Sexual Risk Survey

JESSICA A. TURCHIK AND JOHN P. GARSKE, Ohio University

Risky sexual behavior among college students is a significant problem that warrants scientific investigation. Other measures of sexual risk taking either are too narrowly focused to be used with college students or do not have adequate psychometric properties. The Sexual Risk Survey (SRS; Turchik & Garske, 2009) was developed to provide a broad and psychometrically sound measure of sexual risk taking to researchers interested in studying college students.

Description

The SRS was developed to assess the frequency of sexual risk behaviors in the past 6 months among college students. The SRS was developed at a midsized midwestern university with a sample of 613 male and female undergraduate students (Turchik & Garske, 2009). The survey was originally composed of 37 items taken from past surveys of sexual risk behaviors and from suggestions in the literature. Descriptive analyses and a principal components analysis with varimax rotation were used to reduce data from the original 37 SRS items. Items were eliminated based on low number of responses above 0 (< 10%), low item-total correlations (< .40), low communalities (< .40), and low factor loadings (< .40). Fourteen items were eliminated based on these criteria; the final survey comprises 23 items.

Response Mode and Timing

Participants are asked to read the 23 items, each describing a sexual risk behavior, and to indicate in a free-response format the number of times they engaged in each behavior over the past 6 months. The SRS was developed as a paper-and-pencil self-administered survey that can be given in groups. The survey typically takes participants 5 to 10 minutes to complete. The SRS has also been given in an individual-structured interview format. The responses to the survey and the interview were found to be highly correlated ($r = .90$).

Scoring

Given that sexual risk-taking scores are typically positively skewed, the data will likely need to be recoded or transformed to reduce skewness in the frequencies reported by the students. In the original study (Turchik & Garske, 2009), the responses to the 23 items were recoded into an ordinal series of categories to reduce the variability and skewness in the raw score totals. The raw numbers for each item were recoded into categories coded as 0 to 4. Codes of “0” only included frequencies of 0. Next, the remaining frequencies were examined for the sample and were treated as if they represented 100% of the frequencies. Because the data were negatively skewed, the following guideline was used to classify the frequencies greater than 0: 1 = 40% of responses, 2 = 30% of responses, 3 = 20% of responses, and 4 = 10% of responses. However, in practice, with the restricted variability of frequencies in many of the items, it was often not possible to classify the frequencies in this manner. Also, the distribution of frequencies will likely be different based on the sample, and researchers should not assume the ordinal categories used in one study would be valid in another sample. An alternative way to reduce skewness in the data is to perform some other normalizing technique, such as a logarithmic or inverse transformation, because the distribution will likely not be normally distributed. Researchers should refer to the original article for more discussion on this issue (Turchik & Garske, 2009).

Once the items are recoded with scores from 0 to 4, all 23 items are summed for the total sexual risk-taking score, with scores ranging from 0 to 92 based on the original score “blocking” technique. A principal components analysis revealed five subscales that can also be scored: Sexual Risk Taking With Uncommitted Partners (8 items), Risky Sex Acts (5 items), Impulsive Sexual Behaviors (5 items), Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors (2 items), and Risky Anal Sex Acts (3 items).

Reliability

The SRS has demonstrated good internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Turchik & Garske, 2009). The internal consistency of the total Sexual Risk Survey with all 23 items was .88. For the five subscales, the Cronbach’s alphas were .88, .80, .78, .89, and .61 for Sexual Risk Taking With Uncommitted Partners, Risky Sex Acts, Impulsive Sexual Behaviors, Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors, and Risky Anal Sex Acts, respectively. The 2-week test-retest reliability for the total Sexual Risk Survey was .93. The 2-week test-retest reliabilities for the Sexual Risk Taking With Uncommitted Partners, Risky Sex Acts, Impulsive Sexual Behaviors, Intent to Engage in Risky Sexual Behaviors, and Risky Anal Sex Acts factors were .90, .89, .79, .70, and .58, respectively. The inclusion or exclusion of the Risky Anal Sex Act items did not affect...
the internal consistency or test-retest reliability of the total scale.

Validity

The SRS has demonstrated evidence of content, concurrent, and convergent validity (Turchik & Garske, 2009). Content validity was supported by inclusion of items based on a review of the literature, an examination of previous measures of sexual risk taking, and a pilot study of college students. The SRS demonstrated evidence of convergent and concurrent validity by its relationships with a number of other measures predicted to be related to sexual risk behaviors based on past literature. The SRS evidenced discriminant validity with low correlations with measures of social desirability and sexual threat of disclosure.

Other Information

The measure was originally given with a glossary of terms that might not be familiar to some participants and with a calendar of the last 6 months. Questions to help participants remember their sexual experiences over this time period were also included to help enhance accurate recall.

Further information concerning the measure can be found in the original article (Turchik & Garske, 2009) or by contacting the first author.

Reference


Exhibit

Sexual Risk Survey

Instructions: Please read the following statements and record the number that is true for you over the past six months for each question on the blank. If you do not know for sure how many times a behavior took place, try to estimate the number as close as you can. Thinking about the average number of times the behavior happened per week or per month might make it easier to estimate an accurate number, especially if the behavior happened fairly regularly. If you’ve had multiple partners, try to think about how long you were with each partner, the number of sexual encounters you had with each, and try to get an accurate estimate of the total number of each behavior. If the question does not apply to you or you have never engaged in the behavior in the question, put a “0” on the blank. Please do not leave items blank. Remember that in the following questions “sex” includes oral, anal, and vaginal sex and that “sexual behavior” includes passionate kissing, making out, fondling, petting, oral-to-anal stimulation, and hand-to-genital stimulation. Refer to the Glossary for any words you are not sure about. Please consider only the last six months when answering and please be honest.

In the past six months:

1. ____ How many partners have you engaged in sexual behavior with but not had sex with?
2. ____ How many times have you left a social event with someone you just met?
3. ____ How many times have you “hooked up” but not had sex with someone you didn’t know or didn’t know well?
4. ____ How many times have you gone out to bars/parties/social events with the intent of “hooking up” and engaging in sexual behavior but not having sex with someone?
5. ____ How many times have you gone out to bars/parties/social events with the intent of “hooking up” and having sex with someone?
6. ____ How many times have you had an unexpected and unanticipated sexual experience?
7. ____ How many times have you had a sexual encounter you engaged in willingly but later regretted?

For the next set of questions, follow the same direction as before. However, for questions 8–23, if you have never had sex (oral, anal, or vaginal), please put a “0” on each blank.

8. ____ How many partners have you had sex with?
9. ____ How many times have you had vaginal intercourse without a latex or polyurethane condom? Note: Include times when you have used a lambskin or membrane condom.
10. ____ How many times have you had vaginal intercourse without protection against pregnancy?
11. ____ How many times have you given or received fellatio (oral sex on a man) without a condom?
12. ____ How many times have you given or received cunnilingus (oral sex on a woman) without a dental dam or “adequate protection” (please see definition of dental dam for what is considered adequate protection)?
13. ____ How many times have you had anal sex without a condom?
14. ____ How many times have you or your partner engaged in anal penetration by a hand ("fisting") or other object without a latex glove or condom followed by unprotected anal sex?

15. ____ How many times have you given or received analingus (oral stimulation of the anal region, "rimming") without a dental dam or "adequate protection" (please see definition of dental dam for what is considered adequate protection)?

16. ____ How many people have you had sex with that you know but are not involved in any sort of relationship with (i.e., "friends with benefits," "fucked buddies")?

17. ____ How many times have you had sex with someone you don’t know well or just met?

18. ____ How many times have you or your partner used alcohol or drugs before or during sex?

19. ____ How many times have you had sex with a new partner before discussing sexual history, IV drug use, disease status and other current sexual partners?

20. ____ How many times (that you know of) have you had sex with someone who has had many sexual partners?

21. ____ How many partners (that you know of) have you had sex with who had been sexually active before you were with them but had not been tested for STIs/HIV?

22. ____ How many partners have you had sex with that you didn’t trust?

23. ____ How many times (that you know of) have you had sex with someone who was also engaging in sex with others during the same time period?

*The Glossary is available upon request from Jessica A. Turchik.

**Attitudes Toward Erotica Questionnaire**

**ILSA L. LOTTES,**1 *University of Maryland, Baltimore County*  
**MARTIN S. WEINBERG,** Indiana Universtiy

The Attitudes Toward Erotica Questionnaire (ATEQ) was developed by a University Task Force on Pornography. At a Midwestern university, a student was arrested for showing a sexually explicit film to raise funds for his dormitory. The arrest sparked controversy and brought the issue of pornography into sharp focus among students, faculty, and administrators. Subsequently, a task force was appointed to investigate attitudes toward sexually explicit materials by the student body.

The ATEQ includes scales measuring attitudes about harmful and positive effects of erotica, as well as attitudes toward its restriction and regulation. Because of the wide variety of sexually explicit material, the questionnaire is not designed to investigate attitudes toward erotica in general. A social scientist can adapt the questionnaire to examine attitudes about the type of erotic material most appropriate for her/his research—either a specific medium (e.g., *Playboy*) or a general form (e.g., X-rated movie).

**Description**

For each type of erotica, nine items (numbered 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 20, and 21) assess its harmful effects and form a Harmful scale; seven items (numbered 5, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, and 19) assess its positive effects and form a Positive scale; and five items (numbered 2, 3, 8, 14, and 16) assess its restriction and form a Restrict scale. In the study at the university in the Midwest, 663 students (52% female) responded to items about four types of sexually explicit materials—“magazines like *Playboy,*” “magazines like *Hustler,*” “adult bookstore magazines,” and “X-rated movies and videos like Deep Throat” (Lottes, Weinberg, & Weller, 1993). From a varimax factor analysis with an orthogonal rotation of the 84 responses (21 per erotic type) of these students, one major factor emerged. This factor accounted for 63% of the variance with all factor loadings having an absolute value greater than .71. Thus, although properties of the individual Harmful, Positive, and Restrict scales are presented here, analysis based on one large random student sample (70% response rate) suggests that attitudes toward erotica are organized along a simple binary good/bad dimension.

The response options to each item are one of the 5-point Likert-type choices: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), no opinion (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). This questionnaire is designed for a college student or general adult

---

1 Address correspondence to Ilsa L. Lottes, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 5401 Wilkens Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21228; e-mail: lottes@umbc.edu