

Metadigm Group
for
Book of Hope

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS OF YOUTH Project

Free State, South Africa

Executive Summary for Education and Program Development

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Project Description

Acknowledgments:

This project was made possible in part by funding from the Maclellan Foundation and Global Ministries - Book of Hope International.

We acknowledge the cooperation of the Department of Education South Africa, the headmasters and staff of the schools included in the sample, and the cooperation of students and volunteers. As a demonstration project this cooperation was essential to the research completion, however, it is important to complete the subsequent project with a higher level of independence. While it is expected the permission of the Department of Education will be necessary for subsequent segments of the research project, it is also anticipated that we will follow more rigorous research methodology seeking a higher confidence level in subsequent segments.

The instrument administered in this study was made available by Josh McDowell Ministries.

Overview:

Book of Hope seeks to understand what children and youth deal with in their day-to-day realities. We know that children and youth face a variety of social challenges and experience psycho-social needs to which they are often left without effective responses. We do know that the needs of children vary from country to country and even regionally within countries. However, without reliable information we are unable to tailor our products and distribution programs to address needs specific to particular contexts.

While the issues and challenges facing children and youth in developed countries are researched and documented, those in developing countries are not. Without an accurate analysis of their contexts these populations are treated as though they share a common reality. An awareness of the immediate reality of children is often discovered only after ministry has begun and resources have been committed to a project.

The Attitudes and Behavior of Youth project will capture the following information about children in Free State, South Africa:

- ☞ typical family situations, relationships and parental contact
- ☞ behaviors and moral values guiding relationships with peers of the opposite sex
- ☞ daily occupations and pastimes
- ☞ worldviews, influences, beliefs, future goals and religious affiliation
- ☞ theological perspectives and commitment

In South Africa this research was initiated in the Free State. This is the first of a three part study on Attitudes and Behavior of Youth in South Africa. Access was more readily available for a demonstration project, the population represents a unique demographic and this region offers a representative sample of mixed urban and agricultural populations.

This research offers the opportunity to test the assumption that this region has retained traditional moral values to a greater degree than some of the other regions that will be studied in South Africa. The uniqueness of this region and its demographics should be taken into account when reading this research report and will either be validated or discounted as the remainder of this study is completed.

Research Methodology

This project did not follow our usual approach to gathering this information. The survey sample was not randomized and does not give us the level of certainty we would like in establishing a report that is a fair representation of secondary students in Free State. The survey was also administered by the students' teachers. It is possible that this methodology skews the data since students are less likely to be forthcoming than if a person unknown to them administers the survey. It was also not possible to determine whether the methodology employed in administering the survey was consistent across each of the populations. With

these limitations in mind it still produces some interesting results, however without the level of confidence we would wish to have represent our work.

The survey was administered in secondary schools by the school educator's who were participating in Life Orientation training conducted by Book of Hope's South Africa Regional Director, Jacques van Bommel. The Department of Education selected which Life Orientation schools would participate in the survey and included representation from all the school districts in the Free State Province. The surveys were in English, the language of instruction and administered to students in the schools balanced by gender (proportional to the national ratio of male-female). Of the 15 schools selected to administer the surveys, 13 schools participated and returned the completed surveys.

Additional strata that offer possible additional analysis are economic status, family composition, ethnicity and religious affiliation.

The core survey is constructed using the Survey of Juveniles designed by Chris Sleath of Josh McDowell Ministries.

Project Overview

The data was collected August of 2007 through December of 2007. The local coordinator for the research conducted in Free State was Carol Jacobs. The research followed the project design instructions (see below under Logistics). Mrs. Harriet Speckmeyer, Life Skills Director for Free State Department of Education, made this research possible and approved the project concept. Mr. Johnny Percent was assigned as the liaison for the Department of Education of Free State during the data collection.

Data was entered into a web-based database. The data base was hosted by Philip Issa of Elite Survey and assessed by Dr. Rene Paulson, Ph.D. The final report employs Dr. Paulson's analysis of the data and is supplemented with secondary data drawn from research projects and primary qualitative data.

Logistics

Review: National leaders reviewed the survey and recommended only minor changes.

Randomization: Randomization by gender was done when students were selected for participation, to ensure that gender participation reflects the male/female ratio of the national population.

Verifying Access: Access was granted by the South Africa Ministry of Education and the Educators who participated in the Life Skills training were asked to participate with their students.

Survey Printing: A master copy of the survey response form was forwarded electronically to the local Research Coordinator collated and stapled copies.

Quality Control: Hard copy survey response forms will be retained by the local Book of Hope office in South Africa for one year to provide the opportunity of verifying the accuracy of data entry and as a back up to electronic data files. The surveys must be kept confidential and will be turned over to a designated BOH Headquarters representative on or about 12 months following the survey. This person will oversee the shredding of the hard copy surveys after 12 months.

Implementation & Survey Administration

Data Collection

The survey was administered by teachers of the Life Skills program in the schools identified by the Department of Education and were previously contacted.

Data Entry

Carol Jacobs and Response Team Members of Book of Hope were responsible for accurate input of the data into the web-based survey interface.

Key Issues Analysis

Key Issues

- Family composition
 - 43% - two parent family
 - 21% - one parent has died
 - 17% - parents are divorced or separated
 - 9% - both of their parents have died
 - 20% - live with a grandparent
 - 3% - do not live with an adult
- Perception of Family
 - Definition of family
 - 33% define family as any group of people who live together
 - 28% define family as those related by birth, adoption or marriage
 - 26% define family as any person or group who you love or care deeply
 - Function of family
 - Place for children –
 - 70% consider unmarried men and women with children or single women with children a family
 - Relationship –
 - 32% consider unmarried man and women a family
 - 32% consider cohabiting divorced women a family
- Relationship with parents
 - 26% spend more than 60 minutes a week talking with their father about things that really matter
 - 46% spend more than 60 minutes a week talking with their mothers about things that really matter
- Safety and Security of home
 - 64% feel their home is a place where they feel safe and loved
 - 7% are uncomfortable and rather be elsewhere
- Marriage
 - 85% feel that they will be happy in their marriage
 - 82% believe God intended marriage to last a life time
 - 59% feel the traditional family does not play a significant role in the stability of society
 - 42% report there is too much pressure to get married
 - 42% would rather live together without marriage
 - 48% indicate that anyone who gets married should anticipate divorce
 - 53% approve of divorce even when children are involved
- Sexuality
 - 24% have engaged in intense sexual activities
 - Male respondents are more than four times as likely to have engaged sexual intercourse than females
 - Most likely to learn about sex from television or movies, then textbooks (school) and sex-related magazines/books
 - They are least likely to learn about sex from their parents or the internet and friends

- Satisfaction with Life
 - 58% of respondents indicate they are very and 23% somewhat satisfied with their lives
 - Over the past three months
 - 27% have considered suicide and 18% have reported attempting suicide
 - Younger students more likely to report having more suicidal thoughts
 - 40% indicate having attempted to hurt another person physically or emotionally
 - 40% have gambled
 - 40% viewed a pornographic magazine or pornographic movie
- Influences
 - 76% influenced by their parents
 - 69% teachers, television, the Bible, music and their Christian faith
 - 57% by movies
 - 56% by religious and community leaders
- Moral behavior
 - 60% practice moral relativism
 - 60% feel lying is sometimes a necessity
 - 57% feel bending the rules is okay
 - 48% feel that breaking the law is okay if it does not hurt anyone
- Factors providing future satisfaction
 - 88% relationship with God
 - 85% good physical health
 - 83% owning a large house and having a high paying job
 - 80% having one marriage partner for life

Strengths and Opportunities

- Students enrolled in secondary school perceive their performance to be generally good or excellent
- Influence of parents is perceived by students to be the most significant in their lives
- Education is important and teachers are also thought of a significant influences in the lives of students
- Children, particularly those who are younger are close to their mothers and hold their fathers in high regard
- Schools are currently a significant source of information about sexuality and sexual priorities
- Students who are younger have a greater affinity for sexual abstinence (This may indicate the influence of recent HIV risk reduction training)
- Desire for spiritual fulfillment

Weaknesses and Threats

- Families are weakened by parental loss through death or divorce
- Students do not have a healthy idea of the family and are unprepared to succeed in families of their own
- The role of fathers is limited and poorly defined
- As children age, their sense of security in the home diminishes
- High level of sexual activity means at risk behaviors for HIV/AIDS
- High levels of despair and ideation of suicide are possibly driven by economic issues and low self-esteem
- Morals are defined pragmatically rather than as values to be upheld indicated student responses

Recommendations

- Research the quality of relationship with teachers
- Need for mentors and heroes/role models; teachers can be more influential
- Strengthen families to better support children
- Reinforce school based teaching on healthy sexual behavior
- Prepare children for marriage and parenting
- Web and internet literacy and usage standards to protect children from potential abuse and exploitation
- Develop programs to reinforce student's self esteem

Profile of Youth in Free State, South Africa

Demographic Profile

The gender distribution of those surveyed reflects the demographic distribution of the national population. Sixty-six percent of those surveyed are 15 years of age and younger and 34% are 16 years of age and older. Most students are enrolled in the 7th, 8th and 9th forms with ninth form represented with 38%. Over half (53%) of students report they are doing “good” in school. One-third report that they are doing “average” and 13% report “excellent.”

More than half of the students surveyed report their fathers’ and mothers’ professions as “other” with those over 16 years of age more likely to select this category. This may indicate that parents are either working at home, unemployed or do not fit into one of the other categories. For both fathers and mothers, professional and industrial professions are the next highest categories. The third highest category for fathers is the public sector and service for mothers.

Students are 43% represented as being members of a two parent family. Twenty-one percent report that one parent has died, 17% report that their parents are divorced or separated and 9% report that both of their parents have died.

Fifty-two percent report that they live with two parents, though 13% indicate that one of the parents is a step-parent. Eighteen percent report that they live with only one parent, while almost 20% live with a grandparent; 3% do not live with an adult.

Family Relationships

One third of respondents define family as any group of people who live together; this belief is held 11% more by males than females. Almost as many respondents (28%) define family by its usual description, those related by birth, adoption or marriage. Twenty-six percent define family as any person or group who you love or care deeply; females and younger students are more likely adhere to this belief. Older students are slightly more likely than younger students to define family as a group who share the same set of values and goals in life.

The role of children in a family unit seems to be most necessary for this group to determine the status of family. Unmarried men and women with children or single women with children are perceived to be family, by about 70%. Almost a third of the respondents consider a cohabiting male and female (sexual), as well as cohabiting divorced women (non-sexual) family.

It should be noted for the following observations that 25% of respondents indicated that their father is not alive with little difference between gender and age. This means that we must take into account that these students represent much of the group who report little or no interaction with their fathers. This is also true for 14% of those who responded to their interaction with their mothers.

For those respondents whose fathers are still alive, 44% report they are either “fairly close” or “very close” to their father; males and older students are slightly more likely to be close to their fathers. Almost half of the respondents indicate that they frequently feel proud of their father, show love for their father and feel that their father shows love for them; there is little distinction by gender, though younger students report higher frequencies. Though 46% feel their father shows his love for them, only slightly more than 40% report they sometimes or frequently talk with their father about their personal concerns. Sixty-five percent generally spend less than 60 minutes talking with their father about things that really matter to them.

About 14% of students report that their mother is not alive. Of those respondents with mothers still alive they report that they are “fairly” or “very close” to them. Younger children indicate more likely to be close to their mothers than older children. There is little distinction by gender. In all categories, respondents are more likely to interact with their mothers than with their fathers, with girls and younger students slightly more likely than their male and older counterparts. Both male and female (88%) are proud of their mother, and 78% equally feel their mother shows love for them and are able to talk with them about their personal concerns. Respondents indicate that they spend significant time talking with their mothers, 33% spend two or more hours per week. Females and younger students are slightly more likely to spend significant time talking with their mother.

Youth indicate that the adults in their family are very interested in “who they are”, set good examples, demonstrate love and spend time with them. Seventy-three percent indicate that the adults in their family admit when they are wrong or mistaken. More than half of the students report that they sometimes feel the adults in their family do not trust them, do not allow them to do the things they want to do, are too strict, and sometimes shout at them. There is little significant difference when analyzed by gender.

Sixty-four percent feel their home is a place where they feel safe and loved; this is 5% higher for children younger than 16 years old. Only 7% indicate that they feel uncomfortable and rather be elsewhere. Older students are 6% more likely to feel uncomfortable in their home and 10% less likely to indicate that they feel safe and loved.

Although 82% indicate that God intended marriage to last a life time, nearly 60% disagree with the statement that the traditional family supports society, 42% report there is too much pressure to get married and would rather live together without marriage. Closely tracking to their pessimism about marriage nearly half indicate that anyone who gets married should anticipate divorce. Fifty-two percent approve of divorce even when children are involved. Yet 85% feel that they will be happy in their marriage.

Relationships with People of the Opposite Sex

Two-thirds (63%) indicate that they would prefer to be virgins at marriage. Females are 18% more likely to indicate that they would have waited until marriage to have sex and 11% more likely to want to be a virgin in marriage; younger students also report approximately 10% greater desire to wait until marriage to have sex. This is slightly more likely to be felt by older and male students.

It is important to note that older respondents are almost twice as likely to engage in intense sexual activities as their younger counterparts. Since this population is under represented in the survey sample as a whole; we can conclude that for a general population this category of sexual activity is somewhat under reported.

Regardless of gender or age 77% report that they have held hands with a member of the opposite sex; one-quarter of all students report having engaged in intense sexual activities, such as fondling breasts, genitals and engaging in sexual intercourse. Male respondents are over three times as likely to have engaged in fondling breasts and genitals and four times more likely to have had sex than females.

Between 50%-60% expressed the opinion that fondling and sexual intercourse are never acceptable, though a quarter indicate that “sometimes” these actions are acceptable. Males tend to be more accepting of intense sexual activity than females. Fondling of breast and genitals are slightly more acceptable by older students.

Approximately 40% of those responding indicate that sexual intercourse is likely to be perceived as acceptable if there is intent for marriage. Other factors, such as friendship, parental permission, pregnancy or being in love are permissive factors for fewer than 30%, although parents seem to have more influence in this regard than peers.

Respondents are most likely to have learned about sex from television or movies, followed by textbooks and sex-related magazines/books. They are least likely to learn about sex from their parents, followed by the internet and friends.

Beliefs and Perspectives about Daily Life

Over a three month period, with little difference when compared by gender or age, 58% of respondents indicate they are very satisfied with their lives and 23% somewhat satisfied. Given this level of satisfaction, a much higher than expected percentage, (27%) have considered suicide and 18% have reported attempting suicide; with younger students more likely to report having more suicidal thoughts. About 40% indicate having attempted to hurt another person physically or emotionally, gambled, read a pornographic magazine or watched an x-rated or pornographic movie. Older males are more likely to have watched an x-rated movie and far more likely to have read a pornographic magazine than their younger counterparts.

The most frequent past time reported is listening to music followed by watching television and chatting on the internet or SMS. Least likely past times are looking for information on the web, reading the Bible, sleeping, and reading a book. Females are slightly more likely to read or study than their male counterparts. In other categories there is little difference when analyzed by gender or age.

The data shows that students are most influenced by their parents followed by their teachers, television, the Bible, music and their Christian faith. Parents and teachers influence is approximately 20% greater than that of religious leaders in the community. Students rate movies' influence at 58%, followed closely by the influence of national political leaders at 49%.

Sixty percent indicate that all religions teach equally valid truths. The influence of religion including Christianity trends as follows: Christianity 58%, traditional ancestor worship 51%, new age religion 42% and other religions approximately 30%.

Also, at about 60%, students report a pragmatic approach to life that regards truth as relative and morals as right "if it works". About 60% feel lying is sometimes a necessity, 57% feel bending the rules is okay and 48% feel that breaking the law is okay if it does not hurt anyone.

Students report that satisfaction in the future is based on having a close relationship with God at 88% followed by owning a large house and having a high paying job at 83%, having good physical health at 85% and having one marriage partner for life at 80%. Sixty-one percent expressed a desire to be active in a church, live close to family and relatives and make a difference in the world. The least valued criteria for future satisfaction is having a fulfilled sex life in marriage, having children, influence on others lives, and fame.

Among new fads, the most significant influence is electronic media, followed by fashion magazines and hip hop music. The product least likely to influence students is blogging.

Religious Background

Fifty-four percent of those responding indicate that they are Christian – 31% Protestant and 23% Catholic. Seventeen percent profess Indigenous faith and almost 10% practice no faith. About 70% indicate that religious beliefs changed their behavior and 74% that they have a responsibility to tell others about their faith. Yet nearly 70% of students believe that all religions teach the same principles and essentially pray to the same God. However, 87% still believe that their faith is very important and 85% that it is important to be a member of a church.

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents prefer to think of God an omnipotent and creator of the universe, while approximately 23% adhere to a more “new age” definition of God. Sixty-five percent are certain of the existence of God and an additional 29% consider God’s existence probable. It seems that most of these, 86%, believe the universe was created by God. Only 57% believe that God is personally involved in their lives.

Seventy-nine percent believe Jesus was a real person, 77% express the opinion that forgiveness of sins is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ and 70% accept the virgin birth of Jesus. However, 65% do not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus and 51% believe He committed sins while on earth.

Eighty percent indicate the Bible provides absolute moral truths, is totally accurate in all its teachings and that prayer can change the events of life. Approximately 75% believe that Biblical miracles actually took place. Seventy percent view the devil as a symbol of evil and not a living being, yet 68% believe angels exist and influence lives.

Approximately 75% believe that being good can earn a place in Heaven, though 74% also believe in the judgment of God. Forty-one percent believe the idea of sin is outdated while 49% believe some sins can not be forgiven. However, they are about equally split on the belief that what they do for other people is more important than what they believe about Christ. They are also equally split on the belief of reincarnation. About 45% are certain that human souls are eternal and heaven and hell are real places. Twenty-one percent accept that each of the following are true of life after death; “they do not know what will happen to them after they die,” “confession of sins and acceptance of Jesus Christ is necessary for access into Heaven”, and “access into Heaven is gained by following rites of religion”.

Religious Practices

Although 89% indicate that religion is somewhat or very important to them and 83% report that they are somewhat or very likely to be involved in religious services after they have left home; fewer than half of students (44%) participate in weekly or daily religious activities. Their families, with the exception of fathers, are slightly more likely to participate in weekly or daily religious activities. Fifty-one percent of respondents attend groups smaller than 30, 32% attend groups of 31-60 people, and almost 20% indicate that these groups do not apply to them.

Although, 62% report weekly or daily prayer, scripture reading, including the Bible or Koran, is not a regular practice. Thirty-one percent report that they read scriptures weekly or daily, 11% monthly and 58% seldom or rarely. They indicate that they learned about the Bible or Jesus mostly from church (91%), family or relatives (84%), and other (64%).

With 90% responding, 86% of these indicate that they made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important. Sixty percent made the commitment between the ages of 9-15 years old, with 38% between 13-15 years old and 22% between 9-12 years old.