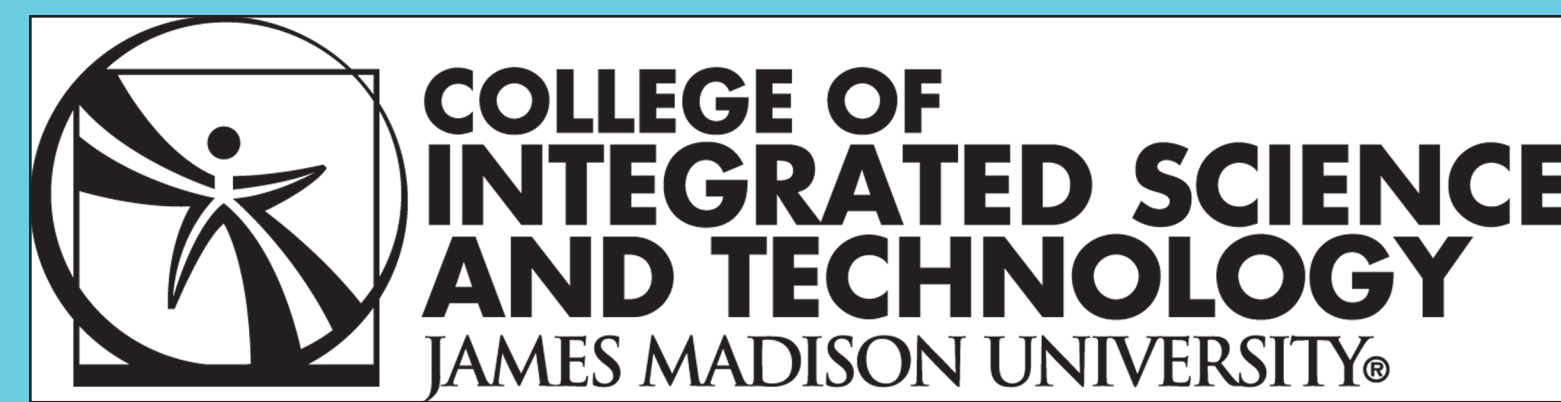


Adolescents and the Co-Occurrence of the Early Onset of Sexual Intercourse and Drug Use Risk Behaviors



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigated the co-occurrence of the early onset of self reported sexual intercourse (classified as reporting sexual intercourse before the age of 13) and risk behaviors among youth associated with drug use.

Methods: In 2006, a sample of 3,583 high school students completed a modified version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2003). Cross tabulations and odds ratio comparisons were used to analyze the co-occurrence of sexual intercourse behaviors (early onset intercourse, intercourse during or after the age 13, and abstinence from sexual intercourse) along with alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.

Results: The findings indicate that students reporting having sexual intercourse before the age of 13 were 16 times more likely to report lifetime marijuana use, 42 times more likely to report lifetime ecstasy use, 49 times more likely to report lifetime cocaine use, and 40 times more likely to report lifetime methamphetamine use than those that abstained from sex. Students reporting initiating sexual intercourse before 13 were 6 times more likely to report cocaine use in the past 30 days compared to those who reported initiating sexual intercourse during or after the age of 13.

Conclusions: Adolescents exhibiting health risk behaviors associated with the early onset of sexual intercourse greatly increase their risk of drug use and abuse. This study supports similar findings in previous research indicating the co-occurrence of the early onset of sexual activity and drug use risk behaviors among U.S. adolescents.

Key Words: sexual behavior, drug use, adolescents, youth.

INTRODUCTION

As today's youth grow through learning and experiencing life, it is not uncommon that adolescents engage in health-risk behaviors, which can include the co-occurrence of multiple health-risk behaviors (Brener & Collins, 1998; Kulbok & Cox, 2002). This is a concern for health professionals as the physical, mental, and social development, as well as the future opportunities, of the adolescents tend to be jeopardized by the participation in health-risk behaviors (Jessor, 1991).

Various combinations of the co-occurrence among health risk-behaviors exist and it is thought to be due to how the behaviors lie in the social ecology of the adolescent. Together, learned risk behaviors along with the social normative expectations among adolescents create a similar function between the behaviors ultimately increasing the likelihood of multiple behaviors being performed simultaneously (Jessor, 1991). Further research supports this concept indicating that youth tend to engage in "like" behaviors whether they are healthy or unhealthy and the co-occurrence of multiple health risk behaviors also tends to increase with age (Kulbok & Cox, 2002).

With the increase of the health risk behaviors including substance abuse, particularly marijuana, among the youth (Brook, Brook, Rosen, & Rabbitt, 2003; D'Amico & McCarthy, 2006; Lessem et al., 2006; Li et al., 2000), the co-occurrence of high risk sexual activities, and the fact that the co-occurrence of health risk behaviors seems to be bi-directional. There is a definite need for further investigation of possible predictors of other high risk behaviors. Therefore, "What are the risk factors for the risk behaviors?" (Jessor, 1991, p. 600).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the co-occurrence of the early onset of self reported sexual intercourse (classified as reporting sexual intercourse before the age of 13) and risk behaviors among youth associated with drug use.

Percentage of students who had 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row on 1 or more of the past 30 days.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	263	137	438
	%	12.1%	55.7%	46.0%
Male Only	N	118	91	215
	%	12.1%	59.1%	50.0%
Female Only	N	145	45	221
	%	12.2%	50.0%	42.7%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	9.099243	1.47497
Male Only	Odds	10.47834	1.44444
Female Only	Odds	7.206897	1.343891

Percentage of students who used methamphetamines 1 or more times during their life.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	37	100	127
	%	1.7%	41.5%	13.4%
Male Only	N	24	61	65
	%	2.5%	40.7%	15.2%
Female Only	N	13	37	59
	%	1.1%	41.6%	11.4%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	40.69389	4.601552
Male Only	Odds	26.9588	3.827658
Female Only	Odds	64.4216	5.547588

Percentage of students who ever smoked cigarettes at least one cigarette every day for 30 days.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	148	98	271
	%	6.9%	42.1%	29.0%
Male Only	N	69	64	112
	%	7.1%	43.8%	26.8%
Female Only	N	79	33	158
	%	6.6%	38.8%	30.6%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	9.863764	1.781331
Male Only	Odds	10.16896	2.132404
Female Only	Odds	8.908715	1.437926

Percentage of students who used ecstasy 1 or more times during their life.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	38	105	124
	%	1.8%	43.2%	13.0%
Male Only	N	26	66	64
	%	2.7%	43.4%	14.9%
Female Only	N	11	37	58
	%	.9%	41.6%	11.2%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	42.5286	5.080645
Male Only	Odds	27.77549	4.376817
Female Only	Odds	76.39336	5.655504

Percentage of students who used marijuana 1 or more times during the past 30 days.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	141	129	339
	%	6.5%	53.5%	35.7%
Male Only	N	73	85	159
	%	7.5%	57.0%	37.3%
Female Only	N	67	44	179
	%	5.6%	48.9%	34.5%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	16.52527	2.072535
Male Only	Odds	16.28318	2.230248
Female Only	Odds	16.07528	1.816857

Percentage of students who used a needle to inject any illegal drug into their body 1 or more times during their life.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	32	80	45
	%	1.5%	34.8%	4.8%
Male Only	N	23	53	25
	%	2.4%	36.8%	5.9%
Female Only	N	8	26	19
	%	.7%	30.6%	3.7%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	35.45	10.63111
Male Only	Odds	23.80315	9.225495
Female Only	Odds	65.27542	11.59679

Percentage of students who used any form of cocaine 1 or more times during the past 30 days.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	29	97	95
	%	1.3%	40.2%	10.0%
Male Only	N	20	61	55
	%	2.1%	40.7%	12.9%
Female Only	N	9	34	37
	%	.8%	38.2%	7.1%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	49.59171	6.055409
Male Only	Odds	32.48764	4.635751
Female Only	Odds	81.32525	8.036364

Percentage of students who took over the counter drugs to get high 1 or more times during their life.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	121	91	237
	%	5.6%	41.7%	25.2%
Male Only	N	52	57	105
	%	5.4%	42.2%	24.9%
Female Only	N	69	32	132
	%	5.8%	39.5%	25.6%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	12.06267	2.128443
Male Only	Odds	12.81657	2.206227
Female Only	Odds	10.61934	1.899814

Percentage of students who used heroin 1 or more times during their life.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	30	87	65
	%	1.4%	36.1%	6.8%
Male Only	N	20	56	45
	%	2.1%	37.1%	10.5%
Female Only	N	9	30	17
	%	.8%	33.7%	3.3%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	40.16688	7.7005
Male Only	Odds	27.94105	5.017076
Female Only	Odds	66.83616	15.01496

Percentage of students who took prescription drugs to get high 1 or more times during their life.

Participant Data Intercourse		Abstinent	Intercourse Before 13	Intercourse 13 or After
Total	N	137	106	253
	%	6.3%	48.2%	27.0%
Male Only	N	61	68	104
	%	6.3%	48.9%	24.7%
Female Only	N	76	38	149
	%	6.4%	46.9%	28.9%

Odds Ratios Intercourse		Comparisons Before 13 and Abstinent	Comparisons Before 13 or During or After 13
Total	Odds	13.7234	2.513834
Male Only	Odds	14.20919	2.919285
Female Only	Odds	12.95349	2.170751

METHODS

The participants included 3,583 Virginia high school students who completed a modified version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2003) in the Spring of 2006. Comparisons were made between students who reported participating in sexual intercourse before the age of 13 and risk behaviors associated with drug use (30 day and lifetime alcohol, tobacco and other drug use). Analysis included cross tabulations and odds ratios.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

Students reporting sexual intercourse before the age of 13 (7.0%) were more likely to report past 30 day and lifetime alcohol, tobacco, and drug use than their abstinent counterparts. As shown in the results charts, the findings indicate that students reporting having sexual intercourse earlier in age were more likely to report lifetime marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, and methamphetamine use than those having abstained from sex. The results also indicated that students reporting initiating sexual intercourse earlier in age were more likely to report cocaine use in the past 30 days compared to those who reported initiating sexual intercourse at age 13 or later. The data suggests that the onset of intercourse may be a significant indicator for participation in alcohol, tobacco and drug use and abuse.

The data also suggests that the gender along with the self-reported times of sexual intercourse is related to health risk behaviors. Males reporting having had intercourse before age 13 are more likely to drink alcohol and use prescription and over the counter drugs to get high than those reporting abstinence and their female counterparts. Females reporting having had intercourse before age 13 are more likely to inject illegal drugs, use illicit drugs, including ecstasy, cocaine, and methamphetamines, than those reporting abstinence and their male counterparts. Further research is needed to determine how the age of onset for intercourse relates to youth risk behavior.

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