



Youth Culture: What's Sexy? What's not?

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Abstract

This study aims to explore personal beliefs of adolescents about sex and sexuality. A survey with 45 questions about beliefs on sex and sexuality was conducted to some 256 students from a Catholic university, both males and females aging 16-24 years old. Results show that a high percentage believed that it is good to wait to have sex until married. Both males and females also believed that girls/boys who carry condom are rather careful, safe, and/or responsible than promiscuous. However there are more males who feel that there is way too much pressure from society to have sex than females. Both sexes believed that they have more respect for girls/boys who say no to sex. Both also believed that they won't have sex with someone unless they really love him/her. A high percentage of females believed that they are scared of getting pregnant if they will have sex while there are more males who say that they are scared of their partner getting pregnant if they will have sex. There are high percentage of those who say that they are not comfortable talking to their parents about relationship and sex. Adolescents understand the context of sexuality and have their own beliefs. Such beliefs shall be strengthened to help them make better decision about sex.

Keywords: Sexuality; Youth culture; Belief

1. INTRODUCTION

Young people are seen as a treasured resource and as endangered and dangerous- at risk, from others, to themselves, and to the fabric of communities (Kelly 2000a, 2000b, 2000, Sharland, 2006). The category of “youth at risk”, and the imperatives to protect, monitor, contain and sustain young people in the transition to responsible adulthood (1, p. 1). However, in social policy and social work, there are some noteworthy ambivalences and gaps in the way that young people and at risk are currently framed (2 p. 2).

For instance, in the Philippines, the nationwide Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study among youth aged 15-24 (YAFS3, 2002) revealed that 23.2 % adolescents have had engaged in premarital sex (PMS) (#1% males and 16% females), with mean age at first sex at age of 17 for males and 18 for females. Only 27.6 % males and 14.5 females used contraception during first PMS.

Females (90%) usually had PMS with a boyfriend. Majority among males, 60%, also had their first PMS with a girlfriend, while about 32% had it with a friend or acquaintance. Of the sexually active adolescents 50% males while 9.1 % females reported having more than one PMS partners, with a 4 and 3 partners on the average, respectively. About 4% males have perceived payment for sex and 6.4% have paid for it (De Jose, E., 2013).

Sexual activity starts increasingly early, with the most vulnerable practicing unsafe sex. Sexuality transmitted diseases and HIV rates are higher than ever, teenage conceptions and abortions among youth (3). Drawing on Coleman and Schofield (2003), we may marshal the countervailing evidence to question not necessarily whether the problem exists, but how it becomes inflated, stereotyped, to the point of moral panic (4 p.3).

Risk taking itself is regarded as part not only of abnormal but normal development, carrying

not just negative but positive consequences (5, p.4). Those focusing on identity development argue that young people's risk taking and experimentation are necessary parts of the individualism process, required for full identity achievement. (p.4).

What it means to be young in contemporary times is hotly contested, with questions of agency and structure, individualization, risk and regulation brought to the fore. (p5). For young people, the transition to adulthood becomes replete with opportunities and risks. Put positively, "life politics" holds that young people may now as never before be the architects of their own lives, free to negotiate their own pathways, take or avoid their own risks (p). These challenges and risks keep on increasing however youth's personal beliefs, convictions and values can be their own greatest guide in their lives.

In response to the challenged of CEAP for studies on youth sex culture especially among adolescents in Catholic schools to assess prevalence of risky sexual behavior of adolescents that often can lead to unwanted early pregnancy or acquisition of sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS at young age. The objective of this research is to discover the values, beliefs and convictions that Filipino youth upholds as they face their sexual challenges.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design:

Data collection was done in 2014. Out of the estimate population of 2,000, we only surveyed 300 students and only 256 were randomly selected for this study.

Two groups of respondents were involved. 126 males and 126 females with age ranging from 16 to 24 years composed of students from different colleges. The groups were asked to indicate their average family income. However, instead of indicating specific amount, and since most of them do not really know the exact amount, they requested if they can have a category of average, above average, below average and high income. They were also asked to indicate the number of household in their family. However, they informed the researcher that while they may be four in the family, they are living alone in their dorm while studying. They were also asked to indicate their residence, and most of them indicated Calocan and other metro places in Metro Manila and Bulacan.

The 2 –page constructed questionnaire, written in English, was constructed by the researcher based from Society and Culture classes. It has 46 statements which the students must answer as yes if such statement is true to them or they believe it, and they shall check no if the statement does not apply to them. Respondents were asked not to leave any statement blank. These statements in the questionnaire are expected to identify beliefs of students when confronted by a situation.

As part of the ethical standards, the purpose and mechanics of the survey were explained to the respondents. They are free to stop answering the questions if they feel so. They were free to ask and verify each question. Throughout the survey, the interviewer was available for clarifications regarding the questionnaire.

3. RESULT

The results of the study are presented thematically. Findings from the survey have been categorized based on themes.

3.1. No Sex until Married

66.03% of the 126 males and 78.73% of the 126 females believed that it is good to wait to have sex until married. During the group discussion, when they were asked what age is the best for marriage, most of the females believed ages 24-29, while males would find 26-30 as the best. Those who believed that sex can wait also believed that they would feel relieved when their girlfriend or boyfriend wants to wait until married to have sex. Both males and females value virginity and sex as sacred part of marriage rather than sex as ordinary developmental occurrence.

3.2. Social Pressure from Peers to Have Sex from

During the survey, some students asked if pressure includes wearing provocative clothes and seductive looks and poses outdoors as well as virtually. In the class discussion, it was emphasized that the concepts of social pressure include lying about sex experience to impress others, or intimidating others sexually by wearing provocative clothes or speaking vulgar languages. 55.42% of the males and 59.25% of the females believed that there was no social pressure. They believed that it was more of personal choice that they wear provocative clothes and use vulgar languages. Most of them may have lied but they said it depends on the group they are with.

However, 59.52% of the males said they feel more comfortable talking about relationship with their mother and with their father about sex, while 59.52 of the females said no and during the discussion, they would prefer to talk about it with friends. Females find it too uncomfortable talking about sex to either of their parents.

3.3. Choosing Sex the Last

The survey results revealed that 67.32% of the males and 63.75% of the females would choose sex the last among their priorities. Both males and females would prefer a relationship than ruining their relationship with pressure to have sex. If they would choose between Dream College and sex, they would rather have their dream college. During the group discussion, they prefer to have first their career to be stable before relationship since. They believed that "love" can wait.

3.4. No Sex without Love

64.01% of the males and 71.55% of the females would never have sex unless they love first the person. Both males and females would rather have no sex with anyone even with the person they are engaged with if they will regret it afterward. 85% of the males said that they would claim equal responsibility if their girlfriend got pregnant and 94% of the females, if they got pregnant.

3.5 Risky Sexual Behavior

In this research, the concepts of risky sexual behavior are limited to having sex without wearing condom or without using any other contraceptive. From the survey, 55.43% of the males and 54.53% of the females would take the risk of having sex without wearing any protection. During the group discussion, most of the respondents shared that sometimes, out of passion, and when they are left alone, they are not sure if they can really control themselves, sometimes, they shared that sex can just happen even if they initially did not plan at all.

3.6. Sexual Knowledge

The concept of sexual knowledge includes knowledge on how to use condom, what are sexually pleasurable for the opposite sex, what to do during sex, and how to prevent pregnancy during sexual intercourse. 49.07 % and 49.27% of the males and females respectively claimed that they really do not know or are confused of what are sexy and what is not.

Both males and females considered males who carry condom as responsible or careful rather than promiscuous. 46% of the males and 43% of the females admitted having experienced sexual intercourse at least once. However, this had been vague because no one during the discussion would ask question as to the nature of what constitute sexual intercourse.

4. DISCUSSION

In trying to understand the sexual culture of the urban youth, attitudes play an important role in determining a person's behavior (Lacson, et.al, 1997). Since attitudes are based on beliefs and values, this research focused more on beliefs. Based on the results of this research, both males and females value virginity. This findings support the social norms that Filipino value virginity. It suggests that a gender-specific approach to sexuality education that strongly emphasizes decision-making and value-clarification among youth is needed for the prevention of early sexual activity (Lacson, et.al, 1997).

Peer education is a possible approach to promote protective social norms and also to emphasize decision-making skills and value education (Lacson, et.al. 1997).

However, this study has several limitations. Respondents were primarily from only one school and most of them are residing in Caloocan and nearby towns. Most of them are also from middle class family. This may mean that they are not representing youth in terms of economic status and setting.

This sample is not representative of the general population, and as such, this research is more descriptive in nature. Future research should investigate predictors of risky sexual behavior in a larger longitudinal cohort.

The strength of this study is that is explored different sexual beliefs since it consisted of 46 questions. New information was also discovered. Youth for instance, do not feel comfortable discussing their sexual life with their parents even if they have open communication with their parents. The silence culture of Filipino when sex is the topic remains prevalence among the respondents.

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