

Human Sexuality as a Phenomenon

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Abstract

Sexuality is a set of feelings, behaviors, attitudes, and values that are related to sexual desire and identity. As an integral part of human development through all stages of life, sexuality includes physical, psychological and social components. Sexuality consists of all those stimuli, emotions and cognitions that lead to physical sexual arousal in a person, and thus contribute to an increase in sexual desire and/or behavior. Human sexuality is an extremely complex psychological and sociological phenomenon that can be proven by considering various forms of sexual desire, especially those that are socially unacceptable. Such forms are punishable in most national legislations.

Keywords: sexuality; sexual desire; internet; child sexual abuse; sexual trafficking

Introduction:

Sexual desire during the years of sexual maturity is a physiological law [1]. The duration of the physiological processes in the sexual organs, as well as the strength of the sexual desire manifested, vary, both in individuals and in races. Race, climate, heredity and social circumstances have a very decided influence upon it. The greater sensuality of southern races as compared with the sexual needs of those in the north is well known. Sexual development in the inhabitants of tropical climes takes place much earlier than in those of more northern regions. In women of northern countries ovulation, recognizable in the development of the body and the occurrence of a periodical flow of blood from the genitals (menstruation), usually begins about the thirteenth to the fifteenth year; in men puberty, recognizable in the deepening of the voice, the appearance of hair on the face and mons veneris, and the occasional occurrence of pollutions, etc., takes place at about the fifteenth year. In the inhabitants of tropical countries, however, sexual development occurs several years earlier in women—sometimes as early as the eighth year.

The existence of the sexual instinct is continuous during the time of sexual life, but it varies in intensity. Under physiological conditions it is never periodical in the human male, as it is in animals; it manifests an organic variation of intensity in consonance with the collection and expenditure of semen. In women the degree of sexual desire coincides with the process of ovulation in such a way that sexual passion is intensified after the menstrual period.

The development of sexual life has its beginning in the organic sensations which arise from the maturing reproductive glands. These excite the attention of the individual. Reading and the experiences of every-day life (which, unfortunately, are now-a-days too early and too frequently suggestive), convert these notions into clear ideas, which are accentuated by organic sensations of a pleasurable character. With this accentuation of erotic ideas through lustful feelings, an impulse to induce them is developed (sexual desire).

Internet:

It is hard to believe, but it was only about one generation ago that the Internet went mainstream and changed the way people accessed explicit materials, learned about sex and sexuality and normalised their sexual experiences [2]. Before that, we had to rely on word-of-mouth, X-rated magazines, embarrassed classroom teachers, cool parents and chatty friends. As far as young people's sexuality and the advent of the Internet,



there have been stated benefits coupled with fears and challenges. Digital media has the potential to reach large numbers of young people with medically accurate sexual health information and education. And health professionals and educators around the world are still fearful about teaching young people about their sexuality and sexual health. Rationales abound, including, “[i]t will make them promiscuous” and “[t]hey’ll only find pornography online”. These justifications serve as reason that sex education has not yet gone viral.

Sexual Development:

Interest in psychosexual development has tended to focus around managing problems, particularly those associated with risks and their management [3]. These areas include sexual abuse in childhood and early adolescence, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in adolescence and early adulthood and functional sexual difficulties in adults. In contrast, the interest, for example of adolescents has been shown to be more in the rite of passage and recreational aspects of sexual activity. There has also been a concentration on childhood and adolescence, with adult psychosexual development being a poor relation and any emphasis for older people being on dysfunctions and disorders rather than the expected course of development. Development through the life cycle involves important areas such as sexual identity, couple relationship issues, fertility and ageing.

At the other end of the spectrum are ideas that take a societal perspective, such as consumer culture bringing sexuality into the world of commerce. Sex is used to sell products through sexiness and physical attractiveness being closely connected with the goods we buy and are seen to own. This aspect of sex and consumerism is particularly directed towards girls and women. A further development is when sex itself is marketed as pleasure or the idea of sexual self-expression is promoted. The world is sexualized, and there is a seduction into the world of responding to sexual impulse. On the Internet in particular, representations of the body become products to buy. This becomes the world into which children and adolescents are socialized and encouraged to participate. As we grow up, sexuality becomes increasingly focussed on technique and performance with a tendency for it to come to resemble work risking the loss of much of its intimate and caring qualities.

Sexuality:

Adult sexuality is not fully biological [4]. Over an individual’s lifetime, sexuality and sexual activities occur on a spectrum between normal and deviant. The meaning of “normal” may vary between traditional and contemporary social contexts. Traditional and contemporary understandings of “normal” shape the law. What was once considered to be a sex crime may later become mainstream, or lawful activities may be criminalized after some time. “Normal” may partially be defined by gender, age, culture, class, and other factors. For example, in some traditional Latin American cultures, a cotillion signifies that a woman has reached maturation at fifteen years of age, and she may marry a man of any age. However, in Protestant Anglo American culture, a sweet sixteen party holds no such contemporary parallel. Though many sixteen year olds in the United States legally may withdraw from high school, work, and drive, most may not consent to marry or

have sexual relationships with adults of any age.

Traditional members of society tend to segregate sexuality into two groups. The first group is considered to be normal. It is composed of natural, good, sanctioned, and blessed experiences. In the United States, traditional sex acts, including heterosexuality, marriage, monogamy, procreation, intragenerational relationships, noncommercial sex, and nonpornographic experiences, have nearly ubiquitously been considered to be good. The second group deviates from normal parameters. It is out of bounds, bad, unnatural, wrong, and abnormal. Homosexual, extramarital, promiscuous, lustful, commercial, masturbatory, casual, intergenerational, pornographic, public, and sadomasochistic sex acts are grouped together and considered to be bad.

Pornography is considered to be deviant, though social norms influence legal parameters for viewing, producing, and transmitting pornography. A person in the United States who is thought to be “normal” in public may privately engage in deviant pornographic practices or harbor unexpected attitudes or beliefs deviating from norms regarding pornography. Use of obscenity, by its definition, is not normative, and deviant depictions are not guaranteed protection under the law. For example, racially charged pornography has been found to be obscene, and community standards may not tolerate explicit culturally nuanced depictions. Racial and cultural themes do not automatically qualify as having redeeming political value. However, some pornography is protected, even though it is not considered to be normal. It is safe to say that protected images include traditional, inexplicit, and conservative depictions of sex.

Because sexuality is socially constructed, racial, cultural, and religious values influence norms. Traditional European-American Christian norms dictate that sexual behavior and erotic thoughts are bad or wrong unless they have been prequalified as “normal” or are procreative. People who subscribe to these beliefs are likely to be unreceptive to social cues about sexuality. They may engage in more sexual austerity and behavior that is restricted by tradition. People who tend to be receptive to social cues about sexuality are more likely to encounter erotic depictions and be exposed to sexuality in the course of nonsexual activity. They think along sexual lines that are normative to sexually active people, and they are more likely to engage in sexual behavior.

Child Sexual Abuse:

Social silence victimizations are aptly described as occurring “in the shadows.” However, certain other forces are at play in keeping the victimization secretive as well [5]. These obstacles lead to underreporting or prevention of these cases from coming into the light, being accurately understood, and informing public policy. Similarly, the secretive nature of the acts thwarts the effort to use precise language to describe all the distinct subcategories of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Although these victimizations are significant, most people do not know the realities of many forms of child victimization, have not been trafficked, do not join peer-to-peer networks to trade sexually abusive images of children, or sexually assault others. Therefore, most people will need accurate information about the nature of these victimizations to understand them. However, due



to the secretive nature of these forms of victimization, this information is not readily available. Thus labels are attached to aspects of it that are inadequate because not enough is known to make them more precise.

This secretive nature, therefore, can be a compounding cause of imprecise labeling. Labels are often put in place by the media. Then, when the public hears labels or terms, it brings its own perceptions, often inaccurate due to the lack of data available, to the issue. In this way the public can be misled by imprecise terms with ambiguous meanings or attribute imprecise labels to misunderstood victimization.

The silence is not only in the failure to openly discuss child sexual abuse and exploitation. It is also in the failure to report it. This allows for not only increased victimization, but also for hiding it more easily. Offenders often target marginalized victims who possess some vulnerability. Offenders with direct access to victims or their caregivers often can groom their victims not only to abuse or exploit them, but also to keep their silence after an abusive event or during an ongoing period of victimization. These offenders target vulnerable victims and further groom caregivers, family members, and others for not only access to children but to prime them to disbelieve the child should a report be made. Therefore, obtaining information about the details of the offense, how it is committed, and the experience of the victims is more challenging to accomplish.

Sexual Trafficking:

The profits generated from this nefarious crime by humans against other humans, according to one estimate, has increased from what used to be a US\$12 billion enterprise to a US\$36 billion venture [6]. Global estimates of human trafficking range from four million to 600,000 victims each year (IOM - International Organization for Migration)—the majority of those individuals are victims of sex trafficking—revealing the difficulty in data gathering and accountability. Currently, the U.S. State Department estimates suggest that approximately 70 percent of the victims of sex trafficking are female and approximately 50 percent of the victims are under the age of 18. Individuals are generally trafficked for one of two main reasons: labor or sex. However, these researchers acknowledge that individuals may also be trafficking for adoption, soldiering, camel jockeying, marriage, and organs. Victims of sex trafficking may be forced into prostitution, pornography, prostitution for the military or militia, spousal prostitution, and prostitution for the sex-tourism industry.

Many nations have either misunderstood the definition of human trafficking or failed to comprehend the magnitude of incidents of trafficking that have occurred within their own geographical borders, or have simply lacked the wherewithal to combat human sex trafficking. The United Nations has defined human trafficking as the recruitment, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by threat or use of force. This definition is similar to that used by the U.S. State Department's Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 which describes severe forms of trafficking as: (a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or (b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for

labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Unfortunately, the trafficking of persons, although different from smuggling, is often identified as "people smuggling". People smuggling is also a global problem as it has quickly become one of the preferred trades for criminal networks. However, trafficking is a distinct activity, as the trafficking of persons involves exploitation. Smuggling simply implies enabling the entry into a region of which that person is not a permanent resident. With smuggling, the movement of the individual is always transnational. Human trafficking may occur within the same country. With smuggling, coercion is not an element; those individuals smuggled have freedom of movement and to change employment. This is not the case in human trafficking. Human trafficking is not smuggling; however, the reality of some smuggling cases provides support for their being considered human trafficking cases. Today, as recognized by the United Nations' Definition of Trafficking Protocol, consent to leave one country and work in another country does not distinguish the line between smuggling and human trafficking. If the initial consent of the victim to leave one country for another was gained through deception or coercion, then consent is irrelevant and human trafficking has occurred.

Sex Slavery

Sex slavery has often been positioned as a human trafficking issue, and both concepts have been critiqued by sex workers, researchers and allies for misrepresenting the lived realities of sex work [7]. Rather than a trafficking issue, interviewees reframed sex slavery as a workers' rights issue in their day-to-day work. Workers weren't specifically asked about sex slavery in interviews and no women reported any of the above scenarios. However, a few workers used these posters to challenge aggressive or argumentative clients. These posters list payment and deception indicators rather than specific references to force or coercion, but it was interesting to note how sex workers shifted the definition of sex slavery in order to use these posters as leverage with clients, by stressing the illegality of forcing workers to provide services workers did not want to provide.

While sex slavery is often used as an identity category in public discourses (i.e. one is a sex slave or is not), brothel workers reframed sex slavery as an action that could affect workers in both the legal and illegal sector, and in specific encounters with some clients but not others. Anti-trafficking, immigration and sex work discourses in Western countries still tend to construct immigrant, migrant and racialised sex workers (particularly Asian workers) as less empowered and more vulnerable. There also remains a risk that clients may seek to exploit workers who fit this public stereotype. In this racialised context, highly visible information about the laws against sex slavery may be a tool available to immigrant, migrant or racialised workers to challenge or educate potentially abusive clients that might otherwise rely on public stereotypes of passive nonWhite/non-Western workers. That workers are able to shift and utilise the concept of sex slavery to resist client assumptions of docile workers, even as sex slavery discourses have been criticised for fuelling those same stereotypes, speaks to women's complex and creative exercise of agency in the workplace. Sex work laws are not only perceived to



provide instruction for clients on how to engage with workers. The following section illustrates how laws also equip workers with ‘legal’ identities to ensure desired law enforcement outcomes.

Prostitution:

What is prostitution [8]? How does it differ from other sexual relations? What makes a teenager engaging in prostitution different by definition from adult prostitution? What about girl prostitution versus boy prostitution? How is prostitution defined in terms of white slavery? The dictionary defines the prostitute as "one who solicits and accepts payment for sex acts" or "to offer oneself (or another) for sexual hire." Hence the term prostitution is typically defined as "sexual relations that include some form of monetary payment or barter and are characterized by promiscuity and/or emotional apathy."

Prostitution differs from other consensual sexual relations in that it is based primarily on money or other payment exchanging hands between the parties involved for the sexual acts to occur. Legally and historically, prostitution has been defined as a gender-specific offense—or one in which the offender is female. One early definition of prostitution by the U.S. Supreme Court defined it as "women who for hire or without hire offer their bodies to indiscriminate intercourse with men." Today prostitution is often defined in gender-neutral terms and includes sexual intercourse along with oral copulation, sodomy, sexual acts between persons of the same gender, and adult and child prostitution.

Debates about the legal status of prostitution primarily revolve around three different approaches, broadly speaking: criminalization, legalization, and decriminalization [9]. Criminalization of prostitution in all its forms is the current legal approach in all U.S. states, with the exception of select counties in Nevada. Under this approach, all actors that are involved in some way with prostitution—including the seller, purchaser, pimp, brothel-keeper (an individual who runs a house of prostitution), and even the landlord of houses of prostitution—are subject to prosecution and punishment.

Legalization (which is currently used, for example, in the Netherlands, Germany, and Israel) consists of the removal of some (i.e., partial legalization, also found in several counties in Nevada) or all (i.e., complete legalization) criminal prohibitions surrounding the purchase of sexual services between consenting adults. But legalization does not mean that the law completely abandons social control of the behavior. Prostitution may become partially or completely legal, but the selling of sexual services is still subject to a system of legal regulations that operate to control one or more aspects of prostitution, such as licensing of businesses, registering of sex workers, zoning, taxes, mandatory health checks, and the provision and availability of health care. Legalization can be intentional—by formal judicial or legislative action. Alternatively, de facto legalization may occur when there is a “disjunction between the criminal law and formal policies and practices”. This occurs when prostitution remains illegal, but is tolerated, to varying degrees, by relevant legal authorities. For example, Western Australia prohibits the operation of brothels. Local law enforcement, however, is fully aware that brothels exist. Rather than close them down, the authorities periodically

inspect the brothels and monitor who works there.

Decriminalization can be partial or complete. Partial decriminalization (which is currently used, for example, in Sweden, Norway, and Iceland) can take multiple approaches. Penalties for prostitution could be reduced (e.g., from a felony to a misdemeanor or violation); or, the criminal laws concerning a specific prostitution-related offense could be removed from the criminal code (e.g., for soliciting prostitution), while penalties for procuring and pandering remain on the books. Complete decriminalization (which is currently used in New Zealand) means that all laws prohibiting prostitution are removed from criminal codes. When completely decriminalized, prostitution could occur in any setting because the law does not prohibit or regulate any aspect of prostitution between consenting adults.

Mental Illness:

The general medical profession has a forensic role in helping the police to gather evidence following a sexual assault, and has tried to take a lead on understanding why some people commit sexual crimes [10]. Psychiatry is the branch of the profession that might have been expected to throw light on sexual deviance and behaviour, and to some extent it has fulfilled this role. On the other hand there is growing consensus that sexual offending is more often unconnected to mental illness.

Some people with a mental illness and in need of treatment – including the new wider definition of treatment – may commit sexual offences, but the treatment is for the person and may or may not remove the propensity to offend. The distinction may not always be clear to a public still confused about the nature of mental disorder and when there is still talk of ‘sex maniacs’ and ‘dangerous’ people, plus the fact that sometimes mentally ill people do commit sexual offences. Even if it could not offer explanations, psychiatry still felt able to offer some treatments, and psychiatric skills in ‘risk assessment’ were still taken into account by courts and the Parole Board when it came to decisions on a person’s sentence and civil liberties.

Conclusion:

Sexuality is the totality of phenomena related to human sex and sexual drive, ie the ability to experience erotic experiences and responses. A person's sexual orientation can affect his sexual interest and attraction to other people. The biological aspect of sexuality refers to the reproductive mechanism, but also the basic biological instinct that exists in all species and is controlled by hormones. The emotional or physical aspect of sexuality refers to the connection that exists between individuals and is expressed through deep feelings or physical manifestations of emotions of love, faith and care.

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