

Sexual Attitude and Potential Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Youth: Basis for a School Based Prevention Program

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Abstract – This study utilized a quantitative descriptive–correlational design to investigate the relationship between sexual attitude and potential sexual risk behaviors among 188 Bachelor of Education students majoring in Elementary Education at a state university in Quezon Province, Philippines. The data were examined with descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and Pearson's correlation coefficient. The findings indicated that participants had favorable sexual attitudes ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.26$) and possessed a moderate understanding of sexual risk behaviors ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.24$), although displayed diminished cultural awareness of these risks ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.42$). This indicates that cultural ideas, traditions, and taboos may restrict candid discourse and comprehension of sexual issues. ANOVA results indicated no significant differences related to age ($F = 2.501$, $p = 0.085$) or sexual orientation ($F = 0.555$, $p = 0.575$), however grade level had a significant influence ($F = 3.751$, $p = 0.025$), suggesting that awareness and attitudes may evolve with academic advancement. Correlation analysis indicated a low positive correlation between sexual attitudes and knowledge of sexual risk behaviors ($r = 0.31$, $R^2 = 0.10$, $p = 0.000$) and a moderate negative correlation between sexual attitudes and cultural factors ($r = -0.40$, $R^2 = 0.16$, $p = 0.000$). These findings corroborate E.B. Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan's Cultural Evolution Theory, emphasizing the adaptability and longevity of culture over time. The study offers critical insights into kids' sexual attitudes, knowledge, and cultural influences, serving as a vital foundation for the development of culturally appropriate and effective school-based prevention programs.

Keywords: Sexual attitude, sexual risk behavior, youth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents globally encounter considerable obstacles for sexual and reproductive health, with around 12 million females aged 15–19 giving birth each year and at least 777,000

births happening among girls under 15, predominantly in low- and middle-income nations (Tilahun et al., 2024). Early pregnancies are frequently associated with insufficient access to comprehensive sexual education, restricted contraceptive utilization, and social influences that inhibit candid conversations about sexuality. Cultural taboos and insufficient awareness impede access to accurate information and services across Asia, especially in Southeast Asia (Kyu et al., 2024). In the Philippines, the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 mandates comprehensive sex education; yet, its implementation is inconsistent (Puen, 2024). The nation maintains one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in Asia, with 5.4% of women aged 15–19 experiencing at least one pregnancy (Manzanilla et al., 2024). In Polillo, Quezon, 84 of 522 live births in 2023 were attributed to adolescents, reflecting a significant rise in teenage pregnancies from January to July 2024. These statistics highlight the pressing necessity for culturally attuned, age-appropriate sexual education programs to meet adolescents' reproductive health requirements.

Although current research has explored the sexual attitudes and behaviors of Filipino teenagers (Habito et al., 2021), it has predominantly concentrated on the general population, resulting in a lack of focus on younger teens in rural and semi-urban areas (Bhana et al., 2023; De Jose, 2013). Moreover, numerous school-based prevention initiatives lack grounding in contemporary, localized facts, hence diminishing their efficacy and cultural pertinence (Tabei et al., 2021). In response to the stated research gap, this study aims to address the following objectives: (1) To assess the degree of sexual attitudes among the respondents; (2) To evaluate the extent of potential sexual risk behaviors among the respondents concerning knowledge and culture; (3) To investigate whether there is a significant difference in sexual attitudes of the respondents based on age, sex, and year level; and finally, (4) To determine if a significant relationship exists between sexual attitudes and potential sexual risk behaviors.

This study is based on the Cultural Evolution Theory proposed by E.B. Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan, which elucidates the temporal changes in human culture—including beliefs, customs, language, technology, and institutions—through the transmission, adaptation, or elimination of traits according to their utility in specific environments. This study aims to examine the correlation between sexual attitudes and probable sexual risk behaviors among youth in Polillo. The research provides localized, evidence-based insights that can inform the creation of preventative initiatives aligned with teenagers' experiences, so enabling them to make informed, responsible, and healthy decisions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW Sexual Attitude

Primarily, in this study, sexual attitude denotes the respondents' perspectives on sexual practices. Comprehending sexuality—irrespective of orientation or beliefs—facilitates informed decision-making, cultivates healthy relationships, and mitigates stigma through open, inclusive discourse (Sekhar et al., 2024). Sexual attitudes differ by gender and orientation, with men typically exhibiting more favorable perspectives towards unconventional and online behaviors, women preferring private sexual activities, and non-heterosexual individuals demonstrating increased receptiveness to varied practices (Ediae et al., 2024). In the

Philippines, conservative cultural traditions impede change, highlighting the importance of school nurses in advocating for comprehensive sexual health education (Kim et al., 2023).

Insufficient understanding, particularly about HIV/AIDS, cultivates conservative perspectives, as Filipino society frequently inhibits discussions about sexuality (Yamat et al., 2023). Sexual knowledge correlates with attitudes (Mahadik et al., 2024), where tradition and educational openness affect conservatism (Blanc, 2021). A societal friction persists between the preservation of traditions and the adoption of inclusivity (Mamdouh, 2024), with educational institutions having a crucial function in reconciling conservative and liberal perspectives to establish balanced, culturally acceptable sexual education (Mukanga et al., 2024).

Socioeconomic status affects premarital sexual attitudes, as elevated parental education is frequently associated with conservatism, but increased income connects with liberalism (Da Silva Araújo Alves et al., 2021). Effective and culturally attuned sex education relies on proficient educators (Szlachta & Champion, 2019), whereas sexual attitudes are influenced by education, peer interactions, and social contexts (Bishop, 2021). Comprehensive, culturally informed programs can empower adolescents with the knowledge to make safe decisions, circumvent harmful behaviors, and cultivate healthy relationships, hence enhancing overall well-being (Mukanga et al., 2024).

Potential Sexual Risk Behavior

Sexual behavior encompasses a range of activities, thoughts, and expressions pertaining to sexuality, influenced by biological, psychological, social, and cultural determinants (Singh, 2025). Recognizing potential sexual risk behaviors is crucial, since they can result in social, emotional, and physical repercussions, particularly among college students who are acquiring independence and encountering many pressures (Dalooyi et al., 2023). Engaging in risky sexual practices elevates the probability of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and mental health complications (Fisal et al., 2022). In the Philippines, premature sexual activity, inadequate contraceptive utilization, and restricted access to sexual health services exacerbate the increase in HIV incidence (Gangcuangco & Eustaquio, 2023) and adolescent pregnancies (Habito et al., 2021), further intensified by cultural and religious conservatism regarding sex education (Noer et al., 2024). Numerous adolescents also possess insufficient understanding regarding reproductive health, cultivating misconceptions and detrimental practices (Mahadik et al., 2024).

Cultural norms, stigma, and misinformation frequently inhibit candid discourse, resulting in hazardous sexual behaviors, including multiple partners and unsafe intercourse (Mahadik et al., 2024). Obstacles such as tradition, systemic inequality, and insufficient knowledge exacerbate reproductive health issues (Habito et al., 2021). Comprehensive research indicate that hazardous sexual practices in developing nations are affected by characteristics including early sexual beginning, alcohol consumption, educational attainment, and cultural context, necessitating focused public health interventions (Cho & Yang, 2023). In younger demographics, preventative measures emphasizing consent, boundaries, and respectful

relationships are essential (Mason, 2023). The literature underscores the necessity for thorough, culturally sensitive sex education, accessible resources, and coordination among educators, health professionals, and communities to foster responsible sexual activity and mitigate health risks among children.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. **Research Design:** This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational methodology to objectively assess the level of sexual attitudes and the degree of probable sexual risk behaviors among respondents about knowledge and culture. Quantitative approaches were employed to generate objective, statistical data that can be systematically analyzed and duplicated. The descriptive method was utilized to characterize respondents and evaluate their sexual attitudes and risk behaviors, while the correlational design was employed to ascertain the relationship between sexual attitudes and potential sexual risk behaviors without variable manipulation, measuring the strength of associations between them.
2. **Participants/Data Sources:** This study involved 188 students from the Bachelor of Education Major in Elementary Education, encompassing 75 first-year, 66 second year, and 47 third-year students, all enrolled in the academic year 2024–2025. The inclusion criteria mandated that students be presently enrolled in the BEED program at the designated year levels, willingly participate with informed consent, and fully complete the survey; those not enrolled in the program or year levels, lacking consent, or providing incomplete responses were excluded. From a total population of 356 students, the fishbowl method was employed for random selection of responders, and Slovin's Formula, with a 0.05 margin of error, established a sample size of 188.
3. **Tools and Instruments:** The researchers employed adapted-modified questionnaires comprising 53 items to evaluate factors affecting respondents' sexual attitudes and probable sexual risk behaviors related to knowledge and culture. The initial segment assessed sexual attitudes utilizing a revised Sexual Attitude Scale (25 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$), grounded in the Attitude-Behavior Consistency Theory, where elevated scores signify more conservative perspectives. Positive items opposed sexual activity, whereas negative things were graded in reverse. The second part analyzed potential sexual risk behaviors using two subscales: the Sexual Knowledge Scale (15 items; $\alpha = 0.73$), which evaluated comprehension of sexual health, risks, and protective measures, and the Cultural Beliefs Scale (13 items; $\alpha = 0.81$), which examined the impact of cultural norms and values on sexual behaviors. Both subscales employed a 4-point Likert scale, with negatively phrased items reverse scored to ensure that higher ratings indicated increased knowledge or more protective cultural attitudes.
4. **Procedures:** The research was carried out at a state university in Quezon Province, Philippines, where the researchers secured authorization from the campus director and registrar to collect data from first- to third-year BEED students enrolled in the academic

year 2024–2025. A letter of endorsement from the university research coordinator, authorizing the research study and soliciting authorization for data collection, was submitted for formal approval. Informed consent was obtained from participants, and questions were disseminated via Google Forms and printed versions. Following collection, responses were aggregated, organized, and examined by a statistician. In adherence to ethical norms and the Data Privacy Act, participation was voluntary, agreement was obtained in advance, and access to data was restricted to researchers, the adviser, and authorized personnel, with all replies securely archived post-study.

- 5. Analysis Techniques:** The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in alignment with the research objectives. Descriptive statistics, encompassing mean and standard deviation, were utilized to evaluate the extent of sexual attitudes and prospective sexual risk behaviors. The Pearson correlation analysis will be employed to examine the relationship between the principal variables. Ultimately, one-way ANOVA was employed to assess the significant differences in sexual attitudes and probable sexual risk behaviors among respondents based on age, sex, and year level.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Summary of Descriptive Analysis

This subsection explored the level of the respondents' sexual attitude and the extent of the respondents' potential sexual risk behavior.

Table 1
 Mean, Standard Deviation, Scaled Response, and Verbal Interpretation (VI)

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Scaled Response	VI
1. Sexual Attitude	2.78	0.26	Agree	Generally Supports
2. Potential Sexual Risk Behavior				
Knowledge	2.70	0.24	Agree	Aware
Culture	2.41	0.42	Disagree	Slightly Aware

Table 1 indicates that respondents predominantly endorse affirmative sexual attitudes ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.26$) and exhibit a moderate level of awareness of potential sexual risk behaviors in terms of knowledge ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.24$). Nonetheless, their cultural awareness regarding sexual risk behaviors is significantly lower ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.42$), suggesting that cultural beliefs, customs, or taboos may inhibit open discourse and comprehension of sexual issues. This disparity indicates that although students may comprehend the factual elements of sexual danger, they may find it challenging to implement this knowledge within their cultural setting. Consequently, sexual education programs must not only deliver correct information but also consider cultural effects, promoting polite discourse that reconciles knowledge with culturally appropriate implementation. This method may foster enhanced awareness and facilitate more educated, responsible decision-making among pupils.

Research suggests that although students possess factual knowledge regarding sexual health, using this knowledge within their cultural environment can prove hard. Cultural and religious traditions frequently perpetuate sexual silencing and highlight perceived dangers, complicating conversations regarding safe sex practices (Bhana et al., 2023). The successful execution of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) continues to be problematic, particularly in rural regions where educators find it difficult to address the sexual health requirements of youth (Bhana et al., 2023). Research indicates that CSE programs frequently exhibit a deficiency in cultural variety and may incorporate Western content that is not always suitable for local contexts (Mukanga et al., 2024). To resolve these challenges, it is essential to implement culturally relevant sex education and include the community in tailoring Comprehensive Sexuality Education programs to local cultural contexts (Ico et al., 2023).

Summary of Inferential Analysis

This subsection explored the significant difference on sexual attitude of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and year level.

Table 2
 Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), One-Way ANOVA, *p* value, and Significance

		<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>ANOVA</u>	<u><i>p</i>-value</u>	<u>Significance</u>
Age	18-19 yrs old	2.72	0.22			
	20-21 yrs old	2.78	0.27	2.501	.085	Not significant
	22 yrs old above	2.84	0.27			
Sexual Orientation	male	2.68	0.27			
	female	2.70	0.24	.555	.575	Not significant
	LGBTQ+	2.71	0.15			
Grade level	1st year	2.74	0.23			
	2nd year	2.72	0.22	3.751	.025	Significant
	3rd year	2.78	0.27			

$p > 0.05 = \text{not significant}; p < 0.05 = \text{significant}$

Table 2 presents the ANOVA results, demonstrating that age ($F = 2.501, p = 0.085$) and sexual orientation ($F = 0.555, p = 0.575$) do not exert a statistically significant influence on the measured variable, implying that variations in mean scores among these groups may be attributable to random fluctuation rather than substantive differences. Conversely, grade level exhibits a statistically significant difference ($F = 3.751, p = 0.025$), indicating that pupils' replies vary significantly according on their year level. This indicates that as students advance through their academic years, their awareness or views may evolve, perhaps due to heightened exposure to academic education, peer discourse, or life events. The lack of notable differences in age and sexual orientation suggests that these factors may not significantly impact the

variable under investigation in this group, whereas educational level exerts a more considerable influence.

The study's findings are corroborated by subsequent research that has examined sexual attitudes and behaviors across various groups. Roberts et al. (2021) identified age- and sex-related patterns in sexual habits, revealing minimal meaningful differences among racial and ethnic groupings. The research by Jackson and Haile (2023) indicated that adolescents with secondary education had higher instances of risky sexual conduct than their counterparts with a college education.

Summary of Correlational Analysis

This subsection explored the significant relationship between sexual attitude and the extent of potential sexual risk behavior.

Table 3
 Pearson *r*, *R*², Correlation, Probability Value, and Significance

Correlation between Sexual attitude and the extent of potential sexual risk behavior		Pearson <i>r</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Correlation	Probability Value	Significance
Sexual Attitude	Knowledge	0.31	0.10	Low positive	0.000	Significant
	Culture	-0.40	0.16	Moderate Negative	0.000	

p > 0.05 = not significant; *p* < 0.05 = significant

Table 3 demonstrates a low positive correlation between sexual attitudes and knowledge of potential sexual risk behaviors (*r* = 0.31, *R*² = 0.10, *p* = 0.000), suggesting that students with more favorable sexual attitudes generally possess a marginally greater awareness of sexual risks, although other factors are likely to affect their knowledge. A moderate negative association was identified between sexual attitudes and cultural factors linked with sexual risk (*r* = -0.40, *R*² = 0.16, *p* = 0.000), indicating that greater adherence to conventional cultural norms and taboos correlates with less favorable sexual attitudes. This trend indicates that although improving sexual education may promote healthier attitudes, cultural obstacles must also be confronted to guarantee that knowledge is properly utilized in making responsible and educated sexual health choices.

Recent research have consistently identified a favorable association between sexual knowledge and attitudes among students. Increased sexual knowledge correlates with more progressive attitudes on sexuality (Mahadik et al., 2024). Nevertheless, general sexual awareness among students is deficient, with a survey indicating that 79.2% of participants possess limited sexual knowledge (Djohan et al., 2021). Enhanced sexual education is essential, since it is associated with more compassionate responses to patient care for sexual issues (Zhao

et al., 2023). The internet serves as a significant source of sexual information for students (Mahadik et al., 2024). Notably, certain studies identified conservative perspectives on sex (Mahadik et al., 2024), but others indicated favorable views on premarital sex (Zhao et al., 2023).

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V. CONCLUSION

The research investigated the correlation among sexual attitudes, knowledge, and cultural awareness regarding potential sexual risk behaviors, as well as the influences of age, sexual orientation, and educational level. The findings indicate that although students often possess favorable sexual attitudes and enough knowledge, their cultural awareness is comparatively lowered, implying that traditional beliefs and taboos may obstruct candid discourse and the implementation of sexual health knowledge. Grade level markedly affected replies, although age and sexual orientation did not, underscoring the impact of educational experience on awareness formation. The weak positive link between sexual attitudes and knowledge, alongside the moderate negative correlation with cultural characteristics, underscores the necessity of addressing both informational and cultural elements in sexual education. Despite being constrained by self-reported data and a particular population, the results substantiate the Cultural Evolution Theory posited by E.B. Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan, illustrating the adaptation or persistence of cultural qualities across time and their impact on the comprehension and application of sexual health knowledge.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Incorporate extensive sexual health information with culturally attuned strategies that consider traditional beliefs and taboos in School-Based Prevention Programs.
2. Promote respectful discourse and analytical reasoning among students in SchoolBased Prevention Programs to reconcile sexual health knowledge with cultural context.
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4. Consistently assess and modify School-Based Prevention Programs to ensure their efficacy and cultural relevance.
5. Enhance future research by augmenting sample sizes and incorporating people from varied educational institutions and demographic cohorts to improve generalizability.
6. Employ mixed-methods study approaches to obtain profound insights into cultural influences and students' life experiences about sexual views and practices.
7. Implement longitudinal studies to investigate the evolution of sexual attitudes and awareness across time and in relation to educational exposure.
8. Examine the extensive impact of family, peer groups, and community on sexual attitudes and practices across many cultural contexts.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 4 provided overall supervision of the study as the research adviser, while Authors 1, 2, and 3 were primarily responsible for writing the original draft, revising the manuscript, collecting data, and securing funding for the research. Author 5 led the data analysis, and interpretation of results. All remaining tasks—including conceptualization, methodology, investigation—were collaboratively undertaken by all authors. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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