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Cognitive-Behavioural Factors Influencing the Development of Healthy Sexual Self-Regulation in Adolescence

Abstract:

The article addresses the significance of sexual self-regulation as a critical component of sexual behaviour and development during adolescence. It explores the cognitive-behavioural factors that influence the formation of healthy sexual self-regulation. The focus is placed on both internal and external factors that affect psychosexual development in adolescence. The study's relevance is driven by the need to foster healthy sexual self-regulation in the context of modern social challenges, risky sexual behaviours, and psychological issues, such as early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or emotional trauma. The study's object encompasses a broad spectrum of cognitive-behavioural influences that shape and regulate healthy sexuality during adolescence. Biological changes during adolescence, like social interactions with the environment, particularly the impact of parents, peers, and media, are crucial. The article aims to conduct a theoretical investigation and systematise the cognitive and behavioural mechanisms contributing to healthy sexual self-regulation. The study's tasks include reviewing scientific publications on this topic, identifying key factors that promote the development of healthy sexual self-regulation, and determining cultural, gender, and social factors that impact the formation of self-regulation. Systematic review methods were employed in the study. The works of researchers such as Crandall, Magnusson, Novilla, Silitonga, Almigo, Pringle, Hasiuk, Fedyk, Smolska, Kryvoruka, and others are reviewed, focusing on the impact of cognitive-behavioral factors on self-regulation in adolescence. It is expected that cognitive-behavioural approaches will contribute to developing healthy sexual behaviour in adolescence, reducing the risks of physiological and psychological problems.

Keywords: sexual behaviour, sexual self-regulation, adolescence, cognitive-behavioural influence, risky sexual behaviour, sexual health.

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Когнітивно-поведінкові чинники, що впливають на формування здорової сексуальної саморегуляції у юнацькому віці

Анотація:

В статті розглянута проблема важливості сексуальної саморегуляції, що є ключовим компонентом сексуальної поведінки та розвитку у юнацькому віці. Досліджено когнітивно-поведінкові чинники, які впливають на формування здорової сексуальної саморегуляції. Акцентовано увагу на внутрішні та зовнішні фактори, що впливають на психосексуальний розвиток в юнацькому віці. Актуальність дослідження обумовлена важливістю формування здорової сексуальної саморегуляції у контексті сучасних соціальних викликів, ризикованої сексуальної поведінки й психологічних проблем, таких як рання вагітність, захворювання що передаються статевим шляхом або емоційні травми. Об'єкт дослідження охоплює широкий спектр когнітивно-поведінкових впливів, що формують і регулюють здорову сексуальність у підлітковому віці. Важливими є як біологічні зміни під час підліткового періоду, так і соціальні взаємодії з оточенням, зокрема вплив батьків, однолітків та медіа. Мета статті полягає в здійсненні теоретичного дослідження та систематизації когнітивних та поведінкових механізмів, що сприяють розвитку здорової сексуальної саморегуляції. Завданнями є вивчення наукових публікацій з цієї тематики, ідентифікація ключових факторів, що сприяють розвитку здорової сексуальної саморегуляції, а також визначення культурних, гендерних та соціальних чинників, що впливають на формування здорової саморегуляції. У дослідженні використано методи систематичного огляду. Розглянуто праці таких дослідників, як Крандал (Crandall), Магнуссон (Magnusson), Новілла (Novilla), Сілітонга (Silitonga), Алміго (Almigo), Прінгл (Pringle), Гасюк, Федик, Смольська, Криворука та інші, які досліджували вплив когнітивно-поведінкових факторів на саморегуляцію у підлітковому та юнацькому віці. Передбачається, що когнітивно-поведінкові підходи сприятимуть розвитку здорової сексуальної поведінки у юнацькому віці, знижуючи ризики фізіологічних та психологічних проблем.

Ключові слова: сексуальна поведінка, сексуальна саморегуляція, юнацький вік, когнітивно-поведінковий вплив, ризикова сексуальна поведінка, сексуальне здоров'я.

Abbreviations:

STI is sexually transmitted infection.

Introduction

Every year, more and more researchers focus on the fact that self-regulation plays a significant role in academic achievement (as, e.g., Dent and Koenko note) and in many other aspects of human life. Many studies indicate individual differences in self-regulation inherent in the individual, and scientists also indicate the presence of predictive features that indicate the nature of inherent social skills, risky behaviour, physical health, problems of internal and external adaptation, and even unemployment. Therefore, as you know, researchers Cooper and Koenko naturally emphasise the significance of self-regulation for well-being throughout a person's life. Using meta-reviews is relevant and necessary to provide a generalised understanding of the factors that influence the development of self-regulation ([Wesarg-Menzel et al., 2023](#)).

However, it is worth noting that in modern society, the problem of forming self-regulation of young people in the context of developing healthy sexuality of individuals, like “entering adulthood” society citizens, is gaining particular resonance. After all, sexuality is a significant part of the individual, which is one of the factors that determines the formation of psychological, mental and physical integrity. What is the deterministic interdependence of biological, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions of human functioning as a sexual being ([Crandall et al., 2018](#); [Smolska & Donets, 2018](#))? Therefore, it is not surprising that the age stage of youth

development from adolescence to adolescence is associated with many changes, in particular physical, emotional and social, affecting their inherent behavioural responses, including sexual behaviour. The ability to self-regulate sexual behaviour is crucial for psychosocial development, as it not only determines the physical health of young people but also affects their social adaptation and emotional well-being. Research shows that low levels of self-regulation are crucial to engaging in risky sexual behaviours that can have long-term negative consequences, such as sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies, or emotional trauma.

Cognitive behavioural approaches to healthy sexual self-regulation play a significant role in helping young people in their youth to control their desires more effectively, make informed decisions and avoid risky sexual practices. Therefore, the study of factors that affect self-regulation and represent a necessary condition for developing the ability of young people in adolescence to control their emotions, desires and actions aimed at promoting an increase in the level of sexual consciousness and responsibility becomes particularly relevant.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications

The review of scientific publications devoted to the study of cognitive behavioural factors' problems influencing the formation of healthy sexual self-regulation in adolescence highlights critical aspects of influencing self-regulation on sexual behaviour and developing healthy interpersonal relationships. The results of the study confirm the significance of self-regulation as a tool for preventing sexual risks and creating a reliable basis for healthy sexual behaviour.

Thus, the study conducted by Crandall, Magnusson, Novilla, Silitonga, and Almigo aimed to study the growth of self-regulation in adolescents and its impact on risky sexual behaviour. They found that increasing self-regulation significantly reduces the likelihood of young people engaging in risky sexual activities, highlighting the need to develop these skills early to reduce future risks. In turn, researcher Pringle and his colleagues highlighted the physiological aspects of sexual behaviour in adolescents, in particular, how cognitive and behavioural factors affect the ability to self-regulate. Their work provides a better understanding of how biological processes occurring during adolescence affect emotional and cognitive responses during adolescence and adolescence, especially in the context of sexual behaviour.

Meanwhile, researchers Farley and Kim-Spoon investigated how social interactions with parents, peers, friends, and romantic partners affect the development of self-regulation in adolescents. Their work has shown that the social environment plays a crucial role in forming self-regulatory skills, where emotional support is a significant factor in this process.

Gajda, Małkowska-Szkućnik, and Rodzeń conducted a cross-cultural study of self-regulation among adolescents in Poland, highlighting cultural features that can influence the formation of self-regulation. Their work provided an opportunity to identify how social and cultural contexts shape behavioural self-regulation in young people.

Researchers Kalina, Orosová, Kriaucionienė, and Lukács studied the effects of self-regulation and optimism on student sexual behaviour in Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia. Their research has shown that high levels of self-regulation significantly reduce the likelihood of risky sexual behaviour, emphasising the significance of these skills in preventing risks.

In a meta-review conducted by Wesarg-Menzel and colleagues, the researchers examined the development and socialisation of self-regulation from childhood to adolescence. They

identified the differences between self-regulatory abilities, goals, and motivation and showed how these cognitive-behavioural factors influence self-regulation development.

Mirzaee, Ahmadi, and Zangiabadi investigated the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy and psychoeducational counselling in improving sexual health in women. Their results confirmed that such methods are effective in overcoming sexual dysfunctions and improving the quality of sexual life. A study by Jangi, Nurizadeh, and Sattarzadeh-Jahdi found that cognitive behavioural interventions and sex education promote sexual confidence in newly married women. They stressed that such educational activities can play a significant role in shaping healthy sexual self-regulation.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian researchers such as Gasyuk and Fedik have looked at the internal psychological aspects of sexual health, emphasising the importance of the psychoemotional State for the development of healthy sexual relationships. Krivoruka and Kushmiruk focused on the psychocorrection of sexual attitudes in adolescents, which is a significant stage in their healthy sexual development. Moskalenko and Prisnyakova focused on the level of readiness of young people for sexual relations, noting that this factor significantly affects self-regulation and the choice of healthy sexual behaviour. Potocki et al. investigated the impact of sexual stereotypes on the social functioning of young people, finding that these stereotypes can influence the choice of risky or healthy sexual behaviour patterns of young men and women.

Among the Ukrainian scientists studying the psychology of sexuality, we consider it appropriate to note the contribution made by such researchers as B.M. Vornik, S.V. Didenko, T.V. Govorun, V.A. Gupalovskaya, O.S. Kozlova, O.V. Fedik, etc. (*Potocka ma in., 2019*). Today, there are a significant number of scientific publications devoted to the study of adolescent sexual behaviour. Such scientists as L.P. Butuzova, O.M. Gridkovets, T.P. Ivakhnenko, O.M. Kikinezhdi, V.P. Kravets, O.V. Petrunko, O.Y. Rybalka, O.V. Secheyko, T.M. Titarenko, S. V. Yashnik, etc. argue that the problem of premarital sexual relations is worth solving systematically and comprehensively: highlight and hygiene of sexual life, self-defence against sexually transmitted diseases and other negative consequences of promiscuous sexual contacts, moral and value orientation of young people regarding sex (*Moskalenko & Prisnyakova, 2021*). Researcher Smolskaya noticed the psychological and spiritual aspects of sexual self-regulation, emphasising the significance of value attitudes in the decision-making process regarding the sexual behaviour of young people. Thus, the analysis of scientific publications demonstrates that cognitive behavioural factors, in particular self-regulation, play a critical role in forming healthy sexual behaviour in adolescence.

The object of the study covers a wide range of cognitive behavioural influences that shape and regulate healthy sexuality in adolescence.

The study aims to conduct a theoretical study, systematise the cognitive and behavioural mechanisms that contribute to developing healthy sexual self-regulation, also conduct a thorough analysis of the scientific literature concerning cognitive and behavioural mechanisms of self-regulation in adolescence, and identify critical factors influencing the formation of healthy sexual self-regulation in adolescence. Moreover, it describes psychological, social and cultural aspects that can influence cognitive behavioural processes in self-regulation.

The main methods used in the study. In the scientific work course to study the cognitive behavioural factors' problem influencing the formation of healthy sexual self-regulation in

adolescence, the results of the studies mentioned above in cognitive behavioural therapy, self-regulation and sexual behaviour were systematised and generalised by using the analysis and synthesis of scientific sources as methods that allow integrating disparate data, highlighting significant aspects for further study. To implement the study and compare the cognitive behavioural factors' influence on sexual self-regulation in different cultural and social conditions, the method of comparative data analysis was used, which contributes to a deeper understanding of the influence of cultural and social contexts on sexual behaviour.

To generalise and evaluate the results of many studies concerning the impact of cognitive behavioural approaches on the development of sexual self-regulation in adolescence, meta-analysis was used to combine data from different sources, evaluate the effectiveness of approaches, and identify general trends. Also, the logical generalisation method was used to formulate conclusions and recommendations on using cognitive behavioural interventions to develop healthy sexual behaviour in adolescence. This method helps to structure the results obtained, develop practical recommendations, and identify directions for further research.

Discussion

Sexual self-regulation is a critical factor in young people's lives, as it affects their health, social adaptation, and overall development. According to Sarwono's research, sexual behaviour involves all actions resulting from sexual desires and can be directed at another person, an imaginary image, or even at yourself (*Silitonga & Almigo, 2023*). These activities can range from experiencing emotional attraction and dating to physical contact, such as kissing or having sex. However, as known, young people in adolescence are more likely to engage in risky behaviour, in particular, the use of alcohol, drugs or unprotected sex. This is because they have more freedom to experiment at this stage of life and are more likely to enter into short-term relationships (*Kalina et al., 2017*). So, the author can say that self-regulation becomes increasingly relevant in such circumstances as a scientific research subject focusing on risky behaviour and as a necessary factor for applied educational work with adolescent population segments. Thus, since self-regulation involves the ability to control emotions, thoughts, and behaviours to achieve goals and also includes planning skills and delaying pleasure, the development of a high level of self-regulation and sexual self-regulation is a predictor of protecting young men and young women from risky sexual behaviour (*Kalina et al., 2017*). It positively influences the forming and development of healthy sexuality.

It is worth noting that social factors play a significant role in forming healthy sexual self-regulation in adolescence. In particular, many researchers have noticed that teenage girls show more self-control than boys. This may be because boys usually experience less physiological pressure due to the lack of pregnancy risk, which may encourage them to engage in more risky forms of sexual behaviour (*Lestari et al., 2023*). Another equally significant factor is socioeconomic status, which also plays a significant role in shaping sexual behaviour in adolescence. For example, young people with low socio-economic status are more likely to resort to early marriages or pregnancies in order to ensure economic stability. Equally significant are personal factors such as emotional maturity, intelligence levels, and spiritual values, which also influence the development of healthy sexual self-regulation. Therefore, as the researchers note, young people with high levels of emotional intelligence better control their impulses and avoid

risky behaviour. Spiritual values form an internal framework of self-control that allows young men and women to make more informed decisions (*Lestari et al., 2023*). Thus, the development of self-regulation affects not only sexual behaviour but also overall life satisfaction, mental well-being, and success.

A meta-analysis conducted by J.S. Hyde and M.B. Oliver, based on 177 studies of gender differences in sexual activity, confirms that men are more likely to masturbate and tend to approve of sex without commitment. At the same time, women are more likely to experience anxiety, fear, and guilt associated with sexual activity. In addition, a review of J. Peter and P.M. Valkenburg's research, which focuses on pornography use among young people, indicates that men are more likely to turn to pornography and pornography use is associated with the formation of sexual attitudes that approve of sex without commitment and aggressive forms of sex (*Smolska & Donets, 2018*). This, in turn, does not contribute to the formation of healthy sexuality due to the unrealistic perception of sexual intercourse by young men. In addition, an analysis of these data shows that girls in adolescence are less likely to objectify a sexual partner, have lower levels of sexual excitability, and are less likely to use pornography. At the same time, their sexual attitudes are more often marked by greater maturity and responsibility. A high level of psychological maturity in girls correlates with a higher level of satisfaction with their sex life. In contrast, high social self-control can cause dissatisfaction, leading to neurotic reactions (*Smolska & Donets, 2018*).

Thus, it can be concluded that young people in their teens who can control their emotions and behaviour are less likely to be influenced by their peers and engage in dangerous, risky activities (*Gajda et al., 2022*). Sexual self-regulation is a multidimensional construct that includes emotional, behavioural and cognitive aspects, embodying the "normative process of development" formed by biopsychosocial factors. The researchers note that in early childhood, this process occurs through co-regulation and modelling of adult behaviour, and in adolescence and young age, through interactions with peers and romantic partners (*Wesarg-Menzel et al., 2023*). The rapid maturation of the brain in adolescence allows for the development of the ability to plan, anticipate consequences, and control emotions, which makes the study of self-regulation during adulthood, adolescence, and entry into adulthood a significant area of scientific research on life and personality development (*Gajda et al., 2022*). Thus, healthy sexual self-regulation helps avoid risky behaviour and contributes to the successful performance of significant developmental tasks in adolescence and young age, including building relationships and adapting to new social roles (*Jangi et al., 2023*).

We consider it necessary to note that sexual behaviour in adolescence is formed under the influence of many factors, including physiological, cultural and social aspects. Studies by Zimmer-Hembeck and Collins have shown that adolescents with high levels of physiological development are more likely to have more sexual partners. This indicates the need for gender-sensitive interventions to prevent risky sexual behaviour in adolescents (*Pringle, et al., 2017*). One of the key motives for sexual behaviour is the desire to be recognised and receive a positive assessment from others. Dissatisfaction with this need can lead to compensatory sexual behaviour, such as hyperactivity or masturbation. However, if a teenager receives recognition and support, he or she can develop stable and deep relationships without deviant sexual behaviour (*Smolska, 2020*). Sigmund Freud noted that sexual attraction is the driving force behind

healthy sexuality. However, sexual excitability is not exclusively a physiological process; it is formed under the influence of the emotional and communicative experience of the individual. This approach is worth reflecting on in sex education programs that combine scientific evidence and cultural aspects that can evoke profound emotional experiences and shape healthy sexuality (*Smolska, 2020*). Therefore, we believe that the current understanding of healthy sexuality requires a comprehensive approach that covers physiological, psychological and socio-cultural aspects in the ontogenetic perspective of human development. After all, education on love and healthy sexual behaviour begins in childhood and forms the basis for mature relationships in the future. Psychologists play a significant role in educating parents and should contribute to harmonising family relations (*Smolska, 2020*). Strategies for developing sexual culture should consider national and spiritual values aimed at fostering responsible behaviour among young people.

However, as young people in their teens and teens face multiple sexual health risks, this is often accompanied by low awareness of contraception and additional risks (*Pringle, et al., 2017*). It is worth adding that early pregnancy, in general, remains a problem in many regions of the world, often associated with increased morbidity and mortality. Therefore, the author believes that targeted awareness of healthy sexual behaviour and contraceptive use will help reduce these risks and reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (*Farley & Kim-Spoon, 2014; Pringle, et al., 2017*). A targeted and competent application of cognitive behavioural factors for the implementation of ecological sex education plays a central role in the formation of healthy sexual self-regulation among young people. This will positively promote healthy sexual development for young people and reduce risks. Therefore, in our opinion, cognitive behavioural factors that influence the formation of healthy sexual self-regulation in adolescence play a crucial role in the development of psychosexual attitudes and behavioural strategies in adolescence that form healthy sexual self-regulation.

Conclusion

The formation of healthy sexual self-regulation is one of the most significant aspects of young people's psychosocial development, mainly from adolescence to a young age. Sexuality, as part of personal identity, is caused by the interdependence of biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. It affects a person's overall well-being, social adaptation, and emotional well-being.

Self-regulation of sexual behaviour is crucial for maintaining the physical and mental health of young people. It helps young men and women control their emotions, think critically and make informed decisions in difficult situations, in particular regarding sexual behaviour. Research shows that low levels of self-regulation are one of the crucial factors contributing to risky sexual behaviour, which can lead to sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies, and emotional trauma. This indicates the need for active development of self-control skills, especially in the context of healthy sexual attitude formation.

Biological, cognitive, emotional, and social aspects have a significant impact on forming sexual self-regulation. Puberty changes, cognitive processes, socialisation, and changes in personal identity determine the formation of sexual behaviour. These factors require a

comprehensive approach so that young people can better understand their sexuality and make responsible decisions about their intimate lives.

Cognitive behavioural approaches are highly effective in shaping sexual self-regulation, as they help correct misconceptions about sexuality, reduce anxiety, and promote confidence in relationships. Cognitive behavioural interventions can increase self-control, prevent risky behaviour and provide emotional stability.

Social, cultural and gender dimensions also play a significant role in shaping sexual self-regulation. Men and women perceive sexuality and sexual behaviour differently, which often depends on gender stereotypes and social expectations. For example, research shows that women show higher levels of self-control in sexual matters, while men are more likely to engage in risky behaviour. Considering gender differences and the impact of social stereotypes allows us to develop programmes that will promote responsible attitudes towards sexuality among both men and women.

Thus, forming healthy sexual self-regulation is a complex process that requires the integration of cognitive, behavioural, and emotional aspects. Psycho-corrective programmes and educational initiatives based on cognitive behavioural techniques can effectively help young people develop the necessary skills to make responsible decisions in sexual behaviour, avoid risky practices, and reduce the likelihood of undesirable consequences such as illness, pregnancy, or emotional trauma.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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