

Factors associated with sexual debut and depression among rural Jamaican adolescents

**O James Ekundayo, DrPH,¹ Joana Dodson-Stallworth, PhD,² Michele Roofe, MD, MPH³
Pauline E. Jolly, PhD¹**

University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama, USA,¹ North East Regional Health Authority, Ocho Rios, St Ann, Jamaica, West Indies,² Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA.³

Background

Individual and family factors have been hypothesized to influence adolescent sexual behavior, but the extent to which this is true for adolescents in Jamaica as a whole and for those in rural areas in particular, has not been well studied

Background

It has also been hypothesized that adolescents who engage in sexual activity often regret their actions and this may predispose them to depression, the relationship between engagement in sexual activity and symptoms of depression among adolescents in this population remains largely unknown

Objective

To determine the influence of individual and family factors in the initiation of sexual activity among rural Jamaican adolescents and establish the relationship between sexual experience and self-reported depressive symptoms

Methods

Participants:

- Students attending public high schools in a rural parish in Jamaica (n=748)
- Categorized into groups based on sexual experience, age at sexual debut, and depressive symptoms score
 - Data collection:
 - Questionnaire based on the Alabama rural Youth Survey Instrument
 - Depressive symptoms assessed with the short form of the Beck's Depression Inventory II (BDI II)

Analysis

- Pearson's chi-square and student t-tests were used to compare baseline characteristics of adolescents who are sexually experienced and those who are not
- multivariable logistic regression was used to predict factors associated with sexual experience, early sexual debut, and symptoms of depression

Results

N: 748

Mean age: 16.3 (± 1.2) years

**Female: 65%; Living with both parents:
312 (42%)**

Sexually experienced: 469 (63%)

Mean age at sexual initiation:

Male: 11 years

Female: 15 years

**Sexual experience before 16 years: 369
(49%)**

Table 1: Baseline characteristics

N(%), mean \pm SD	All (748)	Sexual experience		P-value
		No (279)	Yes (469)	
Socio-demographics				
Age at time of survey	16.3 \pm 1.2	16.0 \pm 1.0	16.5 \pm 1.2	<0.0001
Female	484 (65)	226 (81)	258 (55)	<0.0001
Attend comprehensive high school	545 (73)	224 (80)	321 (68)	<0.0001
Goes home after school	559 (75)	224 (80)	335(71)	0.007
Hangs out with classmates	264 (35)	85 (31)	179 (38)	0.03
Hangs out with boyfriend/girlfriend	177 (25)	38 (14)	139(30)	<0.0001

Table 1: Baseline characteristics

N(%), mean \pm SD	All (748)	Sexual experience		P- value
		No (279)	Yes (469)	
Family characteristics				
Parental monitoring	5.7 \pm 0.1	5.2 \pm 1.6	6.0 \pm 2.0	<0.0001
Living with both parents	312 (42)	143 (51)	169 (36)	<0.0001
Maternal affection and support	7.4 \pm 2.8	7.2 \pm 2.7	7.6 \pm 2.8	0.086
Paternal affection and support	10.0 \pm 0.1	9.6 \pm 3.7	10.3 \pm 3.5	0.008
Psychosocial variables				
Depressive symptoms	2.8 \pm 1.5	2.7 \pm 0.8	3.0 \pm 0.9	0.007
Norms about refraining from sex	13.4 \pm 2.3	13.1 \pm 2.2	13.6 \pm 2.3	0.002
Norms about negative sexual outcomes	6.8 \pm 0.9	6.8 \pm 1.9	7.9 \pm 1.8	<0.0001

Table 2: Predictors of sexual experience, overall and by gender

	Odds ratio (OR), 95% Confidence Interval (CI)		
	Overall	Males (N=264)	Females (N=484)
Female	0.26 (0.18-0.37)	-	-
Age at time of survey	1.51 (1.30-1.76)	1.47 (1.07-2.02)	1.54 (1.29-1.84)
Hangs out with boyfriend or girlfriend	2.06 (1.35-3.17)	1.64 (0.74-3.64)	2.27 (1.37-3.76)
Living with both parents	0.50 (0.36-0.70)	0.61 (0.33-1.14)	0.45 (0.30-0.67)
Parental monitoring	1.19 (1.08-1.31)	1.19 (1.01-1.39)	1.20 (1.07-1.35)
Norms about refraining from sex	1.79 (1.27-2.52)	1.35 (0.71-2.56)	2.08 (1.38-3.13)
Depressive symptoms	1.59 (1.003-2.52)	2.85 (0.80-10.10)	1.45 (0.84-2.56)

Table 3: Predictors of sexual experience before age 16 years

	Odds ratio, 95% CI		
	Overall	Males (N=102)	Females (N=367)
Female	0.16 (0.07-0.36)	-	-
Age at time of survey	0.40 (0.32-0.52)	0.42 (0.23-0.77)	0.39 (0.30-0.52)
First sexual partner (not a steady boyfriend/girlfriend)	4.19 (1.62-10.84)	1.28 (0.31-5.32)	11.95 (2.39-59.69)
Norms about negative sexual outcomes	1.34 (1.34-2.87)	3.11 (1.09-8.93)	1.83 (1.21-2.77)

Table 4: Predictors of depressive symptoms (overall)

	UnAdj OR	95% CI	P value	Adj. OR	95% CI	P value
Sexually experienced	1.60	1.02- 2.52	0.040	1.59	1.003- 2.52	0.049
Lack of maternal affection and support	4.07	2.62- 6.32	<0.0001	4.06	2.61- 6.32	<0.0001

Conclusions

Sexual activity during adolescence is common among rural Jamaican adolescents, with similarities in proportion and predictors to what has been reported among comparable populations in the United States

Conclusions

Education programs that will delay initiation of sexual activity need to start early before adolescents become sexually active. As most homes are female headed, establishing support systems for the mother to take care of their adolescent children may decrease the odds of depressive symptoms

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