

## Sexuality in The Perception of Adolescents Students Of The Public School: Contribution To The Care

Sexualidade na Percepção de Adolescentes Estudantes da Rede Pública de Ensino: Contribuição para o Cuidado

Sexualidad en la Percepción de Adolescentes Estudiante de la Red Pública de Enseñanza: Contribución para el Cuidado

Ediane de Andrade Ferreira<sup>1</sup>; Valdecyr Herdy Alves<sup>2</sup>; Audrey Vidal Pereira<sup>3</sup>; Diego Pereira Rodrigues<sup>4\*</sup>; Márcia Vieira dos Santos<sup>5</sup>; Maria Cristina Gabrielloni<sup>6</sup>

### How to quote this article:

Ferreira EA, Alves VH, Pereira AV, *et al.* Sexuality by the Viewpoint of Adolescent Students From Public Schools of Macapá. *RevFundCareOnline*. 2019. Oct./Dec.; 11(5):1208-1212. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9789/2175-5361.2019.v11i5.1208-1212>

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The study's purpose has been to discuss the adolescents' perception about sexuality in the scholar framework. **Methods:** It is a descriptive-exploratory study with a qualitative approach, which was carried out with forty-six adolescents from three public schools in Macapá city, Amapá State. Data collection took place through interviews lead by the authorization of the respective parents/relatives. The data was later transcribed and submitted to content analysis by the thematic modality. **Results:** The following category was achieved: sexuality in the adolescents' daily life - a challenge for sexual and reproductive education; where the following aspects were addressed: sexuality related to the act of generating children; adolescents' lack of knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. **Conclusion:** Therefore, it is relevant to improve the relationship between education and health professionals aiming to reappraisal the pedagogical practices offered to students. Furthermore, it is necessary to assess the applied methodologies and to pursue new proposals that can reach the adolescents' information needs.

**Descriptors:** Adolescent, Sexuality, Reproductive health, Sexual health.

<sup>1</sup> Nursing Graduate, MSc in Maternal-Infant Health, Assistant Professor at UNIFAP. Universidade Federal do Amapá (UNIFAP), Brazil. E-mail address: edianesaude@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Nursing Graduate, PhD in Nursing, Full Professor at UFF. Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), Brazil. E-mail address: herdyalves@yahoo.com.br

<sup>3</sup> Nursing Graduate, PhD in Public Health, Adjunct Professor at UFF. Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), Brazil. E-mail address: auviprof@yahoo.com.br

<sup>4</sup> Nursing Graduate, MSc in Nursing, Adjunct Professor at UNIAN. Centro Universitário Anhanguera de Niterói (UNIAN), Brazil. E-mail address: diego.pereira.rodrigues@gmail.com

<sup>5</sup> Nursing Graduate, MSc in Maternal-Infant Health. Secretaria Estadual de Saúde do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. E-mail address: enfa.marcia@oi.com.br

<sup>6</sup> Nursing Graduate, PhD in Nursing, Associate Professor at UNIFESP. Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP), Brazil. E-mail address: crisgabrielloni@gmail.com

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Discutir a percepção de adolescentes acerca da sexualidade no espaço escolar. **Método:** estudo descritivo e exploratório, de natureza qualitativa, realizado com quarenta e seis adolescentes em três escolas públicas do município de Macapá, capital do Estado do Amapá. A coleta de dados ocorreu através de entrevistas realizadas com a autorização dos respectivos responsáveis, posteriormente transcritos e submetidos à análise de conteúdo na modalidade temática. **Resultados:** Obteve-se a formação da seguinte categoria: a sexualidade no cotidiano dos adolescentes - um desafio para a educação sexual e reprodutiva, em que foi trabalhado estes aspectos: a sexualidade relacionada ao ato de gerar filhos; o desconhecimento dos adolescentes acerca da saúde sexual e reprodutiva. **Conclusão:** torna-se relevante a aproximação entre profissionais da educação e saúde para reverem as práticas pedagógicas ofertadas aos estudantes, sendo necessário avaliar as metodologias aplicadas e buscar novas propostas que alcancem as necessidades de informações necessárias para que adolescentes.

**Descritores:** Adolescentes, Sexualidade, Saúde reprodutiva, Saúde sexual.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Discutir la percepción de adolescentes acerca de la sexualidad en el espacio escolar. **Método:** estudio descriptivo y exploratorio, de naturaleza cualitativa, realizado con cuarenta y seis adolescentes en tres escuelas públicas del municipio de Macapá, capital del Estado de Amapá. La recolección de datos ocurrió a través de entrevistas realizadas con la autorización de los respectivos responsables, posteriormente transcritas y sometidas al análisis de contenido en la modalidad temática. **Resultados:** Se obtuvo la formación de la siguiente categoría: la sexualidad en el cotidiano de los adolescentes - un desafío para la educación sexual y reproductiva, en que se trabajó estos aspectos: la sexualidad relacionada al acto de generar hijos; el desconocimiento de los adolescentes acerca de la salud sexual y reproductiva. **Conclusión:** se hace relevante la aproximación entre profesionales de la educación y salud para revisar las prácticas pedagógicas ofrecidas a los estudiantes, siendo necesario evaluar las metodologías aplicadas y buscar nuevas propuestas que alcancen las necesidades de informaciones necesarias para que adolescentes.

**Descriptores:** Adolescente, Sexualidad, Salud reproductiva, Salud sexual.

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a phase that arouses interest in various segments of society in order to be a process of anatomical, physiological, emotional and behavioral change that interferes with the formation of personality<sup>1</sup> and that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is established in a person's life from 10 to 19 years old. The Statute of the Child and Adolescent defines that this stage is between the ages of 12 and 18, being the later yet incomplete.<sup>2</sup>

In this period of transformations, there is often the experimentation of sexuality which, in a broader concept, is the energy that is contained in the human being, regardless of gender and age, which involves practices and desires interconnected to different ways of feeling pleasure and be satisfied.<sup>3</sup>

Sexuality, a condition of having sex and of being sexed, is part of human nature, being present in all phases of life,

inserting itself in the search for affection, for contact and intimacy, which express themselves in the form of feeling, in the way of touching and being touched. It suffers the influence of the milieu and historical moment in which people insert themselves and are inserted, implied and implied by considering, for instance, gender relations, identity, fantasies, beliefs, values and attitudes.<sup>4</sup>

During this period, reproductive age and sexual issues become more evident and striking: individuals can take risky behaviors without being prepared for it, and thus contribute to increased susceptibility to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) or even to an unwanted pregnancy,<sup>5</sup> since sexuality is becoming even more precocious in the adolescents' lives.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, there is a need for strategies to provide the necessary information to adolescents to ensure their knowledge about the subject, as the highlighted group is vulnerable and the school appears as a space for this educational process, with the help of teachers and of health professionals, although not always prepared to deal with sexual and reproductive health, especially with sexuality, restricting itself to the biological aspect of the issue, and often neglecting its psychosocial and cultural aspects.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the study's goal was to discuss the adolescents' perception about sexuality in the scholar framework.

## METHODS

It is a descriptive-exploratory study with a qualitative approach, which was carried out in three public high schools located in *Macapá* city, Amapá State, Brazil, from August to December 2016.

The choice of places occurred through a simple random process, obtaining a school by region, namely: State School Professor Sebastiana Lenir de Almeida (South Region); State School Professor Alexandre Vaz Tavares (Central Region); State School Professor Maria Ivone de Menezes (North Region).

The study participants were forty-six (46) students who met the following inclusion criteria: being within the age group from 13 to 18 years old; be regularly enrolled in the state education network. And having as exclusion criterion: adolescents with some physical, emotional or psychological problems that compromised their participation. A semi-structured interview was conducted on sexual and reproductive health, which took place in a private environment, thus guaranteeing the participant's privacy. And, from the moment that the interviews obtained the description of the same direction, they were terminated, since it already obtained the process of saturation of the data.

The testimonies were collected through a digital device, fully transcribed and submitted to content analysis by the thematic modality.<sup>7</sup> Participants were identified as 'Adolescents' and given a sequential alphanumeric code (A1, A2,...A46) to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the respective testimony. The recording unit was used from

the theme as a strategy to organize the content of the interviews. A selection of distinct colors was performed, which enabled each unit to be identified and grouped, allowing a general view of the theme, giving rise to the following registration units: development of the human body; reproduction of children; health care; prevention with contraceptive methods; little knowledge. These units were the basis for the construction of the thematic unit named Reproductive Health: Building Concepts, which originated the following thematic category: Sexuality according to the adolescents' viewpoint.

The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee from the Antônio Pedro University Hospital of the *Universidade Federal Fluminense*, under protocol No. 1.349.794/2015, according to the Resolution 466/2012 from the National Health Council. In order to concretize participation, all adolescents signed the Informed Assent Agreement, complemented with the authorization of the respective legal representatives and/or legal representatives who signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Sexuality according to the adolescents' viewpoint

Concerning the adolescents' perception of sexuality, health, and reproduction, it was possible to address their lack of knowledge about these concepts, as follows:

*I never sought to know exactly what it is, but now with almost 18 I will need to know, so I'll get to know more (A2)*  
*It is our very body reproduction. As we grow, that sort of thing, you know; but about the word itself I do not understand very well (A17)*  
*Reproductive health, I've never heard of it. I think it's a well being for the person, that's what I think it means (A20)*  
*I believe that it is as our health is, to be able to generate other beings (A32)*

The perception of sexuality correlated with the act of generating children brings up issues related to the sexual act and pregnancy, then revealing the little knowledge and doubts of the students in regards to each one, according to the following statements:

*It would be pregnancy, is that it? It is to have healthy children, I think (A15)*  
*I have never heard the term; I think it is self-care, through sexual intercourse, maybe this (A26)*  
*It is an act of two people who are going to generate a child (A30)*  
*I've heard, but I do not know the details. Would it be to know how to make a baby (A40)*

It can be seen in the statements that the unprotected sexual act might generate a child, regardless of contracting STIs, and still cause life-threatening risk for women. Thus, in the conception of the adolescents, especially for boys, the harms go to the girls, as quoted in the statements:

*Concerning the pregnancy, when a person becomes pregnant, she needs medical care and a follow-up so that it does not affect the life within her (A22)*  
*There are several cases of girls who do not plan a early pregnancy, and end up going to the hospital, end up dying, getting sick or so (A42)*

The difficulty in intellectualizing sexuality was evident in the adolescent speeches, as in the following examples:

*I've heard. But I forgot now. Reproduction? I do not get it right now (A14)*  
*I do not know how to answer (A24)*  
*I do not understand much; I do not comprehend it (A28)*

In schools, education associated to sexuality is usually accomplished in an unsystematic and discontinuous way, with a strictly biological approach, thus ignoring the historical, social and cultural aspects involved in this process around the construction of meanings; or discuss sexuality from the threat (use condoms for pregnancy prevention).<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, sexual education actions can be offered in the field of knowledge to adolescents, transcending the biological factor. It should be mentioned that the model of formal education offered in school institutions is duly organized and structured in relation to its pedagogical material, training of its educators and curriculum (curricular or disciplinary grade), with the aim of contemplating all significant contents (from the point of view of the proposer) in the area.<sup>9</sup> The aspects of gender and reproduction need to be recognized when addressing sexuality, understanding that it goes beyond the biological aspect. Their approach must be multidimensional, focusing on the cultural and social aspects of adolescents, thus promoting their perception with respect to the different concepts of lifestyles and sexual and reproductive health.

The aforesaid thought demonstrates that in our culture, sexuality has been associated exclusively with sex through the meaning of sexual activity. Although many people confuse the concepts of sexuality and sex itself, sexuality is not restricted to sexual practices. Sex is only one aspect of sexuality.<sup>10</sup>

WHO defines sexuality as a motivating energy to find love, touch, tenderness, and intimacy; integrates in the way we feel, move, touch and touch; is to be sensual and to be sexual. Sexuality goes beyond the biological and reproductive aspects. It is an integral part of the personality, it involves all the behavior of the individual and is expressed in a great diversity of manifestations, such as: caresses, kisses, hugs, looks, feelings, affections, fantasies, desires, dreams and pleasure.

Sexuality is manifested, then, at any moment, in every space in which the subject is inserted,<sup>10</sup> being boys and girls, men and women, and not simply in the biological order of sex and pregnancy. The accompanying group clearly demonstrates that their knowledge is still restricted to the sexual act, their practice, and the idea that the consequences of the act will be negative and, thus, it will have bad consequences.

Being discussed through this approach, sexuality seems to be responsible for aggravation, death, and violence.<sup>11</sup> This is because the disinformation of adolescents and the early onset of sexual activity without contraceptive protection have the consequence of increasing the rates of pregnancy in adolescence, abortions that leave psychological sequelae, in addition to STIs.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the sense of sexuality reveals itself as a process with obstacles, especially regarding the protection for a healthy relationship.

Maternity, in turn, represents a period of transformation into adult life, in which the girl starts to assume a significant role, coming from changes and readaptation to establish new responsibilities. It is not only a question of physical changes, but also of a transformation related to social life that must be analyzed and understood, since it implies new projects in the daily lives of these adolescents.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, the sexist culture and the visibility of the female gender as the most exposed and socially charged for sexual practice in adolescence still perpetuate in Brazilian society. Disinformation about the broad aspects of sexuality still negatively affects adolescence, especially regarding the biological nature of sexual intercourse; lack of protection favors the health of girls, in addition to non-understood gestation, and most of the time unplanned.

The “silence” that surrounds this topic, the refusal of information, the continuation of ignorance and the repeatedly underlined prohibitions can be reflected in the professional life, in the non-sexualized care, in the impersonality of the relations, in the absence of dialogue, in the emotions and feelings contained in order not to denote embarrassment in dealing with the sexual body of the other, among other issues that may come to the fore at the time of care.<sup>14</sup> It is important to assess the teaching practice and especially of health professionals who also work with adolescents in the considering the perception presented by the students, it is perceived that the information that reaches them follows or maintains the same biologic pattern, of risks and illnesses that still perpetuate in society. Training and updating of education and health professionals, compliance with agreed settlements to address cross-cutting issues in schools in partnership with family health teams (*Programa Saúde na Escola – PSE*; Brazilian Program for Health in School) and the evaluation of the impact of these actions or educational practices proposed for the group of adolescents need to be reviewed because it may be possible from an evaluation process to perceive what is working and what needs to be improved.

## CONCLUSIONS

The approach to sexuality itself has not been identified as a regular theme offered with clear, intersectoral and multidisciplinary language, but still traditionally passed on, considering the difficulty of students in answering the research questions. It is inferred that in order to focus on themes such as sexuality, sexual health and reproductive health, it is necessary to talk about sexual rights and reproductive rights, since the appropriate absence of this approach results in the students' vague or even mistaken answers. Therefore, it is essential to adopt strategies for adolescents' knowledge about the topic, so that there is an understanding not only of the biological factor in relation to the sexual act and pregnancy but, above all, in the psychological, social and cultural aspects that permeate this issue. Promoting an approximation between health and education in order to assess their action plans and their social repercussion in the adolescents' lives can also be a strategy that will support the Brazilian sexual and reproductive health policy.

## REFERENCES

1. Almeida TG, Vasconcelos EL, Trindade RFC, Comssetto I, Ferreira AS, Lopes RF. Validação de material educativo como ferramenta pedagógica sobre métodos contraceptivos para adolescentes. *Rev enferm UFPE [Periódico na Internet]*. 2016 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 10(12): 4696-700. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.ufpe.br/revistas/revistaenfermagem/article/view/11541/13449>
2. Senna SRGM, Dessen MA. Reflexões sobre a saúde do adolescente brasileiro. *Psic, saúde & doenças [Periódico na Internet]*. 2015 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 16(2): 217-29. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.mec.pt/pdf/psd/v16n2/v16n2a08.pdf>
3. Lins LS, Silva LAM, Santos RG, Morais TBD, Beltrão TA, Castro JFL. Análise do comportamento sexual de adolescentes. *Rev bras promoz saúde [Periódico na Internet]*. 2017 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 30(1):47-56. Disponível em: <http://periodicos.unifor.br/RBPS/article/view/5760>
4. Souza V, Pimenta AM, Caetano LC, Cardoso JSR, Beinner MA, Villela LCM. Conhecimentos, vivências e crenças no campo sexual: um estudo com alunos do ensino médio com perfis socioeconômicos diferenciados. *Rev min enferm [Periódico na Internet]*. 2017 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 21: 11-11.
5. Queiroz AAFLN, Sousa AFL, Feitosa JJM, Alves RC, Nery IS, Moura MEB. Educação sexual para adolescentes por docentes de um centro de educação comunitária. *Rev fund. care online [Periódico na Internet]*. 2016 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 8(4):5120-5. Disponível em: [http://www.seer.unirio.br/index.php/cuidadofundamental/article/view/4953/pdf\\_1](http://www.seer.unirio.br/index.php/cuidadofundamental/article/view/4953/pdf_1)
6. Veloso DLC, Peres VC, Lopes JSOC, Salge AKM, Guimarães JV. Anticoncepção de emergência: conhecimento e atitude de acadêmicos de enfermagem. *Rev gaucha enferm [Periódico na Internet]*. 2014 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 35(2): 33-9. Disponível em: <http://seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/RevistaGauchadeEnfermagem/article/view/41561/29914>
7. Bardin L. Análise de conteúdo. Lisboa: Edições 70 LDA; 2011.
8. Barros SC, Ribeiro PRC. Educação para a sexualidade: uma questão transversal ou disciplinar no currículo escolar? *Rev electrón enseñ. cienc [Periódico na Internet]*. 2012 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 11(1): 164-8. Disponível em: [http://reec.uvigo.es/volumenes/volumen11/REEC\\_11\\_1\\_9\\_ex570.pdf](http://reec.uvigo.es/volumenes/volumen11/REEC_11_1_9_ex570.pdf)
9. Marola CAG, Sanches CSM, Cardoso LM. Formação de conceitos em sexualidade na adolescência e suas influências. *Psicol educ [Periódico na Internet]*. 2011 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; (33): 95-118. Disponível em: <http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/pdf/psie/n33/n33a06.pdf>
10. Gonçalves RC, Faleiro JH, Malafaia G. Educação sexual no contexto familiar e escolar: impasses e desafios. *HÓLOS [Periódico na Internet]*. 2013 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 29(5): 251-63. Disponível



- em: <http://www2.ifrn.edu.br/ojs/index.php/HOLOS/article/view/784/741>
11. Costa DO. Educação para a sexualidade, igualdade das relações de gênero e diversidade sexual: possibilidades e limites. Rev Saberes docentes em Ação [Periódico na Internet]. 2016 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 2(1): 131-46. Disponível em: <http://www.maceio.al.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/lucasragucci/pdf/2016/11/10-EDUCA%C3%87%C3%83O-PARA-A-SEXUALIDADE-IGUALDADE-DAS-RELA%C3%87%C3%95ES-DE-G%C3%8ANERO-E-DIVERSIDADE-SEXUAL-POSSIBILIDADES-E-LIMITES.pdf>
  12. Secretaria do Estado de São Paulo (SP). Panorama da contracepção de emergência no Brasil. São Paulo: Instituto de Saúde; 2016.
  13. Santos CC, Wilhelm LA, Alves CN, Cremonese L, Castiglioni CM, Venturini L, et al. A vivência da gravidez na adolescência no âmbito familiar e social. Rev enferm UFSM [Periódico na Internet]. 2014 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 4(1): 105-12. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.ufsm.br/reufsm/article/view/9860/pdf>
  14. Sehnem GD, Ressel LB, Junges CF, Silva FM, Barreto CN. A sexualidade na formação acadêmica do enfermeiro. Rev EEAN [Periódico na Internet]. 2013 [acesso em 2017 jun 10]; 17(1): 90-96. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ean/v17n1/13.pdf>

Received on: 03/06/2018

Required Reviews: None

Approved on: 07/02/2018

Published on: 10/05/2019

**\*Corresponding Author:**

Diego Pereira Rodrigues

Rua Desembargador Leopoldo Muylaert, 307

Piratininga, Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

E-mail address: [deazavalis@gmail.com](mailto:deazavalis@gmail.com)

Telephone number: +55 21 98771-4126

Zip Code: 24.350-450

The authors claim to have no conflict of interest.