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Original article

Homosexual orientation in childhood and adolescence: experiences of concealment and prejudice[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To identify how was the process of discovery of homosexual orientation in lesbians and gays.

Methods: Cross-sectional and qualitative study of homosexuals in Juazeiro municipality, Ceará, Brazil, by applying a semi-structured interview. Data were organized according to Bardin Analysis Technique and analyzed from the training category. It adhered to the ethical principles of research approval by the Research Ethics Committee.

Results: The participants were 27 homosexuals (gays and lesbians). The interviewees revealed that in childhood there were the first manifestations of sexual desires and curiosities with individuals of the same sex, and having during adolescence, the definition of homosexual orientation as result of the implementation of the first homosexual relationships. They revealed that the identity crisis they went through are not unique to homosexuality discovery process, but are also present in adulthood as a result of prejudice and social discrimination, resulting in health problems, especially the psychological.

Conclusion: Homosexual individuals have difficulties in discovery, definition and disclosure of their sexual orientation due to the prevailing heteronormative cultural patterns.

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Orientação homossexual na infância e adolescência: vivências de ocultação e preconceito

R E S U M O

Objetivo: Identificar como ocorreu o processo de descoberta da orientação sexual homossexual em lésbicas e gays.

Palavras-chave:

Orientação sexual

[☆] A study conducted at the Faculdade de Medicina do ABC, Santo André, SP, Brazil.

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Homossexualidade
Infância
Adolescência

Método: Estudo transversal e qualitativo realizado com homossexuais no município de Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, Brasil, mediante aplicação de entrevista semiestruturada. Os dados obtidos foram organizados de acordo com a Técnica de Análise de Bardin e analisados a partir da formação de categorias. Respeitaram-se os princípios éticos da pesquisa face aprovação do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa.

Resultados: Participaram da pesquisa 27 homossexuais. Os depoentes revelaram que durante a infância ocorreram as primeiras manifestações dos desejos e curiosidades sexuais para com indivíduos do mesmo sexo, havendo durante a fase da adolescência, a definição da orientação sexual homossexual em virtude da concretização das primeiras relações homoafetivas. Revelaram que as crises de identidade pelo qual passaram não são exclusivas do processo de descoberta da homossexualidade, mas estão também presentes na vida adulta, como resultado do preconceito e da discriminação social, implicando em agravos à saúde, detidamente os psicológicos.

Conclusão: Indivíduos homossexuais vivenciam dificuldades para descoberta, definição e revelação de sua orientação sexual em decorrência dos padrões culturais heteronormativos vigentes.

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Introduction

Sexuality is considered a central aspect of the human being. It covers the sexual act, identities, social roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction; It is perceived through the thoughts, fantasies, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, and practices, manifesting from the desire for affection, contact, warmth, affection or love.¹

This statement defines sexuality as a fundamental and indispensable constituent of human existence, determining the ways of being, to see, to think and to prove to society because talking about sexuality is talking about history, emotions, relationships with other people, customs, and desires.² Thus, discussing sexuality, among others, includes dialog about directions and inclinations of emotional desire, sexual and erotic individuals. In this sense, the term sexual orientation is used to encompass the diversity of possibilities that a person has to exercise their sexuality.³

Although the terms sexuality and sexual orientation being important, there are still matters of taboos and prejudices permeated as the central theme of discussions.⁴ Particularly in childhood and adolescence, periods that usually occur the first discoveries and experiences related to sexuality, this human dimension is little valued by parents and school.⁵

During childhood, the idea of the non-existence of sexuality in childrens cultivated.⁵ Sigmund Freud, publishing his first study on child sexuality shocked the society of his time, saying that from birth, the individual is endowed with affection, desire, and conflicts inherent in this dimension.⁶ Despite the brilliant contributions of the scholar, the theme of childhood is still little discussed, attributing to the asexual child condition.

This scenario becomes even darker when the awakening of sexuality and sexual orientation are beyond the current social patterns, which indicate relationships and heterosexual behavior, that is, heterosexual sexual orientation (sexual-affective attraction to the opposite sex) as anormal

parameter for the exercise of human sexuality.³ Opposite behaviors to this definition as homosexual sexual orientation (emotional, sexual attraction to people of the same sex) then becomes considered deviant.⁷

Given the heteronormative social context, as soon as children are born are educated/disciplined to acquire a gender identity in accordance with the biological sex, that is, they should behave like a man or woman in society and mandatory in the sexual/reproductive phase, feel attracted and maintain emotional/sexual relationships with the opposite sex.⁸ In this condition, gender identity (man and woman) complies respectively with the biological sex (male and female) and heterosexual sexual orientation.

As a result of this condition, the typical behavior expected for boys and girls, definitely fixed at six or seven years old, could already be observed in children from two years old manifesting through the interests of toys and typical games to biological sex, by heteronormative⁹ and gender identity.¹⁰

The “unusual behavior” in children is thought as an indicator of childhood, a possible homosexuality in adolescence and adulthood; homosexual boys present traces of a “feminine” gender identity and homosexual girls present typical child behavior of a male gender identity.⁹

In this sense, the distinction between typical and atypical behaviors attributed by adults and experienced by children and adolescents, provide doubts and conflicts that face sexuality in childhood and adolescence, resulting in suffering and materialization of prejudice as result of their position of social rules directed to each biological sex. Social standards of masculinity and femininity linked to gender identity will harass the child and adolescent future and may result in psychological disorders.¹¹

Thus, given the potential conflicts before association between biological sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, the study aimed to identify how was the process of discovery of homosexual orientation in lesbians and gays.

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