An Analysis of the Impact of Religious Affiliation and Strength of Religiosity on Sexual Health Practices of Female College Students

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Background: Despite great strides in the development of contraceptive technologies, the United States has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the world. Many investigators have aimed to examine the relationship between religion and the sexual health behaviors of adolescents to determine how social factors may influence the use of contraception amongst adolescents. **Purpose:** To examine the differences in current contraceptive method and age of first contraceptive usage among female college students with different religious affiliations and strengths of religiosity. **Hypothesis:** It was hypothesized that there would be no difference in current contraceptive methods among different religious affiliations and strengths of religions, and that there would be a difference in age of first contraceptive usage among different religious affiliations and strengths of religiosity. **Methods:** The participants were female students at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY (n=224). A 20 question survey was used to inquire about personal sexual health and religious practices. Chi-squared tests were implemented to determine if the frequencies of responses for sexual health variables were significantly different across religious affiliations and strengths of religiosity. **Results:** Significant differences in the frequency of responses for age of first contraceptive usage were observed across different strengths of religiosity ($p=0.016$) and for the self-perceived impact of religion on sexual health across different religious affiliations ($p=0.033$) and strengths of religiosity ($p=0.005$). All other differences were found not to be statistically significant. **Conclusion:** It was determined that increased strengths of religiosity resulted in delayed onset of contraceptive usage and that both different religious affiliations and greater strengths of religiosity lead to different self-perceived impacts of religion on sexual health.