

Negative Partner Responses to Communication about Reproductive Health in Adolescent Relationships

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Purpose

- Partner communication about contraceptives and condom use may result in negative responses from partners that can influence protective behaviors.
 - Female teens who experience physical violence are more likely to fear consequences of negotiating condom use¹
 - Approximately 18% of females ages 16-20 seeking reproductive health care services have experienced reproductive coercion²
- We explored the prevalence of negative partner responses during conversations about sexually transmitted disease (STD) and pregnancy prevention, including abusive and coercive behavior, and their association with sexual behaviors among African American female adolescents.

Methods

- We recruited African American females aged 14-19 (n=348) that reported having sexual intercourse with a male partner in the past 6 months and were seeking care in an urban teen family planning clinic.
- Participants completed an ACASI questionnaire assessing current relationship dynamics; contraceptive, pregnancy and STD history; and sexual behavior.
- Participants were asked whether they experienced any of the following negative responses when discussing topics “like birth control, STDs, and pregnancy” with their most recent partner, including:
 1. being accused of having sex with other guys
 2. being hit, pushed, kicked or threatened
 3. their partner threatening to leave them or to start seeing other girls
 4. their partner asking or telling them not to use condoms or birth control
- Adjusted odds ratios (aORs) and 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs) were obtained from logistic regression models to examine the association between having experienced these negative responses and recent condom and contraception use.

References and Acknowledgements

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2. Miller E, Decker MR, McCauley H, Tancredi DJ, Levenson RR, Silverman JG. Pregnancy coercion, intimate partner violence, and unintended pregnancy. *Contraception*. 2010; 81(4):316-322.

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Results

Table 1. Characteristics of Study Sample, n=348

Age (mean)	16.8
Previous STD	43.7%
Previous pregnancy	26.1%
No insurance	24.6%
Coitarche age ≥15	57.1%
Lifetime male partners ≤3	54.0%
Method use at last sex:*	
No method	35.6%
Condom	41.4%
Non-condom contraception**	44.5%

*Sums to >100% because 21% used Dual Methods

**Non-condom contraception includes IUDs, Implants, pills patches, rings, DMPA, withdrawal and “other”

Table 2. Prevalence of Experiencing Negative Partner Responses During Communication about Reproductive Health

	n (%)
Accused of having sex with other guys	82 (23.6%)
Hit, pushed, kicked or threatened	16 (4.6%)
Partner threatened to leave or see other girls	28 (8.0%)
Asked or told not to use condoms or birth control	60 (17.2%)
Experienced any negative response	129 (37.1%)
Total number of negative responses experienced:	
0 negative responses	219 (62.9%)
1 negative response	83 (23.9%)
≥2 negative responses	46 (13.2%)

Table 3. Experiencing Negative Partner Responses During Communication about Reproductive Health and Association with Protective Behaviors at Last Sex

Number of negative responses experienced	No method		Condom		Non-condom contraception	
	Prevalence (%)	aOR (95% CI)	Prevalence (%)	aOR (95% CI)	Prevalence (%)	aOR (95% CI)
0	30.6%	1.00 (Ref)*	44.3%	1.00 (Ref)*	46.6%	1.00 (Ref)*
1	37.3%	1.425 (.83-2.44)	41.0%	0.86 (.51-1.44)	45.8%	0.91 (.53-1.55)
≥2	52.2%	2.85 (1.46-5.54)	28.3%	0.50 (.29-.99)	36.2%	0.44 (.22-.89)
Trend	p<0.01		p=0.06		p=0.04	

*aOR= adjusted odds ratio, adjusted for age, previous STD, previous pregnancy

Conclusions

- Adolescents in our sample frequently reported experiencing negative responses from their partners during communication about STDs, contraception and pregnancy.
- Participants experiencing multiple negative responses were more likely to forgo all contraceptive use at last sex, putting them at increased risk for unintended pregnancy and STDs.
- Findings highlight the need for screening about relationships (e.g., communication and the potential for coercion), increased education about healthy relationships, and development of new prevention strategies for adolescents.