

EDUHEM 2018
VIII International conference on intercultural education and
International conference on transcultural health: THE
VALUE OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH FOR A GLOBAL,
TRANSCULTURAL WORLD

INFLUENCE ON SELF-ESTEEM AND SATISFACTION WITH
LIFE? A RESEARCH ON SOCIOSEXUALITY

Sara Ortega Guzmán (a), Antonio José González Jimenez (b)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud. Universidad de Almería. saraortega41@gmail.com

(b) Facultad de Educación. Universidad de Almería. ajgonzal@ual.es

Abstract

Sociosexuality is the individual difference in willingness to engage in casual sex without emotional involvement. It is comprised of three aspects: behaviour, attitude and desire. The term was first introduced by Kinsey but interest increased after Simpson & Gangestad published the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI), recently it has taken on greater importance. The principle objective of this study was to investigate the influence of sociosexuality in people and their tendency to engage in casual sex, and to attempt an evaluation of the effects on self-esteem and life satisfaction of the study group. For this study, a sample population was used, drawn from responses online and certain social media platforms. A survey was designed to measure the variables implied within the study group. The results indicated that sociosexuality manifests differently for men and women. Significant differences were obtained in some of the measures studied, such as the number of casual sexual relations in recent years. These results may encourage a change in sex education in order to eliminate the differences between the sexes.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Life satisfaction, occasional sex, self-esteem, sociosexuality.



1. Introduction

In the past, sex was viewed negatively, however, today casual sex is viewed as increasingly important among adolescents. According to Vrangalova & Ong (2014), occasional sex is that which takes place outside of committed relationships or established couples and is currently common among 80% of university students. Lyons, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore (2013) also referred to casual sex as sexual experiences outside of committed, intimate partnerships. Other terms such as "one-night stand" indicate sexual relations occurring between people who do not share a committed, long-term relationship, sometimes between strangers and on a single occasion (Pamela, Regan, Carla, & Dreyer, 1999). Another study by Vrangalova (2014) indicates an increasing tendency among young people to have sex with various people; around 80% of young people reported having this kind of sexual encounter.

Adolescents begin sexual relations at increasingly early ages, compared to a few decades ago (Faílde, Lameiras, & Bimbela, 2008). The majority of occasional sexual encounters occur between people with no direct previous contact, and in places such as bars, discos and parties which are also considered to be socialising environments, due to the use of alcohol or other substances (Ramírez, Chirié, Góngora, & Camacho, 2013). Despite the importance of this fact, men and women are judged differently according to their sexual activity. According to Marks (2008), this may be due to the double-standards held by society: a man who is very sexually active is frequently praised, whereas a woman is criticised. This double-standard has existed in society for decades and has had important implications for women's health, sexual identity and how they are presented in the media (González-Jiménez & Alcalá-Hernández, 2013). A woman with a high number of casual sexual encounters is considered to be "easy" and her reputation damaged, above all when there is a lack of women-related social support, and socially accepted stereotypes are used (Marks, 2008). Pamela et al. (1999) also address the differences between men and women when it comes to casual sex, citing among the possible causes the received social learning of reward and punishment; where the man is rewarded, and the woman chastised for this practice. Such reactions may also be influenced by sociocultural norms, including religious beliefs, culture, and the laws established by society where sex for a woman goes hand in hand with love and commitment, whereas for a man it does not; and by natural selection, where "males and females" have different motivations for engaging in sex (Pamela et al, 1999). Categories defining correct and incorrect behaviour are created by society and may go so far as to limit or punish certain people for practising such behaviour, according to the myths or taboos that provoke rejection and fears in society, or for going beyond mere reproduction (Trejo & Díaz-Loving, 2013).

Megías (2003) reported that boys have no problem in openly showing their intention in participating in casual sex. Conversely, women need a closer relationship in order to have sex. Therefore, it is more common for women to engage in sex to satisfy the reproductive instinct. Another study by Faílde et al. (2008), uphold these ideas, showing that boys tend to have their first sexual encounter earlier than girls, have more occasional partners and engage in riskier behaviour.

1.1. What is sociosexuality?

Sociosexual orientation may be a personality trait that determines the tendency to engage in occasional sex with strangers (Vrangalova & Ong, 2014). It can be understood as the behaviour and attitudes towards spontaneous sex with different people (Webster et al., 2015). Simpson and Gangestad

(1991) defined sociosexuality as "individual differences in willingness to engage in uncommitted sexual relations" (p. 870). Sociosexuality is composed of three traits; behaviour, meaning a person's history of sexual relationships without commitment; attitudes, such as a positive or negative evaluation of occasional sex; and desire, meaning the motivation to have casual sex which may be associated in turn, with arousal and sexual fantasies (Rodrigues, Lopes, & Pereira, 2016). Sociosexual orientation is polarised between those who seek monogamy and deeper emotional unity with a similar partner, and those who have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation, characterised by greater enjoyment of sex without love, and a preference for relationships without commitment (Carvajal, 2014; Zheng, Zhou, Wang, & Hesketh, 2014).

1.2. What may be the consequences of greater sociosexuality?

The possible consequences of a greater number of casual sexual encounters are inconclusive. There is no consensus among researchers as to whether spontaneous sex has positive well-being consequences (Vrangalova & Ong, 2014; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010) or negative (Webster et al. 2015; Vrangalova, 2014; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Vrangalova and Ong (2014) reported that behaving in accordance with one's desires and values can lead to a positive attitude towards casual sex, leading to positive effects on life satisfaction, self-confidence, and improving self-knowledge as well as improving social and academic commitment. Owen et al. (2010) reported that people with a higher sociosexual index have more positive casual sex experiences, resulting in greater psychological well-being. Gebhardt, Kuyper, & Greunsven (2003) cite reasons for engaging in casual sex, such as: improving mood, feeling pleasure or experiencing new sensations.

On the other hand, Webster et al. (2015) reported that people with unrestricted sociosexuality had fewer positive interactions with partners as well as less interest in sex. A further study by Vrangalova (2014), similarly found casual sex was associated with stigmatisation, while Baumeister & Leary (1995), reported that casual sex did not satisfy the innate need for stable, lasting, interpersonal relationships and may in turn give rise to feelings of rejection and pain.

Other consequences of casual sex are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Díaz (2009), Fortenberry, Harezlak, & Orr (2002) show that adolescents with a greater number of sexual partners have less tendency to use condoms than those in stable relationships. The use or otherwise of anticonception methods was also related to attitudes towards sexuality. An erotophilic person (a positive attitude towards sex) makes greater use of anticonception methods than an erotophobic person (a negative attitude towards sex) (García, Menéndez, García, & Rico, 2010).

2. Objectives and hypotheses

The objective of this study was to investigate how sociosexuality may influence behaviour related to the tendency to engage in casual sex with no stable partner, and whether a greater degree of sociosexuality influences higher self-esteem and greater life satisfaction. Our predictions were: 1st hypothesis: that men would obtain a higher score than women, and have a greater tendency to engage in casual sex; 2nd hypothesis: that subjects with a higher sociosexuality score in the survey would have a greater number of sexual relationships (including oral, vaginal, anal, and non-penetrative sex) than those with a lower score;

3rd hypothesis: that subjects with elevated sociosexuality would have greater self-esteem, and 4th hypothesis: they would also have greater overall life satisfaction.

3. Study proposal

Given this paradigm of positivism, and on the hypotheses presented, the quantitative study method as defined by Buendía, Colás, & Hernández (1998) was used. This type of research allowed us to generalise data drawn from a defined population and is used when direct observation is not possible, due to financial constraints or contextual circumstances. It is the common method for quantifying beliefs, opinions and attitudes.

4. Method

The research design used was descriptive, consisting of a single phase. The survey to be completed was made up of different scales: socio-demographic data (including age, sex, nationality, religion and to what degree they practised this; sexual orientation, whether they were virgins or not; age they lost their virginity; type of sexual practice at the time, and whether they had a partner at the time of answering); Sociosexual Orientation Inventory rev. Penke and Asendorpf (2008) (SOI-R), the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (RSE) in the Spanish version by Atienza, Pons, Balaguer & García-Merita (2000); the Spanish version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) Atienza et al. (2000) and Authenticity in Sex, Vrangalova & Ong, (2014), as well as other pertinent data on frequency of sex. After designing and revising the survey it was posted online using Google Drive.

5. Results

5.1. Participants

A simple random sample was taken using probability sampling. The sample consisted of 409 participants (145 men and 264 women), aged between 16 and 59. The average age was 24.43 and the standard deviation was 6.65. In terms of nationality, 97.8% were Spanish, the remainder consisted of Uruguayans (3), Italians (2), Rumanians (2), Ecuadorians (1), and Brazilians (1).

5.2. Descriptive analysis

A descriptive analysis of some socio-demographic data revealed: 84.5% of the sample were heterosexual; 6.9% homosexual; 8.1% bisexual, while 0.5% were of undefined sexual orientation. Only 5 of the participants were virgins at the time of the survey, while 400 were not. The average age of loss of virginity was 17.15 years (SD+2.8). For 67.1% of participants, the first sexual experience was with a stable partner; for 32.9% the first experience was through casual sex, meaning with a partner who had no personal relationship with them.

5.3. Primary analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics software was used to perform the primary analysis, to create the final database and carry out statistical tests. Normality test was carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, resulting in a sample that does not adjust to a normal distribution ($p=0.000$) therefore, the statistical tests were nonparametric.

In consonance with our first hypothesis, the statistical analysis confirmed significant differences between both sexes concerning the final score obtained; the average range for men was 229.80, and for women 181.38, ($p=0.000$). When the three subsections of the sociosexuality survey were analysed separately, there were significant differences in the behaviour relative to sex section. The average range for men was 224.58, and 189.58 for women, ($p=0.004$). There were significant differences also in the desire to have casual sex; the average range for men was 235.73, and for women, 183.45, ($p=0.000$). It was confirmed that no significant differences existed between the genders concerning attitudes towards tendency to have casual sex ($p=0.070$), the average range for men was, 217.72 and for women; 195.68. A Mann-Whitney U test was performed, comparing the points obtained on sociosexuality and the type of sexual relation in which subjects lost their virginity. Significant differences showed average range in stable relationship, 164.13, and casual sex, 258.24 ($p=0.000$). Those subjects who had their first sexual encounter outside of a stable relationship obtained more points in the survey.

Another Mann-Whitney U test was performed on the figures measuring the number of sexual encounters participants had had in the last two years. Once again, there were significant differences between men (average range 235.92) and women (183.34), ($p=0.000$), indicating that the men in our sample had experienced a greater number of sexual relations.

In order to test the second hypothesis (greater points in the survey=greater number of sexual contact or relations in the last two years), a bivariable correlation coefficient was used, due to the range of the two variables to measure. The Spearman coefficient was used because the sample was not a normal distribution. This analysis showed that both variables were positively correlated ($p=0.000$) with a coefficient of 0.610. This confirmed our second hypothesis. If the three subscales are analysed separately, a correlation appears between them and the number of sexual practices experienced. The highest of these was the behaviour subscale, 0.628. This means the greater the points in this subscale, the greater the number of casual sexual encounters experienced by participants.

A further Mann-Whitney U test was performed on the variable "number of sexual practices", to test whether there were differences between the two genders. The statistics indicated a significant difference between genders; average range for men, 235.92, and women, 183.34, ($p=0.000$). Authenticity in sex (feeling true to one's values and feeling in control of the situation) was also measured, and no significant differences were shown between men and women ($p=0.383$).

In so far as our third hypothesis; this is not supported by the analyses of correlation; no significant correlation existed between the level of self-esteem of the subjects and the points obtained in any of the subscales ($p_{\text{behaviour}}=0.657$, $p_{\text{attitudes}}=0.112$ y $p_{\text{desire}}=0.737$).

Finally, to test the fourth hypothesis, another bivariable correlation compared the three subscales in the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory with "general life satisfaction". The results did not confirm the hypothesis that those with a higher score in the survey would have a greater sense of satisfaction with life.

The subscale of behaviour related to sociosexuality produced $p=0.857$ with a correlation coefficient of -0.009. The subscale of attitude towards casual sex presented $p=0.955$ with a coefficient of 0.003; and the subscale of desire to have casual sex produced $p=0.447$, with a correlation of -0.038.

6. Conclusion

Despite the increasing importance of sex to society, it continues to be a relatively taboo subject about which many prejudices and incorrect ideas are held, and sex studies continue to be limited. Social norms from the past continue to place women in vulnerable positions, and subject to degrading labelling. The same does not occur with men, who may be positively valued for having a greater number of sexual encounters due to the fact that historically, sex for men has been a symbol of manhood and power, rather than a reproductive necessity. The statistical differences found in this paper concerning this aspect should instigate a change in the way sex education is planned and treated. A change in thinking and attitudes is needed in order to break certain beliefs and myths that persist today, to treat men and women equally in areas of sex, and in order to prevent discrimination due to the number of relations with other people.

Future studies of casual sex should take into account a series of factors that may have interfered with the data obtained in this sample. It would be interesting to carry out a survey of different Spanish provinces in order to obtain a more representative sample of the country, and to compare inter-provincial data to evaluate cultural differences. Studies may also be carried out using data from adolescents and adults to compare the two groups.

To determine whether sociosexuality is a personality trait, as some authors have suggested, longitudinal studies could be performed beginning in adolescence and continuing through adulthood to an advanced age. Another important aspect which has not been covered in this study, is the possible implications of casual sex on high-risk behaviour (such as not using condoms), which may influence the number of unwanted pregnancies, and STDs.

Despite the possible limitations of this study and the fact that the data cannot be extrapolated to the general population, we consider it necessary to continue researching sociosexuality and its possible consequences on people's daily lives. The negative aspects highlighted need further work in order to improve education at early stages, in order to deconstruct the inequalities between men and women which persist to this day.

References

- Atienza, F., Pons, D., Balaguer, I., & García-Merita, M. (2000). Propiedades psicométricas de la Escala de Satisfacción con la Vida en adolescentes. *Psicothema*, 12(2), 314-319.
- Baumeister, R., & Leary, M. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychologicalbulletin*, 117(3), 497-529.
- Buendía, L., Colás, P., & Hernández, F. (1998). *Métodos de investigación en psicopedagogía*. Madrid: Mcgrawhill.
- Carvajal, A. (2014). *Análisis de la deseabilidad de involucramiento románticos entre jóvenes adultos universitarios. Interacciones entre sociosexualidad, involucramiento y atractivo físico*. (Tesis de graduación). Universidad de Costa Rica. Facultad de Ciencias Sociales. Escuela de Psicología.
- Díaz, R. (2009). Atracción, romance, sexo y protección en adolescentes. *Enseñanza e investigación en psicología*, 14(2), 215-230.

- Faílde, J., Lameiras, M., & Bimbela, J. (2008). Prácticas sexuales de chicos y chicas españoles de 14-24 años de edad. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, 22(6), 511-519.
- Fortenberry, J., W., Harezlak, J., & Orr, D. (2002). Condom use as a function of time in new and established adolescent sexual relationships. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92(2), 211-213.
- García, E., Menéndez, E., García, P., & Rico, R. (2010). Influencia del sexo y del género en el comportamiento sexual de una población adolescente. *Psicothema*, 22(4), 606-612.
- Gebhardt, W.A., Kuyper, L., & Greunsven, G. (2003). Need for intimacy in relationships and motives for sex as determinants of adolescent condom use. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 33, 154-164.
- González-Jiménez, A., & Alcalá-Hernández, S. (2013). *Estereotipos de la mujer en los medios de comunicación y su influencia en la sexualidad de los adolescentes* (Master Thesis). Universidad de Almería. Almería, España.
- Kinsey, A.C., Pomeroy, W.B., & Martin, C.E. (1948). *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Oxford, England: Sauders.
- Lyons, H., Manning, W., Giordano, P., & Longmore, M. (2013). Predictors of heterosexual casual sex among young adults. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 42, 585-593.
- Marks, M. (2008). Evaluations of sexually active men and women under divided attention: a social cognitive approach to the sexual double standard. *Basic and applied social psychology*, 30, 84-91.
- Megías, I. (2003). Jóvenes ante el sexo: valores y expectativas. *Revista de Estudios de la Juventud*, 63, 19-26.
- Owen, J., Rhoades, G., Stanley, S., & Fincham, F. (2010). "hooking up" among college students: demographic and psychosocial correlates. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 39, 653-663.
- Pamela, C., Regan, P., Carla, S., & Dreyer, B. (1999). Lust? Love? Status? Young adults' motives for engaging in casual sex. *Journal of psychology & human sexuality*, 11(1), 1-24.
- Penke, L., & Asendorpf, J. (2008). Beyond global sociosexual orientations: A more differentiated look at sociosexuality and its effects on courtship and romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 1113-1135.
- Ramírez, V., Chirié, F., Góngora, K., & Camacho, F. (2013). Sexo casual entre jóvenes. Percepciones sobre las prácticas sexuales entre universitarios. *Debate feminista*, 48, 112-134.
- Rodrigues, D., Lopes, D., & Pereira, M. (2016). Sociosexuality, commitment, sexual infidelity, and perceptions of infidelity: Data from the second love web site. *The journal of sex research*, 54, 241-253.
- Simpson, J. A., & Gangestad, S. W. (1991). Individual differences in sociosexuality: Evidence for convergent and discriminant validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 870-883.
- Trejo, F., & Díaz-Loving, R. (2013). En torno a la sexualidad: actitudes y orientación sociosexual en una muestra mexicana. *Psicología Iberoamericana*, 21(1), 7-15.
- Vrangalova, Z. (2014). Does casual sex harm college students' well-being? A longitudinal investigation of the role of motivation. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 44, 945-959.
- Vrangalova, Z., & Ong, A. (2014). Who benefits from casual sex? The moderating role of sociosexuality. *Social psychological and personality science*, 5(8), 883-891.
- Webster, G., Laurenceau, J., Smith, C., Mahaffey, A., Bryan, A., & Brunell, A. (2015). An investment model of sociosexuality, relationship satisfaction, and commitment: Evidence from dating, engaged, and newlywed couples. *Journal of research in personality*, 55, 112-126.
- Zheng, W., Zhou, X., Wang, X., & Hesketh, T. (2014). Sociosexuality in Mainland China. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 43(3), 621-629.