

Sexual Behavior of Senior High School Students in a Faith-Based School

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Abstract

This paper reports the research findings that investigated the Sexual Behavior of Senior High School Students. Many factors may lead to first sexual experience, including biological changes in puberty, peer pressure, deranged personal values, environmental opportunities, and even self-esteem and self-efficacy. It is empirical to highlight the current trend on the sexual behavior of its students to be aware and be prepared for whatever intervention program it may require from the administration, support from faculty, action from parents, and improvements on the behavior from students themselves. Using purposive sampling, the researchers gathered the data from sixty-six Grade 12 Senior High School Students from a faith-based school in Pasay. The researchers ensured all ethical considerations, such as but not limited to consents and informed assent with the proper protocol, were observed. The data were analyzed using descriptive design including frequencies, percentage mean, and standard deviation. The result showed that these students from a faith-based school have very low to low engagement in intense sexual activities. This result adheres to the social contagion theory of Rogers and Rowe that explains how sexual behavior can be similar among individuals in a group and this sexual behavior develops gradually over time depending on the adolescent's environment and pubertal development. Any form of sexual activities for young individuals that is not correctly regulated may result in negative consequences until sexual behavior becomes societally appropriate as they age. Thus, it is a call for more mature individuals both in and out of the position in the institution to educate and guide younger individuals, build values that match with one's faith, and present options and possibilities as they make choices in their lives. This gift of sexuality is from God to humanity, but it is destroyed and maligned by sin, yet the wholeness sexuality should be preserved.

Keywords: *sexual behavior, adolescents, senior high school, faith-based institution, sexuality*

Sexuality is a healthy part of a teenager's holistic development. As a person grows, his needs develop behavioral patterns as he matures emotionally and socially. Biological changes also happen in preparation for a more mature role of parenting. However, adolescents tend to explore their bodies and have sexual experimentations immaturely. These sexual activities, which are not limited to coitus or sexual intercourse with

other individuals, may result in experiencing problems in school, family, and their way of living. It shows that 45% of women aged 20-24 have given live birth, and women aged 18 have reported having given birth for the first time 2010-2015 (UNICEF, 2019), which is the adolescent period – between 10 to 20 years old. A person experiences physical, cognitive, psychological, and socio-cultural changes during this stage

(Santos, 2016). Due to this development, sexual experimentation usually happens, and they are acquiring sexual experience for the first time, which the environment shapes. The social contagion theory of adolescent sexual behavior by Rodgers and Rowe (as cited by Coyne & D'Onofrio, 2012) stated that the social environment influences sexual behavior. It encompasses a variety of attitudes and behaviors that are stimulated by contacts within the circles and developed over time. Some of these activities are reading pornographic materials, watching X-rated movies, and accessing porn sites on the internet. Masturbation, phone sex, cybersex, and live showing, may also be included. These sexual activities, which homosexuals and heterosexuals perform with other individuals, also involve anal and oral sex, kissing, necking, petting, and prostitution. According to Fortenberry (2013), half of the adolescents have sexual activities outside the context of dating with varied content of short-term relationships that do not involve penile-vaginal intercourse. While there is limited literature to reveal the age point of first sexual initiation, the study of Habito et al. (2019) discovered that their Filipino respondents first experience sex during adolescents. If intense sexual activities are not regulated properly, these may lead to acquiring sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancy that can ruin the future of young people. In the Philippines, one in ten young Filipino women aged 15-19 has begun childbearing; eight percent are already mothers. Another two percent is pregnant with their first child based on the 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey (Recide, 2013). The Philippines also has the fastest-growing rate of HIV epidemic in the Western Pacific, with a 174% increase in HIV cases from 2010 to 2017 (Gangcuangco, 2019).

The researchers aimed to discover if the respondents' sexual behaviors manifest

similar actions. The result of the study will contribute to the limited related research that focuses on faith-based schools. The study will also give a glimpse to school administrators, teachers, and parents on the current extent of sexual behavior of their students and prepare them for any intervention to save students from the risks. The researchers believed that this study would also be an eye-opener to students and be cautious of their sexual interests and explorations.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive design survey method to present the sexual behaviors of senior high school students. The study was conducted in a private faith-based but non-sectarian institution in Pasay City. This school offers allied health and business courses and senior high school education. 66 Grade 12 senior high school students enrolled for the school year 2018-2019 were selected through purposive sampling. There were 34 males (51.51%) and 32 females (48.49%) with ages ranging from 17 to 19 ($M=1.45$, $SD=.53$), which best fits the category of adolescents. The instrument used to gather the data has two parts: the demographic profile of the respondents, which included age and gender, and the survey questionnaire to measure the extent of sexual activities. The survey questionnaire consists of semi-constructed 15 items 5-point Likert Scale with Cronbach's alpha of .851. This was adopted from the Health Behavior questionnaire by Villagomez (2012), with a Cronbach's alpha of .817. The researchers conducted a pilot test in a sister institution of the research locale located in Baesa, Caloocan City.

After securing approval to conduct the study from the board of Ethics Review Committee, the researchers submitted a letter of intent to the school principal of the chosen research locale. The researchers provided informed consent and assent forms to the students to give them the liberty to either participate or

not participate in the study. The researchers used an exam-style method in collecting the data, where they separated boys and girls. The respondents were arranged one seat apart. The researchers provided folders for the respondents to cover their answers to ensure they would not be conscious of answering the questionnaires. Upon submitting the completed forms, the researchers checked them for missing items, and they encoded these data in Microsoft Excel. The statistician analyzed them using descriptive analyses, which involve frequency distribution, percentage mean, and standard deviation.

Results and Discussions

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences or SPSS. The table in the next page presents the frequency and extent sexual behavior of the respondents.

The table above shows that among the sexual activities of the respondents; the first three variables got the highest mean. They are:

1. watching erotic or X-rated videos with a mean score of 2.30,
2. masturbation with a mean score of 2.02, and
3. mouth kissing with a mean score of 1.92.

For other variables with the highest level of sexual engagement, 21 out of 66 respondents declared to have never watched X-rated movies. 32 respondents claimed they have never engaged in masturbatory acts, while 51 have never done mouth kissing. With regards to the variables with the lowest mean, below are the following:

1. sex intercourse (penis penetration through a vagina) with a mean score of 1.17,
2. sex relations with a member of the same sex with a mean score of 1.15, and
3. anal sex (penis penetration through the anus) with a mean score of 1.14.

For the sexual activity that had lowest extent level of engagement, it is notable that there are still few students who declared to have engaged in such activities. Three claimed to have paid someone in exchange for sexual favor. Three have had engaged in sexual intercourse, three had a same-sex relationship, and three had been involved in anal sex. The low to very low engagement in sexual acts of senior high school in the faith-based school is also due to the social influence process of parental restriction and religious teachings. Despite this kind of environment, many respondents still declared to have been engaging themselves in sexual activities that can be done independently.

The study results indicated that even in a faith-based school, senior high school students might tend to engage in sexual activities. Watching erotic and X-rated videos is the most commonly practiced sexual behavior, while anal sex is uncommon.

In the 2006 pornography statistic, 4.2 million or 12% of total websites were into pornography, which is accessible to all internet users. 25% of daily search engine requests were on these sites. Remarkably, masturbation follows watching erotic or X-rated movies, which could mean that the former could have resulted from frequent exposure to the latter. In a study conducted in Australia, the masturbatory act starts at 13 for 53% males and 25% females (Robbins, 2011). Although some literature links masturbation to sexual health, there are not enough data to conclude on the exact role of masturbation in the development of sexuality of an individual. Further, this particular sexual behavior is controversial among Christian authors whether such an act is considered a sin.

Regarding accessing, sending, receiving, and watching sexually stimulated images, scenes and movies, it is shown in the frequency table that more respondents engaged themselves

Table*Frequency and Extent Level of the Respondents' Sexual Behavior*

		Frequency	Percent	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Watching erotic or X-Rated movies and videos	Never	21	31.8	2.30	Low
	Rarely	17	25.8		
	Sometimes	18	27.3		
	Often	7	10.6		
	Always	3	4.5		
	Total	66	100.0		
2. Masturbation	Never	32	48.5	2.02	Low
	Rarely	20	30.3		
	Sometimes	8	12.1		
	Often	5	7.6		
	Always	1	1.5		
	Total	66	100.0		
3. Mouth kissing	Never	51	77.3	1.92	Low
	Rarely	7	10.6		
	Sometimes	3	4.5		
	Often	3	4.5		
	Always	2	3.0		
	Total	66	100.0		
4. Reading erotic or pornographic books and magazines	Never	56	84.8	1.83	Low
	Rarely	7	10.6		
	Often	3	4.5		
	Total	66	100.0		
5. Necking (kissing on the nape or neck)	Never	59	89.4	1.61	Very Low
	Rarely	3	4.5		
	Sometimes	1	1.5		
	Often	3	4.5		
	Total	66	100.0		
6. Exchanging erotic messages or pictures through the cellphone	Never	32	48.5	1.45	Very Low
	Rarely	11	16.7		
	Sometimes	16	24.2		
	Often	4	6.1		
	Always	3	4.5		
	Total	66	100.0		

7. Fondling or being fondled (touching of sex organs)	Never	36	54.5	1.35	Very Low
	Rarely	12	18.2		
	Sometimes	8	12.1		
	Often	7	10.6		
	Always	3	4.5		
	Total	66	100.0		
8. Phone sex (exchanging voice messages through phone)	Never	45	68.2	1.24	Very Low
	Rarely	8	12.1		
	Sometimes	9	13.6		
	Often	2	3.0		
	Always	2	3.0		
	Total	66	100.0		
9. Oral sex (kissing or sucking of sex organs)	Never	57	86.4	1.23	Very Low
	Rarely	5	7.6		
	Sometimes	2	3.0		
	Often	2	3.0		
	Total	66	100.0		
10. Receiving payment (in cash or in kind) for sex	Never	57	86.4	1.21	Very Low
	Rarely	7	10.6		
	Sometimes	2	3.0		
	Total	66	100.0		
11. Cybersex (exchanging erotic messages and pictures through the internet)	Never	53	80.3	1.21	Very Low
	Rarely	7	10.6		
	Sometimes	3	4.5		
	Often	2	3.0		
	Always	1	1.5		
	Total	66	100.0		
12. Paying someone in exchange for sex favors	Never	63	95.5	1.18	Very Low
	Rarely	1	1.5		
	Always	2	3.0		
	Total	66	100.0		

13. Sex intercourse (penis penetration through the vagina)	Never	63	95.5	1.17	Very Low
	Sometimes	1	1.5		
	Always	2	3.0		
	Total	66	100.0		
14. Sex relations with a member of the same sex	Never	63	95.5	1.15	Very Low
	Always	3	4.5		
	Total	66	100.0		
15. Anal Sex (penis penetration through the anus)	Never	62	93.9	1.14	Very Low
	Sometimes	1	1.5		
	Always	3	4.5		
	Total	66	100.0		
Overall Mean				1.467	Very Low

in exchanging erotic messages and or pictures through their cellphones. This is also known as "sexting", and it is commonly defined as the exchange of sexually explicit images between adolescents via cell phone. Once extended to other media, particularly the internet, it is already labeled cybersex as defined in oxford languages. This is a prevalent topic in US media, yet related studies are lacking. A survey conducted by the National Campaign to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy showed that 18% of teen boys and 22% of teen girls aged 13-19 had sent semi-nude to nude photos either on the internet or on their cell phones. The majority of these teens said they also had sent sexually suggestive images to their boyfriends or girlfriends, while 21% of teen girls and 39% of teen boys declared that they send sexual content to someone they are interested to go on a date with. Further, 15% sent the same form of content to someone they have just known online (Lounsbury, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2011).

About petting or fondling of sexual organs, it shows that it was also practiced to a different extent by 30 respondents, which also outnumbered those who engaged in mouth kissing. This behavior may include caressing or touching sex organs or breasts using hand or mouth to stimulate the other person sexually. In other studies, petting could mean a simple stroke or caress; however, in this study, petting is simply touching or stimulating others' sexual organs. In the survey on the sexual behavior of Filipino adolescents (De Jose, 2013), among 1,412 respondents ages ranging from 15 to 24 years old, 31.7% also disclosed to have had engaged in petting while 30.8% specifically identified that they had done petting in general public but secluded and dark place. Though this sexual activity does not involve sexual intercourse, it can lead to more intense sexual feelings. In addition, the researchers also found out that about ten respondents declared to have involved themselves in oral sex, receiving payment

or paying someone in exchange for sex, cybersex, sexual intercourse, same-sex relationship, and anal sex.

Religion serves as a morale builder, and there is a strong relationship between religiosity and sexual behavior among teenagers. Though prohibitions on pre-marital sex are part of faith-based sex education, it lacks clear-cut details on how a Christian adolescent decides on what specific behavior is permissible to a particular situation and the specific level of intimacy. Experimentation leads them to test different sexual expressions with church teachings overpowered by media and peer influences in a society with a lenient foundation of values and morality (Twelker. 2019).

The overall findings of this study is a loud call to a faith-based institution to revisit how the church it represents stands firm to values and morality based on biblical truth. The data provided the facts that some young students have already been corrupted in the supposed beauty of sex within the marriage bond originally planned by our Creator. Although it could have been brought about by the factor that not all students belong to the same faith the institution holds, it is still a reality that has to be given attention. Even though most of these sexual behaviors are not explicitly labeled as a "sin" in the Bible, it has to be the focus of sex education in faith-based schools and mainline churches.

Academe institutions and churches must not undermine the chances of having STDs among adolescents. Bible teachers, chaplains, pastors, counselors, and all adults overseeing these young people within the vicinity of the school must work hand in hand, even to a point of classroom intervention. Sexual jokes and innuendos should not be normalized, specifically beyond the bond of marriage. Parents should also be quick to respond to these issues for nobody can replace them as the first sex educators of their children. The result of this study may strengthen the sex education for students founded on God's principles and eliminate gray areas such as but not limited to the act of masturbation. The virtue of Holiness, obedience, and self-denial has to be integrated with all aspects of decision-making so that students will be guided well as they journey on the road of sexual development.

Though this study yielded interesting results, there are still limitations that can be addressed in future studies. Academic researchers may also check on the integration of faith in learning with sex education. Future researchers may widen the scope of analyses to other faith-based institutions as participants of this study can be considered a limitation. It would also be more interesting if further studies could look into the difference in sexual behavior among students from different religious groups.

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