

Does unprotected sex
lead to sexually
transmitted diseases
in teens?



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Does unprotected sex lead to sexually transmitted diseases in teens? Claudia LeMay & Madeline Munoz Research Methods, HA-450-05 Professor C. Brown

March 19, 2013 ABSTRACT Sexual activities amongst teenagers in the United

States are on the rise. The issue isn't necessarily the morality of the sexual relations; it's the disease that can be spread without following safe sex

through the use of protection. Using protection isn't a guarantee that all

sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) will be prevented, it significantly

reduces the risk. This study attempts to see why teenagers engage in such

risky behavior. The factors that make up their environment and the influence

of society will be examined in a literature review. In addition, a study

conducted through interviews with teenagers utilizing qualitative and

quantitative methods will demonstrate that many teenagers aren't quite

aware of the seriousness of their actions. The solutions to the issue are quite

complicated, but better educational programs, the continued promotion of

safe sex, and providing modern and relevant guidance, will hopefully help to

fix the problem. Term Paper Outline Abstract Table of Contents List of Tables

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References Appendix Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study The correlation

between sexually-transmitted diseases and unprotected sex is an issue that

has dominated Western societies for many years, especially in a country as

large and diverse as the United States. Teenagers are becoming much more

active in recent times, which have exponentially increased the risk of the

spread of STDs. In the United States, there are a significant amount of

factors that play into why teenagers are becoming more sexually active, but

perhaps the biggest seems to be a change in society in the macro sense.

With society exposing children to sex at a younger age, the logical

correlation is that it will lead to more sexually active teens. In addition, socio-

economic status and the level of education play a major role. A lack of

education about the benefits of using protection can lead to the spreading of

disease. It is becoming an increasing epidemic at all levels of society.

Religion, namely Christianity, has attempted to fight back against it in the

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United States, but as one will see, it is only aiding the problem, not helping to solve it. Facing the realities of the modern environment can help sociologists and educators work towards coming up with realistic solutions. Today's globalized world is much different compared to fifty years ago. Thus, the research question that was asked is, " Does unprotected sex leads to sexually-transmitted diseases in teens? " The assumption going into the literature review and the study is that there is, in fact, a positive relationship between unprotected sex and the spread of STDs in teens. The purpose of the research is not only to determine the relationship between the two but also to see what outside variables make it more likely that a teenager will have unprotected sex and be more sexually active. A combination of appropriate literature that is relevant to modern Western society in the United States and an analysis of the study performed on participants will be completed, with the goal of a clear conclusion as to the effects of such a highly complicated subject. The assumptions are that unprotected sex does lead to the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases and that a host of factors plays into the decision-making of teenagers. The limitations of the study are that it is dependent on how cooperative the participants are. There's no fact-checking their answers, so the researcher must place a level of trust in them. As a result, the answers that they give may not be entirely accurate. Efforts to convey to the participants that they will be anonymous will be made in order to perhaps reduce the amount of inaccurate answers given.

Delimitations included making sure that the participants were all in the same age group of 16-19 and represented a diverse population, with equal members being male and equal members being female. The significance of the study is that it focuses on the main source of the issue, which are the <https://assignbuster.com/does-unprotected-sex-lead-to-sexually-transmitted-diseases-in-teens/>

sexually-active teens. Rather than making assumptions on why their actions occur, asking them directly, will give a better understanding of the issue. In addition, this study takes into account the globalized world that we live in, as well as the multiple issues that often accompany unprotected sex and the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases.

Definition of Terms:

Adolescence: The period of one's life that occurs after childhood but before maturity.

AIDS: A disease which attacks a person's immune system. It escalates from the HIV virus and can be transmitted through sexual relations.

Haley Effect: The influence of peer pressure and social norms in determining the decision-making outcome of those pondering the morality and safety of an issue.

Puberty: A stage of human development which begins around the age of adolescence. Sexual maturity of the human body occurs both in terms of sexual organs, physical characteristics, and thought process.

Sexually-Transmitted Diseases (STDs): Infections that are acquired through sexual contact, usually transmitted through blood, semen, or vagina fluids, amongst others. They can also be transferred through a mother-to-child birth and through sharing needles.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

No topic has caused so much controversy throughout human history as sexual relations. As an action that has created strict cultural and societal rules and social norms, sex has traditionally been thought of as being an immoral act in many societies, spurred on mainly by religion. Religion, through issues such as marriage, has continuously attempted to suppress human desire for sexual relations, which stands in direct contrast against one's biological make-up. The debates about abortion and the usage of contraception have been two topics of discussion as it relates to the realities of modern life and what many religions view as being ideal. Any study of this topic must look at it

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through an objective view point, rather than letting one's own subjectivity about this contentious subject place people in danger health-wise. Sexually-transmitted diseases and whether or not unprotected sex can contribute to it as an issue that must be examined from multiple angles. In the United States, the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention has stated that around 47% of high school students have had sexual intercourse (Stephens, 2012). In addition, over 14% of them have had sex with at least four different people. Perhaps more troubling is the fact that less than 40% have practiced safe sex (Stephens, 2012). When one takes into account oral sex, the number increases to more than half of the high school demographic. The Center for Disease Control has provided additional statistics on this issue. Of the new sexually-transmitted diseases that are discovered each year, almost half of them occur in adolescents and teenagers. (Stephens, 2012). HIV is the most deadly of these sexually-transmitted diseases and can be transmitted in three major ways, which are through sexual contact, an exchange of bodily fluids, and transmission from a mother to her child through pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding (Smith and Siplon, 2006). Contrary to popular belief, much of which was popular during the 1980s, HIV cannot be transmitted through saliva, sweat, or feces. However, if they do contain any blood, they can be. Sexual contact is the most common form of HIV transmission. In this case, one of the two persons are affected. In global studies of HIV, heterosexual relations result in the most cases of this occurring. However, in the United States, homosexual relations between males are responsible for approximately sixty-four percent of transmission cases (Epstein, 2006). Having unprotected sex can make the risk greater, with anal sex being the most risky. STD's and genital ulcers can increase the <https://assignbuster.com/does-unprotected-sex-lead-to-sexually-transmitted-diseases-in-teens/>

chance of transmission by a factor of five. Scientists estimate that around thirty-four million people are affected with HIV, thus classifying it as a global pandemic. In 2010, it was responsible for 1.8 million deaths (Espejo, 2012). The area that has the highest concentration of affected patients is Sub-Saharan Africa, as they account for sixty-eight percent of all affected people and sixty-six percent of fatal cases (Espejo, 2012). South and South-East Asia is the second most affected area, making up twelve percent of all cases, with India being the most affected. The United States has 1.2 million people diagnosed with HIV, in which a little over seventeen thousand have died (Espejo, 2012). The Middle East and North Africa have the lowest rates of infection. Infections and cancer are the two main reasons people die from HIV / AIDS. It has developed into a chronic disease in many developed areas of the world in which treatment is widely available, rather than being a fatal disease (Epstein, 2007). If someone affected with HIV is not treated, they usually live nine to eleven years after diagnosis. Once they become diagnosed with AIDS, they can live from six to nineteen months without treatment. However, HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy) can reduce the rate of death by eighty percent in young adults if treated early, in which they can live twenty to fifty years (Epstein, 2007). However, those already diagnosed with AIDS can live from ten to forty years. Though the United States has often been portrayed as being a very liberal country in which its television and culture is one that advocates sex and violence, in reality, the United States is much more subtle about how it portrays sexuality on television. Partly the result of its past, the United States has become overly sensitive to the portrayal of sexual behavior on basic network television, as evident by the strict regulations that have been implemented by the Federal <https://assignbuster.com/does-unprotected-sex-lead-to-sexually-transmitted-diseases-in-teens/>

Communications Commission (FCC). Sexuality on American television is censored yet has still managed to depict images of sex, relationships, and even body types that have wide-ranging effects throughout the demographics of the nation. People in the United States have been exposed to more sexual material and images on television than at any point in the past, despite the censorship that has been implemented. Sexuality, as various sociologists note, is often both shaped and influenced by popular culture, namely through television and the mass media. Images that are presented on television deliver multiple images of sexuality both directly and indirectly. It is a topic that is quite complex due to the many layers that accompanies it. For example, sexuality on television has a different impact on genders, age groups, and even ethnic groups. In addition, it should be noted that equally important to what is seen on television in terms of sexuality is what is not seen, namely in regards to same-sex relations and so forth. On basic television, most depictions of sex are not direct in. For example, on television, images imply sexual relations but usually do not go any further than basic intimate behavior. Usually, they'll show the beginning of an intimate encounter in which both parties have their clothes on and soon cut away to the next scene or to a point in which the intimate encounter is effectively finished. This is a direct contrast to films, in which there is a much more explicit display of sexual behavior. Popular cable channels such as HBO and Showtime, through shows like Boardwalk Empire, Dexter, and Game of Thrones, have shown extremely graphic sex scenes, as they're not held to the standards that network or basic cable television are. In examining the sexuality that is portrayed on television today, one thing that is apparent is just how much feminism has contributed to role changes. <https://assignbuster.com/does-unprotected-sex-lead-to-sexually-transmitted-diseases-in-teens/>

The Sex and the City generation has carried over to the current teenage generation, as they often see it as OK to go out and have sex with men on one night stands. One-night stands are becoming increasingly more common compared to past decades. Young girls are now exposed to more sexuality at such a young age that they can mentally grow up too fast and possibly imitate many of these actions at an earlier age. The truth is, in many instances, it's no longer relevant to have the "birds and the bees" conversation. There have been several recent studies that have shown that over the past 30 years, puberty has come earlier for girls. One of the main reasons for this early onset of puberty is the increased levels of obesity and thus, the higher body fat. Girls with higher body mass indexes have been shown to have earlier menses. High levels of body fat have been shown to cause early puberty in girls rather than puberty causing high body fat. There is not the same correlation in boys. There has also been evidence that leptin deficiencies can decrease the onset of puberty. Leptin seems to contribute to puberty occurring. Some researchers feel that the reason why high body fat is related to puberty is because the human body evolved in a way that only when a sufficient number of fat cells are present can the girl safely become pregnant with enough body mass to support both herself and her fetus. Females tend to become sexually mature within four years from the onset of puberty. Males, however, take more years to become mature, as studies have shown that it takes at least six years. There has been a "secular trend" in which puberty has started earlier in both males and females during the past few centuries. This can be the result of changes in human diet, environmental factors, and other chemicals that people are exposed to. For boys, early maturation usually has more social advantages initially, but also

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creates more adjustment issues. For girls, there are little initial advantages, while they have similar adjustment problems as boys. There is a significant amount of stress that can affect youth who experience either late or early maturation, such as being exposed to adulthood too early. As such a staple of modern human development in terms of being a distinct stage, it's easy to forget that there was a time period in which adolescence was not considered to be a distinct stage. Adolescence can be defined as being the period from puberty on until the child becomes an adult. Originally, childhood became known as a distinct human stage of human development starting in the 15th century, which resulted from the unintended effects of the printing press. It didn't necessarily define childhood, but it did define the stage of adulthood. Those classified as adults were the ones who could read the works printed by the printing press, while children were defined as those who were not able to read it. In the middle of the 19th century, with the industrial revolution in full swing, adolescence emerged. The reason was that many of the social conditions of the time made extending childhood necessary in the form of adolescence. Industrialized countries meant that citizens had to have new skills. With larger amounts of people situated in cities, there was a major shift in the population to cities. Because of the large number of youths that were a natural by-product of this population shift, the printing press allowed for schools to adequately print textbooks for different age groups so that the youths could be divided into different classes depending on their age. This resulted in adolescence becoming a noticeable stage in human development. Media and technology greatly influence the relationship between adolescents and adults in multiple ways. The first is that when certain technologies were first developed, such as the internet, it was the adolescents who fully

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embraced it. Many adults were not familiar with how to fully use it. There is still the perception that adolescents are more technologically sound than many adults, despite being in an earlier stage of development. However, now that adults have fully embraced technology, there is less a distinction between the two stages. The second is that media and technology have resulted in many adolescents showing more maturity than they normally would at the stage due to being exposed to many of the same things that adults are. This includes being exposed to similar marketing campaigns from vice products, such as sex. The issue is finding the right balance between paternalism and autonomy in a way that will help members of society, as well as to not necessarily take away their individual freedoms. In many cases of paternalism, hindsight plays a major role. For example, a teenage girl may not appreciate the constant bombardment of information about sexuality. However, if, for example, there were not paternalistic laws and she continued to have unprotected sex, she may come to regret it at a later stage in her life if she develops lung cancer. At that point, she may have wished that her autonomy when she was younger was taken away for her own good. People in many instances can appear to be shortsighted in their decisions, choosing to have the immediate sexual gratification. Short-term satisfaction can lead to long-term suffering. If both state and Federal Governments can work with schools organizations to not only improve the quality sexual education but also to educate people from an early age, than the United States will become a healthier nation overall.

Chapter 3:
Research Methodology
The research method that was used combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The reason for utilizing both was to get a sufficient blend of statistical answers and the subjective feelings of the

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participants. Statistics often tell the full story, which is why the subjects were answered questions that were more open-ended and based on their particular circumstances. A series of questions were used in the form of a survey form that subjects had to fill out. In addition to filling out the survey, which comprised the quantitative portion, subjects were also interviewed in person through asking qualitative questions. Answers to all questions were collected and examined. Teenagers between the ages of 13 to 19 made up the sample, and they included equal amounts of both males and females. Fifty people comprised the study population. The selection of the participants was quite random and made up a full spectrum of diverse races and cultures. The participants included a blend of teenagers who seemed troubled and others who seemed more normal in terms of demonstrating high academic standards. In addition, there were teenagers who appeared conservative in terms of their values and others who were more liberal. The only criterion for the selection process was their age. Materials used were paper and writing utensils for the survey portion. The dependent variable was the selection of teenagers who were all asked the same questions. As a result, the independent variables are harder to describe. These included the education level, socio-economic status, culture, and family structure of the particular participant. Data analysis was accomplished through making a note of all of the independent variables that comprised the participants and recording their answers to the quantitative portion. This allowed examining any statistical correlations or anomalies to the questions that were asked. Then, a breakdown of their subjective qualitative answers were examined to see both the range of answers expressed and to see if there were any common threads that linked most of the teenagers together. Participants were

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protected through having their identities remain anonymous. In the paper, they are not referred to by name, but merely in terms of statistics. Overall, the study produced fruitful results, with the participants being quite cooperative in most instances. A few seemed hesitant to open up themselves to the qualitative portion of the questioning, but an overwhelming majority did. Data analysis showed clear threads and statistical correlations in their answers. This study certainly helped to validate many of the topics discussed during the literature review. However, as mentioned, given the sensitive nature of the topic, the answers of the participants may have not been entirely accurate. Nonetheless, they were used quite constructively. Gender equality has also played a major role in the increase in teenage sex that has been occurring. Perhaps a great example of how feminism and its equality have given way to more sexual promiscuity is represented by the classic literary novel *Sula*. *Sula* by Toni Morrison can be viewed from a feminist lens, as it's a novel that is known for its criticisms of what the accepted gender roles of women used to be, as they were victims of criticisms directed by society. Morrison examines how black women are held to different standards than black men. *Sula*, the title character, is a woman who doesn't accept the normal role that she is expected to play as a black female in society. This woman doesn't want to be a domestic housewife although that is what her life was determined to be even before she was born. The desire to discover a new identity for herself, her lack of conformity to what was expected of a woman at the time makes her excluded by the people in her community. Gender equality is certainly a necessary and moral aspect of society. It is something that should be occurring. However, with gender equality, the necessity to address the issue of safe sex from a new vantage point. Often-

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times, it is males that are targeted by researchers and educators. Females must also get the necessary advice about their bodies and not made to feel pressured into having sex. There must be a conscious effort made to change the culture of sex that females can be the victims of. Increasing levels of gender equality in society means that female teenagers will feel that they can act like " boys" in the sense that they can have multiple sexual partners. Gender equality is here to stay, which means that the older policymakers must be willing to adapt to the times and not view the world through a prism of a male-centered society.

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