



Sociocultural Factors Associated with Sexual Activity Among Haitian American Adolescents in Miami, FL

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Background

Adolescents are at increased risk for unplanned pregnancies and STIs, including HIV. Haitian American adolescents remain understudied, despite their vulnerability to risky sexual activities, and experience with the same structural and psychosocial problems (inadequate housing, education, and employment, delinquency, and marginalization/stigma) that disproportionately place other minorities at risk for HIV/STIs.

Methods

This study explored contextual variables related to sexual activity (SA) among 276 Haitian American adolescents in Miami who were participating in a sexual risk reduction intervention (2000–2005). At baseline, participants completed the NIH-developed Problem Oriented Screen Instrument for Teenagers, including the POSIT HIV/STD-Risk Mini-Questionnaire. These measures examined five domains of risk in adolescents' lives: Individual, Peer, Family, School, and Neighborhood. SA was measured by participants' reports of ever engaging in oral, anal, or vaginal sex. T-test and Chi-square were used to evaluate bivariate associations between SA and variables measuring the above domains. Variables that were significantly associated with SA at $\alpha \pm 0.10$ were entered into a logistic regression model to identify their independent associations with SA.

Results

In the overall sample, 51% males and 36% females were sexually active, and their median (*SD*) age was 16.0 (1.2) years. In multivariate analyses, age (Adjusted Odds Ratio [AOR]:1.6, 95% CI:1.18–2.15), being female (AOR:0.42, 95%CI:0.20–0.85), communication about sex (AOR:1.11, 95%CI: 1.04–1.2), currently living with mother only (AOR: 3.10, 95%CI: 1.54–6.20), and currently having sexually active friends (AOR:2.96, 95%CI: 1.31–6.66) were significantly associated with SA. In a female sub-sample, age, sexual communication ability, mental health, and household composition were independently associated with sexual activity ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions

These findings offer important insight into the sexual behaviors of an understudied and vulnerable Haitian American adolescent subgroup. The study reinforces the importance of probing gender differences and the roles of peer norms, sexual communication, and family household situation.

