

# Free report on attitude towards risky behaviour

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



## Predictors of Sexual Risk Taking Behaviour among Adolescents in the U. S. A

### **Abstract**

This study sought to determine the predictors of sexual risk taking behaviour among adolescents in the U. S. A. Based on theory and previous studies this study identified three predictors which informed the research questions and hypothesis for the study; knowledge of HIV/AIDS, attitude towards avoiding sexually risky behaviours and adolescent egocentrism. Three hypotheses were developed. First, knowledge of HIV/AIDS predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents. Secondly, attitude towards avoiding risky behaviour predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents. Thirdly, adolescent egocentrism predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents. Data was collected from 40 participants. Correlation and regression analysis was used to analyse the data. All the three hypotheses were accepted.

## Predictors of Sexual Risk Taking Behaviour among Adolescents in the U. S. A

### **Introduction**

In recent years, several studies have demonstrated that adolescents are frequently involved in risky behaviours. These behaviours range from drug and substance abuse, traffic offenses, engaging in risky sexual behaviours and even criminal activities. In fact, it is estimated that 2.5 million adolescents are arrested each year with an addition approximately 2 million cases being referred to the juvenile courts. This study will focus on sexual risk taking behaviour among adolescents in the U. S. A. Sexual risk taking behaviour among adolescents has resulted in the spread of HIV and other

venereal diseases. The statistics are alarming. According to a report published by CDC, 1 in every 4 new infections of HIV occurs among the youth aged between 13-24 years. It also indicated that roughly 60 per cent of the infected youth are unaware they have the virus and are likely to unknowingly pass it to others.

The primary goals of most Intervention programs in the U. S. A is to create awareness, increase knowledge and create positive beliefs about the prevention of HIV/AIDS in order to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. Numerous studies have indicated that intervention programs have achieved some success with regards to creating awareness and reducing stigma. However, little success has been achieved in reducing risk-related behaviour among adolescents that exposes them to HIV/AIDS and other venereal diseases. To reduce sexual risk behaviour among the adolescents, it is important to determine the factors that predict the behaviour. To this end, this study seeks to explore the various factors that influence sexual risk behaviour among the adolescents.

## **Literature Review**

This study relied on the theory of reasoned action to form the explanatory framework. The theory of reasoned action is a universal model of behavioural predictors that seeks to evaluate what affects voluntary behaviour. Changing behaviour is seen as a matter of altering the cognitive structure which underlies that behaviour. According to the theory, the best way of predicting whether an individual will engage in a given behaviour is their intention. A person's behavioural intent is influenced by: personal attitude towards that behaviour and other people's perceptions about the

behaviour. Relevant theoretical constructs relating to adolescent engagement in risky behaviour are reviewed below.

Several studies have revealed that adolescents find it “cool” to engage in risky behaviour. A study conducted in Turkey revealed that young people engage in risky behaviour in order to find acceptance among their peers. The behaviours outlined by the study were; smoking, engaging in unprotected sex, reckless driving and using alcohol and other drugs. The researcher attributed this attitude to media portrayal of risk behaviour and peer influence. Behavioural options available for protection against HIV/AIDS and STI are; abstinence, screen partners, use of condoms, limiting the number of sexual partners and reduced specific sexual activities. Adolescents are less likely to use condoms consistently compared to adults. In fact, about a third of sexually active youth do not use condoms. In addition, most adolescents feel incapable of discussing contraceptives with their sexual partners.

## **Knowledge of HIV/AIDS**

Although attitudes towards risk behaviour are the most important component of the theory of reasoned action, knowledge is also considered and integral prerequisite that influences behavioural change. This is because attitudes are also shaped by knowledge. Several studies have revealed widespread misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. Rafaelli, Bogenschneider, & Flood (2009) reported high level of awareness about HIV/AIDS among American adolescents but little knowledge about to prevent its spread (Rafaelli, Bogenschneider, & Flood , 2009). The study revealed that there is a

positive correlation between engaging in sexual risk behaviours and knowledge of sexual health.

## **Adolescent Egocentrism**

Adolescent egocentrism influences how health messages are processed.

Adolescent egocentrism results from personal fable. Adolescents tend to feel that they are unique and that other people cannot understand their experiences and problems. According to CDC most adolescents think HIV is a disease for adults and that they cannot contract it. Therefore, adolescents are more likely engage in sexual risky behaviour. In fact, CDC reported that 60 per cent of infected adolescents are unaware they are infected and they are likely to infect other people.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study were;

- Does the knowledge of HIV/AIDS predict the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents?
- Does the attitude towards avoiding risky behaviour predict the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents?
- Does adolescent egocentrism predict the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents?

## **Research Hypothesis**

Based on literature, the researcher developed the following hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: It was hypothesised that the knowledge of HIV/AIDS predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents.

Hypothesis 2: It was hypothesised that the attitude towards avoiding risky

<https://assignbuster.com/free-report-on-attitude-towards-risky-behaviour/>

behaviour predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents.

Hypothesis 3: Adolescent egocentrism predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents.

### Design of Experiment

#### Participants

Forty students ( $M = 14.37$  years,  $SD = 1.62$  years) from the state of California participated in the study. The target population was all adolescents in the U. S. A (between 12-17 years). However, the study was limited to California due to time and financial constraints. Simple random sampling was used to obtain the study participants. Simple random sampling was deemed appropriate since it allowed unbiased sampling and accorded the research work more scientific feature, thus concretizing the validity of the study findings. Participation to the study was on a voluntary basis. Participants were not required to indicate their name so as to protect their identity.

## **Measurements and Instruments**

### Dependent Variables

Dependent variables provided a yardstick for evaluating sexual risk taking behaviour of the participants. The dependent variables were; intention to use a condom and the number of sexual partners.

**Intention to Use a Condom:** The intention to use a Condom was measured using a single item. Participants were asked “ I will use a condom or make my partner use a condom in the future.” A 5-point Likert scale was used to rank responses from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. A high score indicated high intention to use a condom in future and vice versa.

## **Independent Variables**

**Attitude towards Avoiding Risky Behaviour:** This independent variable was measured using 5 Likert items constructed by the researcher. Each item had a 5-point response scale which ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Examples of items used include; “ It is good to avoid sexual intercourse with persons who have high risks of contracting AIDS” and “ It is good to be faithful to one Partner.” A high score indicated a positive attitude towards avoiding risky behaviour.

**Knowledge of HIV/AIDS:** This variable was measured using 8 items in the survey questionnaire. Each item contained three responses; True, False or I do not know. Participants who marked “ Don’t Know” received a similar score to those who answered the question incorrectly. A participant with perfect knowledge of HIV/AIDS received a score of 8 (A score of 1 for each the 8 questions). Example of items included; “ AIDS is not the same as HIV” and “ You cannot get AIDS by kissing someone who has AIDS”

**Adolescent Egocentrism:** This variable was measured using two items. Participants were asked “ The problems of adolescents are unique and nobody can understand their problems” and “ I cannot contract HIV/AIDS”. The responses were ranked using a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strong Agree. A high score indicated high adolescent egocentrism.

## **Results**

**Hypothesis 1:** It was hypothesised that the knowledge of HIV/AIDS and other STI predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents.

### **This hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation coefficient.**

Pearson  $r(40) = 0.937$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Therefore, there is a positive correlation between the intention to use a condom in the future and the knowledge of HIV/AIDS. Pearson  $r(40) = -0.578$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . There is a negative correlation between the number of sexual partners and knowledge of HIV/AIDS. The correlations were significant at  $p\text{-critical} = 0.01$

### **Hypothesis 2: It was hypothesised that the attitude towards avoiding risky behaviour predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents.**

Pearson  $r(40) = 0.937$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Therefore, there is a positive correlation between the intention to use a condom in the future and the attitude towards avoiding risky behaviour. Pearson  $r(40) = -0.609$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . There is also a negative correlation between the number of sexual partners and knowledge of HIV/AIDS.

### **Hypothesis 3: Adolescent egocentrism predicts the sexual risk taking behaviour of adolescents.**

Pearson  $r(40) = -0.666$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . There is a negative correlation between the intention to use a condom in the future and adolescent egocentrism. Pearson  $r(40) = 0.476$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . There is a positive correlation between the number of sexual partners and adolescent egocentrism.

## **Regression Results**

The regression model for this study was

No. of sexual Partners =  $\alpha + \beta_1 * A. Egocentrism + \beta_2 * HIV/AIDS Knowledge + \beta_3 * Attitude$



The explanatory power of the model is 0.376. This implies that 37.6 per cent of variations in the number of sexual partners among adolescents can be explained by the model while 62.4 per cent of variations are explained by factors outside this model.

All the three variables were statistically insignificant at  $p = 0.05$

## **ANOVA**

$F(3, 36) = 7.232, p < 0.05$  (one tailed). Therefore, the results are statistically significant.

## **Discussion**

The first hypothesis was accepted. There is a significant correlation between the knowledge of HIV/AIDS and sexual risk taking behaviour among adolescents. Therefore, knowledge of HIV/AIDS is a predictor of sexual risk taking behaviour. The result is consistent with previous studies. The ANOVA test showed that the result was statistically significant. However, regression analysis showed this variable was statistically insignificant. The practical implication of this result is that there is a need to increase knowledge of HIV/AIDS in order to reduce risky sexual behaviours among adolescent consequently reduce new infections among adolescents in the U. S. A.

The second hypothesis was also accepted. There is a significant correlation between the attitude towards avoiding sexual risky behaviour and sexual risk taking behaviour among adolescents. Therefore, the attitude towards avoiding sexual risky behaviour is a predictor of sexual risk taking behaviour. The result is consistent with previous studies and the theory of reasoned action. The ANOVA test showed that the result was statistically significant.

However, regression analysis showed this variable was statistically insignificant.

The third hypothesis was accepted. There is a significant correlation between adolescent egocentrism and sexual risk taking behaviour among adolescents. Therefore, adolescent egocentrism is a predictor of sexual risk taking behaviour. The result is consistent with previous studies. The ANOVA test showed that the result was statistically significant. However, regression analysis showed this variable was statistically insignificant. Intervention programs aimed at reducing infection rates of HIV/AIDS among adolescents should focus on ways of reducing adolescent egocentrism.

### **Limitations of the study**

There are some noteworthy limitations that were encountered during this study. First and foremost, time and budgetary limitation made it impractical to ensure a truly representative sample from the population. This could explain the contradictory results between the various tests. The respondents of the survey were limited in number; they were from the state of California. Lastly, human responses are hard to ascertain and are subject to personal bias.

### **References**

- CDC. (2012, November 10). HIV Among the American Youth: Protecting a Generation. Retrieved July 13, 2013, from <http://www.cdc.gov>: <http://www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/pdf/2012-11-27-vitalsigns.pdf>
- Cremer, D. D. (2009). Psychological Perspectives on Ethical Behavior and Decision Making (PB) (Illustrated ed.). Charlotte, North Carolina: IAP.

Özmen, O., & Hatipog, Z. (2010). Predictors of Risk Taking Behavior Among Turkish Adolescent. Elsevier, 4-15.

Rafaelli, M., Bogenschneider, K., & Flood, F. (2009). Parent-Teen Communication about Sexual Topics. Journal of Family Issues, 32-40.

Voisin, D. R., Neilands, T. B., Salazar, L. F., & Crosby, R. (2008). Pathways to Drugs and Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Detained Youth. Social Work Research, 147-158.

Appendix 1: Data

Appendix 2: Descriptive Statistics