

# Expressions of Human Sexuality in the Genital Phase: Reports of a Field Observation in Adolescents and Young People from Porto Velho, Brazil

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**Abstract**— This work aims to discuss about the psychosocial development in adolescence proposed by Erick Erickson, focusing on human sexuality, and analyze what influences experienced by each in this period. The study was part of the Human Sexuality discipline of the Psychology Course at the Federal University of Rondônia in the second semester of 2017 and reports an observation made with four young people and adolescents of both sexes in the age group of 16 to 20 years, emphasizing the genital phase but, as said, under the focus offered by Erick Erickson in the well-known phase of identity and confusion of identity. Study procedures included semi-structured interviews. Adolescence is a phase of many personal and social conflicts and the literature shows that adolescents are always in constant development and because of this, it is considered that they do not yet have sufficient autonomy to constitute themselves as fully capable of being aware for their actions. Thus, it was found that the lack of direction generates a negative outcome in the self-knowledge of young people who currently reflect realities of which they have barely overcome the identity crisis.

**Keywords**— Adolescence, Development, Conflicts, Sexuality.

## I. ADOLESCENCE: SOME POINTS

Adolescence is the target of research in many sciences, especially in psychology, which has sought explanations for this stage of life since the beginning of the 20th century. To better understand this concept, it will be necessary to analyze the term and its meaning. The term adolescence, according to the etymological dictionary, comes from the present participle of the Latin verb *adolescere*, to grow. The past participle, *adultus*, gave rise to the word "adult". In Portuguese, the words would be equivalent to "crescent and" "crescent ", respectively. Although we consider the adolescence phase to be a relatively recent "sociological invention ", the word adolescent is about a hundred years older than the word adult. (HENDRICKSON 2008).

Therefore, it can be seen that the meanings carried by that word indicate growth, transformation and that is why we know these phases as a transition, because literally, their meaning explains this idea.

Because of this term, many authors have addressed the topic. Stanley Hall a psychoanalyst exponent had adolescence as his object of study, he conceives the phenomenon as a stage of disturbances, anguish and sexual flourishing.

Urribarri (2002, p.1) enumerated the aspects that cause the mismatches produced by the pubescent clash, such as: "The conflict around the dependence on external objects. The reactivation and the establishment of identity conflicts, which also call into question your identity. The reactivation of the body's representations, and questions about its scheme based on physical change and, in particular, on the news that genital eroticism produces".

According to Bock (2007, p.64) the main responsible for the institutionalization of adolescence, was Erick Erickson. He presented it based on the concept of a moratorium and characterized it as a special phase in the development process, in which the confusion of roles, the difficulties in establishing his own identity marked it as "[...] a way of life between childhood and adult life" (Erickson, 1976, p.128).

In Brazil, we had authors who wrote about adolescence, such as IçamiTiba, popularly known for his books, but who, like the others, also understood adolescence as a maturational phenomenon, a period of personal and social conflicts.

Oliveira (2007) presents in his work the definition used by IçamiTiba for adolescence, as being second childbirth. For him, the experience of pregnancy lived by the mother and accompanied at a distance by the father, are factors similar

to what happens in this age group. The son and daughter seek their own identity, trying to understand what is happening to their body.

Kimbanda (2006) observed that in primitive tribes sexual initiation as well as the division of tasks within a clan began in adolescence, in an age group of approximately 14 years.

In Angola, for example, initiation is practiced by several groups: Ganguela, Tshokwe, Nhaneka-Humbe, Ambó. The girl must be initiated when her first period appears. In some groups, they start them before and in others, after two years or more; they also associate it with the marriage contract. (KIMBANDA, 2006, p.118)

Fiori and Davis (1982) wrote about the development of adolescence and cultural intervention in emotions.

In tribal groups, or historically differentiated from Western culture, there is no long period that separates children's activities from the full integration of the subject into the productive and reproductive group. The child is considered as such until maturation and biological changes start puberty and characterize their transition to the adult group. Usually in these groups there is a passage ritual, sometimes preceded by a period of recollection, which will characterize the entry into adult relationships. (FIORI and DAVIS, 1982, p.11).

For years, it has been found that in different cultures adolescence is defined by historical requirements. Leontiev's contributions make such facts evident, "We can say that each individual learns to be a man. What nature gives you when you are born is not enough for you to live in society. It is still necessary for him to acquire what was achieved in the course of historical development by human society." (Leontiev, 1978, p.267).

Today we have access to different forms of information, and this has contributed to the transformation of adolescents and their role in society. However, even with all this advancement that technology allows, many young people still believe that this moment in life is an obstacle that needs great challenges. All of this makes it difficult not only to understand them when facing the demands of life, but also for their parents who cannot find practical measures, justifying certain attitudes.

We understand, therefore, that adolescence, like any other phase of human development, has its dynamics permeated by the environment. It is up to us to keep updated to deal with these changes, otherwise we will incur misconceptions and misjudgments. (MAFFEI, 2008, p.167).

In view of this variety of understandings of adolescence, in this article we have adopted the Psychosocial perspective of development that presents significant contributions to understanding this stage from the perspective of Erick Erickson. In the course of it, we seek to consider the psycho-social context that rewards the relationships of the young people who were interviewed, also considering the maturational and biological view in the making of the interview script, since there is a junction of this overlapping element in Erickson's Psychosocial theory.

## II. ADOLESCENCE AS A DEVELOPMENT PHASE: MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS TO PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORY

The psychosocial development defended by Erick Erickson stems from the understanding of human behavior beyond the biological and instinctive integrating functions, it seeks to include socio-historical variables in an attempt to break the importance given by Freud of childhood as defining the constitution of the individual's ego.

According to Rabello (2011), Erickson's theory describes the psychosocial development of the human being through eight stages in which the individual grows from the internal demands of the ego, but is also influenced by the people and environment in which they live, being essential to identify the culture and society in which the subject is inserted to understand the characteristics of each phase.

At each stage, there is a crisis that will result in an outcome, whether positive (ritualization) or negative (ritualism). Both experiences are essences for the construction of the ego, since crises can strengthen or weaken the ego to the extent that it is not adequately overcome. The more well lived the previous crises, that is, when Basic Trust, Autonomy, Initiative and Diligence have positive outcomes, the easier it becomes to overcome the Identity Crisis. Loyalty and loyalty to yourself are characteristics of the positive outcome of this stage. (RABELLO and ERICKSON, 2007).

From this perspective, Erickson (1976) addresses the *identity and identity confusion* phase, in which he describes psychological situations common in adolescents. And at that moment, the term crisis will not have an unpleasant connotation, but designate a moment of decision and direction that adolescents go through to grow, differentiate themselves from others, as well as make commitments through meaningful choices. During this phase, there will be constant psychological conflicts regarding the formation of an identity that is not yet well integrated. Based on this, the author writes:

It is a period of life when the body changes radically in proportions, genital puberty changes the body and the imagination with all kinds of impulses, intimacy with the other sex begins and the immediate future puts you in front of an excessive number of possibilities and conflicting choices [...] he must make a series of increasingly specific selections of personal, occupational, sexual and ideological commitments. (ERIKSON, 1976, p. 132-245).

This phase yielded more work, being an entire chapter of his book on identity crisis, in addition to the works *Youth and crisis*; *The complete life cycle*. This period marks the moment when the personality gains mold as we recognize ourselves through the other and the self-knowledge "Who I am", "What are my plans", showing the emergence of the identity that according to (Myers, 1999, p.86) is the gradual reformulation of a self-definition that unifies the various "selves" in a coherent and concrete feeling of who you are.

The acquisition of new skills is relegated to crises experienced during adolescence that will support the accumulation of knowledge to be inserted in adult life. This phenomenon Erickson (1976) called a "psychosocial moratorium" that defines fixed periods through which everyone will go through life until they reach adulthood. In the phase in question, each society will stipulate the appropriate experiences to consider the young person apt to exercise adult life. In Western society, we have the advent of professional choice and ideological definition, as described by Erickson: "*Social institutions support with vigor and the distinction of the nascent functional identity, offering to those who are still learning and experiencing a certain status of learning, a moratorium characterized by definitive obligations and sanctioned competitions, as well as by a special tolerance*". (1976, p.157).

Soon, Erickson (1976) will go over how identity is configured in this stage, dividing it into areas that he considered basic to understand every phenomenon. For Parrot (2003), sexual identity will be responsible for the inclusion of young people in certain patterns and groups of which they correspond representative of the same characteristics that they have. As well, learning to relate differences and conflicts as outside oneself, at this stage the behavior and physical differences of the others do not interfere in the individual's perception, as he already understands that there is an exclusivity of attributes in each human being.

Professional identity is responsible for the feeling of belonging and appreciation attributed by the young person.

When he chooses a profession, he feels independent, confident to leverage the next phases proposed by the author. "Producing and building outside is for adolescents a compensating element for their failures" (Parrot, 2003, p. 31).

On the other hand, ideology identity implies continuous internal restructuring, because as the adolescent positions himself before the world, he is able to assimilate knowledge and introduce political, religious and spiritual ideologies of the social group of which he is part.

What the literature demonstrates about the theory is that the adolescent will always be in constant development and because of that, he does not have enough autonomy to constitute a being capable of being aware of his actions. Therefore, there is much criticism of this point of view, According to Pereira (2007, p.4), we understand that when understanding the young person as someone who "is not yet" we are denying his historical condition. Every young person has a life story that began to be built in childhood and that results in his unique personality.

Based on this assumption, other leading authors of psychoanalysis shared the theoretical position defended by Ericsson regarding adolescence, such as Anna Freud, G. Stanley Hall. For Pereira (2007) this model has been criticized in the maturational era of understanding the human being, even though it considers social aspects as influencers, it still has deterministic conceptions about human development.

In general, Erickson brought a new look within psychoanalysis on human development, focusing on adolescence and not so much on childhood. He noted that all phases have barriers to be faced in order to have a healthy ego, so he proposed an understanding of the daily conflicts in each age group and how this is absorbed and permeated through the human capacity to plan the future, a specific factor of the phase from which the article portrays.

### III. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES FOR STUDY

This study had a descriptive nature, with the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to seek the knowledge, experience and opinions of each subject and thus corroborate the theme of the development of human sexuality in the genital phase, in adolescence and youth.

#### 3.1 The Subjects

The sample universe consisted of four adolescents and young people of both sexes and aged 16 to 20 years.

#### 3.2 Instruments and data analysis

A non-standardized interview was used, in which the interviewees reported their experiences and conceptions about the different contexts of sexuality. The data collected were analyzed through content analysis, in which it aims to know the speeches of each person in order to categorize them and gives meaning to their speeches.

### IV. RESULTS

According to the website "The mind is wonderful", they published an article with the following theme: Do you know what sexuality is? (2015) portrays that the human being has his biopsychosocial unit that has three fundamental aspects of sexuality that must be analyzed together. The first factor is sexuality from the biological, it is not specifically the sexual organ or only reproduction, it is the most comprehensive concept. The scheme of the body is integrated as a whole and in this way, we are sexual beings from childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. The second factor is the social view of sexuality, according to the acquisition of customs and the learned behavior of the individual in the historical context that is inserted, the beliefs are modified and in relation to sexuality is no different. We are influenced from all sides,

Therefore, the socialization process to live sexuality is different for each individual, because the knowledge that is internalized helps us to adapt from our experiences and the maturation of each person's personality. Finally, the third factor is sexuality from the psychological point of view, characterized by thoughts, fantasies, attitudes and tendencies. In other words, it is related to beliefs, pleasure, the result of experiences, the acquisition of knowledge and the feelings we feel about ourselves and others. Thus, it appears that each human being has its uniqueness and our feelings and emotions are felt in a certain way, despite the situation being the same. Therefore, what can be pleasurable for some may cause disgust for others.

Adolescence is a period of change, it is the transition from childhood to adulthood, a time of many changes being biological, social and psychological, adolescence is considered a very difficult phase to deal with, as there are several conflicts experienced in it.

Adolescent pregnancy is considered a serious public health problem and therefore requires guidance, preparation and monitoring programs during pregnancy and childbirth, as it is a problem that offers risks to the child's development, as well as risks to the pregnant woman herself, so most of the time it is unplanned.

When pregnancy occurs during adolescence, biopsychosocial transformations can be recognized as a



problem for adolescents, where a family starts early on that will affect youth and the possible possibility of achieving a stable life project. Pregnancy, whether it is desired or not, causes a set of communicative impasses at the social, family and personal level (ARAÚJO FILHO, 2011).

Studies show that unstructured families, children or adolescents who are mistreated or abused in the family environment, contribute greatly to the increase in the statistics of teenage pregnancy.

*Through an interview with M, a 16-year-old teenager who is five months pregnant. It was possible to observe that even today with the advancement of technology and access to information, there are still many young people and adolescents who are unaware of ways to prevent unexpected sexual consequences. At the moment of euphoria, you forget about prevention, even though you have free access to contraceptive methods. One of the questions asked the teenager was about access to sexual orientation information, she replied that she had already attended lectures at school and that her parents had also spoken about the subject.*

Teenage pregnancy can have a difficult impact on the education of pregnant women, as many stop studying because of the pregnancy, many need to take care of the child because they usually have no one to take care of and often end up leaving to study to be able to take care of the child.

*Teenager M, stopped studying said that she became very ill during pregnancy and that she had to miss several times and then she thought it was better to stop studying. But she intends to continue her studies because in the future she wants to be a doctor.*

According to some studies, a teenage pregnancy is characterized as a high-risk pregnancy, due to the high rates of maternal-fetal morbidity. Bringing several biological implications, which are, anemia, overweight malnutrition, hypertension, pre-eclampsia and postpartum depression. The psychological is also affected by the fact that pregnancy at this time in life reduces opportunities and makes it impossible to take advantage of the experiences that adolescence/youth could provide you (TEIXEIRA, 2010).

In recent years, the teenage pregnancy rate has grown considerably, not only in Brazil, but worldwide (DADOORIAN, 2003). And the question asked is how does this continue to occur if access to information is becoming more and more comprehensive.

*AL, the 19-year-old interviewee who became pregnant for the first time at the age of 14, mentions that she obtained information related to sexuality from friends at school, remembering that the term sexuality is not only linked to the sexual act but also to other factors such as puberty, for example. The mother's absence, according to the interviewee, was a very important factor for her development, the conversations, the clarification of doubts, could not be taken away, reported, due to this lack that had to be supplied by the father, who also did not talk, he informed about the changes that would occur and the best way to deal with them, or at least clear up doubts.*

Sexual maturity, which occurs with puberty during adolescence, results in pregnancy simply because having sex without any contraceptive method during a given period results in fertilization. Freud (1905) mentions that these transformations and organic changes generate a very large hormonal pressure, even impelling the adolescent to use his reproductive system to relieve this pressure, in this way the interest in sex begins and as a consequence of an active sexual life, pregnancy.

A study by Doering (1989) with pregnant teenagers showed that those who fell into the middle class and were seen in private clinics rejected pregnancy, saying that this would hinder their plans, projects and so on. The low-class adolescents, seen in public hospitals, claimed that they liked children, showing a much greater acceptance of motherhood. Which shows that the majority of middle class adolescents do not see motherhood as a priority, which often happens with low class adolescents, which is the case of the interviewee AL who reports that she has no prospect of the future, who just wants to be a good mother, who watches over the health of her children, showing that she sees motherhood as a life perspective. The research also addressed the fact that pregnancy,

According to Blos (1998) apud Oliveira, et al., (2003) in the final phase of adolescence, professionalization is the most striking process for the consolidation of ego interests. Moreira, 2001 also states that all curiosity, creativity and spontaneity are necessary to channel a creative professional option. The particular vision of the professional choice of each young person expresses the way in which he evaluated the past, present and thus, creating means for the projections of the future.

The interviewee AS who is 20 years old, female, single, low class and is currently unemployed. When asked about life projects for the future, she reports the following:

*“Studying and passing medicine. I intend when, during the course, to enter scientific initiation to discover something that helps humanity. When I finish graduation I want to go to these countries in need and help voluntarily. also contributing cash to NGOs, people in need, clothing, food and also to pay for a medical course for someone who is hardworking and cannot afford to pay. Because I wanted someone to do this for me, so if I can afford it I will do it for someone [...]”*

Given the analysis of this excerpt from the interview, we can see that the young woman is in the process of searching for occupational identity, which according to Bohoslavsky and Moreira (1998; 2001) apud Oliveira et al. (2003) has the same difficulties in the construction of personal identity. For the occupation is what the individual wants to be and not what one wants to do, it is the fruit of the socio-historical-cultural context in the connection with oneself. According to their interests and aptitudes, these issues are generated by the interaction of a range of variables such as the social environment, the family environment and personal identifications. (OLIVEIRA, et al. 2003).

Finally, according to Oliveira et al, (2003) in a study with 48 adolescents from different social insertions in Brasília, the results showed that young people want to enter higher education, enter the job market through exercises that bring personal satisfaction. Despite the fact that the socioeconomic situation is a great difficulty for low-income people, at any given moment, regardless of their social class, they have feelings of anguish and indecision for the future, only as a result of the growing maturity of their identity that can to know more about the issues that will help in making the decision for the individual's occupational identity.

We are faced with the ideas of Stanley Hall a great psychologist, who identifies adolescence being marked by torments and disturbances linked to the emergence of sexuality.

*In conversation with V. at the age of 19, he brought the context of sexuality and its definition within the parameters of society and his perspective. He believes that it is the way we express ourselves sexually, with or without the interference of social, biological, political, religious factors, etc.*

With this, Erikson (1976) highlights that it is in this period when human beings are “concerned with what they may appear in the eyes of others, in comparison with what they themselves believe to be, and with the question of how to

associate roles and skills cultivated before the ideal prototypes of the day ”. In the case of the adolescent interviewed, it is clear that he is deciding on the direction of his life, with great concern for what society will think about him. So much so that this formation of identity does not begin or end with adolescence, but it is where construction takes place.

He believes that our society to a great interference of religions, with a historical construction that determined what is "right" would be the heterosexual relationship between "male" and "female" with the sole objective of reproduction.

Also believing that our society has stood out with advances for all sides, even with sexuality, it has become aware of its complexity.

*So much so that V. presents is in constant search for freedom from the dogmas of society about his sexuality. He states that it is not being an easy process and requires a lot of personal construction, because while trying to understand what his desires are and trying not to label himself, he deals with people constantly trying to minimize his situation.*

For Hall (1904), adolescence would be an experience compared to a second birth, in which the human being would have the opportunity to go through all the previous stages and, thus, obtain the apex of their development, in addition, this would be a chaotic and difficult phase due to the speed with which the transformations take place. This statement will be reinforced in the psychoanalytic theory that brings adolescence as a stage of confusion, stress and grief also caused by the sexual impulses that it manifests in this phase of development.

So we understand that we are in a generation that is quite reluctant on the issues of taboos regarding sexuality and we understand that each person has their uniqueness that are very far from the questions of normative heterosexuality that has been imposed in many societies throughout human history. Currently, we are able to approach homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality or pansexuality with adequate naturalness. Gradually, the idea that diversity is freedom and enrichment is beginning to spread, something that encourages everyone to define their particular form of affective-sexual orientation.

Thus it is reinforced again during the conversation about sexuality, that the young person is constantly in search of true identity, even though they identify themselves as homosexual and still find themselves discovering more aspects about their desires, believing that the human being

has the tendency to classify people, precisely as a way of seeking to understand yourself.

According to Outeiral (1994), the cultural issue of being / being a teenager comes up in this search for a definition. The author, despite stressing the fact that adolescence is a psychosocial phenomenon, and does not have a well-defined end, divides adolescence into three phases, the first being characterized by body changes (puberty); the second, the search for sexual definition; and the third approaching what would be the end of adolescence, highlights the acquisition of maturity and social responsibility. And when observing another adolescent interviewed, we still face this search for sexual definition, which is a phase that should be part of the individual's whole life, being a process that undergoes constant changes.

*So much so that he tries to live his life to the fullest, likes to listen to music and watch movies that give him certain pleasure and learning in his day-to-day life. And on questions about sex, he believes it is overrated and even though it is a biological necessity for most people, always being reinforced as an intrinsic desire of all human beings, however, there is a minority of people who do not consider the role of sex. so important for people's well-being and happiness, because there are other things that he considers more fundamental than that, such as love, partnership and complicity.*

This factor is very interesting, the interviewee brings about being asexual in adolescence, since in all books and other readings we are faced with the statement that the teenager is looking for sexual impulses and that it is at this stage that the boy and girl will develop and have the first contacts with other individuals and their relationships. So, what we highlight about what he brought, is about the lack of sexual interest. Being often contextualized from a culture in which it was created, being one of the main influences in its decisions. An example of this would be a country that stimulates sexuality, while in another country it can curb it strongly. But the central point of all this is what we can understand if there is still the presence or absence of psychological distress and, based on psychodynamic theories,

Thus, it is clear that the interviewee has some suffering regarding this asexuality. But not on his part, but on what society thinks and how difficult it is to relate to another person who has an active sex life, and everything becomes even more complex.

## V. CONCLUSION

The interviews with four adolescents and young people brought to light the experiences and life expectations for the future according to their perspectives. We elect people between 16 to 20 years of age, since its objective is to observe the development of human sexuality in the genital phase in adolescence and youth, so we can assess the vision of each one in different social contexts.

In view of the data analysis, we can see that teenage pregnancy is a very delicate moment in a woman's life, as it causes several problems both in the family, in the studies of the teenager, sometimes in physical health and especially in the psychological aspect if she is not prepared to assume the commitment of motherhood and all the responsibilities that pregnancy carries. After the birth of the child, we can see that generally the woman lives or wants to live for him, he has no plans for his future as a person and his desires and desires are left aside. However, it was verified in the face of a young woman's vision that her life goals are well established, that she is in search of occupational identity and that she is also in search of her autonomy, it is a decisive and desired phase for the realization of herself. Finally, analyzing the last interviewee, we can highlight the search for his personal identity, he is in the process of discovering his own sexuality, which considers asexuality as his sexual orientation. Due to a very sexualized society it is a difficult and even painful passage, especially when looking for partners who have the same sexual orientation.

Thus, we conclude that there is a great need for projects in the scope of sexuality in general, both in the biological, as well as personal and psychological. For teenagers and young people in schools, projects that really clarify students' doubts and that provide an open and welcoming place for their positions, without judgments. In addition to the fact that the family is a support for these individuals, thus being able to create a wide space for dialogue between them and, in this way, being able to guide in the best possible way in this turbulent and decisive period in their lives.

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