

SEX EDUCATION IN TV SERIES: SEX EDUCATION AS A CASE STUDY

LA EDUCACIÓN SEXUAL EN LAS SERIES DE TELEVISIÓN: SEX EDUCATION COMO ESTUDIO DE CASO

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The rise and apogee of video-on-demand platforms have contributed, to a great extent, to modify the audiovisual reality as it was known to date. Within this audiovisual context, television series are a television genre that enjoys great popularity among the audience, with those aimed at teenagers and young people standing out. **Methodology:** This research study was based on a qualitative methodology based on the analysis of the content of a television series, as well as the characters, analysing the educational-communicative aspects of sex education in the series *Sex Education*. **Results:** It should be noted that the main themes of the series revolve around sexual relations between adolescents, sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies, among others; while, among the characters, the most numerous groups are that of family members, with adolescents having the greatest interpretative weight. **Discussion:** It can be seen how the series *Sex Education* presents a similar pattern to other television series aimed at teenage audiences, showing themes based on friendship or sexual relations, among others. **Conclusions:** *Sex Education* presents sex education to adolescents from an educational-communicative point of view, offering appropriate and easily understandable teachings.

Keywords: television, series, audiovisual platforms, sex education, teenagers.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El auge y apogeo de las plataformas de vídeo bajo demanda han contribuido, en gran medida, a modificar la realidad audiovisual tal y como se conocía hasta la fecha. Dentro de este contexto audiovisual, las series de televisión son un género televisivo que goza de gran popularidad entre la audiencia, donde destacan aquellas dirigidas al público adolescente y juvenil. **Metodología:** El presente estudio de

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investigación se ha basado en una metodología cualitativa basada en el análisis de contenido de una serie de televisión, así como de los personajes, analizando para ello los aspectos comunicativos en materia de educación sexual en la serie *Sex Education*. **Resultados:** Cabe destacar que las principales temáticas de la serie giran en torno a las relaciones sexuales entre adolescentes, a enfermedades de transmisión sexual y embarazos adolescentes, entre otros; mientras que, entre los personajes, el grupo más numeroso es el de los familiares, siendo el de los adolescentes el que tiene un mayor peso interpretativo. **Discusión:** Se observa como la serie *Sex Education* presenta un patrón similar a otras series de televisión dirigidas al público adolescente, mostrando temáticas basadas en la amistad o las relaciones sexuales, entre otras. **Conclusiones:** *Sex Education* presenta la educación sexual a los adolescentes desde un punto de vista comunicativo, ofreciendo enseñanzas adecuadas y fácilmente comprensibles.

Palabras clave: televisión, series, plataformas audiovisuales, educación sexual, adolescentes.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no denying that a true revolution has taken place in the audiovisual field and, consequently, in access to audiovisual content, generating a new reality known as the "culture of use" (Turner, 2019), where subscription to video-on-demand platforms prevails. Despite being an emerging activity that is modifying the way television is viewed, it is also changing the way young people approach screens (Uddin, 2021; Zanesco et al., 2021; González-Cabrera et al., 2022).

In recent years, audiovisual consumption has been modified as a result of different technological changes, video-on-demand platforms, or virtual businesses, challenging the traditional way of watching television. This has brought about significant changes in consumer habits among the audience (Capapé, 2020). With the emergence of the Internet, substantial changes have occurred within the television industry, leading to a dispersion of the audience towards new audiovisual models (Cortés-Quesada et al., 2021). From that moment on, a new term is used to refer to television viewers, and this collective is known as the social audience since they are active users who comment on content using social media platforms as their usual means (González-Neira and Quintas-Froufe, 2015).

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of research studies related to television series, either from an entertainment perspective (Álvarez-Rodríguez, 2021) or from the cultural and media industry standpoint (López-Rodríguez and Raya-Bravo, 2019). In other contexts, research studies have also been conducted on gender studies (Ferris, 2008; González-de-Garay, 2011; Díaz, 2020), taking into consideration the theory of effects (Zillmann and Vorderer, 2000) or narrative and audiovisual aspects (Gordillo, 2009; Masanet and Fedele, 2019; De-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020; Barra and Scaglioni, 2020; Castro and Cascajosa, 2020; Wilke-François and Seide-Froemming, 2021). Studies related to the creation of identities (Ramasubramanian, 2010; Padilla-Castillo and Sosa-Sánchez, 2018), gender roles (Díaz, 2020; Lozano, 2020), and educational aspects (Forteza-Martínez and Conde, 2021) are also noteworthy.

For the following research study, there is a need to understand how sexual education messages are conveyed in serialized fiction aimed at teenage audiences, with the series "*Sex Education*" from the streaming platform Netflix being analyzed from an educational perspective.

Audiovisual consumption among young people

While it is true that conventional television has not disappeared immediately as predicted at the beginning of the 21st century, significant transformations have indeed taken place, especially among younger audiences. They opt for video-on-demand platforms over traditional television viewing, creating a clear generational gap in television consumption (Cortés-Quesada et al., 2021). As explained by Guerrero-Pérez (2018), the exodus of viewers is a consequence of the rise of the internet and its integration with audiovisual media, particularly among Millennials and Generation Z. These generations have grown up in a technology-driven context, which leads to strong connections between audiovisual media on one hand and the technological field and social networks on the other. However, there is a distinct difference between these two generational groups. Generation Z is predominantly digital, while Millennials tend to use both analog and digital media (Vilanova, 2019).

Generation Z has specific characteristics when it comes to television viewing, turning it into an interactive process where consumption is based on activities that transform the act of watching television into a true experience (Bassiouni and Hackley, 2014). At the same time, it has been observed that the Generation Z population has a clear preference for consuming TV series and movies on various paid platforms, with Netflix standing out as the top choice for nearly 70% of the population (Navarro-Robles and Vázquez-Barrio, 2020). As a result, this generational group has radically transformed its interaction with audiovisual content, moving away from passive consumption. They are the ones who choose where, how, and when to watch audiovisual programming, showing a clear preference for content produced by streamers, while placing traditional industry professionals in a secondary position (Guerrero-Pérez, 2018).

In this context, the industry must adapt to the current times by giving increasing importance and impact to Information and Communication Technologies in order to increase loyalty and engagement among younger audiences (Francisco-Lens and Rodríguez-Vázquez, 2020). It has been observed that the average number of viewers between the ages of 15 and 25 for linear television does not exceed 6%, while the average age of the conventional television audience is 50 years (López-Vidales, 2021). Therefore, the sector must make efforts to cater to the preferences and consumption habits of younger generations by embracing technology and communication tools.

Television series and teenagers

There is a wide range of genres within television series, and while it is true that so-called "teen series" are not a separate genre per se, they do have certain peculiarities that allow them to be grouped within a common context (Fedele and García-Muñoz, 2010).

As various researchers assert, teen series are audiovisual productions in which the characters are portrayed by teenage actors, and the target audience for this type of programming is young people (Mosely, 2001; Davis and Dickinson, 2004; Ross and Stein, 2008).

According to various research studies, teen series are targeted towards young people, and therefore their stories revolve around two main environments: the family context and the educational context, with the latter playing a more significant role in the storyline (García-Muñoz and Fedele, 2011; Lacalle, 2013). Moreover, great importance is placed on

narratives that explore social aspects of young people, such as their social and sexual relationships with peers (Lacalle, 2013), as well as storylines that depict rebellion against authority figures, the handling of emotions, and other related themes (Falcón and Díaz-Aguado, 2014).

In general, the young actors who portray characters in teen series tend to possess specific characteristics, described as "young, attractive, and fashionably dressed, belonging to a uniform middle or upper-middle class" (Lacalle, 2013, p. 30). Another notable aspect of teen series is the portrayal of first romantic relationships, often depicted as idealized love, seen by young people as true love that will last a lifetime (Masanet and Aran-Ramspott, 2016). Aspects related to self-concept and the development of personal identity also have a significant presence in the main storylines (Falcón and Díaz-Aguado, 2014), as well as the representation and promotion of different stereotypes between boys and girls (Signorielli, 2007; García-Muñoz and Fedele, 2011; Masanet and Aran-Ramspott, 2016), and the overcoming of these roles (Owen, 1999; Banks, 2004; Osgerby, 2004; Feasey, 2006; Raya-Bravo et al., 2019; Masanet and Fedele, 2019; Mateos-Pérez, 2021).

2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this research study is to identify the teachings related to sexual education conveyed through the television series "*Sex Education*." Furthermore, the specific objectives are established as follows: 1) to understand the pedagogical value of the series, and 2) to analyze the characters that appear in the series.

3. METHODOLOGY

To address the stated objectives, the study is conducted using a qualitative methodology through content analysis. This type of study provides the opportunity to "scientifically approach the analysis of messages (regardless of their nature), understand their genesis and formation process, and obtain precise descriptions of their structure and components" (Igartúa-Perosanz, 2006, p. 180). Additionally, the characters in the series will be studied as a fundamental element, and the following aspects will be analyzed: a) main/secondary character, b) male/female/binary, c) age, d) sexual orientation, e) nationality, and f) academic background. According to Koeman et al. (2007), it is important for a character to appear in scenes and engage in dialogue with other characters in order to analyze them.

The television series "*Sex Education*" (Netflix: 2019 - present) has been analyzed as the corpus for this study. It belongs to the genres of comedy-drama and teenage drama, and it is set in a contemporary English city. The series was created by Laurie Nunn, produced by Jon Jennings, and executive produced by Jamie Campbell and Ben Taylor. Eleven Film is the production company, and Netflix is the responsible distributor. It currently consists of three seasons with a total of 24 episodes, with each season comprising eight episodes. The episode duration ranges from 47 to 60 minutes. To conduct this research, all aired episodes have been watched in order to identify the educational aspects of the series and conduct a study of all the characters that appear in it. Furthermore, an extensive literature review has been conducted to provide a solid theoretical foundation for the study.

With the study guidelines established, the chapters included in the study are as follows (Table 1).

Table 1. Seasons, episodes, and themes addressed in *Sex Education*.

Season	Episode	Title	Themes Addressed	Release date
1	1	Episode 1	Virginity	11/01/2019
1	2	Episode 2	Teenage pregnancy	11/01/2019
1	3	Episode 3	Abortion	11/01/2019
1	4	Episode 4	Jealousy	11/01/2019
1	5	Episode 5	Homophobic aggression	11/01/2019
1	6	Episode 6	Childhood traumas	11/01/2019
1	7	Episode 7	Love Failure	11/01/2019
1	8	Episode 8	Homosexuality	11/01/2019
2	1	Episode 1	Sexually transmitted infections	17/01/2020
2	2	Episode 2	Sexual Health	17/01/2020
3	3	Episode 3	Sexual assault	17/01/2020
2	4	Episode 4	First sexual relationship as a couple	17/01/2020
2	5	Episode 5	Pansexuality	17/01/2020
2	6	Episode 6	Sexual problems in an adult couple	17/01/2020
2	7	Episode 7	Sexual harassment	17/01/2020
2	8	Episode 8	Visibility of homosexuality	17/01/2020
3	1	Episode 1	Insecurities about one's own sexuality	17/09/2021
3	2	Episode 2	Homosexual sexual relationships	17/09/2021
3	3	Episode 3	Psychological problems after a sexual assault	17/09/2021
3	4	Episode 4	Sexual and affective education	17/09/2021
3	5	Episode 5	Infidelity	17/09/2021
3	6	Episode 6	Psychological problems after a sexual assault	17/09/2021

3	7	Episode 7	Advocacy for sexual education in the classroom	17/09/2021
3	8	Episode 8	In vitro fertilization	17/09/2021

Source: Author's own work

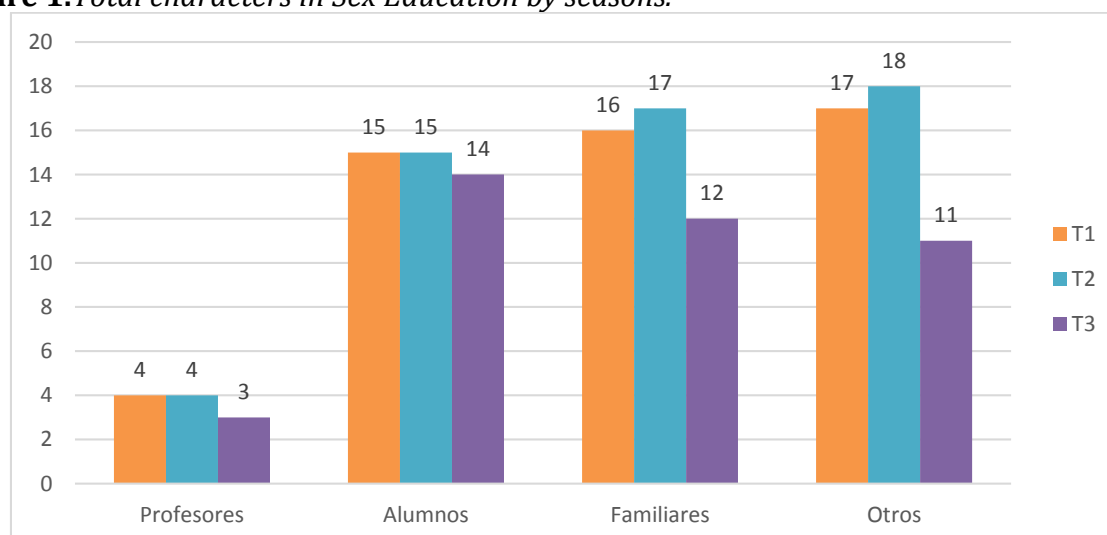
4. RESULTS

The results are structured around two blocks: 1) educational content of the series, and 2) analysis of the characters.

Characters in the *Sex Education* series

After analyzing the characters in this TV series, it is observed that both the main and supporting characters have continuity throughout all seasons. There are new additions and departures throughout the series. The characters can be categorized into four main groups: teachers, students, family members, and others. It is worth noting that one character plays two distinct roles: that of a parent of a student and that of the school principal in the first and second seasons. The total number of characters, based on this observation, amounts to 51 characters in the first season, 57 in the second season, and 46 in the third season (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Total characters in *Sex Education* by seasons.



Source: Author's own work

On the other hand, it is observed that in the three seasons studied, there are a total of 7 main characters in each of them, representing 13.46% in the first season, 12.96% in the second season, and 17.5% in the third season (Table 2).

Table 2. Main characters in *Sex Education*.

Character	Actor	Seasons	Role in the series	Character type
Otis Milburn	Asa Butterfield	1, 2 and 3	Student	Protagonist
Maeve Wiley	Emma Mackey	1, 2 and 3	Student	Realistic

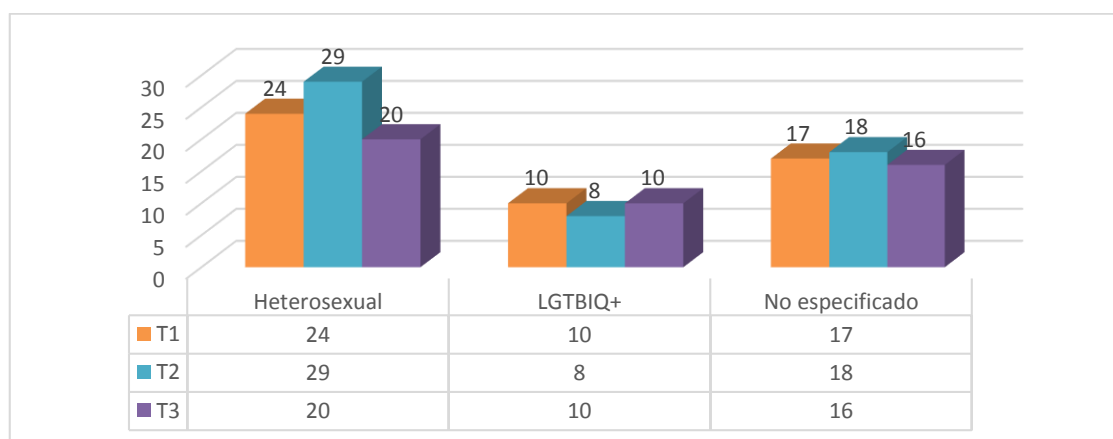
Eric Effiong	Nouti Gatwa	1, 2 and 3	Student	Joker
Adam Groff	Conno Swindells	1, 2 and 3	Student	Rebel
Aimee Gibbs	Aimee-Lou Wood	1, 2 and 3	Student	Ideological
Jackson Monroe	Kedan Williams	1, 2 and 3	Student	Leader
Jean Milburn	Gillian Anderson	1, 2 and 3	Mother/Sex Therapist	Extravagant

Source: Author's own work.

When analyzing the socio-demographic aspects, they are explained in relation to each season. As for the first season, 23 (44.23%) are men and 29 (55.77%) are women. Regarding age, 15 (28.84%) are teenagers, ranging from 16 to 18 years old, and 37 (71.16%) are between 35 and 55 years old, indicating that they are adults. Lastly, concerning the nationality of the characters, 43 (82.69%) are English, 8 (15.38%) are from Nigeria, and 1 (1.93%) is of Indian origin. Turning attention to the second season, 23 (42.59%) are men and 31 (57.41%) are women. In terms of age, 18 (33.33%) are teenagers, 35 (64.81%) belong to the adult age group, and only 1 (1.86%) is a girl under 3 years old. As for nationality, 44 (81.4%) are English, 4 (7.44%) are Nigerian, 2 (3.72%) are Indian women, 3 (5.58%) are Pakistani, and 1 (1.86%) is a French student. Finally, in the third season, 17 (42.51%) are men and 23 (57.49%) are women. A total of 14 (35%) characters are teenagers, 25 (62.5%) are adults, and 1 (2.5%) is under 3 years old. Similarly, regarding nationality, 31 (77.5%) are English, 1 (2.5%) is a French boy, 7 (17.5%) are from Nigeria, and 1 (2.5%) is a girl from India.

When analyzing sexual orientation, it is observed that throughout the series there is a greater representation of heterosexual characters, with a higher representation of this group in the second season (48.08% in the first season, 53.7% in the second season, and 50% in the third season). Additionally, characters belonging to the LGBTQ+ community, including homosexual, bisexual, non-binary, and pansexual characters, also appear, with this group having a greater presence in the third season (19.23% in the first season, 14.81% in the second season, and 25% in the third season) (Figure 2).

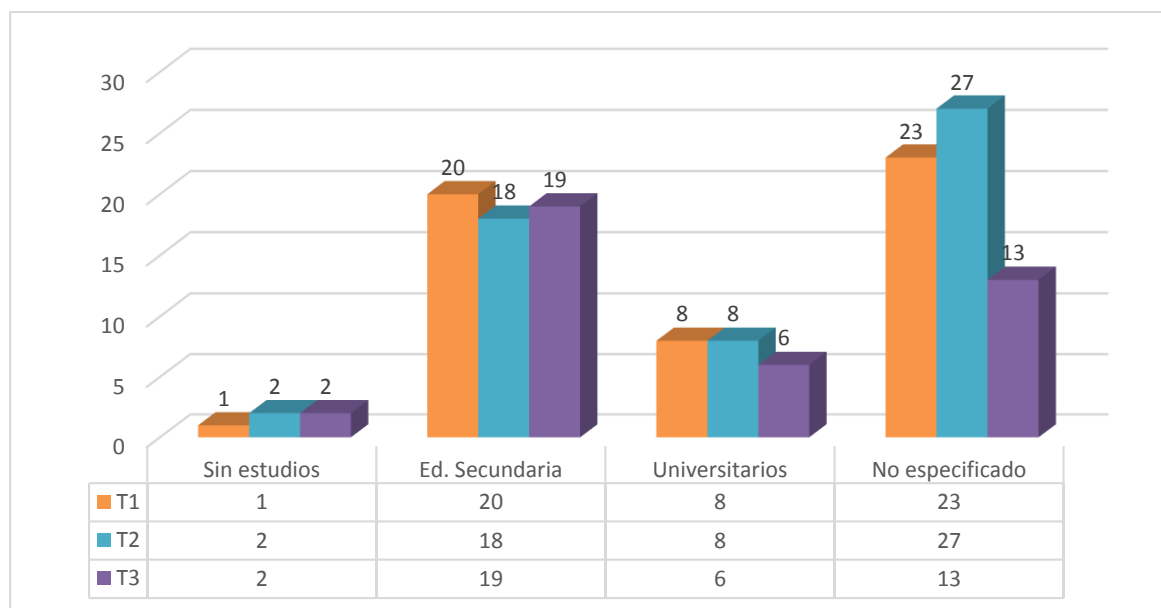
Figure 2. *Sex Education* characters' sexual orientation.



Source: Author's own work.

Another aspect studied has been the educational background of the characters, where it is observed that the group currently pursuing secondary education or already having completed it is the most numerous in all seasons, with the third season having the highest representation (38.46% in the first season, 31.49% in the second season, and 47.5% in the third season). The second most represented group is those with a university education, with a greater weight in the first season (15.38% in the first season, 14.81% in the second season, and 15% in the third season). Those without any formal education form a minority group with limited representation in all three seasons (1.93% in the first season, 3.72% in the second season, and 5% in the third season) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Academic background of the characters in *Sex Education*.



Source: Author's own work.

Educational content in the series *Sex Education*

The main themes shown in the series deal with aspects related to sexual education. Among them, they teach how to deal with a romantic disappointment in adolescents, where Otis, the protagonist of the series, offers advice to a high school classmate, Liam, who intends to climb down from the roof of the gym and plunge into the void because the girl who likes does not have the same feelings towards him.

Liam: Lizzie! Lizzie! It's me, Liam. Up here, on the roof..

Michael Groff (school principal): Liam, come down from there!

Liam: No, not until I talk to Lizzie.

Lizzie: I don't know him. He's a creep who keeps bothering me.

Liam: I love you, Lizzie. And do you love me?

Lizzie: No!

Michael Groff: Come down right now!

Liam: No!

Michael Groff: That's enough! Get down from there now!

Liam: What's the point? Lizzie doesn't want me. Nobody wants me. I'm going to jump!

Otis: Liam, don't! Stay still. Don't do it.

Liam: Hi, Otis.

Otis: You don't want to jump.

Liam: I think I do.

Otis: No, you don't. Look, sometimes the people we like don't feel the same way about us. It's painful, but we can't do anything about it.

Liam: You don't understand.

Otis: Yes, I do. I know what it's like for someone not to feel the same way, and you can't stop thinking about it. It hurts, but you can't force anyone.

Liam: I don't like her, I love her.

Otis: I know. But love isn't something you can win over with gestures or the moon and the stars. It's pure luck. Sometimes you meet someone who feels the same way, and sometimes you're just unlucky. But someday, you'll find someone who loves you for who you are. There are 7 billion people on Earth, and one of them will hang from the moon for you.

Liam: Really?

Otis: Yes. You're great! A committed guy. Someday, you'll make someone very happy.

Lizzie: But it won't be me.

Otis: Yes, Lizzie, that's clear. But someone else, and it won't happen if you fall off the moon and die.

Sex Education (Netflix: January 11, 2019). Season 1, Chapter 7: Episode 7.

On the other hand, there is also a reference to aspects such as fetishism in sexual relationships within a couple, where Otis advises his friend Olivia about this matter:

Olivia: Thanks to your mother, my boyfriend thinks I want to kill him.

Otis: Why?

Olivia: Because sometimes I do... a thing, okay? I cover his face with a pillow when I orgasm, and according to your mother, it's fetishism.

Otis: And isn't it?

Olivia: I look ugly. I've seen myself in the mirror. I look like a python swallowing an egg. But Malik always looks perfect.

Otis: Well, it's normal to feel observed and vulnerable in that moment. I'm sure he also feels silly at times. We might think we look ridiculous or unattractive, but sex isn't always perfect, and it should be based on feeling good, not looking good. It's a privilege to see your boyfriend in that state. Maybe both of you should work on your trust so you can be open with him, even when you think you look ugly because I'm sure he doesn't see you that way.

Sex Education (Netflix: January 17, 2020). Season 2, chapter 3: Episode 3.

Likewise, visibility is also given to sexual assaults, as one of the main characters, Aimee, experiences one while traveling on a bus, and the rest of her classmates narrate how they felt after being victims of harassment.

Aimee: Would you stop staring at me?

Maeve: You mean, you won't take the bus because you're afraid to see that guy again?

Aimee: No. It's more because he had a super nice face. I remember him because he smiled and didn't look like a fucking psycho wanker. If that guy could do something like that, anyone could. I felt safe before, but not now. It's going to sound like bullshit to you guys.

Simone: It's not bullshit. I got groped at a station a year ago. We were going to a concert in town. A group of guys passed by us and one of them touched my boob. I was devastated and now, sometimes, I'm afraid of crowds. I thought my body was his.

Ola: Yes, that we are for public use.

Maeve: A few years ago some guys called me dirty names. And one woman told me it was because I wore my pants so short. I went home and cut them even shorter.

Simone: Well done! You didn't have to change because of her.

Maeve: That's right.

Beatrice: I used to go to the municipal pool a lot when I was little. One day, a guy showed me his dick. It was hanging in a funny way under the water and I thought it was funny. I told my mother about it and she never let me go back. It's a shame, really, because I loved going to the pool.

Simone: How unfair!

Beatrice: I guess. But according to statistics, two out of three girls are touched or sexually abused in public places before they are 21.

Simone: Why would guys insist on showing his ass?

Aimee: Yeah, I think the guy on the bus liked it when I was scared.

Ola: A year ago a guy followed me after work. If I picked up the pace, he picked up the pace. I was shitting myself. He took off when he saw my dad and screwed me, because I don't want any guy to have to defend me.

Aimee: I'm sorry that happened to you.

Ola: Me too.

Aimee: Thank you.

Sex Education (Netflix: January 17, 2021). Season 2, episode 7: Episode 7.

After that episode of sexual assault and after a long time, the assaulted girl attends therapy sessions in order to confront this event and, thus, overcome the traumas and insecurities it has caused her, as well as overcome the feeling of guilt she has regarding being assaulted.

Jean: Do you feel comfortable telling me why you've come?

Aimee: Last year, I experienced a sexual assault. And I thought I was getting over it, but now I don't think I am. I used to like my body and making love, but since it happened, I don't like how my body feels. I don't like looking at it, and I don't like my boyfriend touching me either.

Jean: It must be difficult for you. Could you tell me a bit about that assault?

Aimee: I was going to school, and everything seemed normal, and then... I got on the bus... and there was a... man. I'm sorry, sometimes it's hard for me to talk about it.

Jean: It's okay, you don't have to tell me what you don't want to.

Aimee: I want to be the way I was before.

Jean: Maybe you'll never be the same, Aimee. But it doesn't matter. Human beings are constantly changing, and by facing the trauma, you can gain a clear understanding of the event itself, and we can take steps to heal your relationship with your own body. Would you like that?

Aimee: Yes, I would.

Sex Education (Netflix: September 19, 2021) Season 3, Episode 3.

Jean: Do you think if you hadn't smiled at him, he wouldn't have assaulted you?

Aimee: I don't know.

Jean: Had you done it before?

Aimee: (Nods)

Jean: And were you assaulted for doing it?

Aimee: (Shakes her head)

Jean: Listen to me, Aimee. What that man did to you on the bus had nothing to do with your smile or your personality. It was solely his doing. And it was absolutely not your fault, do you understand?

Aimee: How do I become stronger, like you or Maeve?

Jean: I think you're stronger than you realize. The fact that you can say you're angry about Maeve's argument is a positive step towards being able to feel a full range of emotions. But, Aimee, nobody can tell you whether you should break up with your boyfriend or not.

Sex Education (Netflix: September 19, 2021) Season 3, Episode 6.

Furthermore, classes are dedicated at the school to educate students on sexual and emotional education; however, these classes are biased, separating boys and girls and presenting outdated content that does not address the needs and questions of adolescents. While young girls are shown the negative consequences of unprotected sexual relationships and teenage pregnancy, boys are shown a video about the risks of same-gender sexual relationships, emphasizing a higher tendency for sexually transmitted diseases to occur through such relationships.

(In the students' classroom)

Man: We all know what it feels like when we suffer unwanted erections, whether sleeping, at the disco or kissing for the first time the girl we like. How do you deal with the danger of an unexpected emission until you are ready to procreate with your wife? Homosexual activities are more likely to transmit sexual diseases such as herpes, syphilis, HIV or AIDS.

Student 1: Teacher, this video doesn't teach us anything about safe sex. They just shame gay people.

Student 2: And what do flying penises have to do with STDs?

Colin (Teacher): Remember, we don't ask questions. We just watched this video. Like this.

Otis: Why can't we ask questions?

Colin: You're already asking.

Otis: It's just that this video makes a lot of claims that are not very valid. It just preaches abstinence and homophobia, which is dangerous and we're too old for flying penises.

Colin: Okay, stop calling me a penis!

Otis: You can't just put that on and expect us to....

Colin: Otis, you're interrupting. Get out!

Otis: Really?

Colin: Yes, really. Otis: Get out.

Eric: Can't you say penis in sex ed?

Colin: I'm sorry, okay. But I can lose my job if I let you ask me questions. Just watch it, please.

(In the female students' classroom)

Woman: I'll tell you how one night of sex ruined my life. Did my boyfriend and I use a condom? Yes! Did it break? Yes! Did my boyfriend tell me? No! You teenagers shouldn't have sex because sex ruins your life, forever. I went from having dreams to having a 6 month old baby that left me with leaking urine and a flaccid vagina.

Maeve: Sorry, are boys taught about pregnancy or just girls? Only girls, right? How modern!

Principal: Shut up Maeve!

Woman: After I got pregnant, I was forced to drop out of school.

Maeve: You can always choose. You can always choose not to have a baby.

Headmistress: Stop it!

Maeve: And it's not much to have sexual desires. You make sex terrifying and you shouldn't have to. It can be fun and... beautiful, and teach you things about yourself and your body. And you should not teach us to avoid being sexually active, because that doesn't work.

Principal: Okay, out! Now!

Maeve: Nice to meet you.

Sex Education (Netflix: September 19, 2021) Season 3, episode 4: Episode 4.

On the other hand, the situation of resolving doubts related to sexual relationships by adolescents with healthcare professionals is raised, specifically in a medical consultation with a nurse regarding aspects related to unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases, providing them with reliable information on these matters.

Nurse: Pulling out can lead to unwanted pregnancies if your partner doesn't withdraw in time or if his sperm ends up in your vagina. It also puts you at risk of contracting or transmitting an STI. Is your boyfriend pressuring you not to use a condom?

Simone: He says he likes it better that way.

Nurse: How do you feel about it?

Simone: I don't enjoy sex because I'm afraid of getting pregnant.

Nurse: That's not right, don't you think? (...)

Nurse: Well, tell me, do you practice unprotected sex?

Chaneil: Every movie where someone has sex ends with them getting AIDS and dying. I don't want to die, that's why I use condoms.

Nurse: As long as you and your partners practice safe sex and get tested regularly, it's highly unlikely that you'll get infected. Additionally, there's now a medication called PrEP that protects people who engage in regular risky sex from contracting HIV. And if someone does contract the virus nowadays, there are medications that allow them to live a long and healthy life until they reach a point where the virus is undetectable, which means they no longer transmit it to others. I don't think you're going to die in the short term.

Sex Education (Netflix: September 19, 2021) Season 3, Chapter 4: Episode 4.

Aspects related to sex education are subject to debate among teachers and students in a natural and uncensored way; however, the topic of sexuality often evokes feelings of shame when discussing it.

Beatrice: Retrograde views on sex lead to shame, and people have been taught to feel ashamed of their bodies and identities in an ongoing cycle that continues to this day.

Jackson: But the world is changing, and young people are fed up. If they agree that communication and empathy are better tools than silence and shame, help us create a better school.

Sex Education (Netflix: September 19, 2021) Season 3, Chapter 7: Episode 7.

To conclude, a relevant aspect in the storylines portrayed in the series is single motherhood through in vitro fertilization. Through this story, the aim is to shed light on the emotions experienced by a woman who is unable to conceive, such as feelings of failure, disappointment, vulnerability, loneliness, and sadness.

Principal: I'm not much older than you, but my generation knew how to behave and what was important.

Otis: The topics we discuss have always been there. People didn't feel safe bringing them up. And that's changing (...) What are you going to do now?

Principal: I've been trying to get pregnant for three years, and now I'm trying to start another round of treatment.

Otis: I hope you have luck!

Principal: It won't happen. I won't have it. You don't know what it's like to wake up with that sense of failure every morning. I'm sorry, I'm having a breakdown.

Otis: Why would it be a failure?

Principal: Because my body doesn't want to do the one thing it's supposed to be good for, the thing I want it to do. But you can't have it all, I guess. And dwelling on it weakens you.

Otis: You're not weak; you're just honest about feeling disappointed about not having something you want. And admitting vulnerabilities makes you brave.

Principal: It's very hard, but thank you.

Sex Education (Netflix: September 19, 2021) Season 3, Chapter 8: Episode 8.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Once the results obtained from the research have been analyzed, the relationship with the overall objective proposed can be observed, identifying the teachings on sex education conveyed through the TV series *Sex Education*. Likewise, the specific objectives have also been addressed, as on the one hand, the pedagogical value of the series in terms of presenting content related to sex education is observed, and on the other hand, these teachings are conveyed through the characters that make up the series. Through this series, an attempt is made to provide answers to some of the questions that adolescents may have regarding sex education, as corroborated by Mateos-Pérez's statement that these series present "content that seeks authenticity, stories and characters linked to reality (and that) use a youth jargon, repetitive, spontaneous, specific to the social class they represent" (2021, p. 154).

Regarding the characters, it is evident that in each of the three seasons, there are a total of 7 main characters. The majority gender throughout the series is female, and the age group with the highest representation is between 35 and 55 years old, despite the focus being on the younger characters. The majority nationality in the series is English, although there is a significant representation of characters of Indian origin. In terms of education level, those with secondary education or currently studying at this level constitute the majority in the series. Finally, the largest group in terms of sexual orientation throughout the series is heterosexual, with a small number of characters belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. This is reflected in other studies that affirm significant differences in the representation of heterosexual and LGBTQ+ characters in TV series (Platero, 2008; Fellner, 2017; Calvo-Anoro, 2017). Studies on the representation of characters in TV series are extensive, with a particular emphasis on the portrayal of stereotypes (Guarínós, 2009) and sexuality (García-Manso, 2013; Figueras-Maz et al., 2014; Lacalle & Castro, 2017).

Throughout the series, teachings based on sex education are transmitted, as aspects related to: 1) love disappointments; 2) fetishism; 3) sexual aggressions; 4) psychological therapy to overcome sexual aggression; 4) unwanted pregnancies in adolescents; 5) guilt and shame of getting pregnant; 6) sexually transmitted diseases; 7) sex education in the classroom; 8) use of contraceptive methods; or 9) in vitro fertilization. It is a reality that "adolescents are searching for their own sexual identity, and relationships make them reflect on themselves and who they want to be" (Van-Damme, 2010, p. 86).

Throughout the series, it is shown that the main characters have doubts about their sexuality and the potential consequences of engaging in unprotected sex, such as the fear of teenage pregnancy or contracting a sexually transmitted disease. This confirms findings from various studies that indicate that in series featuring young people, sexual relationships are portrayed at an increasingly early stage, as well as casual relationships (Eyal et al., 2007).

Within this context, there is a significant amount of research related to television series and the portrayal of sex in them. It can be observed that it is young women who initiate conversations with a marked sexual nature (Aubrey, 2004), while it is boys who take the first step towards engaging in sexual relationships (Batchelor et al., 2004). Regarding the use of protection during sexual encounters, there are few scenes where methods to prevent unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases are depicted, and the negative consequences of these acts are rarely shown (Aubrey, 2004; L'Engle et al., 2006; Hust et al., 2008; Wright, 2009). When it comes to consent or engaging in sexual relationships, young women only discuss this aspect in private settings (Donstrup, 2022). In this context, the loss of virginity does not have the same connotation for boys as it does for girls, as it represents an increase in social status among their peers, whereas for girls, it carries moral implications (Kelly, 2010).

As future lines of research, there is a need to understand firsthand the opinions that adolescents have about this type of series that revolve around sexual education. It is important to explore how they feel when watching these series, whether they identify with the storylines portrayed, and whether the lessons conveyed in the series address the questions they have about the topic.

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7. Artículos relacionados

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