

Individual and Partner Attributes of Young Women's Sexual & Protective Behaviors

By: [Amanda E. Tanner](#) and Devon J. Hensel

AE Tanner, DJ Hensel. (2016). Individual and Partner Attributes of Young Women's Sexual & Protective Behaviors. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 58 (2), S99.

Made available courtesy of Elsevier: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.10.210>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

*****Note: This version of the document is not the copy of record**

Abstract:

Purpose: Adolescent women's sexual behaviors are complex with varying motivations that include specific partners, sexual pleasure and satisfaction, and the fertility desires. These factors may affect protective behaviors (e.g., condom use) thus affecting the potential negative outcomes of unintended pregnancy and STIs. Accordingly, this study prospectively examined how specific partners, sexual satisfaction, and pregnancy intentions affected sexual behaviors and condom use immediately and over time.

Keywords: published abstract | adolescent women | sexual behavior | condom use

Article:

Purpose: Adolescent women's sexual behaviors are complex with varying motivations that include specific partners, sexual pleasure and satisfaction, and the fertility desires. These factors may affect protective behaviors (e.g., condom use) thus affecting the potential negative outcomes of unintended pregnancy and STIs. Accordingly, this study prospectively examined how specific partners, sexual satisfaction, and pregnancy intentions affected sexual behaviors and condom use immediately and over time.

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 with high rates of unintended pregnancy and STIs. As part of this study, young women completed partner-specific daily diaries. Measures included: sexual satisfaction (7-item index; $\alpha=0.95$), pregnancy intention (single, 3-point item), coital frequency (number of instances of penile-vaginal sex) and condom use ratio (frequency of condom use during coitus to reported coital events). Linear mixed effects growth modeling evaluated the impact of within-relationship change in sexual satisfaction and pregnancy intention on coital frequency and condom use. Random effects approaches allowed the intercept and slopes to vary randomly across partnerships and to account for clustering of observations within relationships (Stata 13).

Results: There were significant associations between specific partners, sexual satisfaction, and pregnancy intentions with sexual and protective behaviors (all $p < .05$). Specifically, there was significant partner level variation in initial and over time levels of frequency of sexual intercourse and condom use. Further, the relationship between sexual satisfaction and behavior highlighted that in any given quarter higher sexual satisfaction equated to more frequent sex and lower condom use. Similarly, in any given quarter higher pregnancy intention equated to more frequent sex and lower condom use. Growth in sexual satisfaction and pregnancy intention is associated with slowed growth in condom use. There was no significant effect between sexual satisfaction or pregnancy intention and sexual frequency over time.

Conclusions: While a variety of demographic and social predictors of adolescent sexual behaviors have been explored, the influence of specific partners, sexual satisfaction, and pregnancy intentions has largely been overlooked. Our results highlight the ways in which these factors can have immediate and long term affects on adolescent women's sexual health. Specifically, while male sexual partners affected coital frequency, women's sexual satisfaction was also independently associated with increased frequency of sexual intercourse suggesting that women's participation in sexual events depends on their own pleasure and desire. Pregnancy intentions also increased coital frequency and decreased condom use. These results highlight the need to focus on how young women can negotiate safe and pleasurable sexual interactions to avoid negative sexual health outcomes (e.g., STIs and unintended pregnancy). Further, healthcare providers' and health educators discussions with adolescents about fertility desires and plans as well as STI implications can provide young women (and men) with tools to delay pregnancy, prevent STIs, and/or assist with preconception planning. Using this information, providers can give comprehensive sexual health information to encourage protective behaviors at all sexual events.

Sources of Support: NIH U19 AI 31494.