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Attitudes of the Young towards Sexuality in the Elderly

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ABSTRACT

To describe the attitudes that young students have towards sexuality in old age, Cartagena, Colombia, 2015. Descriptive study, with young populations, of the city of Cartagena, 2015.

The questionnaire "attitudes toward sexuality in old age" (CASV) proposed by Orozco I. and Rodriguez D. was applied, it consists of 14 questions and answers possibilities range from completely true to completely false, with a Likert type rating.

A total of 666 young people, average age 17 years old, maximum age of 19 and a minimum of 15 years old observed. Female gender predominated with 54.3% (362); single marital status 66.3% (442); secondary school level 82.6% (551); 74.5% (497) do not work; 64.6% (431) reside in sociodemographic strata one and two (equivalent to conditions of poverty); 27.3% have monthly income lower than 200,000; 59.2% live with 4 or 5 people. Young students have a good attitude towards sexuality of the elderly in Cartagena.

KEYWORDS: Sexuality, young, attitude. (MeSH)

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INTRODUCTION

The attitude of young people towards sexuality varies by age, cultural level, religious beliefs and emotional relationships with parents. Considering attitudes and predispositions to respond in a certain way with favorable or unfavorable reactions to something¹. Sometimes the behavior can be predicted by the attitudes shown to that"².

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines human sexuality as "the integration of somatic, intellectual, emotional and social aspects for which personality and love are enriched and enhanced"³. Moreover, the attitude toward sexuality of the elderly is surrounded by a negative view, society in general pigeonhole the elderly as lacking sexuality. Some young people also think the same way and it is said that older people themselves have taken as true this vision, even if it goes against their sexual expression, and doing that in many cases, their own desires and relational needs are suppressed, since considered inappropriate⁴.

As for that if young people think that the elderly have the right to love and sex life, there are different results; some young people felt in smaller percentages, compared to other age groups, with regard to this aspect, and to start a relationship again if the elderly widowed⁵; others favor, as in the case of young people in this study, who believe it is completely true that elderly do have the right to love and sex life.

There are few studies about the attitude of young people towards sexuality in old age, in Zaragoza⁶ young people still have prejudices regarding the practice of sexuality in old age; in a study in Chile more than 60% of young people defined both the old man and the old lady as sexually inactive⁷; they apply to the old age an idea of decadence that eventually translates into social exclusion for this age group.

Moreno A.⁸ affirms that young belittle the stage of old age, believe in the productive and innovative, highlight the maintaining of a vitality where prevails dynamism, activity, consistency, debauchery, and productivity as relevant characteristics.

In Chile UrquizaA.⁷ concluded that most young respondents "perceive old age as a disgrace". They believe it is related to the overvaluation that has youth. They claim that personal fulfillment is associated with success, achieving status and receipt of money.

Cathalifaud M.⁹ in an exploratory study, found that young people look to the elderly as sexually inactive, as sick people, fragile, dependent and socially devalued. This concept may be related to the idea that elderly have lost physical vitality.

In Colombia, Cala. M.⁵ in their study reported that teens have negative perceptions of sexuality when related to physiological changes and positive perceptions when they have to do with love, desire and love relationships.

Talking about sexuality openly with the elderly is not easy in our environment, since it has been considered a taboo subject and is most evident when it comes to sexuality in old age.

Growing old brings physical, psychological and social changes, associated to a period of physical and mental decline¹⁰, it is a stage of loss of profits, contrary to what young people think about their sexuality where youth is synonymous with productivity and health, aspect that influences perceptions of the sexuality of the elderly.

The nurse is involved in the promotion and care of the human being at every stage of their growth and development, knows the physiological, emotional and social changes that occur, therefore it is necessary to perform interventions that will enable young people to support the elderly in his sexuality, for this their attitudes toward sexuality in old age should be known. The aim of this study was to describe the attitudes that young students have towards sexuality in old age, Cartagena, Colombia, 2015.

METHOD

A descriptive study that included a population of 2,164 young students from the classroom programs in Zaragocilla campus and Piedra de Bolivar, at the University of Cartagena. A confidence level of 95% and an error of 3%, prevalence of 50% (not having previous studies that report) were used. A sample of 627 students was estimated. Adding a 10% contingency, the final sample consisted of 689 young people, distributed by programs as shown in Table1.

Students who attended classes during the days of sampling were invited to complete the required sample. Some surveys were discarded for being poorly fill.

Inclusion criteria were being a young student in the classroom programs and campuses of Zaragocilla and Piedra de Bolivar at the University of Cartagena, being under 19 years old and wanting to voluntarily participate in the study.

Research assistants previously trained requested informed consent, applied the scale “attitudes toward sexuality in old age” and a survey on socio-demographic data.

Table 1. Breakdown sample of teens at the University of Cartagena, 2015.

PROGRAM	STUDENT TOTAL	FRACTION OF SAMPLING	SAMPLE
Nursing	266	12,3 %	85
Medicine	488	22,6 %	155
Dentistry	316	14,6 %	100
Chemistry	126	5,8 %	40
Pharmaceutical chemistry	198	9,1 %	64
Biology	196	9,1 %	62
Chemical engineering	370	17,1 %	117
Food engineering	204	9,4 %	65
Total	2.164	100,0 %	689

Source: Systems Office Database, University of Cartagena.

The questionnaire "attitudes toward sexuality in old age" (CASV), was proposed by Orozco I. and Rodrigo D.¹¹; it consists of 14 questions and answers possibilities range from completely true to completely false, with a Liker type rating. The questionnaire was validated in Cartagena, Colombia, with a group of 130 elderly and reported a high internal consistency in the first measurement, with a Chronbach's alpha equal to 0.83 and 0.87 McDonald's omega; and the second measurement reported a Chronbach's alpha of 0.85 and 0.89 McDonald's omega. Exploratory factor analysis showed two relevant factors (biases and limitations) that accounted for 42.6% of the variance.

Differential Operation of Items, showed appropriate coefficients, with the exception of item 14, which showed a high value ($\tau = 0.37$). The CASV presented a high stability ($r = 0.82$ and $CCI = 0.89$; confidence interval of 95% [IC95%], 0.83-0.92; $p < 0.001$). According to the results of the validation of this scale, item 14 was drafted so as to include men and women¹².

For scores on this scale, the proposed for studies of attitudes was followed, as stipulated by the authors of the scale¹¹; where possible answers are:

- Completely true: 4 points.
- True: 3 points.
- False: 2 points.
- Completely false: 1 point.
- Neither true nor false: 0 points.

According to this scale, those with a rating of "completely true" were considered as more prejudicial attitudes or negative ones; except for the question number five.

The data were stored in a spreadsheet Microsoft Excel which also carried out the analysis, from which tables and figures, as well as measures of central tendency, absolute and relative frequencies were obtained.

Ethical aspects contemplated in the resolution 08430 of October 4, 1993 from the Ministry of Health, Colombia¹³, the Declaration of Helsinki¹⁴ and the code of ethics of nursing Colombia¹⁵ were considered. The informed consent was filled out.

RESULTS

A total of 666 young people participated. The instrument reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.697. The average age of participants was 17 years old, a maximum age of 19 years and minimum of 15 years old were observed. Female gender predominated with 54.3% (362); single marital status 66.3% (442); secondary school level 82.6% (551); 74.5% (497) not working; 64.6% (431) reside in sociodemographic strata one and two (equivalent to conditions of poverty); 27.3% have monthly income lower than 200,000; 59.2% live with 4 or 5 people.

22.5% (150) of the participants are students of medicine; 16.8% (112) chemical engineering; 15.3% (102) dentistry; 13.5% (90) nursing, 9.7% (65) food engineering; biology 9.4% (63); pharmaceutical chemistry 6.7% (45) and chemistry with 6.0% (40).

Table 2 illustrates the results on youth attitudes toward sexuality in old age.

Table 2. attitudes of young toward sexuality in old age - Cartagena 2015

No.	QUESTION	True or completely true	Nor true nor false	False or Completely false
1	Does the andropause marks the beginning of old age?	264 (39,5 %)	185 (27,7%)	217 (32,5 %)
2	Does menopause marks the end of the sexual life of women?	108 (16,1 %)	70 (10,5%)	488 (73,1%)
3	Do old adults who show love look ridiculous?	28 (4,2 %)	76 (11,4%)	562 (84,3 %)
4	Should old adults suppress their sexuality?	25 (5,2%)	114 (17,1%)	517 (77,5%)
5	Are the elderly entitled to love and sex life?	562 (84,4%)	46(6,9%)	58 (8,5 %)
6	Are older men impotent?	157 (23,5 %)	313 (46,9%)	196 (29,3%)
7	Are older women frigid?	58 (8,6 %)	206 (30,9%)	402 (60,2%)
8	Do older adults no longer have sexual desire and less sexual activity?	71 (10,6 %)	169 (25,3%)	426 (64,1%)
9	Do changes that aging brings prevent sexual activity?	111 (16,6%)	193 (28,9%)	362 (54,3 %)
10	Are the most common diseases in old age limit sexual activity?	263 (39,4 %)	229 (34,3%)	174 (26 %)
11	Do medical treatments in old age complicate sexual activity?	189 (28,3 %)	284 (42,6%)	193 (28,9%)
12	Are beauty and sexuality unique to young people?	74 (11%)	86 (12,9%)	506 (75,8%)
13	Is sexuality is exercised only for purposes of procreation?	41 (4,1%)	86 (12,9%)	539 (80,8%)
14	Are all older adults who want to engage in sexual relations dirty old men?	24 (3,4%)	105 (15,7%)	537 (80,9%)

SOURCE: Surveys conducted.

DISCUSSION

In the present study a good attitude of young people towards sexuality in the elderly can be observed, given the high percentage reported in questions 3 and 14, where young people believe that the elderly do not look ridiculous when they show love and that is completely false that all elderly who wish to relate sexually are perverts. And in question 5, they claim is true or completely true that older adults have the right to love and sex life. Results similar to those reported by Cerquera⁴; these results may be related to the fact that teenagers live with elderly, have a higher level of education and have developed a different concept of their elderly relative.

In many parts of world youth and modernity are stressed, great importance is given to productivity and maintaining the vitality and dynamism is highlighted. Young people follow these qualities and many disparage the stage of old age, giving negative attitudes as they emphasize productivity, activity, fruitful and productive, useful and lucrative, as relevant characteristics¹⁶. Predominance of the female gender, similar to that reported by Cerquera A.⁴ while in the study of Cala M.⁵ the percentage of both sexes was almost equal. As for schooling all were university students, as well as in studies of Cala M.⁵ and Cerquera A.⁴. Marital status in this study reported a 66.3% single, while Cerquera A.⁴ and Cala M.⁵ report the same data in the single marital status of 100%. Possibly being students entering college is one of the reasons that there are high percentages in these results.

As to whether andropause marks the beginning of old age, young people reported no significant difference in the true or completely true, false or completely false answers; this response may be influenced by the lack of awareness about the issue, while Orozco I.¹¹ found that 76% of young people believe that it is false or completely false. In the study of Kenny, R.¹⁷ the belief that women, once past menopause, lose their youth and therefore all sex appeal.

Young people in this study opined that it was false or completely false that menopause marks the end of the sexual life of women, as reported by Orozco I.¹¹ by 91%. This may be related to the study of Kenny, R.¹⁷ where it is found that men are sexually competent and active in old age while women are not.

As to whether the elderly showing love are ridiculous, the young of this study mostly considered false or completely false, consistent with those reported by Cala M.⁵ and Orozco I.¹¹ in a percentage of 92.5% and 95% respectively, supporting the favorable position of young people in this regard; contrary to the results of Abella P. where the opinion was that the elderly look ridiculous when they show love⁶.

They considered that is false or completely false that older adults should repress their sexual activity, similar to that reported by Orozco I.¹¹ by 85%. Young people may think of freedom that must exist in humans as the manifestation of sexuality and all that it includes.

About whether sexuality is exercised only for purposes of procreation, this study reported in 80.8% as false or completely false, like Cala M.⁵ and Orozco¹¹ who claimed a 90.7% and 99.9% respectively. This result may be influenced in young people due to their concept about procreation and the responsibility this demand.

As to whether all older women are frigid, 60.2% said that is false or completely false, consistent with the findings of Orozco I. with 83.3% and similar to that reported by Cala M.⁵ who claimed in a 86.4% that not all older women have difficulty feeling pleasure. Likewise, a study in Almeria, Spain, by Gázquez, J.¹⁸ showed a predominance in the view that women did not feel sexual pleasure after menopause.

64.1% said that is false or completely false that older adults no longer have sexual desires and less sexual activity, similar results were found by Orozco I.¹¹ and Cala M.⁵ 58.3% and 85.9% respectively. De La Peza¹⁹. suggest that each culture constructs its ideas about love and sex life and that these structures depend largely on the economic strata and structures predominantly families. In the case of Latin America, the extended family enables close coexistence and enables the positive images of aging sexed.

Contrary to what was reported by Urquiza A.⁷ where more than 60% of young people defined as not sexually active both the old man and the old woman, a result influenced by the infinity of prejudices that society promotes identifying disability and old age with inactivity, which led to the field of sexuality guide to the criticism and disapproval; Gázquez, J.¹⁸ for its part, found that most young people felt that the elderly were not interested in sexual activity; the study by Fárez, C.²⁰ reported that 54% of young participants defined the elderly as sexually passive; Cerquera, A.²¹, meanwhile, observed a domain in the belief that elderly are sexually inactive, but still retain sexual desire, especially old men which young people considered have a higher sexual desire.

On the question what if older adults have the right to love and sex life, adolescents in the present study answered true or completely true in an 84.4%, very similar to that reported by Cerquera A.⁴ and Cala M.⁵ with 84.1% and Orozco I.¹¹ in 96.6%. Now sexuality is part of the rights of the elderly, they are entitled to communicate affectively with their partner, have privacy and develop their sexuality without other people violating this right²².

Regarding whether all old men are impotent 46.9% considered neither false nor true, contrary to what was reported by Cala M.⁵ and Orozco I.¹¹ which in 79.4% and 71% respectively believe that not all old men are impotent.

As to whether menopause marks the end of the sexual life of women 73.1% said it was false or completely false, which agreed with those reported by Cala M.⁴ in a 72.96% and Orozco I.¹¹ by 91%; in the study of Gázquez, J.¹⁸ the belief that while menopause decreases sexual appetite of women, it does not necessarily mark the end of his sex life was observed.

54.3% of young people reported that the changes that aging brings prevent sexual activity as false or completely false, while Orozco I.¹¹ found a higher percentage, 75%. Gázquez, J.¹⁸, meanwhile, reported a majority in the belief that sexual impotence in old men was the product of age and more or less inevitable at this stage.

39.4% felt that it was true or completely true that the most common diseases in old age limit sexual activity, Orozco I.¹¹ also found a similar figure by 51.6%. Note that in this study, 34.3% considered it neither false nor true.

On the question whether medical treatment in old age complicate sexual activity, young people in this study said in a 42.6%, neither false nor true, contrary to what Cala M.⁵ reported with a 79% believe that medical treatments do not hinder sexuality in old age and Orozco I.¹¹ who reported by 33.3% as completely true.

75.8% of young people reported that is false or completely false that beauty and sexuality are unique to young people, similar to that found by Orozco I. in an 88.3%.

As to whether all elderly who wish to relate sexually are dirty old men, young people reported in a 80.9% that it was false or completely false, consistent with what was found with Orozco I.¹¹ in 81.6%.

CONCLUSIONS

Most young people in this study have a good attitude towards sexuality in the elderly: They believe that the elderly do not look ridiculous when they show love, that is completely false that all elderly who want to engage in sexual relations are dirty old men, believe that elderly have the right to love and sex life.

However, percentages in each aspect investigated are not negligible as they evidence not as desirable responses and reflect attitudes that are not positive. Perhaps this shows the need for more and better information about the sex life in old age and about the same aging in general.

It is possible that the current prevalence of nuclear families worldwide, is leading to the need to share more with older adults to learn first-hand their experiences, their fears, their abilities and their realities and so, somehow, prepare for arrival of the own old age. Growing old is a process in which these young students are already engaged and they are likely to face the challenge of caring for elderly relatives in old age condition, so it is important for them to be prepared in the best way.

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