

Relationships Between Parenting Variables and Adolescent Sexual Activity Among Latinos: An Integrative Literature Review

For more than a decade, Latino adolescents in the U.S. have indicated a number of problems related to risky sexual activity, such as unprotected sex and multiple partners. Prior studies of non-Latino adolescents show that such unsafe activities are associated with parenting variables. These variables include parenting behaviors (such as monitoring, supervision, involvement, and discipline), parenting values related to sexuality, parent-adolescent communication, parent-adolescent relationship (such as warmth, closeness, conflict, and attachment), and family structure. A growing body of research has focused on the link between these variables and risky adolescent behavior in Latino families, yet there have been few systematic reviews of this literature. The purpose of this study is to present an integrative review of 31 studies (from 1998 to 2010) that examined the relationship between parenting variables and Latino adolescents (11-19 years) living in the United States. Findings suggest positive relationships between parenting variables and adolescent engagement in unsafe sexual practices. For example, significant differences exist in relationships between adolescent sexual activity and parent-adolescent communication, based on the gender of the adolescent or parent, and on whether the parent or adolescent provided the data. Studies support the importance of interventions that help parents communicate their values and expectations related to adolescent sexual activity. In addition, they offer direction for the development of culturally appropriate interventions to reduce problems associated with risky adolescent sexual behaviors, (such as unplanned teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS).