



PERSONALITY AND SEXUAL AWARENESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Sexuality is an integral part of the personality of every human being and personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. In the present society there exist strong desires to have physical contact with the opposite gender during adolescence with less sex education and unprotected sex. Sexuality is a neglected area among college students and has received insufficient attention. This paper presents an urgent need to address this sensitive, potentially embarrassing but important health issue. Objective: The present investigation examines the relationship between personality traits and sexual awareness among college students. Method: Samples: The participants in this research consist of 70 males and 70 female college students. In order to understand the correlation between Big -5 personality traits and sexual awareness we have used two questionnaires :(1)Sexual Awareness Scale(SAS) of William E Snell, Terri D Fisher and Rowland S Miller (1991). It is an objective ,self report instrument designed to measure sexual awareness :sexual - consciousness , sexual-preoccupation ,sexual monitoring and sexual assertiveness.(2)Big Five Inventory Scale(BFI) of John O.P and Srivastava.S (1999), a 44- item inventory that measures an individual on the Big Five Factors (dimensions) of personality. Data was subjected to descriptive statistics and correlation. The results revealed that students characterized as daring, imaginative, intellectual,

inventive and sophisticated (Openness to experience) are less sexual aroused and motivated. Students who are social, fun loving, affectionate, talkative, playful optimistic and courageous (extraversion) also seem to be less sexually aroused and motivated. College students who tend to worry, feel insecure, self-conscious and show impulsive behavior (neurotics) seem to be sexually assertive.

Results also revealed that sub variables of sexual awareness and personality traits were correlated.

KEYWORDS: ADOLESCENTS, COLLEGE STUDENTS, PERSONALITY, SEXUAL AWARENESS, SEXUALITY

Introduction

Sex seems to be all over including the college campus. However, these days' students appear to have a different sexual attitude and behavior than preceding generations. The history of sexual revolution of the 20th century provides an evident picture of why college students have their current attitudes and beliefs concerning sex.

A survey of 1998 found that only 15 percent of college students chose to stay virgins in the course of their college experiences (Eschbacher, 2002). Related findings were reported by Elliott and Brantley (1997) in the leading study on sexuality of college student to date. Several students are coming to college with pre-established sexual behaviors.

Despite the lift in the number of students engaging in sexual activity, their age if the first sexual encounter is also decreasing, “ Students set seventh grade as the starting point for oral sex” (Remez,2000,p.300). A sexuality educator Deborah Roffman asserts that “ girls at times look at oral sex as an absolute bargain- you don't get pregnant, get diseases, you're still virgin and you're in control as it's something that they can do to boys(whereas sex is more or less at all times described as something boys do to girls)” (Remez,2000,p.301). Interviews with eleventh and twelfth graders revealed that they viewed oral sex as something they can do with someone they are not intimate with (Remez, 2000) and carry these perspectives with them as they enter the college setting.

Several students do not consider oral sex to be 'sex' and many who classify themselves as virgins have engaged in this behavior. Traditional sex education has not given attention on oral

sex or its potential dangers because many teenagers appear to be misinformed about the STDs risks of oral sex (Remez,2000).

In the era of AIDS education, the message students learned was that sexual intercourse was accepted given that they used a condom (Peterson, 1999). In spite of these lessons, only 45% of college students are having safe sex (Elliott & Brantley, 1997).A study showed that few students would abstain from sexual intercourse to prevent STDs and HIV (Feigenbaum & Weinstein, 1995).

Seeing that sex education is on rise and technology is advancing, addiction to sexual crimes has also increased. Sexuality is in an air of sensitivity and taboos. College students together with the adult society accept different types of sexual living. Sexual function has a significant role with respect to the personality trait of individuals.

Personality as defined by McCrae and Costa (1987), is the systematic description of relatively stable, enduring patterns of behavior. There are many approaches that have been used over years to describe assess and classify personality characteristics (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1968; Spence and Helmreich, 1978). One of these to receive widespread acceptance is The Big Five Factor model. There are five key or central dimensions of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1994; Zuckerman, 1994).

THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS

Presently, the most widely used model of personality is the Big Five model. The traits in the Big Five Model are Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness to experience, Extraversion.

- Openness to experience: (inventive/curious v/s consistent/ cautious). Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, curiosity and variety of experience. Openness reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and a preference for novelty and variety a person has. It is the extent to which a person is imaginative or independent. People who are open to experience are intellectually curious, open to emotion, sensitive to beauty and willing to try new things. They tend to be more creative and more aware of their feelings. Low score indicates narrow in interest and simple.

- **Conscientiousness:** (efficient/organized v/s easy going/careless). A tendency to be organized and dependable, show self-discipline, act dutifully, aim for achievement and prefer planned than spontaneous behavior. It is related to the way in which people control, regulate and direct their impulses. High scores on conscientiousness indicate a preference for planned behavior. Low score indicate disorganized, careless. Conscientiousness denotes a person who is hardworking, ambitious, energetic, persevering, organized, efficient, punctual and decisive (Goldberg, 1990). McCrae & Costa(1987) described those with low conscientiousness as being undirected and lazy.
- **Extraversion:** (outgoing/energetic v/s solitary/reserved). Energy, positive emotions, assertiveness, sociability and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others and talkativeness. Extraverts enjoy interacting with others and are often perceived as full of energy. They tend to be enthusiastic, action oriented individuals. Low score indicates reserved, cautious. Some adjectives that are used to describe extraversion on Goldberg's measure of the Big Five personality factors (1990) are: playful, expressive, spontaneous, courageous, optimistic, humorous and ambitious. Surgency is described as being the opposite of extraversion. They are unsociable, withdrawn, quiet, secretive, shy, inhibited, unaggressive, uncompetitive and pessimistic (Goldberg, 1990).
- **Agreeableness:** (friendly/compassionate v/s analytical/detached). A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. Agreeableness trait reflects individual differences in general concern for social harmony. Agreeable individuals are considerate, kind, generous, trusting, trustworthy, helpful and willing to compromise with others. Low score indicates irritable, suspicious and uncooperative.
- **Neuroticism** (sensitive/nervous v/s secure/confident). The tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily such as anger, anxiety, depression and vulnerability. It is also called emotional instability. Neuroticism is interlinked with low stress tolerance. High score indicates individuals to be worriers, insecure, self conscious and temperamental (McCrae and Costa, 1987). Goldberg (1990) argued that neurotic individuals are challenged by insecurity, fear, emotional jealousy, naivety and intrusive thoughts.

PERSONALITY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Heavy drinking, illegal drug use and unsafe sexual behaviors are risk behaviors that can lead to high rates of morbidity and mortality among college students (Wilson and Jorffe, 1995). When adolescents enter college they have improved opportunity to be included in risky sexual behavior and there is often significant decrease in parental supervision, particularly if the student no longer lives at home. Lately there has been more partaking in risky behaviors among college students than in the past.

College campuses are typified by sexual permissiveness and patterns of sexual activity with multiple or serial partners (Chng and Moore, 1994). Unrestricted (permissive) individuals were found to be higher on sensation seeking such as individual differences in effort to reach one's optimal level of physical and emotional stimulation (Hernandez & DiClemente, 1992; Seal & Agostinelli, 1994). Sensation seeking has been found to be positively related with a variety of sexual activities as well as number of sexual partners (Walsh, 1991) and sexual impulsivity (Zuckerman, Buchsbaum & Murphy, 1980). Costanzo and Shaw (1966) argued that group pressure is less an issue than individual willingness to conform to group attitudes and norms, especially for females (Brown, 1982). Adolescent girls with low self worth were more vulnerable to peer influence on sexuality (Whitbeck, Conger & Kao, 1993).

SEXUALITY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Adolescents and young adult's sexual attitudes and behaviors have been the focus of research in the past decade, as the risk of HIV/AIDS for these groups has increased considerably (Gardner & Wilcox, 1993; Gunn & Furstenberg, 1989). Greatest concern is the high risk behaviors shown by many adolescents and young adults. It includes unprotected sex, large number of sex partners, judgment-inhibiting alcohol consumption (Desiderata & Crawford 1995). Moreover, the occurrence of high risk sexual practices seems to be on the rise (Maticka – Tyndale, 1991), especially on college campuses where norms of sexual permissiveness and multiple partners are prominent (Chng & Moore, 1994).

Most common reason college students explain for not practicing safe sex is the influence of alcohol or other drugs in the decision making process. (MacDonald, 1996) researched four

studies that tested the hypothesis that alcohol decreases the possibility of condom using during casual sex and the results gave strong evidence that alcohol use is associated with a decrease in condom use.(MacDonald, 1996). In a study conducted by Elliott and Brantley (1997), it was revealed that 76% of college students have had sex with a partner who was drunk or high, and many of these students do not engage in safe sex.

Media plays a significant role in today's college students' sexual attitudes and behaviors more than any previous generation (Field's, 2002). Sexual expression has been an important theme in youth culture for generations. Today, however, sexually explicit content is the foundation stone of youth-oriented music, their approach to style and fashion, radio, television and film, the music culture and cyberspace (Fields, 2002). The origin of internet has been particularly influential; "Sex is reported to be the most repeatedly searched topic on the internet and 'cybersex' is a really frequent activity for users" (Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000). People think internet is safe as it provides them with a sense of anonymity when engaging in these types of behaviors, without "getting caught. With high speed internet connections in the majority residence halls, students are able to access sexually explicit material as well as partake in cybersex from the privacy of their own room.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Present college students have heard about the 'free love 'of the 1960's and 1970's and have been educated the fear of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. As a result of hearing and learning from these two different generations, students are safer, but more experimental than earlier generations (Peterson, 1999). The sexual attitudes and behaviors of college students have changed throughout the modern history, as has sex education. Now a generation is created who are more familiar about sexual positions and protection than earlier generations of students. .

The greater part of the studies examining the relationship between personality and sex have concentrated on what Shafer (2001) referred to as "sexuality trait terms", narrow traits such as sensation seeking and impulsivity. Literature reviews by Hoyle, Feijfar, and Miller (2000), Pinkerton and Abramson (1995), and Zuckerman (1994) all believed that sensation seeking is the most commonly applied of the narrowly conceived personality trait terms used in these studies. Relatively little research; however, has studied the effect of broadly-conceived personality traits

on sexual attitudes, interests and behaviors. Eysenck (1976), arguing that, at the most theoretical level, the human personality could be represented by three factors (Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Psychoticism), was among the first of modern personality theorists to say that changeability in sexual behavior could be explained by traits. He claimed that extraversion, in particular, was a significant predictor of early sexual experience, more frequent sex, more sexual patterns, and more openness to a wide range of sexual behaviors.

A more contemporary concept of the normal human personality, as represented by the Big Five (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness), on the other hand referred to as the Five Factor Model, has been applied surprisingly little (Hoyle et al., 2000) to studies of sexuality. Studies using the Big Five to examine the relationship between personality and sexual behavior point out that this taxonomy can make significant contributions (Miller et al., 2003). Examples consist of Extraversion as a predictor of sexual monitoring and sexual preoccupation, and as a negative predictor for sexual anxiety and fear of sex (Heaven et al., 2002); low Agreeableness, low Openness to Experience, and high Extraversion as predictors for multiple high risk sexual behaviors (Miller et al., 2003); high Neuroticism and low conscientiousness as predictors for unprotected sex; low Agreeableness as a predictor for various risky behaviors (Hoyle et al., 2000); and high Neuroticism, low Conscientiousness and low Agreeableness as predictors for HIV risk behaviors (Trobst, Herbst, Masters and Costa, 2002)

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Students today have received more sex education than any other generation, but still thousands of children are addicted to sexual crime. Sexual adjustment and satisfaction are important features of an individual's personal well being and their satisfaction with their intimate relationships. Occasionally, however, individuals experience problems and frustrations with their emotional and sexual aspects of their relationships. Many times the sources of these frustrations are due to individual related to human sexuality.

Medias are means which bring out shocking sexual crime news day by day. Proper personality development and sexual awareness may help the young generation to overcome such abuses. As a result, there is a need to reconsider whether their sex education programs are working for effectively among students and whether colleges

and universities are trying innovative approaches to sex education to meet the changing needs and sexual challenges faced by college students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In view of the above need, the aim of the present investigation is to study the “Personality and Sexual Awareness among College Students”.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The present research is to study the nature and extend of the relationship between personality and sexual awareness among college students.

1. To study the significant relationship between Openness to experience and Sexual awareness
2. To study the significant relationship between Conscientiousness and Sexual awareness
3. To study the significant relationship between Extraversion and Sexual awareness
4. To study the significant relationship between Agreeableness and Sexual awareness
5. To study the significant relationship between Neuroticism and Sexual awareness

HYPOTHESES

1. There will be no significant relationship between Openness to experience and Sexual awareness
2. There will be no significant relationship between Conscientiousness and Sexual awareness
3. There will be no significant relationship between Extraversion and Sexual awareness
4. There will be no significant relationship between Agreeableness and Sexual awareness
5. There will be no significant relationship between Neuroticism and Sexual awareness

6. There will be no significant relationship between girls and boys with regard to sexual awareness.

METHODS

Participants:

For the present investigation, the sample comprised of 70 male and 70 female students of age 19 to 24 from various colleges in Ernakulam.

Measures:

Big Five Inventory (BFI): 44 – item inventory that measures an individual on the Big Five Factors of personality (Goldberg, 1993). Reliability was found to be 0.83 and big five showed convergent and discriminate validity.

Sexual Awareness Questionnaire. The Sexual Awareness Questionnaire (SAQ; Snell et al., 1991) was designed to assess the following psychological aspects of human sexuality: attention to internal private bodily sensations associated with sexual arousal and motivation (referred to as sexual-consciousness); external public concern with other's impressions about one's sexuality (referred to as sexual-monitoring); and individual alertness to others' perception that one is sexy (referred to as sex-appeal-consciousness). In addition, it includes a subscale designed to measure sexual-assertiveness, the dispositional tendency to act and behave in an independent, self-reliant fashion concerning one's own sexuality. Snell et al. (1991) reported alphas ranging from .79 to .92 for the SAQ subscales. Higher scores on the SAQ subscales corresponded to greater amount of each of the respective tendencies. The internal consistency of the four subscales on the Sexual Awareness Questionnaire was determined by calculating Cronbach alpha coefficients, using participants from 2 separate samples (Sample I consisted of 265 females, 117 males, and 4 gender unspecified; Sample II consisted of 265 females, 117 males, and 4 gender unspecified) drawn from lower division psychology courses at a small Midwestern university (Snell et al., 1991).

Procedure:

Randomly selected college students were met personally and were given the two tests along with the personal data sheet. They were requested to read all the statements carefully and answer them honestly.

RESULT:

SEXUAL AWARENESS	NO.OF STUDENTS
LOW	24
MODERATE	92
HIGH	24

Table 1 Split of Participants Based on the Three Classificatory Factors of Sexual Awareness

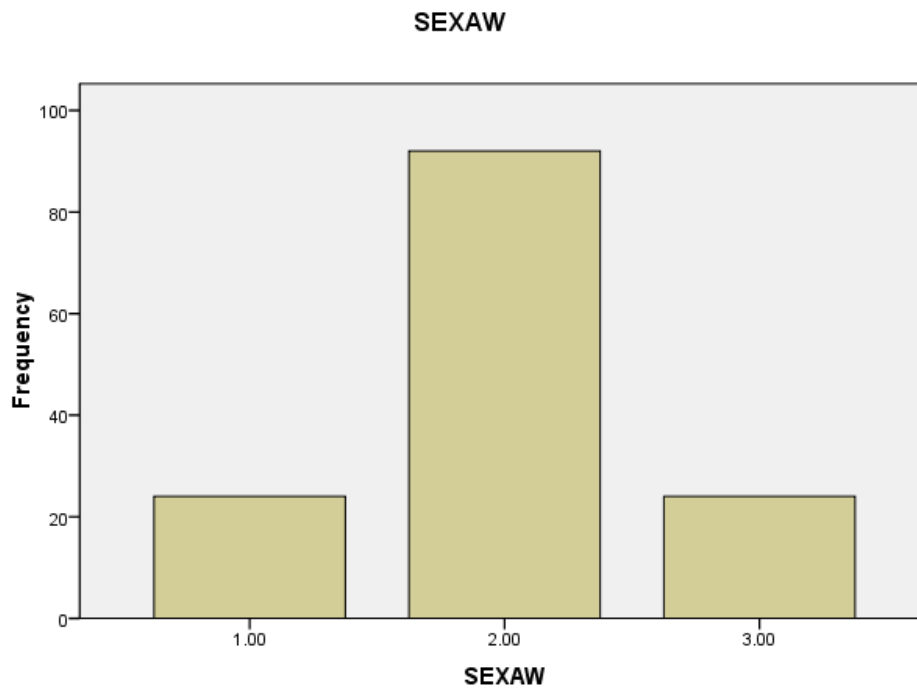


Table 1 indicated the breakup of 140 students based on the variable sexual awareness (low, moderate and high). College students with moderate level of sexual awareness was high (N=92) than those with low (N=24) and high (N=24) level of sexual awareness.

Table 2 Correlation analysis of the variables under study

Correlations										
	O	C	E	A	N	SAW	SC	SP	SM	SA
O	1									
C	.138									
E	.298**	.231**	1							
A	.145	.161	.263**	1						
N	.021	-.105	-.352**	-.061	1					
SAW	-.115	.075	-.141	.080	.179*	1				
SC	-.238**	.129	-.249**	-.076	.150	.812**	1			
SP	.020	-.136	-.025	.155	.146	.511**	.241**	1		
SM	-.046	.127	.084	.080	-.078	.588**	.273**	.091	1	
SA	.002	.022	-.137	.124	.263**	.805**	.554**	.313**	.270**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).										
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).										

Table 2 shows the relationship between the factors of personality and sexual awareness.

Among the factors of personality and sub-variables of sexual awareness, the correlation matrix elaborates that there are significant correlation among the variables. Findings indicates that there exist a negative significant relationship between Openness to experience and Sexual consciousness ($r = -0.238^{**}$) significant at 0.01 level. Also a negative significant correlation was seen among Extraversion and Sexual consciousness ($r=-0.249^{**}$) significant at 0.01 level. A positive significant correlation ($r= 0.263^{**}$) was found between Neuroticism and Sexual assertiveness, significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the formulated hypothesis is more or less accepted.

In short result revealed that students characterized as daring, imaginative, intellectual, inventive and sophisticated (Openness to experience) are less sexual aroused and motivated. Students who are social, fun-loving, affectionate, talkative, playful optimistic and courageous (Extraversion) also seem to be less sexually aroused and motivated. College students who tend to worry, feel unsure, self-conscious and show impulsive behavior (neurotics) seem to be sexually assertive. Results also revealed that the sub variables of sexual awareness and personality traits were correlated.

DISCUSSION

A study on the Relationship between Dimensions of Personality and Sexual Desire in Females and Males demonstrated that there is significant relationship between sexual desire, extraversion, neuroticism and agreeableness in females and males. Sexual Desire had negative correlation with neuroticism, a positive correlation with extraversion. (Miri, Mohammad AliBesharat, Asadi, Shahyad, 2011). KIRST(2011), on investigating the relationship between assertiveness and personality characteristics revealed direct relationships between assertiveness and self-esteem, extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness, as well as inverse relationships to neuroticism, shyness, and fear of disapproval. No significant relationship was found between assertiveness and agreeableness. In this particular study, the NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1985) and the College Self-expression Scale (Galassi et al., 1974) were administered to psychology undergraduate students. It was found that assertive students scored significantly lower on the neuroticism scales and higher on the extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness scales than nonassertive students.

CONCLUSION

Studies based on sexual awareness and personality is not much reported in India, especially in Kerala. The present study with much delight wish to emphase that as the community is facing increasing problems of sexual and drug abuse, suicide and domestic violence among college students, the present study will throw light and will serve as a fruitful basis to the field of education in sexology.

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