

Evaluation of gender knowledge, behaviors and attitudes of physical training and sports students

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Abstract

Human sexuality is a highly complicated and specific phenomenon made of different components. Human sexuality is a component of physical and mental health and affects our thinking, behavior, interactions and our entire life. It has been observed in groups which offer training and service in Physical Training and Sports, numerous studies were made on physical, psychological and social aspects of individuals yet a very limited number of studies were made on assessment of sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. In this descriptive study realized to evaluate sexual knowledge, behaviors and attitudes of students at the school of physical training and sports, data was collected by the student information form and the Sexual Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) and evaluated using percentage distribution, correlation and t test in SPSS 16.0 software. A large part of the student group which was mainly made of male students (75%) and those who have lived for a longer period of time at central areas in their life (73%), pointed at unofficial channels such as friends (62%) and the internet (46%) as their source of information on sexuality. The most widely known sexually transmitted disease (STD) is AIDS (72%). Other STDs have a very low level of acquaintance. While female students exhibited a more conservative attitude compared to males in all areas of SAS, they exhibited a similar attitude to male students in the subscale of attitude towards their own sexuality. The study determined that students needed accountable information sources on sexuality and their level of sexual attitude could be considered conservative.

Keywords: Sexual attitude, sexual health, physical training and sports students, university students

INTRODUCTION

Humans are sexual beings. Sexuality is a basic human need and an innate part of the current personality. Human sexuality is a highly complicated and specific phenomenon made of different components (Eser, 2006; MC Townsend, 2014). These components include psychological, physical and biological traits of the individual as well as social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and other factors (CEDAT, 2007; WHO, 2015). Contrary to common beliefs, sexuality covers not only sexual organs but also the entire body and mind. Human sexuality is a component of physical and mental health and affects our thinking, behavior, interactions and our entire life.

Historically considered to be a taboo, sexuality has been accepted as a scientific field of study since 1960s (MC Townsend, 2014). Since then, developments have been achieved in sexuality and sexual health with scientific studies. However, it is a known fact that the number of these studies is limited, a number of areas have not been addressed yet and silence remains about sexuality (Parker, 2009). Despite the silent attitude towards sexuality, increased number and rate of sexually transmitted diseases, changes in definitions, attitudes and behaviors related to sexuality with the effect of technology and globalizations, claiming sexual rights and other developments require a change in this silent attitude (Parker, 2009).

This silent attitude towards sexuality also reveals itself in Physical Training and Sports. As in other areas of the society, the study conducted by the authors indicates that numerous studies were conducted on individuals' physical (Sevindi et al., 2007; Yılmaz, 2006.) psychological (Şenel et al., 2014; Bingöl et al., 2012; Özşaker et al., 2014; Taşğın et al., 2007) and social aspects (Avsar, 2004; Tekin et al., 2006) in groups which receive training and offer service in physical training and sports. The number of studies which evaluate individuals' sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, however, is very limited. It is required to provide a fair, safe and free environment and lifestyle of education and practice for students and other members of the society vested with different characteristics in professional lives of physical training and sports students. Identification of attitudes of persons to provide training and service in this field towards their own sexuality and towards sexual variables of others they would serve, work with or offer training is critical in bringing a light on a dark field.

This study has been conducted with an aim to identify sexual knowledge, behaviors and attitudes of physical training and sports students.

METHOD

This study planned to be descriptive was conducted in the spring semester in 2012-2013 academic year at School of Physical Training and Sports, Gazi University. All students who continued education in the concerned academic year constituted the study population and 154 students who accepted participation were included in the study. 108 students who completely filled out the data collection form created the sample group and data was collected using the student information form and the Sexual Attitudes Questionnaire and was evaluated using percentage distribution, correlation and t test in SPSS 16.0 software.

Student Information Form: The form created through literature search by the authors is made up of two parts. The first part reviews sociodemographic variable of students while the second inquires into other variables which might possibly be associated with sexuality.

Sexual Attitudes Questionnaire: The Trueblood Sexual Attitudes Questionnaire (TSAQ); (revised by Hannon et al., 1999; Turkish Version, Duyan, 2004), this questionnaire assesses the attitudes (not behaviors) toward sexuality for self (40 items) and for others (40 items) on five subscales. Each subscale has eight items that are rated on a 9-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (I completely disagree) to 9 (I completely agree). Higher numbers indicate a more accepting or liberal attitude toward sexuality.

To prepare the Turkish version, the double translation method was used. Test re-test results were correlated for all subscales and for the total scale ($p < 0.001$). Alpha values of the subscales and total scale were found to be very high (for autoerotism-self = .8341; or heterosexuality-self =.6478, for homosexuality-self = .8101, for variations self = .7542, for commercial sex-self = .7315, autoerotism-other = .8552, for heterosexuality other = .7413, for homosexuality-other = .9354, for variations-other = .8382, for commercial sex-other =.8015, for total self = .9178, and for total other =.9537), (Duyan, 2004).

RESULTS

Table 1. The socio demographic characteristics of the students

The socio demographic characteristics		n	%
Gender	Women	27	25.0
	Men	81	75.0
Grade year	1st year	26	24.1
	2nd year	28	25.9
	3rd year	29	26.9
	4th year	25	23.1
Current Resettlement Unit	Village	9	8.3
	County	20	18.5
	City	79	73.1
Families' Income	Extra Low	31	28.4
	Low	57	52.3
	Middle	5	4.6
	High	16	14.7
Total		109	100

Table 1 demonstrates distribution of students by sociodemographic variables. A large majority of the students are male (75%) and live in urban areas (73.1%). The number of students almost distributes evenly between classes. Roughly half of the students are from families at low income level.

Table 2. Students' characteristics related to sexuality and their information sources

		n	%	
Has a girl/boyfriend	Yes	72	66.7	
Talks about sexuality with others	Yes	78	72.2	
To consent sex without marriage for men	Yes	66	61.1	
To consent sex without marriage for women	Yes	29	26.9	
Has an activesex life	Yes	51	47.2	
Information sources related to sexuality	Curriculum	0	0	
	Specialist	20	18.5	
	Institutions	7	5.5	
	Books	19	17.6	
	Teachers	9	8.3	
	Newspaper	15	13.9	
	Magazines	15	13.9	
	Internet	50	46.3	
	Cassetteand CD	18	16.7	
	Family	26	24.1	
	Siblings	5	4.6	
	Friends	67	62.0	
	Sexual experiences	48	44.4	
	Known sexually transmissible diseases	AIDS	78	72.2
		Hepatitis	18	16.7
Gonorrhea		19	17.6	
Syphilis		10	8.3	
HPV		2	1.9	
Herpes		2	1.9	
How felt while answering this questions	Negative	32	29.6	
	Neutral	59	54.6	
	Positive	17	15.7	
Total		108	100	

Table 2 demonstrates variables which might be associated with sexual attitude. More than half of the students have a girlfriend/boyfriend (66.7%) and a majority of the students state they can talk with others about sexual topics (72.2%). While 61.1% of the students found premarital sex acceptable for men, 26.9% reported they found it acceptable for women. Considering how the students acquired information about sexuality, the most widespread sources are unofficial channels including friends (62.0%), the internet (46.3%) and their own experiences (44.4%). The most widely known STD is AIDS. The rate of acquaintance of life critical diseases including Hepatitis (16.7%) and HPV (1.9%) is very low. Many sexually transmitted parasites and bacterial infections are not known by the students at all. While 54.6% of the students stated they had neutral feelings while filling out the sexual attitude form 29.0% reported negative feelings.

Table 3. Students' attitudes towards sexuality according to their gender

Sub-scales	Women		Men		Statistic	
	\bar{X}	Sd	\bar{X}	Sd		
Masturbation self	13.56	8.01	27.73	12.80	t=-5.4	p<0.01
Masturbation others	11.59	6.08	29.93	14.98	t=-6.2	p<0.01
Heterosexuality self	30.70	4.99	37.65	11.07	t=-3.2	p<0.01
Heterosexuality others	30.59	6.25	36.95	9.58	t=-3.2	p<0.01
Homosexuality self	12.04	7.11	16.72	11.90	t=-1.9	p>0.05
Homosexuality others	12.04	6.78	22.11	15.27	t=-3.3	p<0.01
Variations-self	13.22	9.23	27.85	14.61	t=-4.9	p<0.01
Variations-others	12.81	8.91	27.79	15.54	t=-4.7	p<0.01
Commercial sex self	18.19	6.34	27.15	10.27	t=-4.3	p<0.01
Commercial sex others	17.56	5.99	32.05	13.49	t=-5.4	p<0.01

* Used Mann-Whitney U Test

Table 3 demonstrates distribution of sexual attitudes by gender. On all subscales apart from attitude towards self homosexuality, female students scored much lower than men. No difference was obtained between scores of men and women on homosexuality self subscale (t=-1.9; p>0.05).

Table 4. Students' attitudes towards sexuality according to their sexual life

Sub-scales	Have an active sex life		Not have an active sex life		Statistic	
	\bar{X}	Sd	\bar{X}	Sd		
Masturbation self	30.57	13.31	18.47	10.39	5.3	p<0.01
Masturbation others	31.92	16.53	19.46	11.86	4.5	p<0.01
Hetero sexuality self	40.47	10.80	31.84	8.02	4.7	p<0.01
Heterosexuality others	38.39	9.46	32.65	8.25	3.4	p<0.01
Homosexuality self	17.73	12.43	13.60	9.35	2.0	p>0.05
Homosexuality others	23.41	15.94	16.18	11.78	2.7	p<0.01
Variations-self	30.49	14.84	18.56	12.53	4.5	p<0.01
Variations-others	30.14	16.77	18.60	12.14	4.1	p<0.01
Commercial sex self	30.08	9.90	20.28	8.04	5.7	p<0.01
Commercial sex others	33.69	14.41	23.72	10.92	4.0	p<0.01

* Used Mann-Whitney U Test

Table 4 demonstrates distribution of scores in the sexual attitude questionnaire by active sex lives of the students. Similar to Table 3, the students with active sex life scored statistically significantly higher compared to other students on all subscales of the sexual attitude questionnaire apart from homosexuality self subscale. No difference was obtained between scores of students with and without active sex life on homosexuality self subscale (t=-2.0; p>0.05).

Table 5. Students' attitudes towards self and others

Sub-scales	Self	SD	Others	SD	t	p
Masturbation	24.19	13.29	25.34	15.50	-1.4	p>0.05
Homosexuality	15.55	11.06	19.59	14.31	.00	p<0.01
Heterosexuality	35.92	10.34	35.36	9.26	.47	p>0.05
Sexual Variations	24.19	14.86	24.04	15.56	.90	p>0.05
Commercial sex	24.90	10.19	28.42	13.58	.00	p<0.01

Table 5 provides data on assessment of students' attitude toward sexuality of their own and sexuality of others. No significant difference was obtained between students' sexual attitudes for self and for others in Masturbation (t=-1.4; p>0.05), Heterosexuality (t=.47; p>0.05), Sexual Variations (t=.90; p>0.05). However, their score in homosexuality self subscale is significantly lower than the score in

homosexuality other subscale ($t=-.00$; $p<0.01$). Similarly, their score in Commercial sex self subscale is significantly lower than the score in commercial sex other subscale ($t=-.00$; $p<0.01$).

DISCUSSION

As in many societies, sexuality is also a taboo in our society (CEDAT, 2007; Duyan, 2004). However, the fact that sexuality is a taboo does not eliminate sexuality which has an effect on almost all aspects of human life. Our study demonstrates that almost half the students have had sexual experience (47.2%). However, considering information sources on sexuality used by the students, they are mainly informal sources despite being at higher education level. It is not possible to identify the limits and accuracy of information obtained from informal sources such as the internet, DVDs, magazines and friends which are defined by the main information sources by the students. Sungur reported in a study published in 1998 that “although sexual education is a lifelong process, an important part of it is realized on the “streets” informally” (Sungur, 1998b). The study results show this condition still remains to be valid. It would be easy to support our study results with many studies from the literature (Demir, 2014; Büyükkayacı Duman, 2015; Yildirim, 2008).

Negative consequences of missing or faulty information about sexuality can be critical. It is known that mission or faulty information about sexuality have many negative consequences including sexual dysfunctions, unplanned pregnancy and life critical diseases (Pınar et al., 2009; Sungur, 1998a). In our study, the students knew about AIDS only by 72% and their acquaintance rate with other sexually transmitted diseases was very low. Life critical hepatitis types were only known by 16%. HPV, which can result in cervix cancer, was only known by 1.6%. Many sexually transmitted parasites and bacterial infections were not even addressed by the students at all. These findings indicate the students do not have sufficient knowledge and thus, they are not aware of possible risks they can encounter. According to the study results of Demir, 70.1% of the university students did not find their knowledge in this field sufficient (Demir, 2014). The students suggest education is required in this field (Demir, 2014; Pınar et al., 2009).

Another finding of our study is that attitudes towards social gender continue to be valid although the study was conducted at higher education level. While 61.1% of the students found premarital sex acceptable, only 29.9% of them reported they would find women engaging in premarital sex acceptable. The results of the studies conducted by Demir in 2006 in the Central Anatolia Region and by Yildirim in 2008 in the Thrace region show similarity to our study results (Demir, 2014; Yildirim, 2008).

Considering sexual attitudes of the students by gender, women exhibited a more conservative attitude than men as expected. Similarly, all the students who do not have active sex life are more conservative compared to others. However, on both conditions, not difference was obtained between attitudes towards their own homosexuality ($t=-2.0$; $p>0.05$ by gender, $t=-1.9$; $p>0.05$ by active sex life). In other words, while male students and students with active sex life exhibited a more liberal attitude in all areas, they are conservative about their own homosexuality. This similarity is believed to be expected by the fact that a large majority of the students who reported to have active sex life are male. This finding of our study is parallel to the study results that homophobia level is associated with gender and men generally show a more negative attitude towards homosexuality (Gill et al., 2006; Şah, 2011). When Tables 3, 4 and 5 are evaluated together, attitudes of the students towards their own homosexuality are more conservative than other areas. Considering all the subscale scores of the questionnaire, it can be observed that the students obtained the lowest score in the subscale of their

attitudes toward homosexuality. The study conducted by Sah reviewed into social representations related to sexual orientation of young people in Turkey and demonstrated, when homosexuality representations and representations related to the homosexual individual are evaluated together, negative content representations were more widespread, powerful and rooter compared to positive ones (Şah, 2011). A study conducted by Sarac at a different university in our country demonstrated moderately negative attitude by both males and females towards homosexuality (Saraç, 2014). This is coherent with the fact that they live in a society where heterosexuality is considered to be only normal and proper sexual orientation. Heterosexuality is an attitude supported by Turkish society and heterosexual men are expected to exhibit masculine social gender roles (Duyan et al., 2005). University students do not go beyond social norms although they are aware of social taboos (Civil et al., 2010). Besides all these factors, insufficient and faulty information about sexuality is also known to be associated with the negative attitude towards homosexuality (McKelvey et al., 1999).

Another condition which might have an effect on this result is that sports area is a structure which includes components associated with men by the society including competitiveness, achievement, dominance, assertiveness, endurance to pain and physical strength (Bulgu, 2012). Studies in different cultures also demonstrate negative attitude by athletes towards homosexuality (Gill et al., 2006; Southall et al., 2009).

When students' attitudes towards their own sexuality is compared to their attitudes towards sexuality of others, there is a difference between students' attitudes towards their homosexuality and commercial sex ($t=-.00$; $p<0.01$) and towards homosexuality and commercial sex of others ($t=-.00$; $p<0.01$). This can be construed as when it is only about commercial sex and homosexuality, they distinguish their own sexuality and sexuality of others. They exhibit a more conservative attitude for themselves and a more liberal attitude for others.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that students' sources of information about sexuality are largely informal, they do not have sufficient information about sexually transmitted diseases, female students exhibit a more conservative attitude, students have a more conservative attitude towards homosexuality compared to other sexual attitude areas and their attitudes for themselves and for others differ in terms of homosexuality and commercial sex. This study demonstrates that students need more accountable information sources and their sexual attitude can be considered at a conservative level; therefore initiatives are recommended to ensure students have access to formal and more accountable information.

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