E and magnesium, which have been associated with improved sexual health (Yu Y et al, 2020). Also, traditional practices have linked tigernuts to fertility and virility, making them essential in cultural rituals and social gatherings where discussions around male potency are common (Izunwanne et al, 2020).

Additionally, in the current study, frequent watermelon consumption was associated with higher sexual satisfaction scores. Watermelon naturally known for its high-water content, also contains significant amounts of citrulline, an amino acid that may improve blood circulation and enhance erectile function associated with improved sexual outcome (Rotimi and Asaleye, 2023). Participants who consumed watermelon, dates, and tigernuts daily had the highest (4.5) overall sexual satisfaction rating. In line with the finding in the current study, a previous study found that diets rich in antioxidants and phytonutrients, commonly found in fruits and nuts, can enhance sexual function and general well-being (Salas-Huetos et al, 2019).

The consumption of natural aphrodisiacs was associated with enhanced virility and sexual performance, reflecting deep-rooted cultural narratives that celebrate natural remedies for sexual health. Dates are particularly rich in natural sugars, fiber, vitamins such as vitamin B, and essential minerals (Al-Farsi and Lee CY, 2008). This composition supports energy metabolism and may enhance vitality, thus underpinning their perceived role as a natural remedy for boosting sexual performance. Studies have shown that tigernuts are a good source of dietary fiber, healthy fats, and antioxidants and the presence of these nutrients may positively influence blood flow and hormonal balance, contributing to improved sexual function (Abdulrasheed et al, 2023).

Another major theme observed in the current study associated with the consumption of natural aphrodisiacs was misconceptions with participants expressing doubts about the effectiveness of natural products in improving sexual outcomes. This finding indicates that although natural aphrodisiacs may be effective, gaps in knowledge levels of their effectiveness still exist within the community.

Conclusion

The consumption of natural aphrodisiacs including dates, tigernuts, and watermelon is associated with improved sexual health outcomes in males such as enhance libido and sexual satisfaction. This highlights the potential for these foods to be integrated into holistic health strategies for men. Health practitioners could consider promoting these foods within preventative health initiatives aimed at enhancing male sexual health. Further research may be warranted to establish clinical efficacy and investigate the underlying biochemical mechanisms through which these foods exert their effects.

Study Limitations

The study relied on self-reported data and this may have introduced bias, as participants may have underreport or overemphasize their experiences related to sexual health. Also, the cross-sectional design of the quantitative phase captures a snapshot in time, making it challenging to establish causal relationships between natural aphrodisiac use and sexual health outcomes.

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Funding

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Ethical approval

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Conflict of interest

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Authors Contributions

1. O.D.T: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, writing and reviewing of original draft.
2. A.M: Conceptualization, methodology, writing and reviewing of original draft.
3. O.K.E: Writing and reviewing of original draft

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