



FACTORS RELATED TO COLLEGE STUDENT SEXUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary studies on sexuality among emerging adults typically discuss risky behaviors or research on LGBTQ+ individuals, suggesting that there are very few studies on normative sexual development (non-risky) among other diverse populations. This study explored sexuality among college students at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU). Using a t-test, ANOVA, and regression analyses to compare virgins and sexually active college students ages 18-25. This study explored how substance use, alcohol, ethnic identity, GPA, self-esteem, and social skills correlates to sexual activity in college students. Results revealed sexually active students had better social skills and were more likely to engage in risky behaviors, while virgins had higher GPAs and were more open to getting to know individuals of diverse backgrounds.

SUPPORTING LITERATURE

- It is very common for youth and young adults to engage in sexual behaviors in college (Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016)
 - Most first encounters were with steady partners (74% of females; 51% of males); More than half of individuals are sexually active by age 18 (CDC, 2018)
- Higher rates of sexuality for Black and Hispanic/Latino individuals (CDC, 2018)
- Lowest rates of sexuality for Black affluent young adults (Burrington, 2019).
- Latina/o individuals with lower levels of ethnic identity commitment had higher sexual experiences, in this research higher ethnic identity commitment was protective against sexual risk (Ertl et al., 2022).
- Youth who are sexually active have positive perceptions towards sexual self, relational capacities and positive self-beliefs increase with age (Kotiuga et al., 2021).
- Students who reported more positive affects (mentally, emotionally, physically, educationally, etc.) during months of sexual activity than compared to months without sexual activity (Wesche et al., 2019)
- Young adults engaging in alcohol consumption and other risky behaviors tend to engage more sexually (Garcia et al., 2019)



PROCEDURES

- Stratified random sampling was used for all University HEGIS codes (i.e., ANTH through THEA)
- Courses within each HEGIS code were numbered and randomly selected by a random number generator.
- Permission to distribute surveys was obtained from the IRB, Deans, Chairs, Professors, and Students
- All data collectors were trained Data Analysis Seminar students in the Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015 semesters.
- 508 surveys collected; 407 surveys were from individuals under 26 years old (sample is comprised of the participants ages 17-25)

MEASURES

- Behavior Scales developed by the authors for alcohol consumption and illegal substance use.
- Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure— Other Group Orientation Subscale (Phinney, 1992, 6-items)—“I enjoy being around people from other ethnic groups
- Academic Self-Esteem Scale (10 items) – “I feel I’m just as smart as other students my age.” (Wills, Vaccaro, & McNamara, 1992 based on Harter, 1982)
- Peer Competence (Social Skills) Scale (10 items) – “I am really easy to like.” (Wills, Vaccaro, & McNamara, 1992 based on Harter, 1982)
- Social Deviance Scale (10 items) – “How wrong do you think it is to shoplift from a store.” (Wills, Sandy & Yaeger, 2002)

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION & RESULTS



Table 1: Sample Description (N = 407)

Variable	N (%)
Gender	
Female	278 (68.3%)
Male	127 (31.2%)
Father Attended Some College	
Yes	186 (45.7%)
No	209 (51.4%)
Mother Attended Some College	
Yes	253 (62.2%)
No	149 (36.6%)
Race	
African American/Black	328 (80.6%)
Latino/Hispanic	9 (2.2%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	5 (1.2%)
White	12 (2.9%)
Native American	2 (0.5%)
Other	23 (5.7%)
Sexual Activity	
Virgins	76 (15%)
Moderate Activity	181 (35.6%)
Frequent Activity	202 (39.8%)
Missing	49 (9.6%)
Variable	M (SD)
Age	20.88 (1.91)
Grade Point Average	2.97 (0.53)

Table 2: Univariate Results for Most Valued Opinion

Variable	Virgins	Sexually Active	Statistical Sentence
GPA	3.14	2.99	t (368) = 2.30, p < .05*
Openness to Diverse Cultures	20.36	18.64	t (306) = -9.05, p < .001***
Social Skills	38.19	41.32	t (364) = -3.71, p < .001***
Alcohol Consumption	2.32	5.03	t (369) = -6.21, p < .001***
Smoking	0.18	0.96	t (354) = -5.99, p < .001***
Drug Use	0.65	1.81	t (373) = -3.48, p < .01**

When comparing sexually active students to virgins, Virgins had higher GPAs and openness to diverse cultures, while sexually active students had better social skills and were more likely to engage in drinking alcohol, smoking and substance use.

Table 3: Univariate Results for Groups Based on Sexual Activity

Variable	Virgins	Moderate Sexual Activity	Frequent Sexual Activity	Statistical Sentence
Social Skills	38.05 (7.15)	41.22 (5.80)	41.45 (6.48)	F (2, 357) = 7.29, p = .001 Virgins had lower scores than all other groups
Smoking	0.18 (0.62)	0.62 (1.33)	1.31 (2.33)	F (2, 365) = 11.79, p = .000 Frequently sexually active students had higher scores than all other groups
Drinking	2.30 (2.26)	4.23 (2.59)	5.77 (4.18)	F (2, 363) = 27.65, p = .000 Each group was significantly different than the other groups
Drug Use	0.68 (1.94)	1.21 (2.36)	2.31 (2.86)	F (2, 366) = 12.56, p = .000 Frequently sexually active students had higher scores than all other groups
Deviant Behavior	18.84 (8.55)	17.17 (6.19)	18.89 (6.87)	F (2, 363) = 2.62, p = .074 Not Significant
GPA	3.13 (0.52)	2.94 (0.56)	2.94 (0.49)	F (2, 280) = 2.55, p = .080 Not Significant

Frequently sexually active students were more likely to smoke, drink, and drug use. Virgins had less developed social skills and were less likely to drink alcohol.

Table 4: Predictors of College Sexuality

Variable	r (sig.)	β	t (sig.)	Statistical Sentence
Social Skills	0.24 (.000)	0.147	2.35 (.020)	$\Delta R^2 = .15, F(6, 251) = 8.48, p = .000$
Smoking	0.20 (.001)	0.144	2.42 (.016)	
Drinking	0.37 (.000)	0.289	4.73 (.000)	
Drug Use	0.20 (.001)	0.070	1.15 (.250)	
Academic Self-Esteem	0.10 (.053)	0.095	1.52 (.131)	Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
GPA	-0.10 (.053)	-0.062	-1.05 (.297)	

All factors predicted frequency of college sexuality accounting for 15%. The most important variables related to greater frequent sexuality were increased social skills, smoking and drinking.

DISCUSSION

- Sexually active college students had higher social skills, but they had poorer academic performance as well as engaged in higher risk taking activities such as drinking and smoking.
- Students who were not sexually active had higher grades and were more open to meeting people outside of their ethnic group.

IMPLICATIONS

- Future studies should explore young adults' sexuality as a whole, as opposed to adolescents in order to determine current statistics.
- It is important for students of color to have positive and healthy sexual experiences and education when exploring their sexuality to avoid vulnerability to negative influences.