

The Context of Sexual Risks Among Filipino Adolescents: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS surrounding sexuality and gender carry profound meanings in every society and affect the quality of life of both males and females. Cross cultural studies show that all men and women undergo the process of sexual socialization in which culturally defined concepts of sexuality are shaped across the life course. The opportunities for sexual encounters, the appropriateness of sexual behaviors, the meanings of sexual acts, the structures of sexual relationships are rooted in a society's sexual norms. Studies in these areas, therefore, are critical in the promotion of reproductive health.

Studies show that Filipino adolescents are actively involved in the process of formulating and reformulating their concepts of sexuality. It is imperative therefore, that attention be given in terms of clarifying concepts and determining meanings that underlie their beliefs, practices and knowledge, critical in promoting adolescent health.

The objectives of the paper are to present a summary of studies on the results of researches and intervention programs on adolescent sexuality in the Philippines and to discuss the implications of the studies on future directions in research and interventions in the promotion of adolescent health.

"Hindi ko alam kung bata pa ako o matanda na, marami akong tanong kung ano ang mga nangyayari sa akin, pero wala akong mapagtanungan; saka kasi baka isipin nila na alam mo na, gusto ko nang gawin yun, pero sa totoo lang curious lang ako. Kung minsan, napapagkwentuhan naming magkakaibigan, pero nakakahiya kasi ... Marami kasing bawal...Alam mo yun..."¹

FGD participant, Female, 15 y.o.

The above quotation was culled from interviews conducted among adolescents and it typifies the responses usually provided by young individuals when asked regarding their sexuality. It defines and describes the context of the development of adolescent sexuality in various cultures around the world. These attitudes and behaviors surrounding sexuality and gender carry profound meanings in every society and affect the quality of life of both males and females. Cross cultural studies show that men and women undergo the process of sexual socialization in which culturally defined concepts of sexuality are shaped across the life course. The opportunities for sexual encounters, the appropriateness of sexual behaviors, the meanings of sexual acts, the structures of sexual relationships are rooted in the society's sexual culture. Results of studies in these area are critical in the development, implementation and evaluation of reproductive health programs.

The research aims to provide an empirical basis for understanding the sexual risks adolescents face in the process of confronting their sexuality. The implications of the findings on future directions in research and interventions in the promotion of adolescent reproductive health are also drawn from the research findings included.

The framework utilized in the process of isolating the different contexts of sexuality of adolescents is the ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner (1979). It highlights that development occurs within the context of the following systems where the developing individual is a part of: 1) microsystem; 2) mesosystem; 3) exosystem; and 4) macrosystem. In the process of interacting with the different systems - roles, activities, and interactions develop. All these influence the development of

¹ *"I don't know if I am still young or am old enough. I have many questions regarding what's going on with me. But I have no one to ask. They might think that since I know already, I want to do it but the truth is, am just curious. My friends and I talk about it sometimes, but then, it's embarrassing. There are so many restrictions".*

the self, self- concept, self-esteem, and body image. Part of the development of the self includes the development of one's sexual identity, which is a product of the different systems that provide the context for learning about sexuality. Aspects of these systems contribute to the nature of opportunities, beliefs, behaviors and risks the individual must face in the process of development. These systems and context are further influenced by the chronological, social and historical time of the developing person.

Furthermore, in the process of identifying the elements of sexuality and sexual risks, the framework developed by Dixon- Mueller (1993, as cited in Tan and Ujano-Batangan, 1997) serves as an important guide to the process of isolating factors which needed to be considered in understanding the aforementioned concepts. The various elements of sexuality critical to the understanding and promotion of reproductive health are: sexual partnerships, sexual acts, sexual meanings, sexual drives and enjoyment. These are reflected in a society's gender system and are further related to the elements of reproductive health.

In this study, the discussion on the context of sexual risks among Filipino adolescents focuses on the individual and social dimensions which are reflected by the different social relationships, and consequent interactions, activities and roles in the varied ecosystems the developing individual belongs to. These make him or her more vulnerable or susceptible to the negative consequences of his/her reproductive and sexual behaviors/decisions.

1. ADOLESCENCE AND THE LIFE CYCLE: AN OVERVIEW

Adolescence is a time of extensive changes occurring in the various facets of human development. Physiological and biochemical changes transpire and are modified by environmental influences and social context. Recent events, in some ways, have contributed to the demands placed on adolescents as they go through this phase in the life-cycle. Among the demands brought about by technological and societal advancements that have occurred these past centuries included the following (Hamburg, 1990, as cited in Newman and Newman, 1997):

- *The lengthening period of adolescence.* The social changes in the past centuries have contributed to the postponement of the end of adolescence – and of dependence- until much later. For the majority of individuals, a protracted adolescence introduces a high degree of uncertainty in their lives.

- *The disjunction between biological and social development.* Biological maturity comes earlier than cognitive maturity, making it difficult for young adolescents to make important decisions in their lives.
- *Confusion in young minds about adult roles, and difficulty in foreseeing the years ahead.* In early adolescence now, there is an existing ambiguity of what constitutes preparation for adulthood. The version of adult life that they see and those presented by media creates a shadow image of adult experience, a mix of reality and fantasy.
- *The erosion of family and social support networks.* In contemporary societies, many trends point out to the erosion of social networks available to adolescents; such as, extensive geographic mobility and migration; scattering of the extended family; and rise of single-parent families.
- *The easy access of adolescents to potentially life-threatening mechanisms, substances and activities.* Adolescents today, are heavily exposed to alcohol and drugs, smoking, vehicles, weapons, and a variety of opportunities to engage in health-damaging behaviors.

Situating the phase of adolescence in the life cycle of individuals, the whole developmental continuum will be as follows (Cole and Hall, 1970):

<i>Infancy</i>	Birth to 2 years
<i>Early Childhood</i>	2 to 5 years
<i>Middle Childhood</i>	6 to 10 years (girls); 6 to 11 (boys)
<i>Preadolescence or Late Childhood</i>	11 to 12 years (girls); 12 to 13 years (boys)
<i>Early Adolescence</i>	13 to 14 years (girls); 14 to 15 years (boys)
<i>Middle Adolescence</i>	15 to 17 years (girls); 16 to 18 years (boys)
<i>Late Adolescence</i>	18 to 20 years (girls); 19 to 20 years (boys)
<i>Early Adulthood</i>	21 to 34 years
<i>Middle Adulthood</i>	35 to 49 years
<i>Late Adulthood</i>	50 to 64 years
<i>Early Senescence</i>	65 to 74 years
<i>Senescence</i>	75 years and above

These stages are characterized not only by physical changes but also social and emotional ones.

For the purpose of this study, the working definition of adolescence would be consistent with the WHO perspective - that is, the period of 10-19 years of age. However, since there are overlaps in the data sources on the ages of adolescence, the research took into consideration the need to stretch its concern to cover the youth, 15- 24 years old; and young people 10 – 24 years (DOH, 2002).

All theories agree that human beings change over time, and that there are biological, psychological and social antecedents and consequences of individual development. These theories, however, differ on the emphasis that they attribute to these pertinent factors. Depending on how theories view human nature, development and behavior, Dacey and Kenney (1994) noted the following main causative factors

- *Biological causes.* The genes are the major factor in our development from one discrete stage of life to the next; thus change tends to be rather abrupt.
- *Psychological causes.* Changes in the personality and/or intellect are behind our development through life. Change, therefore, depends on the way these internal states mature.
- *Social causes.* Development depends greatly on what is happening in our environment. Because so many things happen in the course of our lives, change tends to be a gradual, ever present process.
- *Some combination of two or three factors.*

Abel and Jingles in (Cole and Hall, 1970) summarized the various problems encountered by adolescents at this phase of their development. These could be classified under six main headings: 1) adjustment to school work; 2) social-psychological relations; 3) personal- psychological attitudes; 4) finances; 5) health; and 6) home and family.

Muss (1990) forwarded that rather than the monolithic group frequently depicted in the mass media and even in professional literature, adolescents are highly complex and multidimensional. Subgroups have different values and show varying behaviors and characteristics. Few generalizations hold true for all adolescents. It is therefore important to take into consideration the factors that could spell the difference in adolescent functioning.

First, there are *age differences*. Many characteristics change significantly as young individuals move from early to middle to late adolescence.

Second, there is *socio-economic diversity*. Adolescents from different segments of society have differing attitudinal, behavioral, and social characteristics. Research in adolescents show pervasive differences in educational aspirations, attitudes towards the future, locus of control, sexual attitudes and behavior and even sex role differentiation.

Third, there are *sex differences*. Puberty occurs one and one-half to two years earlier in girls than in boys, a fact that accounts for profound developmental differences, especially in early adolescence. In addition to clearly defined biological differences, research show numerous areas of variations due to the socialization process each sex undergoes at a particular time and in a particular culture.

Fourth, there is the factor of *culture*. Adolescents from different cultural groups have varying customs, lifestyles, values as well as opportunities. This, somehow, shape their development and goals of development.

The identified factors above do not contribute singly to the differences observed among adolescents. They act in unison and interact to define the unique way groups of adolescents develop. They further work together to provide the colors and shades of the multidimensionality of adolescent life.

The characteristics of multidimensionality is also observed in the emergence of adolescent subcultures and peer groups. Any population of adolescents display the variation in the social structure of these types of groups. The adolescent subculture is highly differentiated and exhibit considerable consensus about status, activities, and interests of these crowds, there is also considerable differentiation from one group to another.

Clearly adolescence heightens the friction between the ideal and real. This is due to the following reasons (Larson and Asmussen, 1991): 1) Adolescents have expanded the domain of "what matters" – investments in this wider world of concerns potentially increases their vulnerability to worry, disappointment and hurt; 2) Early adolescence is a time when young people develop an ability for abstraction and for seeing beneath the surface of things that may lead to sensitivity and a deeper set of concerns. In the present inquiry, the domains of life commonly identified as the context that create negative emotions are as follows:

- Self, those that relate to looks, abilities, and physical states
- School, said to be the most common context of negative evaluation and reactions from authorities and peers

- Activity, that entails evaluation of capacities and abilities, is more significant to boys than girls
- Family
- Friends, cited more often by girls than by boys
- Media, and the models they present, accounts for few negative emotions

Differences in the nature of problems exist among adolescent males and females. Investigations carried out through the years report that girls have more problems related to self-concept and self-esteem than boys. Commonly found is that girls are troubled by interpersonal relationships while boys are more concerned about finance, education and vocational issues (Harper and Marshall, 1991). However with the changing role of women, more recent studies reveal that females and males had the same amount of problems, but that “boys were more concerned with authority, restrictions and rules... and girls were more self-critical and self-aware.”

2. CONTEXT OF SEXUAL RISKS

2.1. Adolescent Relationships

Peer Relationships

While it is clear that friendships are vital throughout life, there seems to be something special about the role of the peer group during adolescence. Peer groups provide adolescents with a source of social activities and support and an easy entry into opposite sex friendships. The biological, psychological, cognitive changes during adolescence affect the development of a teenager's peer relationship. Puberty, for instance, increases interest in the opposite sex and contributes to withdrawal from adult activities and increased time with peers. The peer group serves the following functions: 1) control aggressive and sexual impulses; 2) encourage independence; 3) improve social skills; 4) develop reasoning abilities; and 5) form attitudes toward sexuality and sexual behavior. It also strengthens moral judgment and values and improve self-esteem. Furthermore, it aids in the development of self-concept and allows an adolescent to try out a new identity as well. As the adolescent continues to assert her/his independence and autonomy, s/he begins to move from the family to the peer group.

As the Filipino adolescent adjusts to new social expectations, peer group influence increases. Her/his peers become her/his real world, giving rise to vital

needs. Her/his needs can be summarized as follows (Tumangday, 1992, as cited in Tan and Ujano-Batangan, 1997):

- Status. An adolescent greatly values acceptability from peers; this enables her/him to try out the company of others. When accepted, s/he can then solicit support for her/his effort without sanctions from adults. In the process, adolescent needs to conform in terms of appearance, clothes, music etc.
- Independence. Adolescence is characterized by a strong desire for independence. Being independent increases her/his chances for greater social acceptance. If independence is not recognized, clashes with parents and other authority figures can result. Her/his independence manifests through her/his desire to have her/his own room, choose her/his own clothes, select her/his own friends, etc.
- Achievement. Leadership roles, good grades, etc. affords one a sense of self- fulfillment. Achievement increases the adolescent's self-esteem and thus results in fewer instances of feeling inadequate.
- Satisfying philosophy of life. The teenage years is a time of questioning. Teenagers endeavor to come up with perspectives that would lead to a satisfying outlook in life. At this time, they would appreciate having friends and adults share their views in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Among Filipinos, and adolescents for that matter, friendships entail being one with their friends and peer group (*pakikipagkapwa*). Relationships develop through two levels of interaction – the outsider category (*ibang tao*) and the insider category (*hindi ibang tao*) (Enriquez, 1982). The behaviors and expectations from each level of interaction are:

- *Outsider (Ibang Tao)*: Level of amenities /civility (*pakikitungo*); level of “mixing” (*pakikisalamuha*); joining/participating (*pakikilahok*); level of conforming (*pakikibagay*); level of fusion (*pakikisama*)
- *Insider (Hindi Ibang Tao)*: Level of mutual trust and rapport (*pakikipagpalagayang loob*); level of getting involved (*pakikisangkot*); level of fusion, oneness and full trust (*pakikiisa*).

In any relationship, one aspires to reach the level of the insider to be one with the group. As an insider, the individual's self now merges with the identity of the group and becomes entwined with it. The adolescent Filipino therefore, develops his/her concept of self within the framework of the significant group he/she belongs to in the family, in school and in the community.

The studies of Conaco, et al. (2003) and Tan, et al. (2002) noted the importance of the *barkada* in the Filipino adolescents lives; primarily due to the support (i.e. social and emotional) that they are able to draw from their friends. The peer group is where they turn to when "they have problems and are unable to turn to parents for help."

The most serious problem elicited in relation to sexual risks among young individuals is an imposed silence within families that prevents discussion of sexual issues. This means that adolescents and young adults have to obtain information from their friends and media (Tan, et al., 1997). Information as well as misinformation are equally shared in the group; this is true even in the area of sexuality and reproductive health. Furthermore, the peer group exerts and expects conformity of the adolescent.

Romantic Relationships

Preadolescent friendships with members of one's own sex and later on, heterosexual interests take place gradually and easily; sometimes it is sudden and bewildering (Cole and Hall, 1970). Whether gradual or sudden, boy and girl relationships are essential to normal adjustment.

In the Philippines, Tan (1996) defined relationships in terms of two important dimensions: spatial and temporal. The spatial covers the notions of space and place where individuals find partners. It was noted in the study that adolescents meet future partners in social events and gatherings, such as parties and school activities. The peer group plays a significant role in making introductions. Though parties are preferred venues for meeting the "right" kind of people, other places were also mentioned: shopping malls, parks, town centers, and schools. Some places are also differentiated depending on one's gender (e.g., there are bars that cater to homosexuals). There are also settings for commercial sex like bars and night spots, which are frequented by male adolescents. All these variations show the importance of looking at the concept of space in the process of socialization.

The temporal aspect pertains to the continuum of the relationship. It is the males who are expected to initiate relationships.

One of the major changes and challenges in an adolescent's life is the shift from same-sex friendships to heterosexual relationships. This commences through dating and becomes more involved in the courtship stage. At the early part of adolescence, dating occurs as a sign of social support and security; this is consistent with their need to feel accepted and has very little sexual significance. At first, dates transpire between individuals belonging to the same class or organization, slowly branching out of the initial peer group. As the adolescent grows older, dating may involve some sexual experiences – usually stop short of actual intercourse. This usually occurs between individuals who have been going steady for some time.

The purposes of dating among young individuals are (Tan et al., 2002; Zarco, et al., 1995):

- Recreation, where individuals are provided with opportunities to just enjoy going out to places and doing things together.
- Emotional support and companionship without the responsibility of marriage.
- Socialization for personal and social growth; adolescents learn to know and understand how to get along with people and the social skills necessary for interacting with people.
- Sexual experimentation, satisfaction and exploitation. Most researches show that while females date to get to know the other person, males do so for physical intimacy.
- Mate sorting and selection, by going out on dates with different individuals, one's tendency to idealize relationships and people is lessened, ushering in a more realistic view of individuals and relationships.
- Achieving intimacy – this is the primary task of adolescence, their ability to maintain an intimate relationship with another person. It was observed that females find it easier to be intimate verbally than males.

Another significant finding on dating among adolescents is on the differences between males and females with regard to reasons for dating and partner selection (Tan, 1996). Males significantly noted more frequently sexual activity as a primary reason for dating and are more concerned with the appearance and sexual activities of the partners, whereas females noted intimacy as a primary objective and placed greater importance on personality and behavior traits.

In the process of dating, new behavioral patterns are formed involving the choice of the partner (Zarco et. al., 1995). Dating is a form of recreation and socialization; it is also labeled as a means of status achievement and courtship. Courtship is the next stage wherein a commitment is established.

The construct of love is one of the most neglected area on interpersonal relationship research. This is primarily because it is considered to be too personal and subjective and too intangible for scientific study. However, it is necessary to look into this phenomenon to understand the dynamics of human affairs, particularly romantic and sexual relationships.

Among Filipino adolescents, most males fall in love between 11 to 15 years of age, while most females do so between 11 to 17 years (CYCC,n.d. as cited in Tan and Ujano-Batangan, 1997). At the age of 21 years, it is estimated that 80% of the young population have already fallen in love. Relationships are seen as being extremely important for emotional support, according to adolescent research participants (Tan,1996). Young individuals identify appropriate places where they can meet other people, including would-be partners. Relationships are believed to evolve over time; one is believed to go through a relationship when one is prepared and the prospect of marriage is an important factor in measuring preparedness. From the initiation of "M.U." (mutual understanding), relationships are perceived to naturally develop between two individuals. The process builds around notions of trust (*pagtitiwala*), responsibility (*pananagutan*) and respect (*respeto*). Sexual activities like necking, petting, and penetrative sex are closely tied with the level of understanding achieved in the relationship.

Results of interviews and FGDs among adolescents (Tan, 1996) pointed to the fact that most males consider having relationships as sources of "experience," "fun" and "pleasure." Females on the other hand, consider "going steady" in order to assess their future partners in marriage. It is interesting to note that when males were asked as to what particular traits they would want their partner to possess, almost all the respondents regardless of economic status, considered physical attractiveness, being demure, being sweet and being educated as essential. The female respondents prefer their boyfriends to be responsible, loving, sincere and honest. Those in the lower income group assessed the importance of having a partner who is financially stable. While Filipino adolescent males initially focus on the external attributes of their partners, females tend to look for indicators of emotional maturity from their partners.

The nature of introduction and the length of time being together somehow reflects the course of the relationship. The type of sexual activity and behavior they will engage in are also defined by these variables. Data shows that marriage legitimizes sex; it could also be a prerequisite of sex or a result of it.

According to Laylo and Montelibano (1999), young Filipinos remain conservative in their views of unorthodox sexual relations; majority refuses premarital relations and reject extramarital relations. Beliefs on the value of female virginity and “preserving” this until one has “tied the knot” are still common.

Tan et al. (2002) summarized the themes that permeate the cultural context of Filipino adolescents and young adults in the area of sexuality. These are: 1) naturalizing sex; 2) sex as both sacred and profane; 3) value of mutuality in romantic relationships; 4) notions of romantic love; 5) value of taking hold, taking trust and taking responsibility in relationships; 6) *hiya* (shame) as an inhibiting social factor in the expression of one’s sexuality; the *barkada* (peer group) as sexual socializing agent; 7) concepts of right place and right time in governing romantic relationships; and 8) risks as *panganib* (threat) and *problema* (problem).

Familial Relationships

The family plays a critical role in the development of a Filipino adolescent’s gender, gender roles and gender perspective. The article of Liwag et al. (1998) focuses on the literature of Filipino child-rearing practices. It affirms that the family plays a major influence in the gender socialization of Filipino children from childhood to late adolescence. This process is facilitated by beliefs, games, chores and practices, which form a large part of child-rearing. The study reflects that in the Philippines, sons and daughters are treated differently within the family, which mirrors society’s own prescription of what is appropriately masculine or feminine; giving rise to different consequences, advantages and disadvantages.

One of the major changes in the adolescent’s life in the area of familial relationships is the adolescent’s branching out outside the home, which dramatically influences the dynamics of the family. The nature of these changes could not be solely due to the changes in the adolescent alone but should be understood within the context of the changes occurring with the people around them—especially parents going through midlife.

The adolescents in the family have expectations of their parents as they go through the ups and downs of the adolescent stage of their lives. They expect their folks to provide the following (Conaco et al., 2003; Ujano-Batangan, 2002).

- Parental interest and help
- Listening, understanding and talking
- Love and acceptance
- Trust
- Behavioral and emotional separation, individuation and autonomy
- Parental example

Though the identity of adolescents is formed by detaching themselves from their families, emotional attachment to the family remains important. Studies have shown that healthy attachment to parents is related to higher self-esteem and to few or non-problematic behaviors (Dacey and Kenny, 1994). In fact, the support, approval and encouragement of parents are still very important to teeners who continue to need some measure of adult supervision and concern.

In the area of parent-adolescent intimacy, it was observed that intimate relationships between parent and child can mediate the effects of crisis and promote positive mental health in subsequent development (Conaco et al, 2003; Ujano-Batangan, 2002). Compared to fathers, mothers are perceived to be more intimate to both female and male adolescents. This is consistent with the view that fathers are not as involved in terms of interpersonal relationship as mothers. Male respondents in the studies attempted to be close to their fathers. Finally, fathers are found to have greater impact on adolescent functioning since fathers generally do not share intimate attachments to their children; it becomes salient then, when they do.

The males are generally reluctant to discuss their problems with their parents because they are “embarrassed” to do so. Another hindrance to disclosure is the unavailability of the parents due to work and family related concerns. In the area of sexuality, though the parents are considered to be the ideal sources of information (Conaco et al., 2003; Tan et al., 2002), adolescents find it hard to discuss their queries with them. They oftentimes turn to their friends for the much needed answers. Most parents also only offer proscriptions on sexuality and do not discuss individual decisions and options among their adolescent children. There is, according to Conaco et al. (2003) “a general feeling of regret and frustration of not being able to get straight answers to their questions on sex, relationships and marriage.”

Parental support is necessary to make the stage of adolescence less frightening for their children. Parents should provide a guide and anchorage for adolescent life, especially in the area of sexuality. Parental approval and disapproval carry a lot of weight.

In the area of decision-making, family factors were observed to be important in the development of competence (Ujano-Batangan, 2002). Although adolescents seek their friends' advice in short-term and less important decisions, they still look for their parent's advice in long-term, and important decisions. Decision-making among adolescents is crucial because of the nature of issues that adolescents must deal with. To become good decision makers, parents must encourage adolescents to decide for themselves. The study concluded that when parents are highly involved in family decision-making, adolescents are also highly involved. From data obtained from intact and single-parent families, it was found that adolescents from one parent families had greater participation in decision-making and higher self-esteem than those from intact families. This may be due to the fact that teens from single-parent households see their involvement in decision-making more important and rewarding. Results also show that female adolescents, rather than male adolescents may be given more responsibility in one-parent families.

Adolescent seems to veer away from family activities, but he/she always returns to the family's nest for nourishment and sustenance – emotionally and psychologically. One significant relationship that provides the adolescent with anchorage is his/her relations with his/her siblings. Older siblings provide the adolescent with role models, surrogate parents, caretakers, teachers, playmates and confidantes, while younger ones provide companionship, and friendship, and meet one another's need for affection and meaningful relationships. In the area of sexuality, older siblings provide perspectives to younger ones in the process of meeting the challenges of one's relationships (Conaco et al., 2003; Tan et al., 2002)

2.2. Sexual Abuse and Assault

In understanding the context of female adolescents and young adults involved in sex work, Abaya (1997) accounted for why they engage in commercial sex work: curiosity, envy of a sex worker friend earning money, search for a job that pays well, sick father unable to provide for the family, broken marriage, and abandonment by a boyfriend. All female sex workers (FSW) are aware and have grown accustomed to society's discrimination; but what embarrass them the most is when they are considered to be *mukhang pera* ("materialistics"). Few of them are actually aware

of the nature and consequences of sexually transmitted diseases. Their fears include raids, abusive customers, and getting sick that would ultimately result to economic difficulties.

Fernando's (2000) study focused on examining and exploring the inner world of the prostituted girl-child. Using an in-depth, multiple case approach, eight girls aged 14-17 years went through clinical interviews and projective techniques. The main finding is that among these adolescents, an emotional/conceptual split had occurred, wherein the individual's self-concept, sense of womanhood and sexuality involved two widely disparate, and yet equally present self-images. On one hand, there is the image of having been "damaged, stained, abused irreparable and degraded by experiences of prostitution and abuse," which "deserved no honor, love or happiness". The other image of one that "held hope for a new, better or fantasized me" that had dignity, is respected and loved, and has real choices in life and a real chance for joy.

Fernandez et al., (1997) looked into the notion and experience of sexual harassment among college students in Visayas and Mindanao. Sexual harassment was defined as unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal and nonverbal conduct of sexual nature. The study showed that 55.3% of the respondents have been subjected to sexual harassment on campus, the forms of harassment they have experienced include: leering, peeping, whistling, unwanted physical contact, suggestive remarks, offensive flirtations and display of pornographic pictures. Some have also experienced unwanted sexual advances, pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions for social activity outside the school, exhibitionism, and outright sexual assault, molestation and rape. These also happened with men as victims of female harassers; though most of the victims were females. Several situations were presented in the study with male professors as harassers.

2.3. Sources of Information

Through the use of questionnaires and psychological tests, it was revealed that adolescent students who have problems with their relationships and sexuality are more inclined to seek assistance from close friends (CYCC, n.d as cited in Tan and Batangan, 1997). Fathers and religious persons are the least popular sources of guidance and help. In general, young individuals' knowledge and attitudes are reflections of their peer group's perceptions. Magazines and movies also play significant roles as sources of information while very little information come from parents and teachers (Tan 1997; Tan et al., 2002)

These findings were also reflected in the findings of Conaco et al. (2003). In addition, it was gathered from these studies that friends, older siblings and parents are preferred sources of information. Teachers and counselors are the least sought because of their perceived "judgmental" stance (Tan, 1997). Sex differences were noted regarding the choice of confidante: males prefer to talk to friends, while females prefer to talk to their mothers about sexuality. The respondents further specified that oftentimes, consultations with parents occur only when they are confronted with beliefs and views that their parents would approve of.

The aforementioned studies further emphasized that the family plays a minimal role in providing information on relationships and sexuality. This role is often restricted to gender roles and prohibitions or proscriptions when crises erupt. Other sources of information, besides the peer group (*barkada*) are books and films. Anigan (n.d.) further observed that males are more aggressive in securing information especially about sexuality than females. Local talk shows as well as foreign ones are also popular among the young. Among females, the most common source of information, aside from books and films are close friends and relatives who have undergone the things they are experiencing.

3. FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN RESEARCH AND INTERVENTIONS

Given the aforementioned results of research literature, it may be forwarded that adolescence brings rapid changes not only in the physical make up of the individual, but also in the socio-emotional realm. With it comes the countless questions adolescents have about the changes in their bodies, feelings, sexuality and relationships. Almost all adolescents grow up perceiving that sex and discussions on sex as *bastos* or profane, as something one learns about in the context of marriage. However, studies on adolescent sexuality have proven that Filipino adolescents are actively involved in the process of formulating and reformulating their own concepts of sexuality. In the process, they become more susceptible and more vulnerable to the different sexual risks they have to face: early pregnancy, abortion, STDs, etc. It is imperative, therefore, that attention be given in clarifying concepts and determining meanings that underlie sexual practices, beliefs and knowledge, critical to the promotion of reproductive health.

Though sex and class differences are evident in the adolescents' conceptualization of the sexual self, there is no way one could deny that they are sexual beings. It is

therefore necessary to address their need to know more about their sexuality and to gain more control over their sexual and reproductive health.

The studies show that social relationships, assault and sources of information, provide the context of sexuality and related sexual risks. It is important, therefore, that the conceptualizations of sexuality and risks be studied with due consideration of the complexities of the relationships among concepts and practices of sexuality and deduce from these the dynamics of understanding the phenomenon.

In the area of research, it could be deduced that succeeding studies look into deepening the understanding of the dynamics of sexuality, sexual risks and risk-taking behavior. To understand young individuals, it is important to conduct contextual researches. Differences in community structure, economic status, gender orientation, gender roles, age, cultural roots, and expectations also come into play in defining meanings related to sexuality and context of sexual risks. It is also important to draw from succeeding studies the relationships between the context of sexual risks and risk-taking behavior. Further studies on homosexuality and sexual abuse should also be conducted, to provide a more holistic view of sexuality and related risks.

In the area of intervention, it is important to consider the developmental changes the adolescent goes through in the process of negotiating with the social world. The value given to the peers and the desire for the parent to address sexual issues will aid in defining interventions in this direction. Though adolescents have extensive knowledge about their sexuality, their knowledge is inadequate. Meeting the gaps in knowledge should therefore be a priority.

Young individuals are aggressive in securing information on sexuality. It is therefore imperative that they gain access to education and counseling services on sexuality and sexual and reproductive health. Due to the constant need to search for information, sexuality education is definitely necessary.

Institutionalizing parent education and community based interventions will facilitate the process of reaching out more effectively to adolescents. Young individuals need access to services and sympathetic service providers; the latter should be trained, therefore, to deal with the questions and needs of adolescents.

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