

A STUDY ON SWING FROM VISIONS PROVIDED BY MEMBERS OF A VIRTUAL COMMUNITY OF LIBERAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

UM ESTUDO SOBRE O SWING A PARTIR DE VISÕES FORNECIDAS POR INTEGRANTES DE UMA COMUNIDADE VIRTUAL DE COMPORTAMENTO SEXUAL LIBERAL

UN ESTUDIO SOBRE SWING A PARTIR DE VISIONES PROPORCIONADO POR MIEMBROS DE UNA COMUNIDAD VIRTUAL DE COMPORTAMIENTO SEXUAL LIBERAL

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ABSTRACT: This work aims to diagnose views on the sexuality of people with liberal sexual behaviors in the swingers' community and their opinions about motivation in the liberal sexual environment. For that, we have consulted a forum of a liberal sexual behavior website which has 16,589 registered profiles, being 13,640 couples, 2,276 men and 673 women, where members spontaneously discussed this issue. A total of 77 posts were classified according to the occurrence, analyzed, and commented on qualitatively. We seek to understand the rules for the exchange of couples, the question of pleasure in the swing, the concept of liberal sex and sexual fulfillment with this practice based on what the participants of the forum said, in the posts.

KEYWORDS: Liberal sexual behavior. Sex. Swing. Web site.

RESUMO: *Este trabalho tem como objetivo diagnosticar visões sobre a sexualidade de pessoas com comportamentos sexuais liberais na comunidade dos swingers e suas opiniões acerca da motivação no meio sexual liberal, mais especificamente verificar o ânimo ou desânimo decorrente da prática do swing. Para isso utilizou-se um fórum de um website de comportamento sexual liberal que possui 16.589 perfis cadastrados, sendo 13.640 casais, 2.276 homens e 673 mulheres onde os membros espontaneamente discutiram essa questão. Foram ao todo 77 postagens que foram classificadas conforme a ocorrência, analisadas e comentadas qualitativamente. Buscamos entender as regras para a troca de casais, a questão do prazer no swing, a concepção de sexo liberal e a realização sexual com essa prática a partir do que disseram, nas postagens, os sujeitos participantes do fórum.*

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Comportamento sexual liberal. Sexo. Swing. Website.*

RESUMEN: *Este trabajo tiene como objetivo diagnosticar visiones sobre la sexualidad de personas con comportamientos sexuales liberales en la comunidad de swingers y sus opiniones sobre la motivación en el entorno sexual liberal, más específicamente para comprobar el estado de ánimo o desánimo resultante de la práctica del swing. Para ello, se utilizó un foro de un sitio web de conducta sexual liberal, que cuenta con 16.589 perfiles registrados, siendo 13.640 parejas, 2.276 hombres y 673 mujeres donde los miembros discutieron espontáneamente este tema. Un total de 77 publicaciones fueron clasificadas según la ocurrencia, analizadas y comentadas cualitativamente. Buscamos entender las reglas para el intercambio de parejas, la cuestión del placer en el columpio, el concepto de sexo liberal y realización sexual con esta práctica en base a lo que los participantes en el foro dijeron en los posts.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Comportamiento sexual liberal. Sexo. Swing. Sitio web.*

This research aimed to verify conceptions about liberal sexual behavior in a group of partner swapping practitioners, known as swingers, seeking to identify what stimulates this practice and the reactions caused by it in a society that is still monogamous and has a discourse for conjugal fidelity. In this context, swing practitioners look for partner swapping spaces to realize fantasies that are contrary to the traditional monogamous format of stable relationships.

Literature review

Swing is an English term, with no translation into Portuguese, which refers to the exchange of partners, a type of liberal sexual behavior, whose practice is generally considered deviant and opposes traditional perceptions of healthy relationships (JENKS, 1998). The swing raises stigmas, such as considering that its practitioners accept "everything" or are libertines, or even promiscuous.

Carvalho and Vasconcelos (2013, p. 2, our translation) define the swing as

the practice of sexual relations between couples, where there is an exchange of partners and contact with experiences related to this context. By "other experiences" we mean all kinds of sexuality activities that can be done taking into account the parameters established by the couple. Since the exchange of partners, the relationship between people of the same sex, the relationship with more than one man, or with more than one woman, or even the practice of voyeurism (pleasure in looking), exhibitionism (pleasure in being seen), or sex in the same environment without changing partners.

However, some researchers, such as Jankowiak and Mixson (2008), argue that the notions of love, intimacy and sexual pleasure in swingers are very similar to non-liberal people.

A difference between the two groups is the dissociation between love and sex, with swingers differentiating these two relationships and non-swingers correlating these feelings more easily.

Some studies (BERGSTRAND; SINSKI, 2010; WEID, 2010; WEID, 2012; JENKS, 1998) already discuss the topic and claim that swing provides more benefits than negative consequences, not only for relationships, but also for swingers as individuals, seeking to understand how this liberal lifestyle can help in romantic relationships. The most common claims are that the activity strengthens the marriage and increases the perception of its quality; brings the couple closer emotionally and sexually; improves sexual performance and increases self-esteem.

It is noted that the practice of swing has had more and more followers, for two reasons: curiosity and improvement of the relationship. Although there is a popular, social and religious culture that imposes the idea that an extramarital relationship gets in the way, in the case of swing, logic subverts the traditional monogamous union. Sex outside of marriage is not considered cheating, but rather helps to strengthen the couple. Unlike polyamorous relationships, swinging is generally practiced by heterosexual couples with stable relationships, and engagements with other individuals are defined primarily by physical intimacy, with no other engagements. From this perspective, swinging couples must maintain boundaries and open communication. To help combat problems of jealousy, for example, couples are guided by agreed rules to ensure that only sexual intimacy is exchanged, not romantic intimacy, that is, it is forbidden to have feelings (BERGSTRAND; SINSKI, 2010; WEID, 2010; WEID, 2012; JENKS, 1998).

For Fontoura Jr. (2015, p. 45, our translation), swing

involves conjugality, the desire to maintain the nuclear family, principles of romantic love, which are characteristic of the contemporaneity of a certain social group [...]. Despite the liberalizing discourse, the practice of swing does not reformulate, in its fundamentals, the social roles considered adequate for wives and husbands. On the contrary, it even tends to exacerbate them - such as the overexposure of women [...] that reinforces the woman's model as a passive object of erotic desire.

There are generally two different types of swinger relationships - open and closed. The open swing occurs when a couple engages in sexual intercourse with another couple in the same environment, and the closed swing is when the exchange takes place in separate rooms. There are also soft swingers and complete swingers, which is a measure used to describe the amount of sexual contact made between the partners involved, with the soft ones referring to the lack of penetration in sexual intercourse and the complete ones have penetrative sex.

Swing is a term from the English language, which means to swing, to move freely. Data collected from surveys on websites state the hypothesis that the origin of the swing is somewhat inaccurate, but that it can also be compared to ancient Roman and Greek orgies. Some websites risk saying that the practice was conceived in the 1960s, after the sexual revolution. However, the first reference to the swing was published in 1928, in the writings of the author H. O. Jones, in the work known as "Lives". At the time, the word swing was used to exchange elements between couples, so the practice was already known in the 1920s, according to an article published on the website "Private Pleasures".

The average age of swingers is thirty years old, white and with an above average education (JENKS, 1985). It arose during World War II among pilots of the American air force, because as the death rate was high, if any military were killed, another subject would take care of his wife. There is also a relationship with the struggle for sexual freedom in the 1970s and the hippie movement and its polygamy.

In Brazil, Fontoura Jr. (2015) identified that the first couple exchange ads appeared in the 1970s in newspapers in the city of Rio de Janeiro, a bold and unprecedented practice considering that the country was experiencing the tough years of the military dictatorship.

According to Orejuela, Piedrahita and Renza (2012) there are several types of swinger in the community, such as the *occasional* ones that do not structure their relationship based on the swing; those *located* who practice more frequently than the occasional ones, having some knowledge of the community; and *personalized* ones, who prefer the practice of swinging in their relationships but do not fully open up their tastes and lifestyle to other people. In addition, there are those who openly declare their sexual preferences, relate to other people of the same taste and often swing.

Orejuela, Piedrahita and Renza (2012) pointed out in their literature review two questions that guide the practice of swing: the male logic behind this activity, and that its practitioners come from the middle and upper classes. They also commented that swingers,

despite their unconventional sexual practice that breaks with traditional concepts of sexuality, they continue to preserve ideals of the conventional couple. [...] the novelty is that, for the first time, it is based on the couple's core as a relational unit and in a consensual way (p. 43, our translation).

Along the same lines, Teixeira (2015) questions whether the swing is an exchange of couples or an exchange of women. The arguments used by the author suggest that this practice reinforces

the androcentric model of patriarchal, monogamous and heterosexual family; men make a false exaltation of women on the swing, whose practice is marked by the exchange of women, symbolic violence and control (our translation).

Fontoura Jr. (2013, p. 6) explains that in swing,

however parts of the discourse of sexual liberation and equality between men and women were used, the fact is that elements of patriarchy, typical of the nuclear family, remained quite evident [...].

Swing suggests a dissident sexual practice, however, Weid (2009, p. 108) talks about the ambiguity or imprecision in his understanding of it:

For some, the swing is a sexist world, of male domination and submissive women. For others, a bold, libertarian and innovative experience. A modern attempt to live a relationship. What is observed in these positions is a need to classify, to oppose, to choose one side or the other.

There are several stigmas regarding people who practice swing, as if they were libertine, sadomasochistic people; that do not take care of themselves; with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). One of the reasons why this behavior is so labeled, refers to the traditional moral values of heterosexual society. The swing represents breaks with the traditional forms of couples seeking new forms of pleasure and aims to control infidelity, as every action is allowed by the partner.

However, an interesting observation is that, on the swing, men are straight and women can be bisexual, a fact demonstrated by several authors (WEID, 2009; VIEIRA, 2013; SILVÉRIO, 2014, among others).

Silveira (2014, p. 20, our translation), explains that

when a couple declares themselves to be swinger, it is clear that, similar to an open marriage, only one person is loved, but sex, when done with someone outside the couple, involves both spouses, be it with a third subject, or exchanging partners simultaneously with another couple.

Weid (2010) says that it is the love for the spouse that marks the fidelity in the swing, and not the sexual intercourse itself. Is the swing, then, a dissident sexual practice? A proposal for sexual freedom or a space that reinforces values and attitudes of domination concealed by a libertarian discourse?

There are several sites, forums and services for the swing community, which facilitate meetings between couples and the “privacy” factor is touted by the sites. The advertisements on the websites are clearly focused on heterosexual men, as you can only see images of women

in the background. And studies show that the couple's first steps towards a liberal relationship usually take place at the man's will. According to the analysis of some sites, there are more than 30 million users, in addition to the existence of applications on smartphones.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were members of a virtual community of liberal sexual behavior who voluntarily posted content on the Website Forum tool, making the following sample:

Table 1 – Profile of Forum respondents

Profile	Occurrences
Couples	39
Men	11
Women	10
Others	17
TOTAL	77

Source: Devised by the authors (2018)

Participating subjects were at least 18 years old, being unpaid volunteers according to the current rules for carrying out studies with human beings in Brazil. In total, there are 39 couples, 11 men, 10 women and 17 classified as "others", due to the "nickname" on the website not delimiting a gender. There was one more response, because the same user published his responses twice consecutively.

All information was used for research purposes only, and the participants' identity was strictly preserved. Data collection was carried out from October to November 2018, using all occurrences of posts.

Study environment

The research was carried out in the virtual forum environment of a liberal sexual behavior website, and in order to have access to the content of the posts, the viability of one of the researchers was already a member of the community.

The Forum tool is open to any member to post a new topic or interact on existing topics, and the website administrator strictly monitors its content regarding topics and posts.

In the Forum there is also the possibility for members to agree or disagree with the posts by means of the thumbs up (indicating the agreement) and thumbs down (stating the disagreement) icons, besides presenting the date and time of the post and the profile of the member who posted, and there is also the possibility of the post being anonymous.

Every forum is open for members to interact voluntarily.

Procedures

To investigate people's discouragement in the practice of liberal sexual behavior, we started with a question asked by one of the platform's participants. As we sought to make the members at ease and interested, we suggested that they tell us what issue related to the practice of swing should be discussed. One of the participants asked the following question: "Has anyone here felt discouraged by the liberal environment? How did you react, or how would you react?". Thus, we directed the conversation on the platform to gather the information that we would use to write this article.

Information analysis

All posts were organized according to the occurrence of positive, negative or indifferent responses related to the Forum's initial question, in addition to diagnosing posts that deviated from the focus of the question.

In addition, all content was analyzed qualitatively by the authors using the subjects' statements to illustrate the analyzes, reaching the discussions, final considerations of the study and forms of intervention for the theme.

Results

The forum obtained 77 posts from several states in Brazil, obtaining the following responses:

Table 2 – Categories referring to the positive and negative responses to the discouragement of liberal sexual behavior in the forum

Profile	Couples	Men	Women	Others	TOTAL
Positive	3	0	0	2	5
Negative	30	8	6	11	55

Indifferent	2	2	0	0	4
Other answers	6	2	2	2	12
Total	76				

One subject provided two answers to this question, changing the value of N.

Source: Devised by the authors (2018)

We can see that the liberal sexual behavior community believes that there are more negative points than positive ones. According to the table above, couples are the most dissatisfied, followed by profiles with unidentified gender, men and, finally, women.

Regarding "other answers", some couples reported that they go to the swing when there is "lust", not answering the question directly from the site. Couples who no longer attend the swing community are tired of people closing themselves in "groups"; who do not respect the rules of the swing; invasive approach by other couples; jealousy; envy; gossip; competition, among others: "[...] *Sincerely, many people have entered without respect, who are liberal in that moment*" (our translation) - said one of the participants criticizing people who do not respect the rules of the swing.

Another participant of the forum commented: "[...] *moreover, in our case, there were still some disappointments with some couples and singles from the liberal milieu that led us to take a good break. But now we are back, and it seems to be better, at least in our perspective...*" (our translation).

According to a couple in the community, "*swing today is business. It is disrespectful, it is an insane thing that can no longer be defined. The swing today, in most cases, is to eat the wife of others by mere competition. I eat you today and tomorrow, I don't want to know, or chat with you anymore*" (our translation).

Another practitioner pointed out the importance of reflecting on the practice of swing, that is, rethinking the real reason why one participates in the swing: "[...] *If you are feeling this rancidity, give 'time' to digest and rethink how and if it is healthy to live the environment... I consider it essential...*" (our translation).

There are other couples who interpret the swing in a positive way: "[...] *we have been on the swing since 2008, here on the site since 2009, for us every year our desire has only increased*" (our translation).

Regarding people indifferent to the swing, a woman mentions "[...] *We don't change others, we can change ourselves...*" (our translation), reporting that it is not the environment that discourages, requiring the adaptation of the subject.

There were testimonies confirming cases of loss of interest: *"I know couples to whom the swing has become routine, and they end up losing interest"*. Falling into the routine also appeared as a justification for discouragement: *"I've seen couples who got sick of it. At first it was new, then it became routine and they got discouraged"* (our translation).

One person stated that the swing is an addiction, and another complained about always meeting the same people and hearing the same subjects.

One of the women said she was very excited about the swing. Because with her practice, she awakened her sexuality: *"I was very restrained. I had few sexual relationships, and even after I got married I think it was kind of stuck. But with the swing, I let go and today I've lost count of how many men I've had sex with"* (our translation).

Pregnancy is also a factor that influences the participation of the swing: *"[...] we moved away from the liberal environment in the planning phase of the child, and now we are gradually returning to be active..."* (our translation).

One couple mentioned a set of factors influencing the decrease in the frequency of swing practice *"[...] Sometimes, there are several reasons that lead to withdrawal... family problems (as in our case), the arrival of children, the stressful life due to work, among others"* (our translation).

Conclusion

Most of the reports analyzed consider the swing environment discouraging, disrespectful and invasive. Several swingers stated that they were discouraged with the community and that the main reasons are the lack of education of the participants due to the crude proposals, the formation of "groups" and the concern with quantities of sexual partners instead of quality.

Despite the liberal environment not being trapped in traditionalist structures, we can observe through the reports that it is a community of liberal sexual behavior that demands respect and have rules of coexistence. It is a dissident sexual practice that is often confused with a group of individuals who are always available for sex at any cost and without rules established in the community.

The social stigma that, in the swing, "everything is allowed", can generate conflicts between swingers, causing discouragement over time. Therefore, if the subjects do not behave according to the rules established in the community, these types of problems can be caused.

In addition, external factors such as family, different stages of life and pregnancy influence the lack of interest in participating in the swing community. At the forum, it was said several times that the groups are very heterogeneous, which demand certain standards for the exchange of couples, such as standard of beauty, financial status, sexual option, hindering interaction and exchange of couples. And the participants also repeatedly emphasize that respect is essential. Although the milieu is liberal, the rules exist and need to be respected.

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