

EXPLORING THE SEXUAL SCRIPTS OF ADOLESCENTS

Ann Heather B. Kiwang

College of Arts and Sciences
Benguet State University

ABSTRACT

Discussions on matters of sex and sexuality continue to be a cultural taboo in Philippine society. This is in spite of the studies which reveal an incessant increase in cases of teen pregnancy in the Philippines. As an educational institution, schools must take an active role in helping students understand and deal with their sexuality issues. This study aims to provide a deeper knowledge and understanding on the sexual scripts of students. Using an open-ended questionnaire, the sexual desires and sexual behaviors of selected students enrolled in Social Science 12 were known.

Findings reveal gendered sexual desires among the students. Most of the females define their sexual desires within the context of a relationship or a potential relationship while males seem more inclined to define sexual desires in relation to sexual satisfaction. Male's definition of sexual desires, compared to females, is more physiological than emotional. Furthermore, many of the female students have negative perception of themselves for experiencing sexual desires. Also, there is an apparent difference in the context within which male sexual behaviors occur compared to females. Most of the sexual experiences of males were triggered by porn movies or magazines they watched. Many claim to have felt proud and satisfied after a sexual experience. On the other hand, sexual experiences of females occurred mostly within the context of a romantic relationship. Some felt more loved and secure. Others felt disgusted and embarrassed.

Sex continues to be a cultural taboo in daily conversations in the family and in school. Religion remains a strong influence in the perception of the students about sex.

Keywords: *sexual scripts, cultural scripts, interpersonal scripts, intrapersonal scripts*

INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is a recurring issue throughout the lifetime of an individual. In particular, sexuality becomes important during adolescence when primary and secondary sex characteristics develop. The adolescent stage is often associated with curiosity and exploration on matters of sex. Steinberg (2005) considers that the increase in importance of sexuality during adolescence is not solely a result of puberty. Rather, one of the chief tasks of adolescents is to figure out how to deal with sexual desires and how to incorporate sex successfully and appropriately into social relationships. Much of these are made possible

by the expansion of intellectual abilities that takes place during the period (Steinberg, 1999). Hence, the apparent importance of sexuality during adolescence is not due solely to puberty but also to the cognitive changes that adolescents experience. Moreover, adolescence becomes a turning point in the development of sexuality as it marks the onset of deliberate sexually motivated behavior that is recognized, both by oneself and by others, as primarily and explicitly sexual in nature (Steinberg, 1999).

Given their constant unguided exposure to various mass media sexual content and their interaction with their equally uninformed friends,

many adolescents have little understanding about sexuality. Many of them do not know how to deal with their sexual feelings and sexual desires. Hence, just as sexuality is an inescapable aspect of being human, so too are the issues arising from it. In fact, a significant number of researches and articles confirming the prevalence of issues relating to sexuality especially among adolescents cannot be denied nor ignored. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2007) reports that the adolescent fertility rate is high at 133 births per 1000 women worldwide (WHO, 2007). Furthermore, the levels of adolescent childbearing are moderate to high in most areas of developing countries. Southern Asia comes second in the latest international estimates of early marriage worldwide. Accordingly, 16.5 million Filipinos belong to the age group 15-24 year-old, out of which thirty 30% of all births belong to (Singson, 2008). A later study in the Philippines by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) disclosed that 53 of every 1,000 Filipinas aged 15 to 19 are pregnant and this is the highest pregnancy rate in the region (ABS-CBN, 2012).

The same is the case in the United States of America where a study shows that each year, more than one million teenage girls become pregnant. 30,000 of them are younger than 15 years old; and, by age 18, one quarter of all girls in the US have been pregnant at least once, and a remarkable number of American adolescents have little information or indeed have the wrong information about birth control (Nevid and Rathus, 2005).

A closer look at the Philippine context from the Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study or YAFS (2002), shows that 31% of young adult males and 68% of young adult females report having engaged in premarital sex and approximately 70% of young adult males and 68% of young adult females reported not using any method of protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases the last time they had sex. Moreover, misconceptions abound with 28% of young adults believing that HIV/AIDS is curable and 73% think that they are immune to HIV. The same study found out that STI prevalence is quite high among young females and males compared to the general population, being highest among youth in the 18-24 age group (Reproductive, 2006). The more recent 2014

Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) study revealed that around 14% of Filipino girls aged 15 to 19 are either pregnant for the first time or are already mothers—more than twice the rate recorded in 2002. The study conducted by the Philippine Statistical Authority (PSA) further revealed that every hour, 24 babies are delivered by teenage mothers. Among six major economies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Philippines has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies and is the only country where the rate is increasing, per the United Nations Population Fund (as quoted by Van Der Hor, 2014).

It is undisputable that sexuality is a natural and significant trait of humanity, however, it has not always been an acceptable topic in daily polite conversations. As Macionis (2005) observed, the discussion of sex has been a cultural taboo through much of the history of society; hence, while sex can produce much pleasure, it also causes confusion and outright fear. A team of researchers reported that mothers are reluctant to discuss sex and birth control with their teenagers out of fear that they will embarrass the teens or that their children might ask them something they do not know. Also, teen agers avoid involvement in such conversations not only because of being embarrassed but out of fear that their mother will ask too many personal questions (Knox and Schacht, 2002). In the local setting, parents at home and teachers in school feel inadequate or uneasy to discuss the topic of sex with youngsters (Singson, 2008).

Philippine educational institutions, particularly the State Universities and Colleges (SUC) have limited curricular offerings specifically on sexuality. Leyson (2004) traced the history of sexual knowledge and sexual education in the Philippines. During the Spanish colonial rule, only a few colleges, catering only to the most sophisticated elite and rich Filipino students, offered limited science and social courses and absolutely no sexuality or health education. When the Americans came, college education was free in national colleges but there was no formal sex education or published material on the subject. The Japanese occupation, on the other hand, did not show any interest in education. In 1970, some colleges included in their curriculum, science

courses that included information on sexually transmitted diseases and limited information on human sexuality. After Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law, the government approved a program that directed formal sex education to be taught in all levels of education (Leyson, 2004). At present, state colleges and universities, particularly here in the Cordilleras, are offering a subject that includes a topic on family planning. However, Leyson (2004) observed that most teachers do not allow questions from their students during the lecture on family education. He added that most instructors were too insecure and embarrassed and so are unable to facilitate any in-depth dialogue. For him, the Christian dogma still has a strong influence on teachers' moral and religious values; hence, sexuality remains taboo in public discussion.

Dagdag (2006) declared that the Philippines is in the midst of a youth bulge, considering that the youth population or those aged 15 to 24 years old comprise 15.1 million of the entire Philippine population as of the year 2000 and is projected to be 30 million in 2030. Hence, the mounting sexuality concerns experienced by many adolescents as revealed by several researches should not and cannot be ignored. There is a need for Philippine schools to become more interested and to have more understanding of the sexual attitudes and sexual behaviors of their own students. The students are the very reason for the existence of the educational institution. Consequently, the students' welfare is of utmost concern.

Without appropriate guidance from experienced and knowledgeable educators, neglected sexuality issues among adolescents can lead to devastating effects on the adolescents themselves. Nevid and Rathus (2005) disclosed that the emotional impact of early sexual experiences may have repercussion in the school, both for the students involved and for fellow students who hear about the experiences. Berk (2001) disclosed that characteristics of sexually active adolescents include early physical maturation, poor school performance and lower educational aspirations.

With emphasis on family planning, the effort of Philippine Educational Institutions, especially SUC's, to reach out to their students to help them

understand their sexuality is clearly not enough. Woodfolk (2001) believes that one major hurdle adolescents face is figuring out how to properly manage and express their sexual feelings, an issue that is influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which they live. The educational institution form a significant part of the adolescent's social as well as cultural milieu; hence, schools have the responsibility to help the students understand and handle their sexual feelings, sexual attitudes and sexual behaviors, with the end goal of mitigating the alarming consequences of sexuality issues among adolescents. This responsibility entails a broad understanding of the different social factors that influence adolescent sexuality.

Thus this study focused on understanding the sexual scripts of adolescents, particularly those who are enrolled as second year college students in one University. Sexual scripts of adolescents reflect how they attempt to integrate sociocultural factors in their sexual experience. Script theory emphasizes the role of society, its rules and norms, in explaining human sexuality. There are three levels of scripts according to this theory. Firstly, cultural scripts include all of the rules and norms for sexual behavior in a culture. Secondly, interpersonal scripts are representations of how cultural scripts are to be played out in actual interpersonal situations. Intrapyschic scripts include the plans, fantasies and motives that guide a person's past, current and future sexual behavior. Private thoughts, feelings, values, body image and one's sense of identity as a man or a woman are all part of intrapsychic scripts (Santrock, 2008).

An understanding of these sexual scripts can serve as an essential guide for the educator in facilitating in-depth discussions of adolescents' sexual issues. Furthermore, results can be used to formulate programs and activities that will help adolescents deal with their sexual issues. The results can also be used to help address reproductive health concerns of students.

Objectives

This study explored the sexual scripts of adolescents. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. identify the common sexual desires and sexual acts of adolescents;

2. determine how adolescents deal with their sexual desires;

3. understand how adolescents perceive themselves when they experience a sexual desire or a sexual act;

4. understand how sociocultural factors influence the sexual scripts of adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive-survey method was utilized in this study. This method involves the collection of data to answer questions concerning the sexual scripts of college students.

The present study focused on sexual scripts within the context of adolescent sexuality; hence, college students were chosen as respondents of this study. Specifically, a total of 249 college students enrolled in a course on Society and Culture with Family Planning in one state university during the second semester of school year 2012-2013 comprised the population of the study. The result of the survey was intended as input to the class discussion on reproductive health and family planning; hence, only these students were considered as respondents.

A questionnaire using open-ended questions was used. The questionnaire was explained to the students to make sure that they understood the questions.

Themes from the responses of the students were identified and discussed in relation to the objectives of the study. The reactions or behaviors of the respondents during the administration of the questionnaire were likewise noted.

Ethical Considerations

Considering the teacher-student relationship of the author and the participants, students were not forced to answer questions they were not comfortable with. However, they were asked to explain why they refused to answer certain questions. Their explanations were included as

part of the data. Also, they were not required to write their names. They were, however required to write their gender. It was further emphasized to the students that their participation in the research is not part of the requirement of the subject.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 shows the total number of males and females who participated in the study. Out of 249 students, 26.9% or 67 are males while 73.1% or 182 are females.

Figure 2 shows the number of male students who claimed to have sexual fantasies and performed sexual acts and those who claimed to have no sexual fantasies and have not performed sexual acts.

Figure 3 shows that out of 182 females, 45% claimed that they do not have sexual fantasies and have not experienced any sexual act. On the other hand, 55% revealed that they have sexual fantasies and they experienced sexual acts.

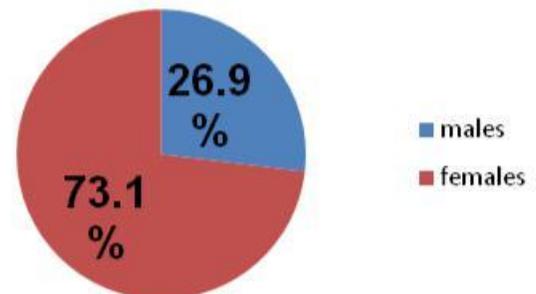


Figure 1. Percentage of male and female respondents

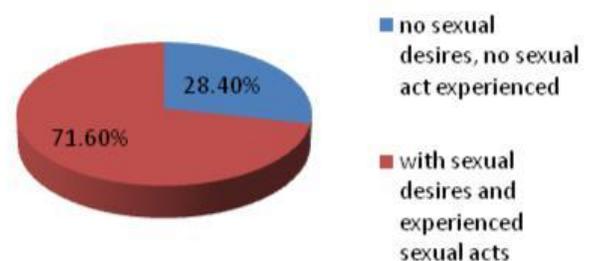


Figure 2. Percentage of Male Students with Sexual Desires and with Experience of Sexual Act and Percentage of Male Students without Sexual Desires and Without Experience of Sexual Act

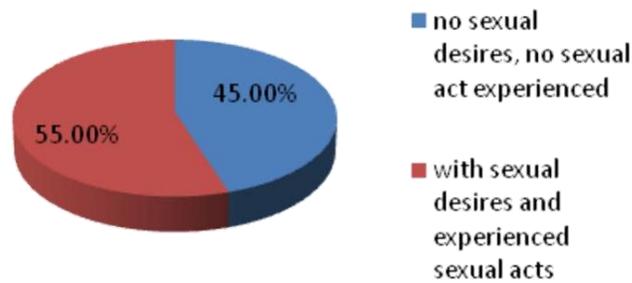


Figure 3. Percentage of Female Students with Sexual Desires and with Experience of Sexual Act and Percentage of Female Students without Sexual Desires and Without Experience of Sexual Act

Table 1. Sexual Desires Reported by Male and Female Students

FEMALE STUDENTS	MALE STUDENTS
Kiss on the cheek, kissing a person’s lips, the urge of kissing my boyfriend, intimate kissing, the feeling of kissing an actor’s lips, I want to kiss a guy I do not know	The feeling that I want to touch her body I’ve experienced, I think, almost every sexual desire. The greatest, I think, would be to have every single girl and follow me
Making out, sexual intercourse, the urge of having sexual intercourse with my boyfriend, yearning for sexual intercourse, the urge to do something na dapat ginagawa lang ng mag-asawa	Kamay Want for intercourse
Imagining myself with someone, wanting to be with someone I like	Sexual attraction toward opposite sex
Hug	I felt horny. I am in a relationship when this happened and honestly we had contact
Having crush, puppy love, be his girl, being attracted to opposite sex, having a boyfriend	Kissing
Wet dreams	Paghanga
Holding hands, desire to hold the hands of my crush	Having a crush with opposite sex, being attracted/ in love with opposite sex
Touched intimately	Pagkagusto sa isang tao at pagkakaroon ng interes sa kanyang katawan
Dreaming of someone whom I admire doing such a private affair	Seeing beautiful ladies
Having an extreme crush on someone that led me to think of him every night	
Yung parang gusto mo siyang yakapin at hawakan yung kamay niya	
Pagkagusto sa isang lalaki	
Yung feeling na type na type mo ang tao	
Wanting to be close to the person I’m attracted to	
Horny	

Table 2. Sexual Behaviors Reported by Male and Female Students

FEMALE STUDENTS	MALE STUDENTS
Hugging	Masturbation, self stimulation
Holdings hands	Sex, sexual intercourse, sex in bed with my girlfriend
Kissing on the cheeks, French kiss, kissing my boyfriend	Foreplay
Sexual intercourse	Direct contact with my partner
Intimate touching	Kissing
Dirty talk	Blow job
Muntik na naming magawa yung sex	Kissing, 69, lahat
I tried watching porn	Masturbating, kissing and many more
	Having sex with a friend but once
	“chancing”
	Embracing and kissing my girlfriend
	Holding hands

Gendered Sexual Desires: An Interplay of Cultural and Interpersonal Scripts

During the administration of the questionnaire, most of the students laughed upon reading the questions. Many of them refused to answer the questions on sexual desires, declaring their lack of experience. Some of them expressed feeling uncomfortable talking about their sexual desires. The students' reaction to the questionnaire reflects the prevailing cultural scripts on matters of sex. Sex is not openly discussed among friends, in the home and even in schools. It still has the characteristic of a cultural taboo.

Nonetheless, some students answered the questions without hesitation. Their sexual desires include the yearning to be kissed, to hold hands with someone, to be embraced and to be touched. A few expressed their desire for sexual intercourse. In a similar Western study conducted with a nonrepresentative sample of 13-18 year olds, 72% acknowledged having sexual fantasies (as cited by Crockett *et al.*, 2003). Accordingly, erotic fantasies serve several important functions for adolescents:

along with creating pleasant sexual arousal and expressing sexual needs. They provide insight into sexual desires and preferences and are an opportunity to “rehearse” sexual encounters (as cited by Crockett *et al.*, 2003).

There is an apparent distinction between males and females when it comes to the context of their sexual fantasies. Most of the females define their sexual fantasies within the context of a relationship or a potential relationship – having a boyfriend or being in love with someone, having crushes or feeling attracted to another person. Many of them expressed their desire to kiss, embrace or hold hands with a person for whom they have romantic feelings. For females, their interpersonal scripts define sexual desire not only as physiological but also emotional in nature. This supports Steinberg's (2007) claim that, for girls, the development of sexuality involves the integration of sexual activity into an existing capacity for intimacy and emotional involvement; hence, the girls' sexual script is one that, from the outset, tinges sex with romance, love, friendship and intimacy (Steinberg,

2007). He further added that the society is still much more discouraging of sexual activity outside the context of emotional involvement among adolescent girls than among boys considering the possibility of pregnancy. On the other hand, males seem more inclined to define sexual fantasies in relation to pleasure – wanting to touch a woman’s body, seeing beautiful ladies, feeling “horny”, satisfying one’s sexual urges through masturbation. Their definition of sexual fantasies, compared to females, is more physiological than emotional. It is important to note that the society affords a certain level of tolerance for boys’ sexual activities. Somehow, such tolerance has allowed them to approach sex less cautiously, focusing more on the sexual experience rather than its consequences. Again, this reflects Steinberg’s statement that the interplay between cultural scripts and interpersonal scripts in boys define sex in terms of recreation (Steinberg, 2007).

The Influence of Sexual Fantasies on Students’ Self Perception: Intrapsychic Scripts

Many of the students consider having crushes or boyfriends/ girlfriends as “normal” for teenagers like them. They feel happy and inspired. However, most of them perceive themselves in a negative manner for experiencing sexual desires. They feel weird, bad, awkward, embarrassed, ashamed, disgusted, dirty, sinful and confused. These perceptions reflect the “evil” character of sex as portrayed by the dominant values of our society. Society teaches us, especially females, to suppress sexual fantasies. Confronted with this powerful societal norm, the teenager attempts to conform to it by calling himself/herself insane, sinful, maniac and bad for having such desires. Nonetheless, the reality of his/her sexual urges, more often leave the teenager, at a dilemma. This is made more problematic by the fact that sex is not openly discussed in the home and in the school. The teenager is often left alone to deal with his/her sexual desires.

Only a few students expressed their concern over possible pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

A male student considers the satisfaction of his sexual fantasies as part of his being a “true”

man. Some expressed their becoming aggressive and competent for having sexual fantasies. This is consistent with the stereotypical macho image of men that still pervades today’s society. Furthermore, more male students expressed momentary happiness during the experience of their sexual fantasies. Accordingly, they felt good, happy and inspired.

A few females likewise expressed a positive perception of themselves. One said she felt valuable when together with her boyfriend while another said it (embraced by someone) makes her feel that she’s a woman. Others say kissing makes them feel normal, satisfied, happy and matured. However, many of the female students expressed negative self-perceptions as a result of their sexual fantasies. Furthermore, the experience of negative self-perception seems more pronounced for females than males. They describe themselves as “malandi”, “maniac”, “low”, “worthless”, “unclean”. One even expressed regret for having kissed someone while under the influence of alcohol. These negative self-perceptions may be understood in the context of the stereotypical image of a “good” woman – conservative and modest.

Acting Out or Ignoring Sexual Desires: A Challenge to Adolescents

Many of the students confront their sexual desires through self-control. Such self control emanates from the values inculcated by their families, religion and friends. Some of the female students emphasized the inappropriateness of them having sexual desires. Somehow, the sexual desires become “more wrong” if felt by a woman. This is consistent with the Maria Clara view of Filipino culture on women. Some try to learn from the experience of family members or relatives who experienced early pregnancy or marriage. Others attempt to ignore their sexual desires by keeping themselves busy with school works and other activities. Some avoid the person they desire. Nonetheless, many of them seem to consider kissing, embracing and holding hands as acceptable. However, one student recalled that when her boyfriend tried to kiss her, she did not respond. Instead, she slapped him. She considers her boyfriend’s attempt to kiss her as disrespectful. Still, some deal with their sexual desires by

allowing themselves to experience such desire. One admitted to “self-touching” if she is not in a relationship. Another said she allowed it to happen for the sake of the relationship. One said she tried to fight the feeling but when the boy kissed her, she kissed him back. This tends to support a study by Impett and Peplau (n.d.) as cited by Grello, 2006 which found that females were more likely to comply with sex in a casual relationship to satisfy their partner or to increase intimacy in a potential relationship.

More males admitted to masturbation and sexual contact with a partner. Many of these male students revealed watching porn movies in the internet and in magazines. Mass media seem to have a significant influence on how male students deal with their sexual desires. The internet, for instance, has become a convenient source of varied information. This feeds their growing curiosity and renders them unable to maintain self-control. Many adolescents turn to mass media such as television and magazines in their attempt to find answers to their sexuality issues and concerns. Sexually inexperienced people especially adolescents may use the media to fill in the gaps in their understanding about how a particular sexual scenario might work (Brown, 2002). Adolescents are exposed to television programs, movies, tabloids, magazines and the internet practically every day. Knox and Schacht (2002) believe that media influence sexual values by emphasizing through movies and television that sex is pervasive and recreational but the discussion of contraception and safer sex issues between lovers on the screen is almost nonexistent.

Gendered Sexual Behaviors

The sexual behaviors of students range from kissing and hugging/embracing to masturbation, foreplay, blow job and sexual intercourse. More females admitted to kissing and hugging/embracing while more males claimed to have performed masturbation and sexual intercourse. In one Western survey, 46 % of boys and 24 % of girls reported masturbating; and, among college students, 67 % of males and 34 % of females reported masturbating at age 15 (as quoted by Crockett *et al.*, 2003). Similar to sexual desires, however, there is an apparent difference in the context within which male sexual behaviors

occur compared to females. Most of the sexual experiences of males were triggered by porn movies or magazines they watched. Some were under the influence of alcohol. Others were simply driven by their curiosity. Hence, their sexual partners are not necessarily involved with them romantically.

These include a friend or even a mere classmate. A series of study conducted on adolescent sexuality found that though first intercourse experiences occurred in the context of a romance for the majority of young people, large numbers transitioned to sex with a partner who was a friend or with someone they had just met; 70-85% of sexually experienced adolescents age 12-21 reported engaging in intercourse with a casual sex partner; and, college students sampling suggest that 70% reported having engaged in intercourse with partners they did not consider romantic (Grello, 2006). The same study found that adolescents who transitioned to casual sexual relationships during the year reported more symptoms of depression, participated in more delinquent behaviors and were exposed to more physical violence (Grello, 2006). Also, another related study found that by age 15, about half of all African American men have had sexual intercourse whereas half of all Hispanic and white men by age 17. For women, half of all African American women have had intercourse by age 17 whereas half of all Hispanic and white women by age 18 (Nevid and Rathus, 2005).

A group of health professionals reported that besides an earlier age for teen sexual activity, health professionals reported that an increasing number of girls admit to “hooking up”, a term for oral sex and other intimate contact, at parties with people they often hardly know, thinking that it is safe because it cannot lead to pregnancy nor spread sexually transmitted diseases (Parrillo, 2005).

On the other hand, the sexual experiences of females occurred mostly within the context of a romantic relationship. Most of them view kissing and hugging/embracing as expressions of love. For male students, doing a sexual act with their girlfriend is not necessarily associated with love. For many of them, it is simply a part of what couples do. As one aptly said, “Eh, di ba yun ang gawain ng magsyota?” This supports the claim of Crockett

et al., (2003) that romantic or dating relationships often provide the context for adolescent sexual behavior. Early and steady dating predicts sexual behavior for both genders; hence, being in a romantic relationship increased the likelihood of sexual activity.

For both male and female students, most of their first sexual encounters occurred during their high school years when they were 15 to 17 years old.

The Students' Self Perception after their Sexual Experience: More Intrapsychic Scripts

Male students who masturbated claimed that they feel good, proud and sexy after doing the act. Others were regretful and felt guilty. Some think they became horny and addicted to sex. A few claimed it as an additional life experience or a normal part of life.

Kissing and hugging/embracing with their boyfriends tend to make female students feel loved, noticed, satisfied and secured. They think these are normal in the context of a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. Yet, many expressed regret after contemplating on the sexual acts they committed. They feel embarrassed, cheap, disgusted, ashamed, and "low". One claimed she felt stupid after masturbating. Some "looked down" at themselves for having committed sexual acts. They doubted whether they deserve to be respected after doing what they have done. One said she felt she is not worth anything and that she looked evil in the eyes of God and the people around her. Another said she lost confidence after engaging in sexual intercourse. Yet another said she considered herself a bitch. Once again, the societal pressure for females to be modest comes into play in the female students' perception of themselves. Leyson (2004) showed that girls' memories of losing their virginity were somewhat different from those of the boys. Guilt and shame prevented the majority of young females to get prior information about sexual intercourse and the possible consequences of their first sexual encounters, perceiving their first intercourse as the fulfillment of young love, motivated by peer pressure to keep their boyfriends and at the same time a challenge to parental authority or a gross transgression of a religious or social taboo.

Alarmingly, one claimed she was forced by her boyfriend to kiss him. She felt pity for herself after the incident. The boy's attempt to coerce his girlfriend into engaging in sexual behavior supports Knox and Schacht's (2002) claim that men's motivations for sexual intercourse are sexual pleasure, conquest and relief of sexual tension. The girl's motivation, on the other hand, emphasizes closeness and affection; hence, Steinberg (1999) emphasized the tendency of girls to experience hurt feelings during their sexual encounters. A study conducted by Ramiro (2005) revealed that of the 600 adolescent survey respondents, 64% reported that they have practiced or experienced a form of pressure and coercion in their intimate relationships; of this number, 321 were targets of coercion, whereas 65 admitted that they had perpetrated the coercive act. Moreover, among the victims, 42.3% were males and 64.6% were females. Also, the use of verbal pressure to pursue coercive sex was commonly reported.

Acceptability of Sexual Desires Among Students: A Reflection of Dominant Cultural Scripts

Most of the students who refused to answer questions about their sexual desires and those who claimed to have no sexual experience believe that having sexual desires is acceptable. They cited several reasons for its acceptability. Many of them insisted that it is part of an adolescent's growth towards maturity. They claimed that it is "natural" to have sexual desires. Also, they emphasized the fact that desires are simply feelings that can be controlled. One does not and cannot harm others because of his/her sexual desires. However, they believe that acting out one's sexual desire is a different story. For them, sexual acts are not acceptable. Students lack the knowledge about sex and its consequences. Accordingly, acting out one's sexual desires is not in accordance with the teachings of the bible. It can also lead to early pregnancy and may cause the student to stop going to school and destroy their future. Many of this group of students maintained that sexual acts should be done within the context of marriage. Nonetheless acts like kissing, holding hands and those that will not lead to pregnancy, like fellatio, are considered acceptable.



Similarly, students who answered the questions on sexual desires and who claimed to have sexual experiences think that having sexual desires are part of the normal growth of adolescents. Accordingly, the adolescent cannot control or prevent himself from having sexual desires. Surprisingly, some of these students also believe that adolescents should not engage in sexual acts. Engaging in sexual acts outside the context of marriage is considered a sin. Moreover, they said that students are still young and not knowledgeable enough to handle the consequences of premarital sex. They likewise cited the increasing cases of teen pregnancy together with the alarming number of abortions committed due to unwanted pregnancies.

The Culture of Silence on Sex

Sex remains taboo in family conversations. Most of the students claimed that they do not talk to their parents on matters of courtship, romantic relationship and sex. Furthermore, there is an apparent deliberate refusal on the part of the students to engage their parents to talk in the same way that parents fail to initiate conversations about these topics with their children. Most of the students cited reasons like “feeling uncomfortable” and fear of being rebuked.

Religion likewise plays a significant role in maintaining this culture of silence. Many students, with or without sexual experience, judge the immorality of having sexual desires from engaging in sexual behaviors.

It is interesting to note, however, that many of the respondents, especially males, revealed that they find it easier to talk with their peers about sex. This can pose a problem considering the observation that their peers are almost in the same situation as they are insofar as knowledge on dealing with sexual issues is concerned. One study showed that when children’s queries regarding sex are not answered properly by parents, they revert to their equally ignorant friends, who try to satisfy their curiosity by wrong notions and distorted facts in the tender brains of the children (Dawakhana, 2009). In another study conducted by Simeone *et al.* (2008), it was found that most students are interested to talk with their friends about masturbation, first time sexual encounters, sexual development, sexually

transmitted diseases, petting and homosexuality. Another study likewise confirmed that friends are the most important sources of sex education and are important influences on one’s sexual values (Knox and Schacht, 2002).

In schools, many of the students claimed that sex is almost never discussed too. In fact, it is only in their subject Society and Culture with Family Planning that sex is openly discussed. However, they further claimed that this depends on the approach of their teacher.

CONCLUSION

The sexual desires and sexual behaviors of the students range from mere kissing to sexual intercourse. Also, there is an apparent gender difference in the context within which these desires and behaviors occur.

Most of the students attempt to restrain themselves from acting out their sexual desires through self control. Apparently, however, such self control does not always prevent them from engaging in sexual behaviors.

There is likewise a gender difference in the students’ self perception after experiencing sexual desires or engaging in sexual behaviors. This gender difference reflects the prevailing cultural standards on matters of sex among adolescent males and females.

The culture of machismo continues to be influential in the occurrence of teen age sex especially among the male students. Also, the stereotypical image of a conservative woman exerts its influence on the female students by leading them to attribute negative feelings and descriptions themselves due primarily to their perceived deviation from this stereotypical image. Furthermore, the culture of silence on matters of sex leaves the students alone in dealing with their sexual desires and sexual behaviors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The University, through the Office of the Student Services, should formulate programs intended to help the students deal with their sexual desires.

Integration of discussions on sex in relevant courses must be considered to provide avenues for students to express their issues and concerns as well as to seek informed help in dealing with such issues and concerns.

Another study, wider in scope, on the sexual scripts of adolescents, must be conducted to obtain more comprehensive data.

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