

Adolescent Sexuality among Filipinas: Novel Constructs and Emergent Realities

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ABSTRACT

This research study utilizes indigenous methods of research in Filipino Psychology (Sikolohiyang Pilipino) to discover the sexual practices of young Filipina teenagers who enter into consensual sexual relations at an early age. The researcher interviewed young Filipina teenagers, ages 13 to 19, in the Province of Cagayan through purposive sampling. Results indicate that environmental parameters have a huge impact in their decisions to enter into consensual sexual relations at such a young age. From the data and supplemental informal conversations with the participants, the researcher developed a model to explain the sexual psychology of young Filipina adolescents who enter into early consensual sexual relations.

Keywords: *sexual activities of young Filipinas, Filipino psychology, Indigenous Psychology, adolescent sexuality, Filipina teenagers, public health*

INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is a very exciting aspect of life, ubiquitous in its compelling power to hold the interest of peoples and races all over this Earth. This paper explores some theoretical, conceptual and psychological implications of my research on the sexual activities of Filipina teenagers. It is not a direct translation of my research but a synthesis of ideas, insights and reflections that I had while performing said research. It is the objective of this paper to illuminate and further elaborate the seminal ideas that I have advanced in the said research. My research was in the field of Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology) and was entitled “Ang Mundo ng mga Dalagitang Naglalaro ng Apoy.” Translated loosely into English, it would mean “Immersion into the World of Sexually Active Filipina Teenagers.”

Perspectives from Indigenous Psychology

The traditional social sciences which have been developed as part of the totality of learning in the West have been brought over to Asia. It is now becoming increasingly evident that the validity of such social sciences, whether in the realm of research theory or of action policy, can no longer be accepted uncritically. Such analysis is necessary not only as an academic venture; social change is basic to the Asian aspiration for modernization and the need is urgent for such change to be directed towards the achievement

of what may well be Asian as distinguished from non-Asian goals. The problem is clear and present. The Asian academic world, until now, has been staffed with many scholars whose training has been, for the most part, in Western universities and institutions. At the same time, the political and intellectual leadership in the larger life of its society is held to a significant degree by Western-trained leaders. The orientation of many of these leaders has been conditioned by the predominant Western culture. Trained to think in Western terms through the medium of Western languages, some are experiencing a reawakening to the reality of their situation. Asian intellectuals are undergoing an agonizing period of soul searching. Their system of values, developed through years of training in, and broad exposure to, Western philosophies, is being shattered by a realization that these values may not be suitable to the Asian environment (Espiritu, cited in Enriquez, 1990).

Dissatisfaction with Western methods and concepts, a more general pride and emergence of cultural identity, and cogent scientific and methodological reasons have all contributed to the emergence of a movement to develop truly indigenous theories, concepts and methods (Enriquez, 1990).

The project of Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology) can be seen as three interrelated tasks.

First, there is the development of indigenous psychological concepts. Secondly, indigenous research methods are utilized. Thirdly, a more authentic and more acceptable social scientific Psychology (Sikolohiyang Pilipino) will be produced (Rood, 1985 cited by Enriquez, 1990). The new consciousness, labelled Sikolohiyang Pilipino reflecting Filipino psychological knowledge, has emerged through the use of the local language as a tool for the identification and rediscovery of indigenous concepts and as an appropriate medium for the delineation and articulation of Philippine realities hand in hand with the development of a scientific literature which embodies the psychology of the Filipino people.

METHODOLOGY

Pagtatanong-tanong is a Filipino word which means “asking questions.” It is a behaviour which Filipinos ordinarily exhibit. Filipinos are used too spending hours chatting and exchanging questions and ideas. As a research method, it is sometimes interpreted as an informal interview or at best an “improvisation” which approximates the interview method, but this is not correct. Although there are some similarities, *pagtatanong-tanong* is basically different from the interview in general. Besides, the use of the local term *pagtatanong-tanong* highlights the importance of tapping culturally appropriate indigenous research methods without claiming exclusivity to it for the particular culture. The first characteristic of *pagtatanong-tanong* is its participatory nature. The structure is not predetermined by the researcher as in the interview. While the interview favors a listing of questions in the form of an interview schedule, whether tentative or final, this arrangement is not advisable in *pagtatanong-tanong*. Instead of a listing of questions, a tentative outline of topics to be covered is recommended. The outline is revised and improved as the *pagtatanong-tanong* opens up a new and richer perspective, to which the informant has a major input. The second characteristic of *pagtatanong-tanong* is equality of status between the researcher and the informant. Unlike the interview where the respective roles of the interviewer and the interviewee are distinct, there is a constant reversal or roles in the *pagtatanong-tanong*. The thing to remember is that personal relationships and interactions are particularly important for many ethnic groups. The third characteristic of *pagtatanong-tanong* is its being appropriate and adaptive to the conditions of the ethnic minority group. The fourth characteristic of *pagtatanong-tanong* is its being integrated with

other indigenous research methods (Pe-Pua, 1983 cited by Enriquez, 1990).

DISCUSSION

In my research, I was able to discover that the sexually active Filipina teenager can be categorized into two types. The first category is what I have termed the “Shallow Explorer” or the Wandering Maiden archetype. This sexually active Filipina teenager is motivated from without, by parameters of the environment, such as peer pressure, mass and social media stimulation and the pressure of an aggressive lover, to explore nuances of sexuality. I have used the term Shallow Explorer to characterize this type because this teenager is not interested in the long-term relationships but focuses mostly on the short-term gains from sexual liaisons. This young woman wants to explore the sexual world, and is greatly influenced by concepts of the ideal mate from mass media and social media. On the other hand, the second category I have called the “Profound Explorer” or the Wounded Healer archetype. This sexually active Filipina teenager is motivated from within, is usually a victim of incest and/or sexual abuse and seeks to discover some sort of relationship paradigm that will facilitate her healing. This teenager, deeply scarred by psychological wounds from sexual abuse, is nevertheless seized by initiative to go on a personal quest and discover some sort of healing paradigm that can help alleviate her wounds. She wants to repair her wounds and achieve some sort of wholeness. As much as possible, this sexually active Filipina teenager is interested in long-term relationship success. She is influenced by concepts of the ideal mate from a deep-seated need to fulfil childhood wishes of security and stability. May I cite directly from my research for those pertinent concepts:

On the other hand, the Profound Explorer is conceptualized and defined as the sexually active Filipina teenager who is moved by attempts to repair existing psychological wounds. These psychological wounds are usually situations of incest and/or sexual abuse that have occurred mostly in childhood settings and which have invariably deposited deep-seated psychological wounds or scars in the individual. The Profound Explorer enters into sexual relationships not because of the promise of physical pleasure per se but because of the anticipation of a relationship that could help heal these psychological wounds. Sometimes, the Profound Explorers are violated by the same men who promised to heal their wounds. But still they continue to seek and enter

into new relationships because they are trying desperately to heal themselves psychologically, mentally and socially. Let us now encapsulate these insights into a table.

Table1. A Comparative Analysis of the Behavioural Correlates of Two Fundamental Types of Sexually Active Filipina Teenagers Based on my Study

Behavioural Correlates	Wandering Maiden (Shallow Explorer)	Wounded Healer (Profound Explorer)
Primary Motivational Theme	Moved by curiosity	Moved by attempts to repair psychic wounds
Locus of Motivation	Tempted by physical sensation and the bodily pleasure of sex; quantity of sexual partners determined by impetus of bodily conditioning	Motivated by a need to cure/repair psychic wounds incurred by incest and/or sexual abuse; quantity of sexual partners a consequence of the need for acceptance
Causality paradigm involved	Environmental pressure, peer pressure and lover pressure combine to increase quantity of sexual experiences	Presence of internal need to achieve wholeness by the promise of relationship success; quality of experience is more important
Relationship to contexts of nativity and childhood systems	May or may not repudiate contexts of nativity/childhood upbringing systems	May or may not repudiate contexts of nativity/childhood upbringing systems
Relationship to contexts of the significant other	Not ready for long term relationship success; may change sexual partners frequently	Wishes to be in a relationship to alleviate anxiety and cure psychological wounds due to incest and sexual abuse; projects on to lover ideas of the idealized male
Influences on choice of significant other	Deeply influenced by environment, peer pressure and the idealized concept of the male promoted by mass media and social media	Also influenced by environmental pressure; check out family back-ground for better understanding of the male influences on the individual psyche
Self-esteem parameters	Variable self-esteem; some exhibit joy at having these sexual experiences	Low self-esteem due to childhood trauma and psychological wounds
Awareness of relationship success factors	Not deeply conscious of the significant parameters of context, relationship and contrasexuality parameters	Deeply aware of context, relationship and harmony parameters; makes effort to have successful relationships due to need to repair deep-seated psychological wounds
Determinants of maturity	Still at immature stage of development where quantity of relationships overpower quality; still unaware of deeper repercussions; needs to become more mature by understanding consequences of sexual behaviour more; is currently awed by the seduction of physical pleasure; this teenager would benefit from the crucible of experience	Also, still at immature stage, however there is a deep need and awareness of the possibility of wholeness through relationship success; maturity could be greatly facilitated by the proper counselling and psychotherapy methods; desires to be at peace with self; this teenager needs psychological help

Differences in Motivation

The first fundamental divergence, which is that of motivation and motivational strategy, helps to stabilize the cornerstone of differences between the two categories. Whereas the first category is impelled by external forces to embark upon the perilous, but nonetheless exciting adventure of sexual exploration; the second category is motivated by internal forces as well as the drive for wholeness. In her book, *Developmental Psychology*, Elizabeth Hurlock, has laid down cornerstones for our understanding of the behavioural correlates of the first type. Let us review again her concepts on this issue.

There are five almost universal concomitants of

the changes that occur during adolescence. The first is heightened emotionality, the intensity of which depends on the rate at which the physical and psychological changes are taking place. Second, the rapid changes that accompany sexual make young adolescents unsure of themselves, of their capacities and of their interests. They have strong feelings of instability which are often intensified by the ambiguous treatment they receive from parents and teachers. Third, changes in their bodies, their interests and in the roles the social group expects them to play create new problems. Fourth, as interests and behaviour patterns change, so do values. Fifth, adolescents are ambivalent about changes. While they want and demand independence, they often

dread the responsibilities that go with independence and question their ability to cope with these responsibilities. (Hurlock, 1982: 224).

In addition to this fundamental framework, Hurlock also makes these assertions about the sexual interests and sexual behaviour of adolescents:

Because of their growing interest in sex, adolescent boys and girls seek more and more information about it. Few adolescents feel that they can learn all they want to know about sex from their parents. Consequently, they take advantage of whatever sources of information are available to them---sex hygiene courses in school or college

Basically, Hurlock (1982) is describing the personality development and dynamics of the first category of sexually active teenagers, specifically sexually-active ones in the American heartland. Incidentally, I also discovered that this partially holds true for sexually-active Filipina teenagers of the first category I have described in my research. However, I have also discovered a second type, whose motivational strategies widely differ from the first type. Because the first category of sexually-active teenagers have been widely researched and discussed in psychological and educational literature, I shall concentrate my discussion in this section on the second category of sexually-active teenagers, a type I have discovered to be prevalent here in the Philippines. In order to understand this category better, it is necessary to analyze some relevant philosophical and psychological implications in a broader perspective and then focus those perspectives on the issue at hand.

Woman as a Contextual Being

In an earlier philosophical manuscript, this author has made the discovery and assertion that the female is a contextual being (Rimban, 2009; Rimban, 2017). As a contextual being, the female is subject to the dynamics, nature and fate of the system or collective of which she is a member. Being an integral member of a system, the woman experiences her totality as part of that system. This is in contradistinction to the male, which is a singularity. Being a singularity, the male has the choice and initiative to experience life from his point of view always. He has the choice to be a significant member of a collective but retains the power of the singularity. The female therefore, experiences life differently, cognitively as well as experientially (Rimban, 2009).

May I quote liberally from my earlier work in order to present the philosophical background of this discussion:

A woman's understanding of beauty is colored by her "intimate gradients of force." Brought up by a family, she absorbs these mental paradigms and expresses them subconsciously like a crystal chalice that has multiple mirrors on all sides. The important thing to understand is that a woman is a non-discrete energy expression. Thus, she has no choice but to express the personality colorations of her environment like a chameleon. Being nonlinear, she follows a different causality paradigm, something alien to the logic of the male (Rimban, 2009).

The very first step is to understand her environment. *How did she grow up? Who were her parents? How was the relationship to both the father and the mother? How is the relationship with the siblings? How is the family as a whole? Are there any significant adult influences other than the parents? What are the basic value systems of this family? How is the mother as a caregiver? Are there any traumatic influences in her life? Who were her best friends?* All these should be taken into account. Now, these are just the psychological paradigms that we have to consider.

A Yin's first loves are always critical. Examine the father or father figure. The older brother archetype. The wise uncle archetype. The first great teacher as archetype. All these have significant roles. A woman begins to understand the Art of Life from her surroundings. She absorbs the colorations of her primal environment and expresses them subconsciously. The entrance into the Cave of Yin is really an extended initiation into her home environment. Metaphysically, presence and absence are extremely important signposts. The presence of an archetype can significantly alter her response to the gradients of force. But the absence of an archetype also is very significant. Why? ***Because a female is a web of force!*** The study of the female is really a study of a particular gradient-of-force system. Its polarities. Its tendencies. Its operating systems. Its idiosyncrasies. Its basic instinctive responses. Its ways of expression. The overwhelming influence of a parameter colors the gradients of force. But in a similar manner, the absence of a fundamental parameter also colors the gradients of force. *Consequently, the female indeed behaves in a different causal universe!* (Rimban, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Having discovered two fundamental types of sexually-active Filipina teenagers, we can now make the following conclusions regarding their behavioural correlates:

The personality factors common to both are the following:

- Curiosity, being inquisitive
- Propensity to explore sexual life, vicariously or experientially
- Tendency to have multiple romantic/sexual partners
- Awareness of the sexual changes in adolescence as a distinct chapter of life
- The capacity to be influenced by environmental parameters, like peer pressure, mass media and social media
- The courage/initiative/desire to explore various aspects of sexuality.

The personality factors distinct to category one, in addition to the above, are:

- Extreme capacity to be influenced by environmental factors, especially in the selection of the desired romantic/sexual partner
- Variable self-esteem, understands both positive and negative factors of early sexual involvements
- Tempted by physical sensation and the bodily pleasure of sex
- May have numerous romantic/sexual partners
- Not ready for long-term relationship success, goes for quantity and not quality

The personality factors distinct to category two, in addition to the above, are:

- Low self-esteem
- High levels of fear, and insecurity due to childhood sexual abuse and trauma
- A deep need to be loved and understood by another
- The deep need to belong to a stable group /system, such as a family
- Uncertainty due to psychological wounds incurred
- A desire for wholeness, and repair of psychological and sexual wounds
- The desire for a long-term or quality relationship
- Deeply aware of context, relationship and harmony parameters; makes effort to have successful relationships.

- And I have also made the recommendation that category two is the type most in need of counselling and psychotherapy services.
- May this study on the sexual activities of Filipina teenagers engender more empirical studies in this area, involving more subjects and perhaps paving the way for immersion studies in the future. Many young Filipinas are now engaging in early sexual activities. Studies like this can not only help expand the psychological literature but also help provide a forum for the discussion of taboo subjects, such as childhood rape and incest. It is the hope of this researcher that this study will also stimulate research into the psycho-therapy of victims of childhood sexual abuse in this country.

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