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Authors

Fernandez-Theoduloz, Gabriela
Godoy, Juan Carlos
Lopez-Gomez, Dr. Alejandra

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Using Dual Systems Models of cognitive development to understand risky sexual behaviors in adolescents from Montevideo (Uruguay)

Gabriela Fernandez-Theoduloz

Universidad de la Republica, Montevideo, Uruguay

Juan Godoy

Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Córdoba, Argentina

Dr. Alejandra Lopez-Gomez

Universidad de la Republica, Montevideo, Uruguay

Abstract

Adolescence is characterized by an increase in risky behaviors. The Dual Systems Models of cognitive development suggest that this could be explained by an imbalance between the development of the Socioemotional Reward System and the Cognitive Control System. Also, there is a normative increase in sexual exploration. However, some sexual behaviors are considered health risks. With a prospective longitudinal panel design, we aimed to analyze the effect of change in risk propensity, self-regulation, and consideration of future consequences (CFC) on sexual risk behaviors in adolescents aged 15-20 years from Montevideo (Uruguay). In a sample of 49 adolescents, we measure cognitive variables at T1 and T2 using behavioral tasks and scales. We surveyed sexual behaviors at T2. Congruent with Dual Systems Models, we observed a decrease in risk propensity and CFC-Immediate, and the decrease in risk propensity impact the use of contraceptive methods. No significant results found for self-regulation and CFC-Future.