



Influence of Religion on Sexual Education among Albanian Teenagers

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Abstract

A large number of researchers in different countries of the world may have extrapolated the relations between the religious belief, education and the sexual behaviour of the teenagers but this is a pioneer study in Albania. Sexual education at Albanian schools is a matter of concern persisting after 25 years of democracy. Inappropriate programs, unqualified teachers, texts with flaws often underestimating the need for comprehensive sexual education, continue to be part of sexual education in Albania. This is more common at religious-based schools, where religious morality often prohibits a comprehensive sexual education of the students of these schools. Through this study I would like to stress the immediate need for new sexual education based on the development and opening up of the society and Albanian teenagers, notwithstanding the religious belief of teachers, students or their families. The study is based on three pillars: need for comprehensive sexual education, need for detachment from religious education as part of sexual education at religious schools and promotion of the new perspective of sexual ethics. This study will be attended by students of local religious schools, wherefrom the data to be derived will analyse the relations between key variables of the present study, highlighting the impact of religious belief on sexual education at these high schools. The research methodology to be applied will be quantitative and the measuring instrument will refer to 500 adolescent students of religious different schools within the country. The hypothesis of this study will be tested through Chi-square test, regression etc through the program SPSS.20. The study will be closed with a number of recommendations and conclusions drawn from the empirical and theoretical working results.

1. Introduction

For some authors religion is portrayed as a phenomenon shaping human perception about particular attitudes and behaviors. However, they admit that in relation to sexuality and sexual behavior, religion has negatively shaped perceptions and basically on moral and immoral demagogues [1]. The opening of some first religious schools in Albania was observed after '90s, when the religious belief was free. At national level, they amounted to 14 religious high schools with a large number of students. After opening up of the society, radical change of the role and function of social institutions, the Albanian schools deemed necessary the adaption of sexual education, based on the needs of young people to be informed about sexual relations, in the circumstances of the freedom of information from media, peers etc. The problem lies in that Albanian schools still fail to inform the youth based on the professionalism and quality, though it should be stressed there have been significant changes and developments. In the circumstances of a patriarchal society, where teachers often lack the skill to be ethical and professional and fall prey of social morality, a comprehensive and ethic sexual education is rendered impossible. The teachers of local religious schools find it even harder, although it should be a same duty within ethics and sexual education programs approved by the Ministry of Education [2]. As a result, this study is intended to identify the forms of communication of sexual education at religious schools, model of sexual education and the need for a new ethics in sexual education. In view of the foregoing, the hypothesis of the present study are as follows: H1- As a result of sexual education built on moral and dogmatic bases, the religious school students are not informed of sexual relations and sexual ethics. H2- Forms of sexual communication based on the religious morality on sex and sexual relations could not refrain the youth from sexual relations. H3- There are gender differences in sexual education at religious schools.

2. Literature review

In summary, this part of the study introduces some of the authors where the study is based. As a result, it is worth analyzing the orientations to sexual behavior of particular religions, in order to see more clearly if all religious beliefs have the same attitudes to sexual education and sexual behavior of



the teenagers and young people. Specifically, Islamism and Christianity as monotheist Abrahamic religions prohibit sexual activity out of heterosexual marriage. The Catholic Church has adopted a clear position against contraception, while Islam religion is less strict and clear in this respect [3]. Studies of religion and sexuality usually report that religious beliefs and/or activities are rather associated with conservatorian sexual attitudes, latter onset of sexual behavior and a more limited range of sexual experiences [4]. The conclusion drawn from these studies in Christian cultures is that religion provides and reinforces a sexual ideology prohibiting the sexual relations, particularly of teenagers [5]. Researches have generally demonstrated a negative link between the religious spirit and sexual behavior [6]. However, some studies have not identified any relations between these factors [7]. Although the Holy Scriptures of these religions exclude some of these behaviors, religious institutions are not equally effective in shaping the actions of individuals [8]. In addition, when a large number of population abides by these religious beliefs, their followers may impact the macro-cultural climate and legalize formal limitations, which may shape the behavior of all residents within a nation. The macro power of culture may strongly influence the formation of attitudes of the individuals [9]. Yet, there are three religious beliefs in the Albanian society, which without being a macro strength of religious culture, with their morality on behavior, may find it hard to internalize and shape the behavior of the group left out of the religious belief and the one falling within that group [10].

3. Data results and study methodology

The sample population comprised of students from 14 national religious high schools localized in different towns or cities of Albania. The procedure for selection of the sample oriented to the quantitative study methodology was a layered and random one. 500 students from these schools were addressed the questionnaire as a measuring instrument of empirical data, where in 137 cases it was refused due to its topics, where for most of them was considered a sin and immoral, and 30 interrupted the survey upon their volition. All face to face surveyed cases were individual, where the students were isolated in different premises and were surveyed without the presence of other students or persons, save the researchers.

Data collected by 333 students who participated in the study and completed the questionnaire, were analyzed through the statistical method by applying the program SPSS.20. These data are summarized as follows. The study was attended by 199 females and 134 males, who studied at 10 religious high schools of Moslem faith, and at 4 schools of catholic faith. The religious high schools were localized in Tirane, Berat, Durrës, Shkoder, Elbasan, Korce, Kavaje, Gjirokaster, which are also the largest cities of the country. The vast majority of students, in 76% of the cases came from the villages surrounding these towns and cities.

We will briefly provide some data results, where the focus will be the final analysis of linear regression and Pearson correlation coefficient. As we see below in figure 1, the results of correlational relations between the variables are introduced, proving that there is a positive relationship between the variable of dogmatic sexual education and sexual relations of the teenagers at religious schools, thus implying that the more sexual education is based on moral and dogmatic foundations (such as sex is a sin and immorality if occurring before marriage etc), the teenagers are more likely to be involved in sexual relations (such as vaginal, oral, anal etc).

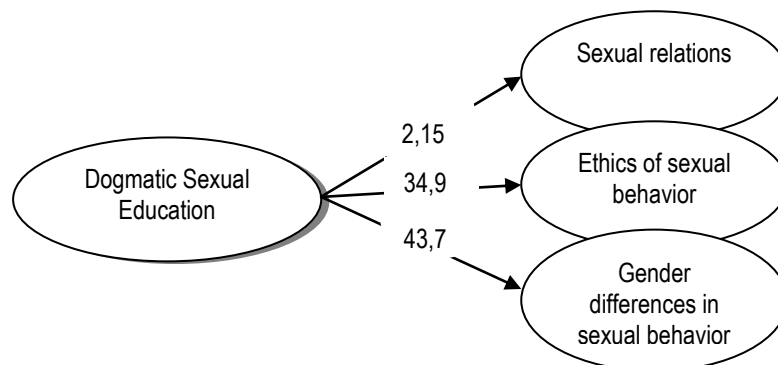


Figure 1. Pearson correlation coefficient for the main variables

Further, the correlation coefficient between dogmatic sexual education and ethics of sexual ethics is proven to be negative, -34.9 respectively, which means the more dogmatic sexual education is, the



less sexual ethics is introduced in sexual behavior (ethics in sexual behavior means the use of pills, condoms, sexual relationship with mutual desire, awareness and information on hygiene and sexual health, ethics was not treated as a dogmatic philosophical term, but as a social measurable construct). The two last variables such as dogmatic sexual education and gender differences in sexual behavior reported a positive coefficient of 43.7, thus implying that the more gender education is based on moral and dogma, the larger is the number of gender differences in sexual behavior, where a more tolerant sexual behavior is observed for men and a high level of conservatism among women. In all cases, it was proven that there is a stable statistical relationship between the variables, where the p-value was less than 5%.

Table 1. Analysis of the assessment of lineal regression model for all variables				
> summary(ols)				
Call:				
lm(formula = f ~ gender + age + edu + SE + SR+ SEthc+ GR, data = y)				
Residuals:				
Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-0.15113	-0.07972	-0.03232	0.10787	0.32872
Coefficients: Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(> t)				
(Intercept) 0.6925443 0.2874384 2.409 0.0165 *				
Gender 0.700710 0.0115084 60.869 <2e-16 ***				
Age 0.28639 0.0092390 22.310 <2e-16 ***				
Educati 0.10594 0.0066591 159 <2e-16 ***				
Sex. Educ -0.0058488 0.0117274 -0.499 0.061				
Sex. Relat 1.2936048 0.0404900 31.949 <2e-16 ***				
Sex. Ethic 1.1714388 0.0327297 35.791 <2e-16 ***				
Gend.Role 0.2212286 0.095022 42.328 0.0205 *				

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1				
Residual standard error: 0.1045 on 333 degrees of freedom				
Multiple R-squared: 0.7788, Adjusted R-squared: 0.7783				
F-statistic: 1920 on 8 and 333 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16				

Further, table 1 provides a final model of analysis conducted through the linear regression, while introduced in the table, the variability of dependent variables is at a level of 77%, an extremely satisfactory value, once again guaranteeing that variables are strongly interlinked. This means that the model best suits the available data. Specifically, we may conclude that explanatory variables are valid for the explanation of dependent variables. We based this on the following summarized components: statistically valid coefficients, high R-square value (about 77%) and independent residuals without time auto-correlation.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite the fact that sexual education at religious schools is a highly sensitive issue, it assumes special importance, especially when although in certain religious beliefs sexual intercourse before marriage is prohibited, despite the morality existing at schools and institutions of religious beliefs, again the teenagers have frequently had sexual intercourse. It is clear that religious belief in the country without being homogeneous and at macro level, fails to have a maximum impact on sexual abstinence among the students of religious schools, also because of other social institutions that may interfere with modeling of sexual behavior. In these circumstances, lack of information on the use of condoms or hygiene and sexual health, and failure to discuss with teachers as a reason for considering sexual intercourse as a forbidden topic causes teens not to be informed professionally and ethically on sexual relations. As a result, they are a contingent at risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Although sexual intercourse before marriage was deemed forbidden, again it should be understood that within marriage couples need information about sex and contraceptive methods for a healthy sexual and reproductive life. Such information would be better acquired since early adolescence. Training of teachers for sexual education at religious schools is a prerequisite, where at least they approach to abstinence programs, failing to provide a comprehensive sexual education. Further, it is important that teachers stay out of educational frames on the basis of religious morality.



Currently these schools do not operate on sexual education programs approved by the Ministry of Education, underestimating the limited information contained in specific textbooks, and rendering sexual education prohibited.

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