SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SEXUALITY OF ADOLESCENTS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN PASTO.

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Abstract.

The research focuses on analyzing the social representations of sexuality in adolescents from two educational institutions in the city of Pasto. It investigates knowledge and interests about sexuality and the influence of family, school and social networks. Specific objectives are proposed to identify and understand these representations, with the intention of contributing to sexual education processes in educational institutions; applying a qualitative study.

Keywords: Social representations, human sexuality, adolescents, sexual education, social networks.

Resumen.

La investigación se enfoca en analizar las representaciones sociales sobre la sexualidad en adolescentes de dos instituciones educativas de la ciudad de Pasto. Se indaga sobre los conocimientos e intereses sobre la sexualidad y la influencia de la familia, la escuela y las redes sociales. Se plantean objetivos específicos para identificar y comprender estas representaciones, con la intención de aportar a los procesos de educación sexual en las instituciones educativas; aplicando un estudio cualitativo.

Palabras clave: Representaciones sociales, sexualidad humana, adolescentes, educación sexual, redes sociales.

I. INTRODUCTION.

The research focuses on exploring the social representations of sexuality in a group of adolescents belonging to two educational institutions, one official and the other unofficial, in the city of Pasto. The origin of the sexual information of young people is investigated, considering relevant aspects such as the family, school and social environment.

The research question posed is: What are the social representations in the perspective of sexuality that adolescents from two educational institutions in the city of Pasto have? In order to develop this question, some objectives are established to guide the study. Starting from the main objective of analyzing the social representations in the perspective of sexuality in adolescents of these institutions.

LAS REPRESENTACIONES SOCIALES EN LA PERSPECTIVA DE LA SEXUALIDAD DE LOS ADOLESCENTES EN INSTITUCIONES EDUCATIVAS DE PASTO.

During adolescence, sexuality becomes a relevant topic, since it is a crucial period in sexual identity. In this context, social representations play a fundamental role in influencing the understanding of how sexuality is experienced by young people. These representations are shared mental constructs that shape attitudes, behaviors and decisions related to sexuality.

Therefore, it is important to investigate how these representations are formed, transmitted and internalized in adolescents, since this has an impact on their perception of sexuality and on their affective relationships and decision making. The research seeks to explore the sources of information on sexuality of adolescents, both the family and educational context, society, which are their friends and, nowadays, the media, as well as to understand the implications of these representations on their values, beliefs and emotional wellbeing.

Through the collection of qualitative data, it is expected to obtain a broader and contextualized understanding of how social representations influence the perspective of sexuality in adolescents.

The results could contribute inputs to sex education programs in educational institutions, as well as identify areas for improvement in promoting informed and healthy sexuality among adolescents in educational institutions.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

Social Representations and Adolescent Sexuality.

Social representations are mental constructs shared by individuals in a community, which allow them to interpret and interact with the world around them (Moscovici, 1979: 27). The representations that adolescents construct

or interpret about sexuality may be influenced by values, beliefs and cultures that influence how young people understand and experience their sexuality.

Social representations, according to (Moscovici 1979: 27), consider affective, mental and social elements. These elements are articulated through cognitive processes, language and communication. In addition, social relations that influence representations, as well as material, social and ideal reality, must be taken into account. This approach, presented by (Gutiérrez, 2013: 23), suggests that social representations are complex constructs that are formed and affected by various interrelated factors.

Characteristics of social representations.

For (Cruz, 2006: 22) a social representation is associated with a specific object; therefore, the concept of representing stands out as the act of giving form to something that may not be physically present, which implies the ability to create new concepts based on the perceptions held about that object. In other words, it is pointed out that social representations are mental constructions that allow us to give form to reality, even through imagination and perception.

Social representations in adolescents.

Social representations in adolescents are essential for their cognitive and social development, as they allow them to interpret and construct meanings about various aspects of their environment, including sexuality, influenced by family, social and educational factors. These representations help them make sense of the world and their own experiences, shaping their behavior, attitudes and decision-making.

Sexuality.

For (Vargas, 2007: 6) "sexuality is a construct that represents everything that a person can say about his/her sexual dimension when describing him/herself". This being a complex and varied topic that should be treated in a personalized way according to individual needs. She stresses the importance of students understanding social representations and how these influence the information they receive in educational institutions. In addition, it emphasizes the integral development of students, including their relationship with themselves and how they represent attitudes and behaviors towards others.

Human sexuality.

According to (Cruz, 2011: 71), human sexuality cannot be separated from the person, because it contains the capacity to express love and allow him/her to be fully realized as a man or a woman, therefore, its care requires that it be integrated through a timely education, understood as a formation that considers it as a being composed of body, mind and spirit.

It therefore highlights the need to integrate sexuality education within a broader framework of personal development and well-being that takes into account the totality of the human experience.

Sex education.

Sexuality education goes beyond the transmission of biological knowledge about reproduction. It emphasizes the importance of acquiring and transforming knowledge, attitudes and values in relation to sexuality in all its dimensions, including eroticism, identity and social representations in their various facets in an inclusive and respectful manner.

(Palacios-Jaramillo, 2008: 7) considers that it is the vital process through which knowledge, attitudes and values regarding sexuality in all its manifestations are acquired and transformed, formally and informally, including from the biological aspects and those related to reproduction, to all those associated with eroticism, identity, and social representations of them.

Influence of Family and School.

Family and school are central to the formation of social representations about sexuality in adolescents, and the type of influence they exert can have a lasting impact on individuals' sexual perception and behavior. As can a lack of open communication about sexuality issues and prejudice in the family, or inappropriate sex education at school, can contribute to the formation of limited or biased representations about sexuality.

Socio-cultural processes.

According to (Luisi, 2013: 432), all human beings are born into a family environment that not only provides basic and affective needs, but also plays a fundamental role in education. This educational function of the family nucleus is crucial to provide the individual with the necessary tools for an integral formation from an early age. The

early learning acquired in this context is considered to be the most significant and enduring, and many of them have a permanent influence on the individual's life.

Influence of social networks on social representations.

Social networks and digital media play an increasingly relevant role in the formation of social representations about sexuality in adolescents. Exposure to sexualized content on social networks can influence young people's perception and experience of sexuality, as well as their affective and sexual relationships.

(Arab and Díaz, 2015: 9) Digital media generate multiple new contexts to express and explore aspects of identity. Individuals act in different spaces, creating diverse identities that are changing at very fast speed and that can generate enriching or destructive interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences, depending on how online communication is used (time of use, type of virtual social group chosen, among others).

III. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK.

The research will be carried out in two educational institutions in the city of Pasto in the Department of Nariño - Colombia, one of them is the Liceo Integrado de Bachillerato de la Universidad de Nariño. Institutional Educational Project (PEI 2023:8) official educational institution that offers formal education at the levels of transition, elementary school, junior high school and high school. Oriented to the formation of emotionally and academically competent people, with social sensitivity, critical spirit, leadership skills and committed to the destiny of their environment that contributes to the training of university professionals from different programs in teaching activities, academic practices, research and social interaction, as related to the educational levels that precede higher education.

The other institution in which this research is framed is the San Felipe Neri School, a private Catholic educational institution that offers formal education committed to the integral formation of the person capable of promoting his life project; in addition, committed to society from the values of the Gospel, its qualifying, liberating and evangelizing axes. The pedagogical proposal is carried out through classroom pedagogical projects, which allow the integration of knowledge through themes that arise from the interests of the students, through which they develop cooperative work, improve bonds of friendship, support and companionship, solve difficulties, integrate families and the educational community, in the different themes worked on each year.

Based on the Sexuality Education and Citizenship Building Project of the San Felipe Neri School Institution (PESCC. 2023: 12), it is organized on an annual basis with a projection for the academic school year, working on the preparation of material and development of workshops on the topic of sexual and reproductive health, approaching protective and risk factors.

The focus of these workshops will include the practice of values related to self-care and co-responsibility, as well as the analysis of the physiological aspects of sexuality. To guarantee the success of these workshops, qualified human resources, work guide formats and audiovisual resources will be available to enrich the learning experience.

IV. METHODOLOGY.

A qualitative study will be conducted in two educational institutions in Pasto, using in-depth interviews and focus groups to collect data on the social representations of sexuality in adolescents. A purposive sampling will be used to select the participants, ensuring the representativeness of different age groups, gender and socioeconomic level.

The in-depth interviews, according to (Martínez, 2020: 33) are structured with questions organized according to study categories and subcategories, as well as research components. This allows the construction of an instrument that guides the questions according to the purposes of the study. The importance of leaving space for emerging questions that may arise during the interaction between interviewer and interviewee is emphasized.

And focus groups are a technique that allows the collection of detailed and meaningful information about adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions regarding sexuality, as stated by Hamui and Varela (2013), such technique is effective in collecting information about the feelings, thoughts and experiences of the participants.

The results expected to be collected from this research will provide a detailed and in-depth view of the social representations of sexuality among adolescents in the educational institutions where the research is being conducted. Through the analysis of the data collected, it will be possible to identify a wide range of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes that young people have regarding sexuality, and how these are influenced by various factors of the social and cultural environment in which they develop.

In addition, a considerable influence of social networks in the formation of these representations will be observed. It is possible that adolescents are constantly exposed to a wide range of messages and images related to sexuality through platforms such as: Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok, which may significantly influence their perception and understanding of sexuality. For example, exposure to sexualized content on social media can contribute to the objectification of the body and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, which in turn can negatively affect adolescents' self-esteem and perception of body image.

The results of this research will highlight the complexity and diversity of social representations about sexuality among adolescents, as well as the significant influence of contextual factors such as family, school and social networks. The findings will have important implications for the design and implementation of sexuality education programs and for the development of intervention strategies aimed at promoting a more informed, healthy and positive understanding of sexuality among adolescents in the city of Pasto.

The findings to be obtained in this research may reveal several areas for action and reflection that could have important implications in the promotion of healthy and well-informed sexuality among adolescents in the Educational Institutions of the city of Pasto.

It is essential to highlight the need to contribute to sex education processes in educational institutions. The results of this study will help to detect any gaps that exist in the sexuality education provided in these institutions, since it will be possible to observe a variety of social representations on sexuality among the participating adolescents.

In addition, the importance of promoting open and nonjudgmental communication in the family setting is highlighted. The family plays a crucial role in the formation of social representations about sexuality in adolescents,

and the results of this study will suggest that lack of effective communication in the home may contribute to the formation of limited or biased representations about sexuality. Therefore, it is critical that parents and caregivers maintain an open and respectful dialogue with their children about issues related to sexuality, providing them with accurate information and emotional support so that they can develop a healthy and positive understanding of their sexuality.

On the other hand, it is important to take into account the influence of social networks on adolescents' perception of sexuality. Easy and constant access to sexualized content on social networks can influence the way young people perceive and live their sexuality, as well as their affective and sexual relationships. In this sense, it is necessary to develop digital and media education strategies that promote responsible use of social networks and help adolescents discern reliable information from false or harmful information. In addition, it is important to foster critical thinking and analytical skills in young people so that they can question and reflect on the messages and stereotypes present in the media and online.

The research can mark the importance of improving sex education processes in educational institutions, promoting open and non-judgmental communication in the family and school environment and addressing the influence of social networks on adolescents' perception of sexuality.

The research highlights the importance of understanding and developing social representations on sexuality in adolescents, in order to promote a more informed, empowered and healthy sexuality at this stage of life. Recommendations will be suggested to improve sexual education processes in Educational Institutions, as well as to promote open and non-judgmental communication in the family environment. In addition, the need to develop digital and media education strategies to counteract the negative influence of social networks on adolescents' perception of sexuality is highlighted.

In order to develop the first specific objective, the main category was sexuality, and the subcategory: human sexuality. The eighth-grade students of the two educational institutions referenced were used as a source and an in-depth interview was used as an instrument.

Similarly, in order to develop the second specific objective, the category: education for sexuality, and the subcategory: training, were used to apply to students through focus groups.

In relation to the third specific objective, the category taken was: the functions of sexuality, with the following subcategories: relational communicative, reproductive, erotic and affective, and as research instruments the interviews to be applied to the people in charge of the sexuality education projects (PESCC).

Finally, with regard to the development of the fourth specific objective, the category of social networks is taken as: social networks with the following subcategories: attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, by means of data collection through in-depth interviews.

In this way, the information will be organized in a clear and detailed manner, indicating the guiding questions, specific objectives, categories and subcategories, as well as the sources, instruments and other considerations used in the research.

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