

PREDICTORS OF RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG ADOLESCENT BOYS AND GIRLS

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INTRODUCTION

Risky sexual behavior is one of the major issues in many fields (medicine, psychology, sociology...), particularly when it comes to adolescents. Worldwide studies show that its prevalence among adolescent boys and girls is high, and has an ascending trend. In an attempt to understand and prevent such behavior, numerous studies assessed different predictors of adolescent risky behavior. It was shown that significant predictors of risky sexual behavior generally include personality traits such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, impulsivity, sensation seeking, emotional instability, agreeableness, consciousness etc., as well as academic performance and some parental variables when adolescents are concerned.

AIM The aim of this study is to present frequency of risky sexual behavior among adolescent boys and girls, within, identifying risk factors and whether factors in question differ among boys and girls.

METHOD Participants

The data was collected within the scope of International Father Acceptance-Rejection Project among 572 high school students (318 boys and 254 girls) in Zagreb. Number of participants used in this study is 552 (305 boys and 247 girls).

Measures

Risky sexual behavior was measured with a subscale of **Youth Self-Reported Delinquency and Risk Behaviors Questionnaire** (SRDP-2007; Ručević, Ajduković and Šincek, 2009). Subscale consists of 4 items for which participants have to state how many times in their lifetime have they behaved in a described way on a five-point scale: 0 = never (0), 1-4 = one to four (1), 5-10 = five to ten (2), 11-20 = eleven to twenty (3), 21 and more = twenty-one and more times (4). Item concerning the number of sexual partners was measured on a four-point scale: 0 = zero (0), 1-2 = one to two (1), 3-4 = three to four (2), 5 and more = five and more (3). Total score was calculated as a sum of products of frequency for different behaviors and related ponders (1-9), depending on severity of described behavior.

Personality dimensions were measured with **Child Personality Assessment Questionnaire** (Child PAQ; Rohner, 1991). Child PAQ is composed of 42 items which reflect seven personality dimensions: hostility and aggression, dependency, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional unresponsiveness, emotional instability and negative world view. Respondents are instructed to ask themselves if an item is basically true or untrue about the way they see themselves. If the statement is basically true they are instructed to ask themselves "Is it almost always true?" (scored as 4) or "Is it only sometimes true?" (scored as 3). If the statement is basically untrue they are instructed to ask themselves "Is it rarely true?" (scored as 2) or "Is it almost never true?" (scored as 1). Total score on every dimension is calculated as a sum of scores on corresponding items, where higher score reflects higher level of corresponding personality dimension.

RESULTS

Graph 1. Percentage of reported number of sexual partners among adolescent boys and girls



Graph 2. Percentage of reported unprotected sexual relationships among adolescent boys and girls



Graph 3. Percentage of reported one night-stands among adolescent boys and girls



Graph 4. Percentage of reported fear of pregnancy among adolescent boys and girls



Gender differences: Boys have significantly more sexual partners ($\chi^2=22.073$, $p < .001$) and significantly more one night-stands ($\chi^2=18.714$, $p < .001$). Girls have significantly more sexual relationships without protection ($\chi^2=43.295$, $p < .001$) and significantly more often fear of pregnancy ($\chi^2=18.974$, $p < .001$).

Table 1. Summary results of hierarchical regression analyses of risky sexual behavior on sociodemographic and personality variables

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted separately for boys and girls with personality dimensions as predictors and risky sexual behavior as a criterion variable. Sociodemographic variables (adolescent's age, school success and parental educational level) were taken as control variables.

Generally, risky sexual behavior of adolescent boys and girls is significantly predicted by age and school success in a sense that older adolescents and those with poorer school success exhibit more risky sexual behavior. These sociodemographic variables explain more variance of girls' (24.5%) risky sexual behavior than boys' (7.5%).

Variables related to personality dimensions significantly accounted for risky behavior only among girls (9%).

It can be noted that emotional unresponsiveness significantly predicts risky sexual behavior among boys, while hostility and aggression significantly predicts risky sexual behavior among girls: more emotionally responsive boys and more hostile and aggressive girls exhibit higher tendency of risky sexual behavior.

VARIABLES	Risky sexual behavior			
	Boys		Girls	
	β	R ²	β	R ²
STEP 1 - sociodemographics		.075*		.245**
Age	.168*		.240**	
School success	-.191*		-.438**	
Father's educational level	.073		.001	
Mother's educational level	.022		.005	
STEP 2 - personality dimensions - ΔR^2		.062		.090*
Hostility and aggression	.146		.204*	
Dependency	-.059		-.099	
Negative self-esteem	.039		-.164	
Negative self-adequacy	-.095		-.048	
Emotional unresponsiveness	-.211*		-.050	
Emotional instability	-.072		.042	
Negative world view	.155		-.077	
FULL MODEL		.137*		.335**

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

CONCLUSION

Results of this study show that adolescent boys and girls differ in frequency of different forms of risky sexual behavior: boys have more sexual partners and one night-stands, while girls have more sexual relationships without protection and higher fear of pregnancy. Also, the results indicate that different risk factors predicted risky sexual behavior among boys and girls: emotional unresponsiveness significantly predicted risky sexual behavior among boys, while hostility and aggression significantly predicted risky sexual behavior among girls.