A systematic review of the influence of sexual coercion on sexual risk behaviour, physical abuse and substance use among adolescents

Presenter: J Soomar
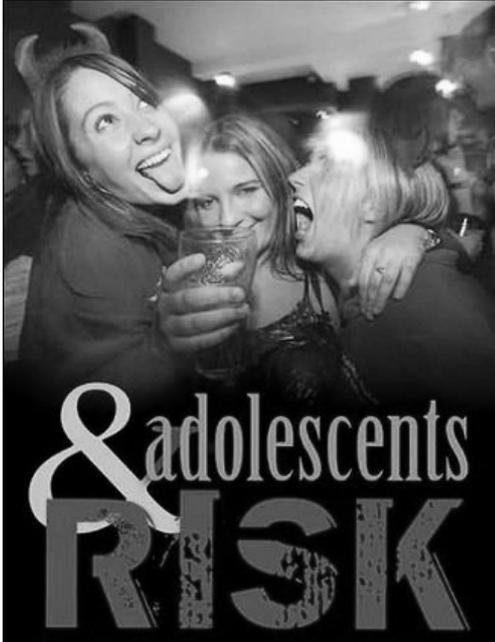(University of Cape Town)

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Introduction

Sexual coercion is a health issue which results in psychological effects that may influence decisions made by adolescents around **sexual activity** and other **risk behaviours**.

To assess the scope of the research area, we undertook a **systematic review** of studies on sexual coercion as a risk factor for sexual risk behaviour, physical abuse and substance use.
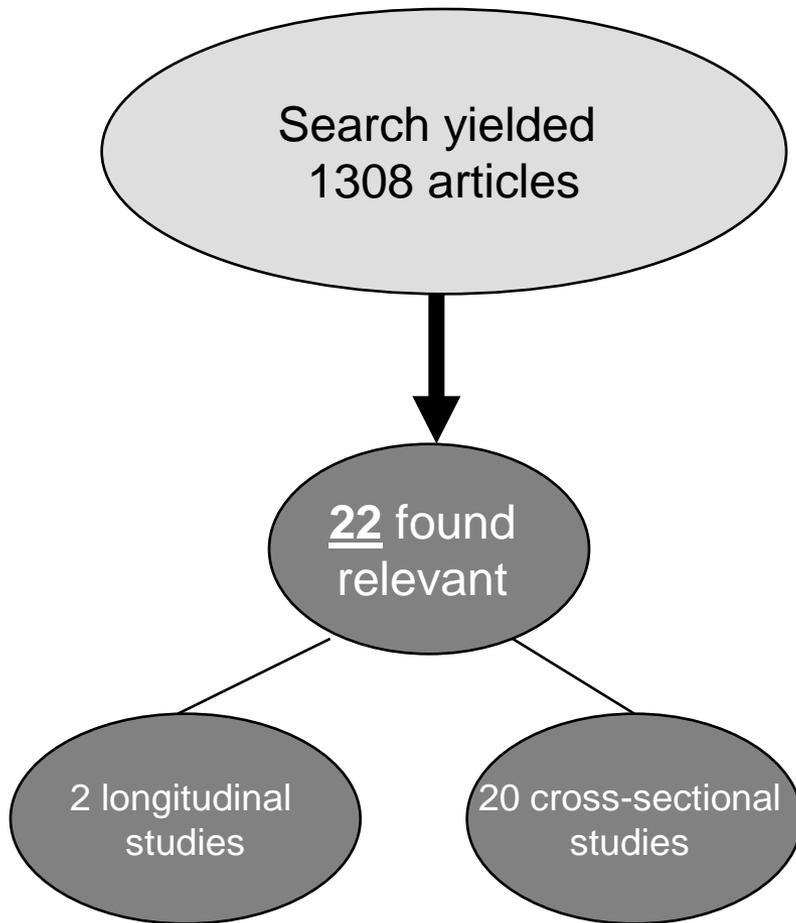
Methods

Study selection	
Study design	Quantitative observational studies
Population	Males and females aged10 to 25 years
Exposure	Being the victim of sexual coercion (sexual coercion was defined as sexual intercourse that occurred as a result of being tricked, forced, or raped)
Outcomes	Sexual risk behaviour, and/or Physical abuse perpetration or victimization, and/or Substance use.
Source	Peer reviewed published articles that were paper-based or electronic: Science direct Google scholar PsychINFO Pubmed NCBI The University of Cape Town ('aleph') library database

Methods contd.

Data collation, analysis and reporting	
Study selection validation	External researcher validated the selection of the studies according to the criteria
Study quality assessment	Quality assessment tool developed to check external validity, performance, detection, attrition, and selection bias of each study selected
Data synthesis	Prevalence Measures of associations (odds ratios & significance level) Forest plots Interpretation

Results
Article search

Search yielded
1308 articles

↓

22 found
relevant

2 longitudinal
studies

20 cross-sectional
studies

- Few studies
- Most include sexual coercion as outcome NOT exposure
- Setting varied
- Definition of sexual coercion varied

Results contd.
Prevalence

The prevalence of sexual coercion range:

Males	0.2% → 26.7%
Females	4% → 48%

- Broad prevalence ranges
- Discrepancy between the genders
- Vary with definition of sexual coercion
- Difference in settings (e.g. social norms, subject, country)

Results contd.
Associations
Odds ratios: Sexual risk behaviour

Indicator	Coercion at 1st sex		Ever been coerced	
	M	F	M	F
Age at 1st sex	1.21	1.15		2.11
Transactional sex		1.98		
>2 Sex partners		1.91		1.54
		1.77		2.16
Unwanted pregnancy			1.64	1.4
Condom non-use			1.37	1.19
				1.28
				1.5

All p<0.05

- Seven studies indicated an increased odds of **sexual risk behaviour** if coerced into sex.

- Positive associations were found with
  - transactional sex,
  - more than 2 sex partners,
  - condom non-use, and
  - age at first sex.

- The odds ratios ranged from **1.21 to 1.98** (*p<0.05*).

Odds ratios: Physical abuse victimisation and/or perpetration

Only 2 studies presented indicators for **physical abuse** which indicated a strong positive and statistically significant association

Indicator	*Ever been coerced*	
	M	**F**
Perpetrated forced sex	**3.8**	
Physically hurt	**8.9**	**4.7**
In a fight in past 12 mo	**1.3**	**1.6**
Ever in a fight		**2.3**

All p<0.05

Odds ratios: Physical abuse victimisation and/or perpetration

3 studies presented indicators of **substance use** which indicated a strong positive and statistically significant association

Indicator	*Ever been coerced*	
	M	**F**
Smoked marijuana in past 30 days	2.11	1.3
Used marijuana more than once		1.6
Smoked cigarettes in past 30 days	1.75	1.5
Drank alcohol on past 30 days	1.94	

All p<0.05

Conclusion

- Sexual coercion influences risk behaviours, but multiple other influences/confounders

- Need for improved quality of studies

- Need studies with longitudinal and experimental designs

- This review provides insight into prevention of these risk behaviours

- The effectiveness of programmes that aim to prevent risk behaviour may be increased by addressing the consequences of sexual coercion

- Interventions that reduce the extent of sexual coercion may have added benefit in terms of reducing sexual risk behaviour, physical abuse victimisation and substance use.

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