

Disentangling the meaning of a positive sexuality within adolescence and development of the Positive Sexuality in Adolescence Scale

Maes et al. (2022)



Positive sexuality is formally defined as the acceptance and respect for one's sexuality and the sexuality of others without judgment, shame, violence, or discrimination.

Step 1: Developing the items for our measure of sexual positivity

We generated several potential statements (i.e., Items) to include in the scale based on a thorough search for highly referenced scholarly articles and key terms on positive sexuality in adolescence.

Step 2: Making sure the questions are understood by adolescents

Following discussion of item clarity for adolescents among 4 doctoral students, we conducted 50 minute group interviews with adolescents (aged 13 to 16) to confirm clarity and develop other statements of positive sexuality that may have been missed.

Step 3: Conducting a survey on the developed items, and ensuring they indeed measure sexual positivity in adolescents

211 participants from Belgium completed the developed survey and scales of variables anticipated to be associated or unassociated with positive sexuality.

Analysis revealed **5 factors** assessed by our scale to fully capture positive sexuality in adolescents:

- positive approaches to sexual relationships
ex. "I think it is important that a partner feels safe when we're being intimate"
- resilience against challenging sexuality related experiences
ex. "my friends would tease me about my sexual feelings and experiences, then i would distract myself by doing or thinking about something positive"
- one's own control over sexual interactions
ex. "If someone would force me to do something intimate, I think I can say "no" if I don't want to"
- respectful approach to different sexual expressions
ex. ". I respect that two people of the same gender can fall in love"
- acceptance of one's own sexuality
ex. "It seems normal that I feel sexually aroused sometimes"

Each factor was confirmed associated with sexual positivity and associated variables, scores for each item within each factor were also associated – overall demonstrating successful validation of the scale in measuring sexual positivity.



Step 4: Conducting the survey once more to confirm the items.

679 participants' data were analyzed from an existing study of participants from 12- to 18-years-old, most heterosexual and Belgian. They were also surveyed on their sexual activities and relationship experience.

The factor structure developed from the first survey study was confirmed, we also found that the scale was able to provide meaningful scores for girls and boys, with girls having greater sexual expression and boys having more acceptance of their sexuality.

In short

This study has successfully developed and validated a new measure of sexual positivity in adolescents.

Being able to measure positive sexuality is important. Several studies have demonstrated that without a reliable measure, scientists and clinicians will lack a balanced and comprehensive understanding of adolescents' sexuality development.

