

Development and validation of the Attitudes Toward Sexually Inexperienced Youth Scale (ATSIYS)

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Introduction

- Rates of sexual inexperience in early adulthood are increasing¹⁻⁵
- Sexual inexperience is still a source of stigma,⁶⁻⁸ perceived as non-normative,⁷ and depicted as such in TV and movies⁹
- Research on sexual inexperience remains scarce and focuses mostly on motivations for virginity, developmental trajectories, virgins' self-perceptions and virginity-related stigma^{7, 10-13}

To date, however, no study had assessed how sexually inexperienced youth (SIY) are perceived by their peers. **The aim of this study was to develop and pilot the 1st measure to assess sexually experienced peers' perceptions of SIY.**

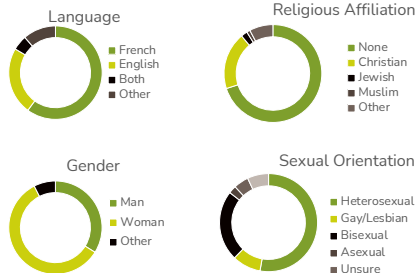
Methods & Measures

- A worldwide, cross-sectional online survey was conducted between October 2020 and June 2021
- Based on available empirical findings and two preliminary studies, we developed a 69-item *Attitudes Towards Sexually Inexperienced Youth* scale (ATSIY)
- All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "1 - Strongly Disagree" to "7 - Strongly Agree"
- 59 items were gender-neutral (i.e., applicable to both men and women, such as "Sexually inexperienced youth [SIY] are highly invested in their studies or career")
- 10 items appeared separately for men and women SIY since they were likely gendered, such as "Sexually inactive men/women have an overly romantic view of sexuality". Mean scores were computed for those 10 items prior to the EFA step.
- The scale had no missing data.
- Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses (EFA and CFA) were conducted using Mplus v7.4.

Participants (n = 1,442)

- The full sample was randomly split into equivalent subsamples for EFA (n = 709) and CFA (n = 733)
- Sample equivalence was assessed through non-significant group difference tests (χ^2 and t-tests), and by testing measurement invariance based on subsample attribution on the final model.

	Range (years)	M	SD
Age at participation	18.08–74.27	28.52	8.47
Age at sexual debut	10–40	18.35	3.59
Time since sexual debut	0.12–57.42	10.14	8.76



Results – (1) Exploratory Factor Analyses

EFA were conducted on the scale items as continuous indicators. Goodness-of-fit was assessed with CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and AIC fit indices.

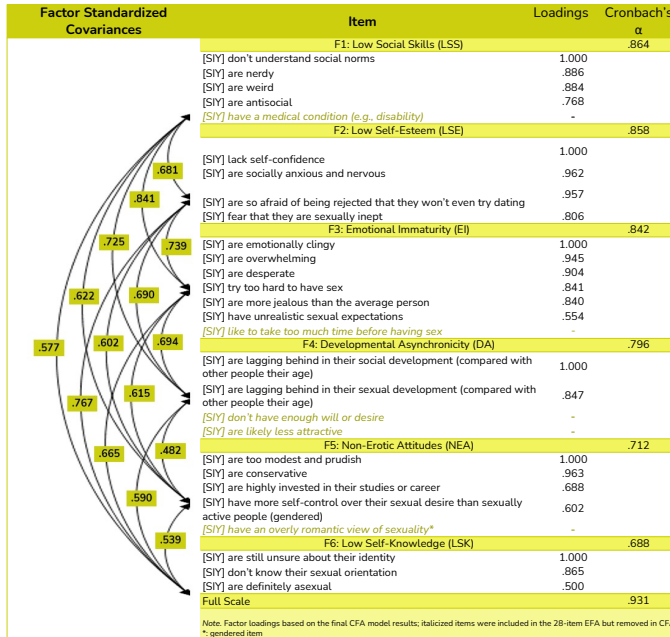
Five items were removed due to multicollinearity ($r \geq .7$) (e.g., "shy" and "socially awkward"; "geek" and "nerdy"). Paired items were compared; the item with the larger variance was kept.

EFA were conducted on the remaining 64 items. Items were then selected based on adequate item-total correlations and factor loadings ($\geq .40$). Poorly adjusted items (all factor loadings $\leq .40$) and complex items (factor loadings $\geq .40$ on several factors) were removed gradually until the factor solution was conceptually sound.

A 28-item, 6-factor model was suggested by the EFA.

Final Scale Results

BIC	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
55602.118	0.061	0.929	0.917



Note: Factor loadings based on the final CFA model results; italicized items were included in the 28-item EFA but removed in CFA. * gendered item

Results – (2) Confirmatory Factor Analyses

CFA were performed in the following sequence:¹⁴

- Model specification (based on the EFA results)
- Model identification and estimation (maximum likelihood)
- Model fit assessment with CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and BIC fit indices

Models were tested by combining factors/assigning items to different factors based on conceptual considerations.

Five items (italicized in the table below) were removed at the CFA step due to being less well adjusted to the final model. The final model includes 23 items in 6 factors.

Discussion

This study assessed perceptions of SIY among sexually experienced emerging adults.

- Contrary to empirical correlates of sexual inexperience, these results show that SIY are **not** perceived by others as socially awkward, isolated, rejected, lacking knowledge about sexuality, or less desirable sexual partners^{7, 9, 13, 15}
- In line with previous studies, however, SIY are perceived as lacking self-confidence and being socially anxious, nervous, and highly invested in their studies^{9, 16-17}

Conclusions

- This is a first step in better understanding the perceptions of SIY by their sexually active peers
- Further research is needed regarding these perceptions and to assess whether other attributes, that were not included in the original 69 items, should be added to this measure
- Convergent and divergent validity still need to be assessed in order to create a fully validated scale

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To download the final 23-item scale, scan this QR code!



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