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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### ADOPTION OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

#### ADOÇÃO DE MEDIDAS PREVENTIVAS POR OCASIÃO DA PRIMEIRA RELAÇÃO SEXUAL ADOPCIÓN DE MEDIDAS PREVENTIVAS EN LA PRIMERA RELACIÓN SEXUAL

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to analyze the practical use of contraceptive methods for men and women, at the occurrence of first sexual intercourse. **Method:** cross-sectional study with 400 couples aged between 20 and 49 years old. A form was used to collect data which subsequently were statistically analyzed using SPSS software version 21.0. The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, Protocol 018 151 / 2010-53. **Results:** in women, contraceptive methods were used in larger quantities (45.1%) compared to men (35.9%). Whereas men and women, 40.5% said they had used a contraceptive method and 59.5% said did not use any form of protection at first sexual intercourse. The best-known contraceptive method cited by both sexes was the male condom, 74.2%, followed by the contraceptive pill, 14%. **Conclusion:** the majority of men and women, had information about contraceptive methods, but did not use them, to have sexual intercourse. **Descriptors:** Contraceptive Methods; Sexual intercourse; Gender; Reproductive Health.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** analisar a prática do uso dos métodos contraceptivos de homens e mulheres na ocorrência da primeira relação sexual. **Método:** estudo transversal, com 400 casais com idades entre 20 e 49 anos. Um formulário foi usado para a coleta de dados e a analisados estatisticamente pelo software SPSS versão 21.0. O projeto de pesquisa foi aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, Protocolo nº 018151/2010-53. **Resultados:** no sexo feminino os métodos contraceptivos foram usados em maior quantidade (45,1%) quando comparadas aos homens (35,9%). Considerando homens e mulheres, 40,5% afirmaram ter utilizado algum método contraceptivo e 59,5% afirma não ter utilizado nenhuma forma de proteção na primeira relação sexual. O contraceptivo mais conhecido por ambos os sexos foi preservativo masculino, 74,2%, seguido da pílula anticoncepcional, 14%. **Conclusão:** a maioria, homens e mulheres, tinha informação sobre métodos contraceptivos, mas não resultou em uso dos mesmos quando iniciaram a vida sexual. **Descritores:** Métodos Contraceptivos; Relação Sexual; Gênero; Saúde Reprodutiva.

#### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** analizar el uso práctico de los métodos anticonceptivos para hombres y mujeres, en el momento de la primera relación sexual. **Método:** estudio transversal con 400 parejas de edades comprendidas entre 20 y 49 años. Una forma se utilizó para recopilar datos que posteriormente fueron analizados estadísticamente con el programa SPSS versión 21.0. El proyecto de investigación fue aprobado por el Comité Ético de Investigación, Protocolo 018 151 / 2010-53. **Resultados:** en las mujeres, se utilizaron métodos anticonceptivos en cantidades más grandes (45,1%) en comparación con los hombres (35,9%). Mientras que los hombres y las mujeres, el 40,5% dijo que había usado un método anticonceptivo y el 59,5% dijo que no habían usado ningún tipo de protección en la primera relación sexual. El anticonceptivo más conocido citada por ambos sexos fue el condón masculino, 74,2%, seguido de la píldora anticonceptiva, 14%. **Conclusión:** la mayoría de los hombres y las mujeres, tenía información sobre los métodos anticonceptivos, pero no usarlos, a tener relaciones sexuales. **Descritores:** Métodos Anticonceptivos; Las Relaciones Sexuales; Género; Salud Reprodutiva.

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INTRODUCTION

In the scientific field and in clinical practice is often observed that condoms are an effective means for the prevention of AIDS, other STIs and pregnancy, allowing safer sex practices. Is also presented as a wide dissemination theme coming from the media, highlighting the efficiency and the importance of the method in an attempt to convince the population to incorporate it in their sexual activities, aiming to reach more and more young people, since it is a disseminator for habits and information for the future generations.<sup>1-2</sup>

Changes in the socio-cultural prism are responsible for shaping sexual behavior and hence are related to many socio-political transformations, derived from the feminist movement, in the context of family relationships<sup>3</sup>. Despite this new context, the difficulty of parents, educators and health professionals to enter in the dialogue on sexuality and its implications in the lives of adolescents is still noticeable.

For this theoretical and practical divergence to decrease, an access to factual information is necessary so that one can obtain behaviors favorable to health promotion, aimed at transforming reality, especially in its sexual and reproductive dimension.<sup>1</sup>

Some studies attest to the ability of the media to influence attitudes and beliefs of teenagers about sex and sexuality. In addition, another study found a significant link between exposure to sexual content in the media, and the early onset of sexual intercourse. There is still much debate about the behavioral effects of the "new" media.<sup>4-5</sup>

It is noteworthy that relativizing the argument of misinformation and to appreciate the key role that the experience of sexuality has on social construction of young people, enables to capture sociocultural rules that constrain the the phenomenon of sexuality of young people.<sup>6</sup>

There are studies produced in this country on the youth from different perspectives: education, labor market, violence, political participation, which help to contextualize this phase of life in which sexuality and reproduction are inserted<sup>5-6</sup>.

Gender roles are expressions of identity or sets of behaviors related to sexuality and socially required for the individual, according to their gender<sup>7</sup>. Sex is like a kind of anatomical, biological category; gender is a cultural and historical category that implies

the social and historical construction in the context of life, of being a man or a woman.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, this study aims:

- To analyze the practical use of contraceptive methods for men and **women**, at the occurrence of first sexual intercourse.

METHOD

This study is part of research called Gender and Reproduction: a study on maternity, paternity in Maceió AL, funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development - CNPq. The development of this research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee - CEP under No. 018 151 / 2010-53.

A cross-sectional study on sexuality, specifically on sexual initiation and use of contraceptive methods in the city of Maceio, capital of **Alagoas**, in 2011, with an estimated residential population 943,110 inhabitants.

Participants were men and women in the age group of 20 to 49 years old. To calculate the sample, we used the intercensal projection provided by DATASUS, based on the IBGE census 2010. The population of Maceio estimated by IBGE in 2011 was 943 110, being 458.655 in the range 20-49 years old, and 46.01% were men and 53.98% women. To select the sample considering a sampling error of 5%. This way, the study sample consisted of **400 couples**, the total sample consisting of 800 participants, whose inclusion criteria were: they were father and/or mother, they are married or living in a CommitmentRelation.

The data collection instrument consisted of a form structured with direct questions covering the following variables: use of contraception at first intercourse and type of contraceptive method used. The variables: sex, religion by upbringing and information about contraceptive methods used before the first sexual intercourse were used to analyze whether it favors the adoption of contraception at first intercourse.

Data collection was performed in all the districts of Maceió (**50**), with 16 participants selected per district, eight men and eight women, done through home visits.

The data was statistically analyzed using the *SPSS* software version **21.0**, which features a large range of statistical techniques, and subsequently organized in tables. The Gender category was used to analyze the results.

RESULTS

The study participants living in the city of Maceió-AL were 400 men and 400 women in

that 52.2% (417) were living in civil union and 47.8% (382) were living in consensual union. The age of them ranged between 20 and 49 years, the average age of participants was 35 years and 37 years for men and 32 years for women. Also in relation to age, 26.1% were between 20 and 29 years old, 42.9% were between 30 and 39 years and 31.0% were between 40-49 years. The characterization of

the group according to skin color, which was self-reported, shows that the majority of respondents declared brown (61.7%), followed by white with 24.6% (Table 1).  
The predominant religion is catholic upbringing (78.0%), followed by the Protestant religion with 14.2%. Only 6.4% of participants reported having not been brought up with any kind of religious orientation (Table 1).

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample (n.800). Maceió, Alagoas, 2012.

Variables	n	%
Skin color (n = 800)		
White	196	24.6%
Brown	491	61.7%
Black	81	10.2%
Yellow(Asian)	20	2.5%
Indian	08	1.0%
Establishment of religion		
Catholic	613	78.0
Protestant	112	14.2
Spiritualist	08	1.0
None	50	6.4
Other	04	0.4

The percentage of participants who reported having used some form of contraception at first intercourse was 40.5% in contrast to 59.5% that said they had not used any form of protection at the beginning of sexual life. The study revealed significant association between sex and the use of contraception at first intercourse ( $p = 0.006$ ).

It was found that of the participants who used contraception at first intercourse, 55.6% were women. Among men, 64% did not use any contraceptive method at first intercourse, while among women the majority (55%) reported having used a contraceptive method at first intercourse (Figure 1 and 2).

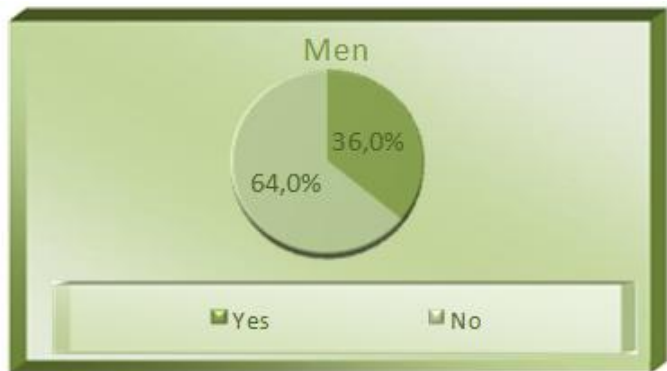


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of men according to the use of contraception at first intercourse. Maceió-AL, 2012.

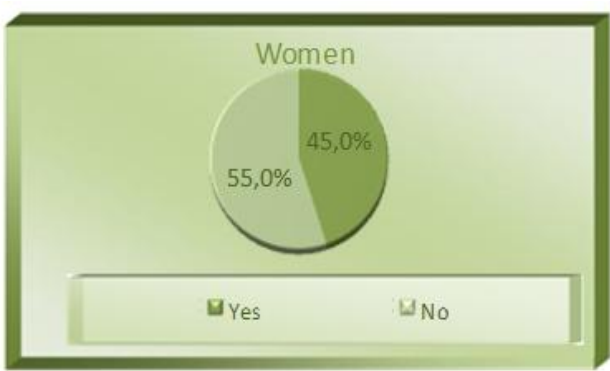


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of women according to the use of contraception at first intercourse. Maceió-AL, 2012.

According to Table 2, from the distribution of the methods used during the first sexual intercourse is found that the condom is the method most used by respondents at first intercourse (74.2%), the pill appears as the

second most widely used method, with 14.0%. It also demonstrates the use of the injection and withdrawal to a lesser extent, respectively, 4.3% and 3.4%.

Table 2. Number and frequency of respondents, according to the use of contraception and the type of method used at first intercourse. Maceio / AL. 2012.

Contraception at 1st sex	n = 322	% 40.25%
Condom	239	74.2
Birth control pill	45	14.0
Withdrawal	14	4.3
Injection	11	3.4
Other	13	4.0

Table 3 presents the distribution of the use of the method, according to independent variables, the religion of upbringing and knowledge of contraceptive methods. The

study shows that the association between religion of upbringing and general use of contraception at first intercourse is not significant ( $p = 0.731$ ). If the association is set

to the female, has no significance ( $p = 0.955$ ), and after adjustment for males the association is also not significant ( $p = 0.418$ ). The study revealed that there is an association between prior information about contraceptive methods and use of contraception at first intercourse ( $p = 0.000$ ). This result holds when the variable is set to the females ( $p = 0.000$ ) and male ( $p = 0.000$ ).

It is observed that 55.2% of participants who reported having information about

contraceptive methods adopted some preventive measure before the first sexual intercourse. When considering only the females for information analysis and the use of the method, women who had some information and used some method of prevention (59.3%) represent a number greater than the same association for the male group (50.0 %) (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Use of contraception at first intercourse, according to independent variables. Maceio / AL, 2012.

Prediction variables	Use of contraception at first intercourse				p *
	Yes		No		
	n%		n%		
Religion of upbringing					0.731
Catholic	243	40.0	364	60.0	
Protestant	45	40.5	66	59.5	
Other	6	54.5	5	45.5	
None	21	44.7	26	55.3	
Previous information about contraceptive methods					
Yes	245	55.2	199	44.8	0.000
No	73	21.3	269	78.7	
Adjusted for females					
Religion of upbringing					0.955
Catholic	137	45.1	167	54.9	
Protestant	23	43.4	30	56.6	
Other	2	40.0	3	60.0	
None	11	50.0	11	50.0	
Previous information about contraceptive methods					0.000
Yes	146	59.3	100	40.7	
No	32	21.5	117	78.5	
Adjusted for males					
Religion of upbringing					0.418
Catholic	106	35.0	197	65.0	
Protestant	22	37.9	36	62.1	
Other	4	66.7	2	33.3	
None	10	40.0	15	60.0	
Previous information about contraceptive methods					0.000
Yes	99	50.0	99	50.0	
No	41	21.2	152	78.8	

DISCUSSION

Information on the use of contraceptive methods before the beginning of a sexual life is important because it can promote a healthy attitude in which men and women adopt its use since the first sexual intercourse. The adoption of preventive measures in sexual intercourse prevents sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancy.

In this study, the religion of upbringing did not influence the use of contraception in the studied group, however a study on age and condom use at first sexual intercourse among adolescents, compared people between 1998 and 2005 showed that there was an increase in the use condoms among young Catholics, unlike what occurred in Protestant youth groups and those with no religion.<sup>8</sup>

While the promotion of condom use and sex education in schools is supported by more

than 90% of Brazilians of any religion, only a few initiatives in the field of systematically managed STD / AIDS programs address the religious youth in dialogue with their beliefs and in their own terms, thus guaranteeing their right to prevention, such as access to condoms and information on how to use them.<sup>8</sup>

This study revealed that the majority of participants (59.5%) did not use contraception at first intercourse. The result differs from another study, on age and condom use at first sexual intercourse among adolescents, indicating an increasing trend in condom use at first intercourse between the years 1998-2005, in which 60.0% of the relationships were protected, regardless of whether they occurred with a fixed or a casual partner.<sup>9</sup>

This study evaluates the use of contraception among people who have 20-49 years, encompassing three decades. The



results of this research possibly does not follow the latest trend of increased use of these methods. In addition, the variable used in this study is not restricted to the use of condoms, but considering the use of other contraceptive methods, with a view on the analysis towards pregnancy also developed by this research.

Another study conducted in Latin America confirms that women in general adopt more preventive measures in sexual intercourse than men, however, the use of contraception is low in both sexes, in which 20% of men and less than 15% of women use any contraceptive method at first intercourse<sup>7</sup>. These data corroborate with the study, being considered the low rates of these methods used at the first relationship in Maceió. However, the results show that women are worrying more with preventive measures.

The women in this study had more favorable attitudes to adopt preventive measures in relation to men, a result which agrees with data obtained by other research on the subject, as Challenges of youth contraception: intersections between gender, sexuality and health, which show a significant increase the use of methods at the time of sexual initiation for both sexes, especially for women who appear more favorable to the use of prevention methods during sexual intercourse.<sup>3,10</sup>

In research carried out in Spain and Portugal was identified the existence of gender differences, where women also have more favorable attitudes to the adoption of preventive measures, specifically for the use of condoms. Yet men demonstrated a use condoms less frequently in casual sex than women.<sup>11-2.</sup>

Although the women's group is the most favorable to prevention in most of the aforementioned studies, in this research the number of women who do not prevent is still considered high (45%). This may be a consequence of the lack of women's autonomy in the experience of their sexuality.

Women can feel insecure to request or require the use of condoms during sexual intercourse, and this may be due to fear of arousing suspicion in a partner by revealing this desire. Thus, to preserve the relationship and responding to the good mother and wife image, as expected by society to support the female identity or showing not to be prepared for sex, they are just letting the man to continue making decisions regarding the use or not of methods prevention in first intercourse. All this fear causes women to ponder the adoption of preventive measures.<sup>12</sup>

Most women with a regular partner avoid the use of condoms to not generate mistrust between the couple, and, and ultimately, the decision of condom use seems to remain in the hands of the man. Also, to address the problem, it is necessary to understand the determinants of sexual behavior using qualitative and quantitative research methods to measure the magnitude of the problem.<sup>14.</sup>

A quantitative study of the Gravav research is conclusive to say that 70% of women and 74% of men that were surveyed, justify not using contraception during the first relationship for lack of attention, they "did not think much about it."<sup>6</sup> This shows that during the teenage sex, many situations are without proper questioning, due importance, pointing to a spontaneist attitude about sexuality, which is not conducive to dialogue and preparedness among pairs.<sup>6</sup> These factors, combined with the social and cultural conservatism, contribute to increasing gender distinctions, through which women should not think about sexuality and men can not predict or control their sexual desires.<sup>6.</sup>

Given the increasing number of cases of HIV infection, condom use is a method widely discussed by many researchers that addresses issues related to sexual behavior. In these, the fact that women find it more difficult to negotiate condom use during sexual intercourse due to the power relations is emphasized that permeate these decisions, in addition, men tend to be prevented less than women.<sup>11-2, 15-7.</sup>

The existence of gender inequalities interfere both for acquiring information, as in decision-making for the adoption of preventive measures (social vulnerability). Male and female roles established culturally interfere substantially in decisions about HIV / AIDS by individuals (cultural vulnerability) as well as for the prevention of pregnancy.<sup>16.</sup>

The biggest concern about the use of methods at first intercourse is related to the importance that this time is towards the future of the sex life. In general, the behavior adopted at first intercourse predicts sexual and reproductive behavior throughout life, with little likelihood of significant changes in contraceptive behavior in the future.<sup>6,3.</sup>

This is one factor that makes information about contraceptive methods before the first sexual experience, very important to raise awareness about the risks and responsibilities of sexual activity, such as sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy resulting from unprotected sexual practices.<sup>6,3.</sup>

The lack of protection at first sexual intercourse may be associated with

impairment of health services for specific actions to groups of young people, the lack of preparation of health professionals, as well as lack of family dialogue, issues that are important to the sexual orientation of young people.<sup>10,21 to 2</sup>

Due to the above mentioned situations, it is very common for adolescents and young people have access to information on contraceptive methods, even if they are not reliable sources. This way, this information may not reflect the correct knowledge about the choice and the use of contraception from the first sexual intercourse. This learning seems to be associated with increased age of the person, that is, knowledge increases as the individual's age increases.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact there are reasons that can justify not using a contraceptive method: one is the limited value given the chance of occurrence of pregnancy or STDs during sexual intercourse, or even the lack of concern on the involvement that led to sexual intercourse. Perhaps the main reason for the lack of protection is related to the unpredictability of the occurrence of sexual intercourse for both sexes.<sup>10</sup>

It should be considered that the adoption of contraceptive practices and one's sexual initiation are events necessarily investigated through the personal account, which prints the interpretation of meanings that each one gives to things, besides the possibility of responses being influenced by what is socially acceptable.<sup>23</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The study found that with the onset of sexual life, they were not prepared to act safely, use a contraceptive method that should prevent a STD or pregnancy, which makes it essential to this group to provide sex education involving programs covering the socio-cultural, educational, family, and the emotional aspects, in which adolescents are included, focusing on the issue of contraception, as well as other important issues for men and women begin a healthy sex life. When used, Condoms were the primary contraceptive method chosen, which is important because it is the only one that prevents STDs and unwanted pregnancy, simultaneously. The adolescent's sexual health needs to be discussed in the socio-political context, as there are few programs for this age group and that focus on sex education.

## FINANCING

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