

Knowledge and Attitude of Sex in Undergraduate Students

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Abstract Background/Objectives: This study was conducted to analyze the correlation of knowledge and attitude of sex in undergraduate students. **Methods/Statistical analysis:** A questionnaire survey was conducted on 140 students in K universities located in Chungbuk from May to June, 2016. 135 questionnaires were used as the research data. The data were analyzed using SPSS 18.0. The knowledge and attitude of sex by General Characteristics were analyzed using a t-test, ANOVA, the post hoc Scheffe's test and Correlation of the knowledge and attitude of sex was analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. **Findings:** There were significant difference of the knowledge to sex by general characteristics among the gender ($t=-3.354, p=.001$) grade ($F=12.992, p<.001$) and the experience of the dating ($F=3.547, p=.033$). Female students showed a higher degree of the knowledge to sex than male students and senior students showed a higher degree than freshman. Also present the dating students showed a higher degree of the knowledge to sex than past the dating but present no the dating students and no experienced the dating students. But there was no significant difference in the attitude to sex by general characteristics. And there was positive correlation of the knowledge and attitude to sex in undergraduate students ($r=.320, p<.05$). **Improvements/Applications:** Therefore, the development of the effective sexual education program is needed to help undergraduate students to have responsible attitudes toward sex by providing accurate sex knowledge to the individual students.

Keywords: knowledge, attitude, sex, sexual education, undergraduate students

I. INTRODUCTION

As the duration of university education has been increasing due to difficulties in obtaining employment, and the age of marriage has also been rising recently, the age at which it is considered appropriate for a young person to engage in sexual relations as a socially and economically responsible adult is increasing. Moreover, as the living environment and individuals' lifestyles are rapidly changing to reflect the typical norms of an advanced industrial society, baseless information about sex is overflowing, causing the rapid spread of unhealthy and commoditized sex through the internet¹.

Many university students exposed to such an environment are experiencing confusion in relation to values concerning sex, and are indulging more freely in sexual activities than ever before. However, such indulgence leads to distorted knowledge of sex on the part of university students, and

causes or aggravates problems related to sex, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, prostitution, AIDS, and sexual crime². Sex education provided in families and schools in South Korea is more conservative than that in other countries, and the national sex education systems are not sufficient to be practically applied to actual lives. In particular, most male students, who have a relatively higher degree of physical freedom, consider sex as a means of pleasure, and are given almost no opportunity to understand or experience healthy sex as a part of social relationships. Therefore, male students often exchange distorted sex information with peers, and acquire incorrect or inappropriate sex-related knowledge through pornography, engaging in sexual experiences in covert, commercial, and sometimes violent ways. One report revealed that the most frequent channels through which male students obtain knowledge about sex are pornography, including magazines, videos, and internet sites; and their peers, who may provide inaccurate word-of-mouth information, rather than official sex education³.

Undergraduate students, most of whom are demographically part of the youth group in South Korea, have voracious appetites for sex, as their physical growth has been completed. In their high school years, these individuals have been forced to suppress their sexual desires within their schools and families by social norms and the competition involved in the university entrance examinations. Upon entering universities, undergraduate students usually experience confusion with regard to sex, as they feel a sense of freedom as an adult and are affected by the liberal atmosphere between the opposite sexes⁴.

Undergraduate students in South Korea currently live in an era in which sex is socially permitted to a higher degree than ever before. These students, who are developmentally in the early stage of young adulthood, are in the stage during which the completion of growth regarding sexual awareness and attitudes is expected⁴. The sexual attitudes formed in this stage affect not only individuals' sexual behavior but also their character development and even their future marital life.

In the present study, the level of knowledge and attitudes regarding sex among undergraduate students were investigated, and the correlation between knowledge of sex and attitudes toward sex was analyzed to provide fundamental data for the development of sex education and sex counseling programs.

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II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

III. RESULTS

2.1. Research Design

This study is a descriptive study to investigate the knowledge and attitude of sex in undergraduate students.

2.2. Sample and Data Collection

The purpose of this study, voluntary participation, and confidentiality were explained to each of the subjects who were undergraduate students in A universities where located in C-city who agreed to participate in this study. A questionnaire survey was conducted on 140 undergraduate students from May to June, 2016. Excluding 5 questionnaires in which the responses were unclear or missing, 135 questionnaires were used as the research data.

2.3. Instruments

As a sexual knowledge instrument, the instrument developed by Ho⁵ was revised and compensated, and then used in this study after undergoing verification by two professors in the department of nursing. The perception was rated on a two-point scale from zero point representing “unknown & no” to one point representing “yes,” and a higher score indicated a higher degree of the knowledge of sex. The Cronbach's α was 0.907.

As an instrument for attitude of sex, the instrument developed by Ho⁵, Kang⁶ was revised and compensated, and then used in this study after undergoing verification by two professors in the department of nursing. Attitude was rated on a five-point scale from one point representing “very negative” to five points representing “very positive” and a higher score indicated a higher positive degree of attitude of sex. The Cronbach's α was 0.866.

2.4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed with the SPSS 18.0 software program.

1) The frequencies and percentages of the general characteristics of the subjects were calculated.

2) To analyze the differences in the knowledge and attitude of sex according to the general characteristics of the subjects, t-test and ANOVA were done. A Scheffe test was done as a post hoc test.

3) The correlation between the knowledge and attitude of sex was analyzed with the Pearson's correlation coefficient.

3.1. Subjects' general characteristics

Table 1 presents the subjects' general characteristics. The percentage of male undergraduate students was 26.6%, and that of female college students was 73.3%. The percentage of sophomore students was the highest at 33.3% among the grades, each of freshman students and senior students were 25.2% and 16.3% of the subjects were junior students. With regard to the religion of the subjects, 47.4% of the subjects had no religion; 34.1% of the subjects were Protestant Christians; 10.4% of the subjects were Catholics, and 8.1% of the subjects were Buddhists. With regard to the experience of the dating of the subjects, 43.7% of the subjects were in ‘past the dating but present no the dating’, 33.3% in ‘present :yes’, 23.0% in ‘no experienced’.

Table 1. General characteristics of the subjects N=135

Characteristics	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	36	26.6
	Female	99	73.3
Grade	Freshman	34	25.2
	Sophomore	45	33.3
	Junior	22	16.3
	Senior	34	25.2
Religion	Protestant Christians	46	34.1
	Catholics	14	10.4
	Buddhists	11	8.1
	No religion	64	47.4
Experience of the dating	Present : Yes	45	33.3
	Past the dating but present no the dating	59	43.7

3.2 Difference of the knowledge and attitude of sex by general characteristics

There were significant difference of the knowledge to sex by general characteristics among the gender($t=-3.354$, $p=.001$) grade ($F=12.992$, $p<.001$) and the experience of the dating($F=3.547$, $p=.033$). Female students showed a higher degree of the knowledge to sex than male students and senior students showed a higher degree than freshman students. Also present the dating students showed a higher degree of the knowledge to sex than past the dating but present no the dating students and no experienced dating students.

But as shown in table 2, there was no significant difference in the attitude to sex by general characteristics.

Table 2. Difference of knowledge and attitude to sex by general characteristics

Characteristic	Item	Knowledge to sex			Attitude to sex		
		M±SD	t or F	p	M±SD	t or F	p
Gender	Male	0.50±0.17	-3.354	.001**	3.07±0.32	.728	.468
	Female	0.63±0.18			3.01±0.44		
Grade	Freshman	0.45±0.17	12.992	.000*** a<d	2.92±0.26	2.031	.115
	Sophomore	0.61±0.13			2.99±0.52		
	Junior	0.58±0.17			3.03±0.42		
	Senior	0.72±0.18			3.19±0.33		
Religion	Christians	0.62±0.20	1.240	.300	3.05±0.46	.331	.803
	Catholics	0.50±0.13			3.02±0.30		



	Buddhists	0.57±0.23			2.88±0.54		
	No religion	0.59±0.18			3.04±0.05		
Experience of the dating	Present : Yes	0.64±0.19	3.547	.033* a>b,c	3.05±0.43	.677	.511
	Past the dating but present no the dating	0.54±0.18			2.99±0.44		
	No experienced	0.55±0.17			3.10±0.28		

3.3. Correlation of knowledge and attitude to sex

As shown in table 3, the result showed that there was positive correlation of the knowledge and attitude to sex in undergraduate students ($r=.320$, $p<.05$). This means that higher the level of the knowledge to sex in the undergraduate students increase to more the level of the attitude to sex.

Table3. Correlation of knowledge and attitude to sex

	Knowledge to sex	Attitude to sex
Knowledge of sex	1	
Attitude of sex	.320*	1

IV. DISCUSSION

In the present study, the level of knowledge and attitudes regarding sex among undergraduate students were investigated, and the correlation between knowledge of sex and attitudes toward sex was analyzed to provide fundamental data for the development of sex education and sex counseling programs.

The analysis of knowledge and attitudes regarding sex depending on the general characteristics of the undergraduate students revealed that significant differences were found in the knowledge related to sex between groups categorized on the basis of different sex (male or female), grade level, and the presence of dating experience, but no significant differences were found in attitudes regarding sex.

The average sex knowledge scores were 0.50 in males and 0.63 in females, indicating that female students have a higher level of sex knowledge. This result was consistent with the findings reported by Kang⁶, which showed that the sex knowledge score was higher in the female students (69.17 points) than in the male students (65.43 points). In the present study, the sex knowledge score was higher in the fourth grade students than in the first grade students. This result contrasted with the findings reported by Cho⁷, which showed that there was no significant difference in the sex knowledge score between the grades. This discrepancy may be due to the fact that the subjects differed between the two studies. The sex knowledge score was also significantly different between the groups with and without dating experience. This result was consistent with the findings reported by Lee, Kim and Choi⁸, which showed that the sex knowledge level was higher in the students who reported dating experience than in the students who reported no dating experience.

No significant differences were found in sex attitudes among the groups with different general characteristic, a result that differed from the findings of previous studies^{9,10}. This difference may be because the subjects were limited to undergraduate students from only a few universities. Therefore, an extensive survey may need to be conducted with subjects from various regions.

The analysis of the correlation between sex knowledge and

sex attitudes of undergraduate students showed that the two factors have a positive correlation, a finding that was consistent with the results reported by Woo¹⁰, which showed that subjects with more sex knowledge showed more open attitudes toward sex. Cho¹¹ also reported a consistent result that showed that subjects with more sex knowledge had more positive attitudes toward sex. These results indicate that correct knowledge regarding sex results in a positive sex attitude. Therefore, interest on the part of the entire society in sex education and the development of an effective sex education program are needed to help undergraduate students to have responsible attitudes toward sex by providing accurate sex knowledge to the individual students.

The present study was conducted only among undergraduate students in C city, and there is thus less generalizability of the results regarding the sex awareness and attitudes of undergraduate students. Therefore, a more extensive study should be conducted to allow generalizability. Adopting sex education as a part of the regular curriculum of middle and high schools is recommended for adolescent students before the university years. Regular education may need to be implemented to help undergraduate students enjoying the necessary freedom regarding sex to allow the formation of sound sexual values.

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