

## Possible influences on sexuality among healthcare university

### Possíveis influências na sexualidade de universitários da área de saúde

### Posibles influencias sobre la sexualidad de universitarios del área de salud

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This study aim to describe the possible influences of binge drinking, religion, parents and University in sexuality and the satisfaction with aspects of life for freshmen in graduate courses of the health area. With descriptive and exploratory and convenience cutting sample, were included 786 students, 79.3% of which were female, with an average age of  $19.2 \pm 3.1$  years. For academics, the use of alcoholic beverages (96.6%) and University (50.4%) stimulated the sexuality and 54.3% of the young were satisfied with the University. If questioned the influence of the University in this context and the implications of health behaviors of students in their future practice.

**Descriptors:** Sexuality; Adolescent; Personal satisfaction; Students health occupations.

O presente estudo tem como objetivo descrever as possíveis influências de bebidas alcoólicas, religião, pais e universidade na sexualidade e a satisfação com aspectos de vida de ingressantes em cursos de graduação da área da saúde. De corte descritivo e exploratório e com amostragem de conveniência, foram incluídos 786 estudantes, dos quais 79,3% eram do sexo feminino, com idade média de  $19,2 \pm 3,1$  anos. Para os acadêmicos, o uso de bebidas alcoólicas (96,6%) e o ingresso na universidade (50,4%) estimulavam a sexualidade e 54,3% dos jovens estavam satisfeitos com a universidade. Questiona-se a influência da universidade neste contexto e, as implicações nas condutas de saúde dos estudantes em sua prática futura.

**Descritores:** Sexualidade; Adolescente; Satisfação pessoal; Estudantes de Ciências da Saúde.

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo describir las posibles influencias del alcohol, la religión, los padres y la Universidad en la sexualidad y satisfacción con los aspectos de la vida para los estudiantes en cursos superiores del área de la salud. Con trazo descriptivo y exploratorio y muestra de conveniencia fueran incluidos 786 estudiantes, 79.3% de los cuales eran mujeres, con una edad promedio de  $19,2 \pm 3,1$  años. Para los académicos, el uso de bebidas alcohólicas (96,6%) y la Universidad (50,4%) estimulan la sexualidad y 54,3% de los jóvenes se mostraron satisfechos con la Universidad. Se cuestiona el papel de la Universidad en este contexto y las implicaciones en los comportamientos de salud de los estudiantes en su práctica futura.

**Descriptor:** Sexualidad; Adolescente; Satisfacción personal; Estudiantes del área de la salud.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sexuality, conceived as a central aspect and inherent in human nature comprises a number of factors such as sex, gender identity, gender, intimacy and reproduction. Such aspects gain greater relevance and intensity in the period of adolescence, when the young people experiences a series of social interactions, in addition to the search for their autonomy and the assertion of their gender identity and their functions, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction<sup>1,2</sup>.

For many times, the adolescent has the opportunity to ingress in the University, especially in Brazil, where the higher course is the natural way of education, especially in the culture of the middle and upper classes, in addition to being a privileged path to social ascension and professional achievement<sup>3</sup>.

In this context, happens the "fusion" of the academic living with the most effusive features of the adolescence, converging in situations and behaviors that provide risks and vulnerabilities to these young people, the example of tobacco smoking, the excessive alcohol consumption, the risky sexual conduct, the use of illicit drugs and other<sup>4</sup>.

The Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), in turn, in Latin America, victimize about 1.4 million people infected by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and half of this number are brazilians<sup>5,6</sup>.

Among the hypotheses, the consumption of alcohol in adolescence<sup>1</sup> is considered as a predisposing factor to risky sexual behavior, especially in the various opportunities of social events and justified by the University entrance, plus factors such as distance from parents/guardians, the experience of living alone or in republics/pensions with a group of friends, among others<sup>4</sup>.

Some investigations have addressed relevant aspects about the subject, especially concerning the perception of personal risk and preventive behavior, whose results show high knowledge about the risks

inherent in unprotected sexual conduct despite the non-reduction of these practices<sup>7,8</sup>. Although healthcare students maintain broad access to information in the University and they use it in customer approach through guidelines, diagnoses and treatments, studies have shown that their level of knowledge about STDs/AIDS do not reduce their own risk sexual activities<sup>5,8,9</sup>, by maybe consider themselves invulnerable to acquire such diseases.

This research aims to understand which are the possible influences of factors such as religion, entering in the University and drinking alcohol consumption, would influenced on satisfaction and sexual behavior of University students of the health area.

## METHOD

This is a descriptive design study with cross-sectional clipping and convenience sampling, in which were included students of the first periods of undergraduate courses in Biomedicine, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Medicine, Psychology and Occupational Therapy, who have matriculated in the years 2011 and 2012 at the Universidade Federal do Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM). The data collection occurred between March 2011 and November 2012.

A semi-structured questionnaire was used, tested and adjusted under test pilot in another higher education institution, with supervised application. This study was reviewed and approved by the Committee of Ethics in Research with Humans Beings of UFTM by Protocol No 2188/2011.

The variables of interest were: Influences in the sexuality related to religion, parents or guardians, university and ingestion of alcoholic beverages; Satisfaction with aspects of academic life, personal life and with their social interactions.

All information collected were stored in a database built on public domain software Excel v. 2007 (Microsoft Corporation, United States). From the results, descriptive analysis was made by

absolute frequencies (n) and percentage (%) for categorical variables, and measures of centrality and dispersion for numeric variables.

**RESULTS**

786 students were part of this study, of whom 623 (79.3%) were female, and 163 (20.7%) male. The median age was 19.2±3.1 years, the majority declared to be white (64.6%), followed by dark (31.9%) and black (3.4%).

Approximately 67% had no religion, and 46.6% were from the State of São Paulo, Brazil, while Minas Gerais, Brazil, answered by 41.5% of the students. 61.5% have family income above three to five minimum wages (41.7%), established at the time of the

search in R \$ 622,00. Most of adolescents, both female (57.9%; 361) and male (50.9%; 83) lives with friends and about 70.0% of women and 60.7% of men lives in pensions or republics.

In table 1, present the measured data of the perceptions of young people regarding the influence of some variables in their sexuality. For a large proportion of young people (34.3% of women and 53.4% of men) religion has repressive effect.

The other variables present effects of stimulus in the sexuality of studied young people (34.7% in the case of parents, 50.3% University and 96.6% alcoholic beverage consumption), with proportional fluctuations and unequal distribution between the studied sexes.

**Table 1** – UFTM academics as influences on sexuality. Uberaba, 2012.

		Female		Male		Total	
Possible Influences on Sexuality		n	%	n	%	n	%
Religion	Repress	214	34,3	87	53,4	301	38,3
	None	220	35,3	36	22,1	256	32,6
	Stimulates	126	20,2	21	12,9	147	18,7
	Guide	63	10,1	19	11,7	82	10,4
Parents/guardians	Stimulates	225	36,1	48	29,4	273	34,7
	Guide	157	25,2	52	31,9	209	26,6
	Repress	157	25,2	26	16,0	183	23,3
	None	84	13,5	37	22,7	121	15,4
University	Stimulates	318	51,0	77	47,2	395	50,3
	Guide	220	35,3	42	25,8	262	33,3
	None	75	12,0	29	17,8	104	13,2
	Repress	10	1,6	15	9,2	25	3,2
Intake of alcoholic beverage	Stimulates	605	97,1	154	94,5	759	96,6
	None	9	1,4	6	3,7	15	1,9
	Guides	6	1,0	2	1,2	8	1,0
	Repress	3	0,5	1	0,6	4	0,5
<b>Total</b>		<b>623</b>	<b>79,3</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>20,7</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>100,0</b>

In table 2 the results are presented about the academic satisfaction with the University, with personal life and their social interactions. Most young people (54.3%), especially the male (71.8%) say they are satisfied with the University. In relation to aspects of personal life, 58.1% of women and

89.0% of men were dissatisfied or have ambiguous responses; even more pronounced in the parameters of social interaction, where around a quarter of adolescents (26.0%) considered themselves happy.

**Table 2** – Academics UFTM regarding satisfaction with aspects of life. Uberaba, 2012.

Satisfaction Aspects of Life		Female		Male		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Academic Life	Satisfied	310	49,8	117	71,8	427	54,3
	Indifferent	220	35,3	40	24,5	260	33,1
	Dissatisfied	93	14,9	6	3,7	99	12,6
Personal Life	Indifferent	276	44,3	88	54,0	364	46,3
	Satisfied	261	41,9	18	11,0	279	35,5
	Dissatisfied	86	13,8	57	35,0	143	18,2
Social Interactions	Indifferent	255	41,1	73	44,8	328	41,8
	Dissatisfied	207	33,3	45	27,6	252	32,1
	Satisfied	161	25,6	45	27,6	204	26,0
<b>Total</b>		<b>623</b>	<b>79,3</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>20,7</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>100,0</b>

## DISCUSSION

The studied population includes only the students in the first semester of University courses of health, which constitutes a population still little studied and which presents peculiar characteristics in connection with emotional, psychological, and other life experience.

Understanding the moment of ingress into the University as an important event in the life of the young, is considered the hypothesis that they are open to new experiences, influenced by various changes in their routine, as the experience of living away from parents and/or with friends and colleagues at the University, the wide availability of nocturnal events and parties involving the consumption of alcoholic beverages, and other situations in which they might be more susceptible to express their sexuality. Of the surveyed 67.6% considered their favorite leisure activity, to be present at parties or dances.

In a study that investigated the profile of students entering the field of health in a public University of Minas Gerais, Brazil, pointed out that among the 124 participants, the majority belonged to the female (89.0%), with 18 years (34.0%), white (81.5%), from São Paulo (50.8%), with family incomes of up to four wages (19.4%). In relation to the health profile, 35.5% did not practice physical activity, 2.4% were smokers, 31.5% consumed alcoholic beverage and 45.2% had active sex life<sup>4</sup>.

With regard to possible influences from aspects of adolescent life for expressions of their sexuality, the highest proportions found were: influence of stimulus through the use of alcoholic beverages (96.6%), entering into University (50.3%) and parents or guardians (34.7%); in addition to repression on the part of religion (38.3%).

It should be noted that although not being object of this study to investigate what the religious belief of the individuals, the variable for the own religion and what their slope can be related to sexuality. For this line, study performed with 395 Mexican University students, identified a greater relationship with the maintenance of virginity and later sexual initiation with religious influence, particularly among Catholics<sup>10</sup>.

Study that included adolescents of 27 Brazilian capitals found positive association ( $p > 0.001$ ) among adolescents who have sex without using a condom and consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs, whose proportions were 32.0% and 43.0% higher respectively, to consider the use in the last 30 days prior to the research<sup>11</sup>. Even in this respect, a study that examined the frequency of alcohol use during adolescence as predictor of sexual risk behavior for HIV in adulthood, found probability of 1.78 times higher chance (IC95%, 1.05-3.02) of risk for those who consume alcohol frequently, being this an important marker for the development of

programs aimed at preventing sexual behavior of risk<sup>12</sup>.

The freshmen at the University are inserted in adverse contexts and situations of crises that require adaptation processes, and may trigger the onset of depression, alcoholism, social evasion, truancy, difficulties in learning, in personal relationships and social isolation<sup>13,14</sup>. Such a condition can generate difficulties in social interaction and coexistence of the respondents of this survey, since only 26.0% of students were satisfied with their relationships and 35.5% with the parameters used to assess their personal life.

Of the surveyed, 54.3% responded to be satisfied with the University. It is reflected that the personal identification with the chosen course, especially in the initial periods of graduation, is considered an important source of satisfaction, Considering that the commitment to a choice in vocational terms terminates a more optimistic assessment of the possibilities, establishes any difficulties for obtaining results and promotes a greater psychological well-being, even in other parameters of the personal life<sup>15</sup>.

Study that included a population of University students in different levels of education identified good levels of life satisfaction, with course and profession, and students in the early stages of formation present greater commitment, but smaller vocational exploration than the other students<sup>3</sup>.

Study performed with academics of a University of Espírito Santo, Brazil, identified indices of satisfaction with the course of 89.4%, associated with the fact that they passed the last semester (89.6%). Moreover, in the same study, it was found some factors that influenced the consumption of psychoactive substances (licit and illicit), finding positive associations with access to locals unrelated to the University and to the option of skipping school to sleep or rest<sup>16</sup>. Such facts denotes that the role of the University does not provide just the inside prospect, but should stick to the issues

inherent to the different aspects of the life of the students.

Then, it is questioned the influence of the University in this context, as much as the implications of health behaviors of students in their future practice. Factors such as perceptions of invulnerability and influences on risk behaviors practiced by these young people – such as the indiscriminate consumption of alcoholic beverages in commemorative occasions in the University context – reflect the need for an extensive work on formation of future professionals in the field of health.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this research suggest a profile of students predominantly female, with an average age of 19.2±3.1 years, whites, without religion, from the State of São Paulo, followed by Minas Gerais, Brazil, with family income between three and five minimum wages.

Most young people lived with friends in pensions or republics and had as a favorite leisure activity the act of going to parties or dances at night. Most young people were satisfied with the University and little satisfied with their social interactions and believed that the fact of being in the university and consuming alcoholic beverages may affect their sexuality.

The data, although reflecting characteristics of a single institution of higher education, draw attention to elementary issues that may signify flaws in the initial processes of education of health care professionals. It is recommended, therefore, that health education initiatives are directed to adolescents who enter universities, healthcare in particular, preparing these future professionals both for a healthier life, highlighting not only biological aspects, but also psychosocial and behavioral.

The vulnerability of these young people should be emphasized, not only in the individual aspect, but also in the social and programmatic, contributing to the formation

of critical students, aiming at the transformation of reality.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

**Rodrigo Eurípedes da Silveira** participated in the study design, data collection and analysis and the data and writing of the article.

**Álvaro da Silva Santos** acted in the study design, in the critical review and writing of the article.

**Maritza Rodrigues Borges** had participation in data collection and writing of the article.