

11. Event-Level Attributes of Young Women's First and Subsequent Non-coital Sexual Behaviors

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Abstract:

Purpose: First vaginal sex is constructed as a significant event imbued with cultural relevance. Voluminous literature documents cultural, social, religious, and psychological influences on first coitus. Comparably little is known about first non-coital behaviors or how healthcare providers can use these behavioral patterns to support adolescents' healthy sexual development. Accordingly, this study prospectively explored changes in young women's emotions at first and subsequent non-coital events.

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Articles:

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Methods: Data were drawn from a longitudinal cohort study of sexual relationships and sexual/contraceptive behavior in adolescent women (N=385, 14-17 years) residing in areas of high rates of unintended pregnancy and STI. As part of this study, young women completed partner-specific daily diaries measuring individual mood, partner affect and the occurrence of different coital and non-coital behaviors. In the current study, we separately identified young women reporting no experience with a given non-coital behavior, including giving manual-genital sex, receiving manual-genital sex, giving oral-genital sex and/or receiving oral-genital sex. Outcome affective variables were: positive mood (3-items, $\alpha=0.86$), negative mood (3-items, $\alpha=0.83$), sexual interest (1 item, 5-pt scale), feeling in love (1 item, 5-pt scale), partner support (4-items, $\alpha=0.93$) and partner negativity (5-items, $\alpha=0.83$). GEE ordinal or linear regression compared affective differences (SPSS, 22.0; all $p<.05$).

Results: Young women's sexual repertoire included a variety of non-coital behaviors including: giving manual-genital sex (n=11 first events; n=8223 subsequent events), receiving manual-genital sex (n=19 first events; n=8559 subsequent events), giving oral-genital sex (n=43 first events; n=2944 subsequent events), and/or receiving oral-genital sex (n=35 first events; n=3153 subsequent events). Compared to first non-coital events, for subsequent non-coital events young women reported significantly higher feelings of: being in love for giving oral sex (OR=1.69) and sexual interest for receiving oral sex (OR=1.39). Days with subsequent non-coital events also had significantly lower feelings of: negative mood and partner negativity for vaginal touching (b=-.68; p<.001, respectively), giving oral sex (b=-.65; p<.05, respectively), and receiving oral sex (b=-.52; p<.05, respectively). There were no differences in positive mood or partner support across any first and subsequent non-coital events.

Conclusions: While a variety of demographic and social predictors of adolescent sexual behaviors have been explored (particularly as it relates to vaginal sex), the influence of sexual interest, feelings of being in love, mood, and partner negativity have largely been overlooked. Our findings suggest that these variables are independent and driving forces of non-coital sexual behavior. Overall, participation in non-coital events was positive especially as young women gained experience. These emotional correlates of non-coital behaviors likely influence overall sexual development of adolescents as they transition to making decisions about coital behaviors. These results highlight the need to focus on young women's ability to prevent negative sexual health outcomes (e.g., STIs and unintended pregnancy) and positive emotions (e.g., sexual pleasure, love, and perceptions of partners) as key components of healthy and safe sexual exploration. Using this information, providers can give comprehensive sexual health information to encourage protective behaviors at coital and non-coital events.

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