

SEXUAL BEHAVIORS OF STUDENTS AT ALBANIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: Since '70s major studies were carried out in the Western Europe on impact of young people's sexual behaviors on sexual revolution. Perception of a sexual revolution is hard due to absence of studies of this kind in Albania, although radical socio-cultural changes have occurred during the last two decades. Again, we do not have a clear overview of sexual behaviors and attitudes of the Albanian young people. Currently, there is a belief that young people adopt an open attitude to sexuality and sexual behaviors as they have different communication channels to receive information about sexual intercourse and other related components. About 20 years ago, as an isolated country under a dictatorial system, Albania had prohibited every sexual behavior. Sex-oriented conversations, sexual preferences and so on represented a social threat at that time as those actions were deemed immoral, deviant or taboo. At that time women's career support was a demagogical approach but in the meantime family planning due to ambitions and career constituted an immoral act. Unmarried women or those who chose a late marriage were labeled by offensive terms and were isolated from the society. Open conversations about sex and sexuality, even with the partner, were forbidden. Similar conversations might prejudice the honor of Albanian women. Kisses and caresses in the public were not common at all and they even did not occur, otherwise the Youth Committees of the Party in power launched disciplinary measures against the young people who infringed such a moral rule. On the other hand, female's virginity was a veil of honor per se which everyone should have until the day of her marriage.

Presently, Albania is an utterly different country under radical social changes which cause ambiguity to someone to raise questions if we are at the eve of a social and sexual revolution or degradation. This work aims to analyze the sexual reality of Albanian young people, their sexual attitudes and behaviors and to understand if they constituted a sexual revolution. Through an empirical and theoretical analysis, the study will be focused on attitudes of the students from public universities to contraceptive use, career women, marriages at an increasingly later age than before, as well as sexual rights and freedoms. The research methodology of the present study will be quantitative one, where through a random and stratified sample about 200 persons will be interviewed, to be students of public universities in the capital. The data obtained from this sample will be analyzed through SPSS statistical program, where the mean, standard deviation and frequencies will be realized to measure the variables defined for the study. The hypothesis testing will be realized through Chi-square (χ^2) tests, which determines the level of certainty at a value of $p < 0.05$ (5%). The study is closed with conclusions obtained from empirical and theoretical data.

Keywords: college, sexual revolution, sexual behavior, students, young people

INTRODUCTION

Albania overcame a transition from an extreme isolated and dictatorial system when noone would be kissed in the public. In no Albanian wedding the Albanian bride and bridegroom were

kissed although their relationship was already official. Female's virginity represented an indisputable value for every Albanian female. Supposedly, the only partner with whom they could have sexual intercourse was the spouse. Sexual attraction was never openly manifested, even when couples shared a liking for each other. Transition to an open and democratic society brought many social issues which were often understood as social freedoms or rights of every individual to choose what he/she wishes. The change of social and sexual activity of young people has faced its own arguments to justify such changes.

These changes of the last 23 years often cause confusion, if we attempt to understand that the course of this change is linked with a sexual revolution or an absence of ethics of the young people's sexual behavior. Accordingly, the present study intends to analyze the sexual behavior of young people, factors promoting the awareness of sexual reality within the country, sensitization of both positive and negative factors supporting a potential sexual revolution.

The study is limited to young people from Tirana public universities, including interviews of 193 students who currently attend higher studies and are residents in Tirana Student's Campus. Interviewees come from different districts of the country and attend higher studies at different faculties, thus presenting a realistic overview of the Albanian young people's situation. The importance of this study lies in identification of sexual attitudes and behaviors of the Albanian young people, which may represent a sexual revolution.

Two main hypotheses are raised for this study, to be tested through the chi square test and to see which of them proves the Albanian reality. The study hypotheses introduced in this part of the study are as follows;

H₀ => Sexual behaviors of the young people displayed after the collapse of communism due to social changes in Albania may not constitute a sexual revolution.

H₁=> Sexual behaviors of the Albanian young people displayed after the collapse of communism due to social changes have led to a sexual revolution.

A difficulty of this study is that there are few studies of that nature on which it may be based, to enable comparisons of sexual behaviors during the last 20 years. Foreign literature sources are mainly used from well-known authors who have carried out studies of that type, to provide a clear theoretical overview and a critical analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the collapse of communist regime where the society suffered radical political, social, cultural and economic changes, sexual behaviors of young people in Albania and their attitudes to those topics have significantly changed. Currently, a growing number of adolescents and college students are much more informed about sexual intercourse than the generations of 20 years ago.

The history of a society helps us understand how sexuality and sexual behaviors of young generations have evolved during the transition from an isolated society to an open, modern and democratic one (Hefner, 1999). However, democracy in itself should not be understood as a simple political manifestation or transition of political systems but it should be properly defined in all of its components, including aspects of the education of young generations (Knijn and Lewis, 2002).

Media and technology development has made the young people more open-minded, including also parents or relatives. Many issues such as current sexual behaviors of young people, prevention of early pregnancies, late marriages of females, career and not marriage as women's lifestyle, decline of the myth that virginity represents the female's honor and sexually transmitted diseases face a developing society detached from isolation to completely different social and moral conditions (Moore, 1982). There is a present different situation in Albania, where every conversation about sexual intercourse was considered a taboo and probably immorality. (Zenelaj, 2012)

By analogy, before '60s the US men believed in women's chastity and their virginity, notwithstanding the fact if that was really bad or good. On the other hand, males clearly expressed their drive for sexual intercourse but that was absolutely opposed by females, who due to educational factor of the democratic society, currently introduce another reality (Peterson, 1999). If the USA experienced such a social reality before '60s, Albania was under the same conditions but only after 20 years. Yet, to overcome our sexual repression, the previous traditional system of society education and abuse of morality should be challenged, in order to understand the importance of socialization in every individual's life (Reiss, 1983).

Sexual education in the western countries in 1900-s was focused on anti-masturbation, reiterating that sexual chastity established a strong personality for an individual (Peterson, 1999). In almost similar circumstances, Albania of 23 years ago considered as vulnerable every person who attempted to openly manifest his own sexual pleasures. In most of cases

the initial sexual experiences before -90s began with marriage (Tarifa, 2007). However, the present reality is different where apart from free conversations between friends, the number of young people who have premarital sex and increase of the number of sexual partners is almost a natural trend for a developing society (White, 2000). Indeed, the use of pills by college women has minimized the risk of early pregnancy, regardless of regular and active sexual intercourse and has maximized the pleasure of sexual intercourse (Peterson, 1999). Alternately, current topics of sexual intercourse and Internet videos prove to be the most visited websites by young people due to their sexual content (Cooper, Delmonico and Burg, 2000).

According to a 1998 study in the USA, only 15% of college students had preferred to be virgin during the period of their higher studies (Eschbacher, 2002). Also, in their famous study Eliot and Brantley found similar statistics about sexual intercourse of the college students (Elliott and Brantley, 1997). In Albania, following a 2012 study conducted by the Public Health Institute, 14% of young people start their sexual activity since 13 years old (ISSH, 2012) while the study co-authored with Shoraj during 2013, reported that out of 353 high school students, 149 had sexual intercourse, with men outscoring females (Zenelaj and Shoraj, 2013).

According to Reich, it should be understood that capitalism affects human sexual behavior, especially of the young people. Social revolutions should be understood to be co-related with sexual revolution, where many generations of young people should realize these two revolutions are closely linked and development of awareness about the importance of both revolutions per se is crucial (Reich, 1971). Notwithstanding the fears caused by a sexual revolution among young people, we should bear in mind that repression of sexual instincts is harmful, thus causing neurosis to individuals without sexual activity or experience (Freud, 1921; Reich, 1971).

Political or social systems may still abuse and mislead the population but there is no doubt that sexual revolution is a progress and no power in the world may prevent it (Reich, 1971). Apparently, due to social changes the young people have realized that a sexual act becomes immoral, non-ethical or irrational not due to its sexual character but precisely because it may be non-sexual, wrongful and ineffective (Ellis, 1971).

The essence of sexual revolution, its major purpose, as stated by the sociologist Gëzim Tushi, was the discouragement of marriage, considering it as an outdated social institution repressing the sexual life of the mankind and promoting the concept of free love as a personal pleasure but without social

responsibility. Marriage, as the only official institution for sexual intercourse, was targeted by "sexual revolution" (Tushi, 2007).

Due to this "shock" of marriage, the number of unmarried women in particular was increased. Other factors include plans for attendance of studies, beginning of sexual intercourse before college, use of contraceptives, planning of pregnancies postponing the marriage at a latter stage, and in some cases increasing the chances of being unmarried (Blum, Buekring and Rinekost, 2000; Manlove, Terry, Gitelson, Papillo and Russel, 2000; Dorrach, Landry and Oslak, 1999).

Notably, in patriarchal societies the decisions of females to not marry are not welcomed by the society, basically for two reasons; 1) females are considered as vulnerable, inferior persons who need men's support. If women do not get married in similar societies, attitudes such as "she does not get married as she is not suitable", and 2) "since females were born to be mothers, they are not realized if they do not have a husband and children" (Baker, 1971; Rosenteur, 1961; Erikson, 1963) will apply.

A question naturally arises: where is the Albanian society going? Toward sexual revolution or degradation of society values? During the time we live there is a strong trend of abandonment of morality over sexual behavior with the prevalence of theory that everyone has the right to do whatever he/she wants with his/her own body, and the one to decide about the sexual acts he/she desires. As regards young people at universities and high schools, passion and sexual intercourse apparently compensate gloominess, boredom and stress caused by the modern lifestyle. We are living in a sexually open society, where the delayed waves of sexual revolution are producing maximum social effects on marriage, family and our civilization (Tushi, 2007).

The present young generation believes that sex per se should be a spontaneous pleasure. Casual sexuality does not occur only in the context of an advanced relationship. The old-fashioned chastity is not important for the young people (Salisbury and Salisbury, 1998). Basically, in some patriarchal societies the sexual revolution echoed by the society and media is not a product of a revolution but one of the ideas and attitudes of sexual behaviors (Reich, 1971). Distortion of the concept of sexual freedom in the Albanian society has turned this phenomenon into a social epidemic that is further increased in the daily life of not only young people and adolescents but also of other social groups (Tushi, 2007). Therefore, it is open for discussion if Albania is really undergoing sexual revolution, notwithstanding its positive and negative effects. Further, does this occur for a large

number of young people or as many other related trends, is it a fake reproduction of modern societies?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling and sampling procedures

For the purpose of implementation of this empirical study, we attempted to interview 200 students residing in the Student's Campus in Tirana, who study at different Tirana Faculties and come from most of the Albanian cities and towns. The sampling procedure applied was the random and stratified one, where the campus facilities of men and women numbered as 1, 3, 5, 7 and so on were chosen to be part of the study. 1 in every 10 students coming out of the main gate of the building intended for the study are considered part of the sample, thus representing a random choice. Of 26 buildings only 11 are considered part of the sample as 3 other ones are residential buildings for families, while the rest are those bearing an even number, which were not part of the study. Of 200 students planned to be sampled, only 186 accepted to be interviewed and fully completed the questionnaire, while 14 others were basically not interested in the study or due to lack of physical time they did not participate in the study.

Measuring Instrument

The questionnaire established as a measuring instrument for the empiricism of sexual behavior of young people following studies at Tirana University was divided in 3 sections, where the raised questions included pre-defined options and considering the character of the study, the questionnaire was of reverse score type, with general questions gradually shifting to more specific and direct ones. Accordingly, the sections were divided in the demographic section including questions about age, gender, faculty, the city or town they come from and profile of higher studies. The second section defined as the section of the young people's sexual behaviors contained questions on use of contraceptives and their kind, attitudes about virginity, late marriage among males and females, ideal age for marriage, sexual experiences and preferences etc. The third section is focused on sexual revolution, opinions of young people about this phenomenon, behaviors representing sexual revolution, morality and sexual ethics.

Data results

According to data analysis conducted through SPSS program for the *demographic section of the questionnaire*, of 186 study participants 98 were females and 88 were males. 87 students are 18-20 years old, 57 are 21-23 years old and 42 are over 24 years of age, where 113, 40 and 33 students follow Bachelor studies, Professional Master and Scientific

Master studies respectively. 28 students from Vlora follow studies at Tirana University, 21 from Kukës, 25 from Saranda, 11 from Shkodra, 20 from Tropoja, 8 from Gjirokastra, 9 from Peshkopia, 13 from Laç, 18 from Fier, 15 from Skrapar, 13 from Erseka and 9 from Has who follow studies at Tirana Public University. As regards the frequencies according to faculties they attend: 39 students study at the Faculty of Social Sciences, 17 at the Faculty of Natural Sciences, 49 at the Faculty of Economics, 29 at the Faculty of Engineering, 21 at the Faculty of Law, 11 at the Faculty of History-Philology and 20 at the Faculty of Foreign Languages.

The second section of the questionnaire designed on students' sexual behaviors provides the following results. As for the question of *Age at their first sexual intercourse*, 52 females admitted they were under 18 years old, 35 females over 18 years old. As for males, only 6 of them had their first sexual intercourse when they were over 18 years of age. Regarding the question: *"Do you use condoms or contraceptives during sexual intercourses?"* out of 186 students 119 stated they do not prefer to use condoms, 67 of them regularly apply contraceptive methods, where 44 are women who use contraceptive pills. Further, concerning the question *"In your opinion, does virginity constitute a moral value for the female?"* 81 females admitted that virginity does not establish the moral value of the females. Meanwhile, of 88 males 32 confirmed that virginity does not represent a female's moral value and 56 stated that a virgin female has moral integrity.

How many sexual partners do you have during one academic year? Options varied from 1 to 5 with an ascending degree, where the average for males is about 3.6 and for females about 2 sexual partners per academic year. *Which are your sexual preferences?* Of 186 interviewed students, only 2 who are females, admitted to have bisexual preferences and the rest of 184 persons preferred heterosexual relations. *What would be the most appropriate age for marriage?* 146 young people confirmed that marriage should take place after the age of 25-27 years old, where 40 of them believe that marriage should occur over 30 years of age. *What do you think about females who choose career instead of marriage?* Only 42 females and 14 males believe that marriage is the individual's choice. The rest of them connect the status of females being single with their fate or morality. When questioned about the sexual behavior of young people, *"do you believe they constitute degradation of social values or freedom to live?"* 99 believed that sexual behaviors of the young people are currently degrading and 87 of them admitted that sexual behavior is a right and freedom to live life as they wish.

Table 1: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.563 ^a	16	.005
Likelihood Ratio	36.731	16	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.139	1	.286
N of Valid Cases	200		

Table 2: Sexual behaviors * Sexual revolution Cross-tabulation

		Sexual Revolution					Total
		1.00 Not at all	2.00 A little	3.00 Slightly	4.00 Very much	5.00 Strongly	
Sexual Behaviors	1.00 Not at all	2	0	3	0	0	5
	2.00 A little	1	1	12	1	1	16
	3.00 Slightly	1	0	15	11	3	30
	4.00 Very much	1	3	19	28	1	52
	5.00 Strongly	9	14	20	30	10	83
Total		14	18	69	70	15	186

The third section contained questions about sexual revolution among young people, focused on their concept about sexual revolution and their sexual behaviors. The chi-square test in Table No. 1 and cross-tabulate analysis in Table No. 2 demonstrates that for the main variables of sexual behavior and sexual revolution, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is proven according to the chi-square test. According to Chi-square (χ^2) analysis, for an observed statistics of Chi-square (χ^2) equal to 33.563^a which falls within the critical area, at a freedom degree equal to 16 and importance level of 0.005 which is < 0.05 , we admit there is a connection between both variables, therefore we reject $H_0 \Rightarrow$. Sexual behavior of young people exhibited after the period of collapse of communism due to social changes in Albania, may not constitute a sexual revolution.

CONCLUSIONS

While interviewing young people there was a trend to prevent the potential completion of questionnaire, notwithstanding the female gender of the interviewee and explanation of the purpose for the implementation of this study. The students did not show a high level of interest, thus representing one of the challenges of the study. This study investigated current sexual behaviors of young people, wherefrom it has followed they had started sexual intercourse under 18 years of age and their vast majority did not use condom as a protective measure to prevent undesired pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases.

In the meantime, it has followed that in respect of virginity, young people mainly believe it does not represent the female's moral value and sexual partners, both for males and females were on average more than 2 partners per academic year. An added value of this study, though in a limited number, is the confirmation of bisexual preferences in two cases, thus highlighting sexual freedom among the young people. The concept of marriage is strong and their vast majority admits it is a vital step to be undertaken by women at about 27 years old and by men at about 30 years old. It follows that the age of marriage is postponed but the institution of marriage is important for the interviewed students.

Key study variables have proven that in the opinion of young people, the freedom of sexual behaviors constituted in itself a sexual revolution. If we compared their behaviors with generations of 20 years ago, sexual revolution is undoubtedly a clear indicator. Career women are more strongly supported by females and the number of partners does not represent a moral value or not for the present young generation.

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