

Sexual education between adolescents: a case study

ABSTRACT | Objective: to identify adolescents' expectations about sex education; characterize the socioeconomic and cultural profile of adolescents from a private school in the city of São Gonçalo / RJ. Methodology: this is a descriptive, exploratory study of a qualitative nature, a case study with data collection, an individual interview was conducted in order to obtain socioeconomic and cultural data from the interviewees; focus group technique that used a script guided by some guiding questions to apprehend the conceptions about the expectations of sex education. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Hospital Universitário Antônio Pedro, under CAAE: 0265.0.258.000-10. Results: two categories emerged: Serious conversation: talking to teenagers about sex education in the school and society reaffirming taboos on the issue of sexuality. Conclusion: the adolescents understand that the school and the family must work together playing an important role in education for sexuality linked to life, health, pleasure and well-being.

Keywords: Sex Education; Adolescent; Education; Sexuality; Public Health.

RESUMEN | Objetivo: identificar las expectativas de los adolescentes sobre la educación sexual; caracterizar el perfil socioeconómico y cultural de los adolescentes de una escuela privada en la ciudad de São Gonçalo / RJ. Metodología: este es un estudio descriptivo, exploratorio de naturaleza cualitativa, un estudio de caso con recolección de datos, se realizó una entrevista individual para obtener datos socioeconómicos y culturales de los entrevistados; técnica de grupo focal que utilizaba un guión guiado por algunas preguntas orientadoras para comprender las concepciones sobre las expectativas de la educación sexual. El estudio fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética del Hospital Universitario Antônio Pedro, bajo el CAAE: 0265.0.258.000-10. Resultados: surgieron dos categorías: conversación seria: hablar con los adolescentes sobre la educación sexual en la escuela y la sociedad, reafirmando tabúes sobre el tema de la sexualidad. Conclusión: los adolescentes entienden que la escuela y la familia deben trabajar juntas, desempeñando un papel importante en la educación para la sexualidad vinculada a la vida, la salud, el placer y el bienestar.

Palabras claves: Educación Sexual; Adolescente; Educación; Sexualidad; Salud Pública.

RESUMO | Objetivo: identificar a expectativa dos adolescentes sobre educação sexual; caracterizar o perfil socioeconômico e cultural dos adolescentes de uma escola da rede privada do município de São Gonçalo/RJ. Metodologia: trata-se de estudo descritivo, exploratório de natureza qualitativa, estudo de caso com coleta de dados, realizada entrevista individual a fim de obter dados socioeconômicos e culturais dos entrevistados; técnica de grupo focal que utilizou roteiro orientado por algumas perguntas norteadoras para apreensão das concepções sobre as expectativas da educação sexual. O estudo foi aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética do Hospital Universitário Antônio Pedro, sob o CAAE: 0265.0.258.000-10. Resultados: emergiram duas categorias: Papo sério: conversando com adolescentes sobre educação sexual no âmbito escolar e sociedade reafirmando tabus na questão da sexualidade. Conclusão: os adolescentes entendem que a escola e a família devem trabalhar em conjunto desempenhando papel importante na educação para sexualidade ligada à vida, à saúde, ao prazer e ao bem-estar.

Palavras-chaves: Educação sexual; Adolescente; Educação; Sexualidade; Saúde pública.

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INTRODUCTION

In Western societies, all schools with adolescent students currently face the challenge of educating them fully, following their personal, social, vocational and spiritual development, and not just preparing them academically.

In this sense, the educational environment is fundamental and must take into account challenges such as, for example, looking at adolescents in their need for development located at the crossroads of the consolidation of identity and the capacity for inter-relationship; catalyze your process of discovering yourself as a uni-

que, valuable, dignified person; enable personal and stable contact with significant figures, as well as confrontation with values, attitudes and ideals that may give meaning to your life.

The school is the space where teenagers live most of their day and where many interactions take place, being an environment of social transformation that contribute to the personal, sexual, socioeconomic and cultural development of students.⁽¹⁾ However, these students find in the family the first nucleus of education. It is there that the experience of individuals begins, they incorporate and adopt values, beliefs and customs to reproduce in society.⁽²⁾

In the education of adolescents, biological, psychological, social and cultural aspects are extremely relevant. Following this reasoning, John Dewey stands out as a thinker and his vision of democracy, constantly constructed and reconstructed by the work of school education. He worked with specifically educational themes, spread around the world, which brought the concept of "new school", where his proposal was to take education as crucial for understanding the individual-society relationship and had the "view that education was for excellence a method of social reconstruction, even if it was not the only one."⁽³⁾

The study is justified for having an innovative character for the practice of care for adolescents and their families and for having social relevance, since there are few studies addressing this theme. Thus, the study aimed to: characterize the socioeconomic and cultural profile of adolescents in a private school and describe the expectations of adolescents about sex education in a private school in the city of São Gonçalo/RJ. As a contribution, the study can sensitize teachers, trainers, health professionals active and in training, about the need to insert and exercise the theme in the curricula of undergraduate and graduate courses.

METHOD

This is a descriptive, exploratory, qualitative study of the case study type. The

research subjects were twenty-eight teenage students aged 15 to 18 years old and of both sexes. The setting was Centro Educacional Soares Herdy, a private school located in the municipality of São Gonçalo/RJ. The anonymity of the adolescents was guaranteed through codenames that were chosen by them. For data collection, an interview was conducted first and afterwards, the focal group technique was performed with the adolescents, using a script guided by some guiding questions. Data were collected in the second half of 2016.

The decision to participate was respected, signing by the parents/guardians - the Informed Consent Form of Resolution 466/12, after sending a letter presenting the work and the adolescent - the Consent Form. The study was submitted to and approved by the Ethics Committee of Hospital Universitário Antônio Pedro, and under CAAE: 0265.0.258.000-10

RESULTS

The participants were 28 adolescents from the first, second and third years of the Centro Educacional Soares Herdy in the city of São Gonçalo/RJ, the socioeconomic and cultural data of the adolescents and their families were collected and later described.

Of the 28 adolescents interviewed, all are single and their age ranged from 15 to 18 years old, where 60,7% (17) are female and 39,3% (11) male. Regarding color/race, 53,6% (15) declared themselves white, 25% (7) brown, 7,1% (2) yellow, 7,1% (2) mulattos, only 3,6% (1) declare themselves black and 1 teenager (3,6%) did not declare this item.

Regarding the housing and family situation, 71,4% (20) residing in Trindade, the same neighborhood where the school is located, 17,8% (5) in Alcântara, 3,6% (1) Colubandê, 3,6% (1) in Mutondo and 3,6% (1) in Antonina. As for the type of housing, of the 28 adolescents interviewed, 78,5% (22) declare to live in their own residence, 14,3% (4) in rented property, 3,6% (1) of the type of housing is financed and 1 ado-

lescent (3,6%) did not declare their housing type. Regarding the family situation of the parents of these adolescents, it was observed that 32,1% (9) are separated, while 67,9% (19) live together.

Regarding the labor situation of those responsible, it was stated that 50% (14) of the male guardians have a formal contract and 28,6% (8) do not have this regularity. Six adolescents (21,4%) did not comment on this. Among the female guardians, 39,3% (11) have a formal contract, 17,8% (5) do not have it and 42,9% (12) of the adolescents do not declare anything about it.

The family income of these adolescents was analyzed. While 3,6% (1) did not declare their family's income, 7,1% (2) declared to survive on less than 1 minimum wage, 17,8% (5) with income between 1 and 2 wages, 46,5% (13) between 2 and 5 wages, 17,8% (5) with wages between 5 and 10 and 7,1% (2) with an income of more than 10 minimum wages.

After analyzing the family's labor and income situation, we tried to organize the data regarding the contribution of this adolescent to family life. Thus, it was concluded that 71,4% (20) do not work, while 28,6% (8) work, but are still supported by the family. However, none of these working teenagers have a formal contract.

In another research question, it was portrayed the frequency with which adolescents use some means of communication. The most used medium by them daily is the internet, with 82,1% (23) of access, followed by television, with 64,3% (18). The radio had 28,6% (8) of daily access. Then came the newspaper and the book, with 25% (7) each and the magazine as the least mentioned, with 17,8% (5). When they mentioned the media that they access almost every day, what appeared most was the radio, with 25% (7), followed by the newspaper, 21,4% (6), the magazine and television, with 17,8% (5) each and the internet, with 10,7% (3).

The focus group discussions were productive and enabled intense moments

of reflection around the expectations of high school teenagers at Centro Educacional Soares Herdy about sex education at school, which culminated in the construction of two categories: Serious chat: talking to teenagers about school sex education and society reaffirming taboos on the issue of sexuality.

Category 1- Serious chat: talking to teenagers about their expectations regarding sex education at school

In order to design an effective sex education program, one must take into account the school reality, as well as the students' wishes and expectations. When analyzing the adolescents' understanding of sex education, it can be seen that the doubt surrounded the discourse of students who, among their colleagues, demonstrated attempts to understand the elements of sex education based on human sexuality, which can be perceived in the following lines:

The psychology teacher has been talking about prostitution and sexual option. [...] It is a way to learn how to prevent early pregnancy and diseases. [...] It is talking about sexuality and understanding your body. (GF2)

[...] It is talking about the person's ways to prevent diseases, using condoms. Talk about the person's sexual option. I think it's all about sexuality. (GF4)

Sexuality is a curiosity strongly present in the lives of adolescents, as this phase is marked by profound physical and emotional changes. If the family and the school do not provide important information for a healthy and responsible sex life, adolescents look for their own ways to find the answers.

We had some classes, [...] but all the same. [...] use condoms, how to prevent diseases and AIDS. There was a year that our school had

some lectures, a man came and brought sinister pictures. (GF3)

Here at school we don't have sex education classes. Some teachers talk about sex when we have questions. It's always the same: prevent disease and use a condom. (GF4)

Actions directed at sex education in schools must be continuous and cannot be threatening, as they can prevent a quality and effective sex education, as can be seen in the statements below:

When there was a lecture here about sex education, they spoke like this: sit there, shut up and pay attention. [...] Write the question and give me the answer. [...] We couldn't ask. It was boring. (GF4)

We think that lecture is very scientific. The guy is there talking and just throwing information. But he doesn't even try to know what people already know, whether what they know is wrong or right. Or if they don't know anything. (GF2)

In this sense, when the adolescent does not feel welcomed, he does not understand the purpose of sex education in the school space and they resort to other means for their inquiries, such as: the street, the internet, television and friends, which can be evidenced in the following statements:

If I can't talk to the teacher, then I'm going to talk to a friend. (GF3)

In fact, we learn on the street first. [...] At school it is that very formal thing. You learn more in slutty, with colleagues and on the street. (GF2)

Often, the internet and television help people understand certain issues about sex. Television encourages young people to have sexual intercourse and soap operas often bring teenage pregnancy. (GF1)

Today the internet gives you access to everything. Whatever you want to know about sexuality. (GF4)

Television is the most important means of communication in sexual education among adolescents, as shown in the statements below:

Television encourages young people to have sex, but does not show prevention. [...] there is only sex, in itself, and pregnancy. (GF1)

A television character can put a lot on a teenager's head. There is a side of the media that influences a good side. But it is by influence that everyone does it because they think it is beautiful. (GF3)

The adolescents claimed to see both sides of the media - the positive and the negative, showing that they are aware of the dangers that it can take from inappropriate use. However, from the moment the media conveys excess information, it is necessary to learn how to filter the information, developing a critical spirit.

You have to know how to distinguish where to look for sex information. Some things are valid, others are not. (GF1)

It depends on the source of information about sex you seek, because on the internet there are dangerous sites and on cable television there are porn movies. (GF3)

According to the statements below, the adolescents highlight the importance of the family-school link:

Sex education must happen at school, but it has to start at home with parents. [...] Sex education begins and ends at home. But the school participates. (GF2)

In schools, it is difficult to talk about sex education, as there are parents who recriminate. But she is important, just like the family. (GF1)

The school could provide more information. But parents should, too.

[...] The school would complement with more things. (GF3)

Category 2- Society reaffirming taboos about sexuality in adolescents

In this second category, other issues emerged, notably it is observed that for years, taboo, repression, prejudice, fear, unpreparedness and myths took care of the sexuality theme, creating an atmosphere of insecurity in the dialogue of this theme between adolescents and educators. ⁽⁴⁾

This thought is reflected in the following statements, when adolescents were asked whether sexuality is treated as a taboo by society:

It is taboo. People don't like it, they are repressed. Society charges everything [...] And society is us, our parents, teachers, school directors. When my mother tries, she measures words so much that she ends up giving up talking to me. In the past, people rarely talked about it [...] people kept that in mind and passed it on. (GF3)

I am embarrassed to watch a movie or a soap opera that has a warmer scene with my grandmother by the side. You can't! I think she will look at my face and ask, "Are you going to do this?" It is logical that there are parents that you can do this [watch such scenes]. They see it as art. (GF4)

Another important issue observed in this study is that parents live in a community, have a religion and have their values. Thus, the education of the son or daughter will reflect this whole structure and everything they learn, know, experience and believe will teach their children. According to the adolescents' statements when they state that they will be afraid to talk about sex with their future children:

I intend to educate my children, but I will not talk about sex with them,

as it is a very difficult subject to talk about. (GF4)

I will be ashamed to talk about sex with my children, I will let the school address the issue. (GF3)

Even in modern times, themes such as chastity until marriage emerged in the speeches of adolescents. Virginity is valued by teenagers, as it was by their great-grandparents. And for them it is of paramount importance and a religious achievement, as the following statement points out:

Nowadays, young women lose their virginity very early. For me, there is an age group to lose your virginity, because there are young girls who are already pregnant and I don't want that to happen to my daughter. (GF4)

My mother is an evangelical, I am also a servant of God and my parents tried to guide me on what they thought was right and I agree with them. I have the option of having sex before marriage. It is not an imposition, but a choice. (GF3)

In a current perspective, it can be observed that, from a young age, adolescents learn to behave according to socially established models. In Western culture, different social models for the girl and the boy are in force, and this is evident in the following statements:

If I see a girl going out with several boys and if she is not my friend, I will say that she doesn't value herself. If it's a boy, I won't say anything because he is considered a "catcher". (GF2)

The question of going out is different when you are a girl and a boy. Besides, it is much uglier for the girl to be with several boys than for the boy. (GF3)

In the past, if a girl became pregnant and was not married, the

parents would throw the daughter out of the house, so as not to soil the family name. Or they would marry the daughter before the belly appeared. And now it's more explicit. (GF3)

DISCUSSION

The school that is desired must have an integrated view of the experiences lived by the students, seeking to develop the pleasure of knowledge, and for this it is necessary that it recognizes that it plays an important role in education for a sexuality linked to life, health, pleasure and well-being, which integrates the different dimensions of the human being involved in this aspect.

The media has directly influenced the adolescent, often with distorted information about sexuality. Teens magazines have great appeal among teenagers, for using their language. The internet, on the other hand, is ambiguous, and its use without time control has created difficulties for young people in society relationships, including their sexuality stimuli. ⁽⁵⁾

The school and the family must work together in order to achieve the continuity of the sexual education process. Together they would work as a support in educational activities with the aim of safely and effectively reaching the demands of the sexual life of these students. ⁽⁶⁾

A facilitator for the school to assume this adolescent as being integral and sexual, is the fact that the school is a place for the adolescents' daily experiences, where they live with other adolescents, curiosities, doubts and relationships arise. It is the responsibility of this institution to fully promote education to the student in a way that includes open dialogues about sexuality, always aiming at health promotion. ⁽⁷⁾

It is evident that the taboos and prejudices that involve society distort the information of many natural attitudes of adolescents and still hampering the demystification of behaviors considered prohibited before society, such aspects

cause negative consequences in the decision-making made by these young people in relation to their own health. ⁽⁸⁾

In society, the issue of human sexuality is still surrounded by taboos, which portrays a certain delay, as the subject must be discussed, integrating the adolescents' doubts about the theme with the different areas of human existence, such as biological, reproductive and cultural. ⁽⁹⁾ Beliefs, values and customs permeate the context of people's lives, influence the way they behave and which can influence the construction of human sexuality. ⁽¹⁰⁾

In this relationship between family and school, it is up to the nurse as an educator not to give parents a "cake recipe" to deal with their children. The presence of this health professional in this bond serves as an impetus for the self-care of these students, aiming to achieve safe sexual habits. ⁽¹¹⁾

Living in a society of great religious influence, it is necessary to consider the

factor of religious morality as an element as an element in the manifestation of sexual behaviors. Sex was seen as sin, dirty and immoral, where the submission and devaluation of women prevailed, sexual control and repression, and the denial of sexual relations prior to marriage. ⁽¹²⁾

In the context of gender discussions, adolescents suffer clear social control, which although it seems to be the same for both sexes, have different requirements. The girls are directed with a view to monitoring their behavior and their moral conduct. In cases of divergence from these conducts, there is discrimination and marginalization in various ways. ⁽¹³⁾ In the focus group sessions, these issues were raised in typical situations among adolescents.

Differences between boys and girls are incorporated into society by people even before birth, with the expectation of the baby's sex. The process continues with the family and the school, defining

sexual and gender roles at all times, through the maintenance of oppressive social standards imposed by society. ⁽¹³⁾

CONCLUSION

In this way, it would be up to the school and the family to consider its importance in the context of the sexual education process, and this would reduce the interference of the use of the media by the adolescents.

In this sense, it is reflected on the relevance of the nurse's performance in the Sexual Education process at school, whose participation was not mentioned in this study. The nurse, as an educator, becomes essential in health education focused on the issue of sexuality.

Finally, it should be noted that sexuality has an interdisciplinary character. The preparation and training of health and education professionals must be valued with regard to sex education. 🐦

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