
ORIGINAL RESEARCH—EPIDEMIOLOGY

Age, Quality, and Context of First Sex: Associations With Sexual Difficulties

Charlene M. Rapsey, PhD, PGDipCIPsy

Department of Psychological Medicine, Dunedin School of Medicine, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

DOI: 10.1111/jsm.12690

ABSTRACT

Introduction. Research consistently indicates an association between a younger age at first sex and poorer sexual health outcomes. However, research addressing associations between age at first sex and sexual difficulties has produced mixed findings. Moreover, little is known about links between the context and quality of first sex and subsequent sexual difficulties.

Aims. The aims of this study are to examine whether (i) age and (ii) context and quality at first sex are associated with sexual difficulties; (iii) examine whether age at first sex and context and quality variables are independently associated (after mutual adjustment) with sexual difficulties; and (iv) examine whether age at first sex has an indirect effect on sexual difficulties through an effect on context or quality.

Methods. Data from 388 questionnaires were gathered from students aged 17–21 living in accommodation halls and by postal invitation to adults aged 25–35.

Main Outcome Measures. The main outcome measure was the Golombok–Rust Inventory of Sexual Satisfaction (GRISS), which assesses sexual difficulties via an overall score and seven subscales.

Results. Appraising first sex as emotionally negative was associated with the majority of sexual difficulties. A less stable relationship at first sex was associated with sexual communication problems and dissatisfaction. Greater enjoyment and using substances were associated with a lower likelihood of anorgasmia for women. Age at first sex was directly associated with reduced sexual frequency only. A younger age at first sex was associated with a greater likelihood of negative appraisal and lower likelihood of a stable relationship and thereby indirectly associated with several sexual difficulties.

Conclusions. Experiencing first sex as emotionally negative was consistently associated with later sexual difficulties. When attending to sexual difficulties, understanding the quality and context of first sex may be more useful than knowing the age at first sex. This research is limited by the retrospective nature of the reports of first sex. **Rapsey C. Age, quality, and context of first sex: Associations with sexual difficulties. J Sex Med 2014;11:2873–2881.**

Key Words. Sexual Difficulties; Sexual Function; Age at First Sex; Sexual Debut; Context of First Sex

Introduction

More is known about the significance of age than about any other factors in association with first sex [1]. A young age at first sex has been associated with a number of adverse outcomes, including increased risk of unwanted pregnancy, increased risk of sexually transmitted infection, health risk behaviours such as alcohol and drug use [2], a greater likelihood that sex will be regretted

[3–5], and decreased sexual satisfaction at the time of first sex [6]. Evidence for an association between age at first sex and later sexual difficulties, however, has been mixed.

Specifically, in two studies with university students (mean age 21 years), a younger age at first sex was associated with fewer sexual difficulties [7,8]. These studies were limited by the narrow age range of participants. It may be that the association between an older age at first sex and a greater

likelihood of currently experiencing sexual difficulties can be explained by the short time period between first sex and current sex and thus a relative lack of sexual experience of the older-age initiators. In another study with a wider age range of participants that controlled for the effects of age at time of study, Sandfort et al. [9] investigated the effects of a younger- or older-than-normative age at first sex. For men, late and early first sex were associated with an increased risk of arousal problems, erectile difficulties, and orgasm problems, whereas for women an older age at first sex was associated with a reduced risk of sexual arousal difficulties. In contrast, Else-Quest et al. [10], using nationally representative data from the United States, found no evidence for an association between early or late age at first sex and sexual difficulties for men or women.

Although Else-Quest et al. [10] found no association between age at first sex and current sexual difficulties, they provided evidence for an association between a negative context at first sex and sexual difficulties. A negative context was defined as sex that was forced, with a relative, with someone who paid, or primarily motivated by peer pressure or substance use; a history of sexual abuse; or, for women, sex with someone they knew but not well. Else-Quest et al.'s findings contribute to a strong literature connecting coerced sex with poor outcomes [11,12]. However, less is known about the other elements of context at first sex that were included in their composite measure of a negative context.

In another study, university-age participants who reported a negative subjective evaluation of first sex, that is, stronger negative emotions and weaker positive emotions, were more likely to report current difficulties [8]. Further, Mercer et al. [13], using nationally representative data from a large UK sample, found that sexual competence at first sex (defined as using hormonal or barrier contraception, not using alcohol, being willing, and engaging in sex for autonomous reasons such as love rather than because of peer pressure) predicted a lower likelihood of experiencing later sexual difficulties. Thus, there is evidence that subjective evaluation and context of first sex can have implications for later sexual experience.

In sum, it is not clear whether age at first sex is associated with a greater or lesser likelihood of sexual difficulties, which specific elements of the context of first sex are associated with later sexual difficulties, and whether age at first sex influences

context and subjective evaluation of first sex. Understanding these elements may better inform our understanding of the development of sexual difficulties. Investigation of the quality and context of first sex allows for more information regarding the mechanisms or processes that may link first sex with later sexual experience. Thus the current study investigates associations between sexual difficulties and age at first sex, context at first sex, and appraisal of first sex.

Aims

This study aimed to examine (i) whether age at first sex is associated with sexual difficulties, (ii) whether any of a series of context variables are associated with sexual difficulties, (iii) whether any of a series of context variables are independently associated (after mutual adjustment) with sexual difficulties, and (iv) indirect pathways between age at first sex, each context variable, and sexual difficulties.

Methods

The University of Otago Ethics Committee granted approval for the research. Data were collected from late-adolescent students aged 17–21 years and adults aged 25–35 years. Late-adolescent participants were recruited from accommodation halls for students enrolled at university, polytechnic (an institution offering tertiary-degree and below-degree certification), or a teacher training school in a single New Zealand city. Participants aged 25–35 years were randomly selected from the electoral roll to ensure selection of participants from a developmental period following emergent adulthood/late adolescence.

Late-adolescent participants provided written consent before being given a questionnaire to complete in supervised study rooms at their accommodation hall. Three female researchers were available to assist if needed. Participants were informed that their answers were confidential, and no identifying information was collected. Surveys were returned in a plain envelope to a closed box. Compensation was with a movie or phone voucher to the value of NZ\$10.00. At one hall, students also entered into a draw to win an MP3 player. Participation was on an opt-in basis, with a maximum of 250 students being able to participate; representation of the participating halls ranged from 19–53%.

To recruit adult participants, invitations to complete a self-report questionnaire via the internet or

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4269814>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4269814>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)