

ABSTRACT

Exploring the Relationship Between Emotional-Social Intelligence and Sexual Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviours in Jamaican Adolescents

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This study investigated the relationship between emotional-social intelligence (ESI) and adolescent sexual practices which for the purposes of this study was defined as adolescents' sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Emotional-social intelligence is comprised of four components: 1) stress management, 2) adaptability, 3) interpersonal, and 4) intrapersonal skills. A cross-sectional study was conducted using maximum variation sampling techniques to solicit adolescents ages 13-18 years ($n= 500$), attending nine randomly selected government secondary institutions in Kingston and St. Andrew. Students completed three self report questionnaires; the Bar-On EQ-i:YV(S) which measured their emotional-social intelligence, a sexual knowledge, attitude and behaviour questionnaire as well as the sex risk scale from the, Adolescent Risk Inventory. Correlational analyses identified significant relationships ($p < 0.05$) between ESI and the adolescents' sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. ESI competencies of adaptability and interpersonal skills were found to be protective factors with regard to adolescent sex risk behaviours. Additionally, emotional- social intelligence was positively correlated with the students' academic performance. There were no significant gender differences in relation to ESI scores; however results indicated that girls had better stress management skills than boys. The findings suggest that of the three key sexual variables (knowledge, attitude and behaviours), knowledge was not strongly correlated with sex risk behaviours; attitude was strongly correlated with participation in sexual behaviours and all sexual behaviours were correlated with each other. Additionally, the results suggest that ESI competencies are associated with adolescent sexual practices. These findings have implications for policy and practice related to improving healthy sexual practices among adolescents; as by nurturing adolescents' interpersonal and adaptability skills, risky sexual behaviours may be reduced. It is also recommended that ESI training programmes be included in the high school curriculum as a way of improving academic performance and reducing risky sexual behaviours amongst adolescents.

Keywords: Samantha Kayeon Longman-Mills; adolescent sexual practices; emotional-social intelligence; emotional intelligence; Jamaican adolescents; sexual intelligence; sex; sexuality; teenagers.