Reviewer’s report

Title: Relationships, Love and Sexuality: What the Filipino Youth Think and Feel

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Reviewer: Ann O’Leary

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This interesting paper from the Philippines assessed youth attitudes toward sexuality, sources of information regarding sexuality, and attitudes toward sexism. The study is clearly predicated on the belief that abstinence is highly desirable among youth. From the perspective of an American, this approach at first blush seems misled. After all, substantial evidence suggests that abstinence-only programs conducted in the U.S. are ineffective (Kirby, 2008; Underhill, Montgomery & Operario, 2007). However, these data do not address the question of whether such programs might be effective in other cultures, especially ones where abstinence is more culturally congruent—including, perhaps, the mostly-Roman Catholic Philippines. In fact, although it was a comprehensive program that focused heavily on abstinence, a recent study in South Africa obtained a significant abstinence effect among youth (Jemmott et al., 2008), which of relevance to the present data was mediated by parental attitudes toward sex (O’Leary et al., 2008).

In general, the study was well-conducted. The sample is large and representative of youth in the Philippines. The response rate was very good. Sample weighting was included in analyses. More detail on recruitment and sampling may be of interest to some readers. If this has been described elsewhere, perhaps this source could be cited. If not, more detail would be desirable. It is unclear how the schools were selected, for example.

The measures section needs much more explicit detail. It does not become clear that sexual experience or condom knowledge were even assessed until page 11, well into the Results section. Ideally, enough information regarding measures should be given to allow replication.

The great desire of study participants for guidance as to romantic love issues as well as biological sex information (86% wanted more) and managing feelings and emotions (92%) is a poignant reminder that sex is emotionally complicated for everyone, perhaps especially for young people.

The task for the future, for educators in the Philippines and other cultures, will be to identify behavioral interventions that are most effective in reducing pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection, and adverse emotional consequences of sex. This will ideally involve comparing different approaches, such as abstinence-only with comprehensive education, as has been done elsewhere.


**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests.