

## **Sexual initiation, number of sexual partners and Body Mass Index**

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**Rationale/Background:** Sexuality is a basic human need reflecting on multiple components of life. Sexual frequency and sexual initiation are indicators of human development in general and obesity in particular. Obese and overweight people self-report reduced sexual partners and sexual frequency and less likelihood to become sexually active (Bajos et al, 2012; Sabia and Ress, 2011)

**Research Questions:** Is there a statistically significant relationship between the onset of sexual activity, the number of sexual partners and the BMI?

**Methods:** An exploratory, descriptive and correlational study was performed, in a sample of 218 patients of both genders (68.3% women and 31.7% men) aged 18 to 65 years, with different BMI categories. The data were collected in health institutions in the North of Portugal.

**Results:** We found a statistically significant negative correlation between the age of first sexual intercourse and number of sexual partners ( $r = -.176, p = .002$ ) and the number of sexual partners and the BMI ( $r = -.252, p < .001$ ). In contrast, the number of sexual partners showed a positive and highly significant correlation with the educational qualifications/professional level ( $r = .340, p < .001$ ). Additionally, BMI established two negative correlations, which despite being weak are highly significant: with the number of sexual partners ( $r = -.252, p < .001$ ), and with the level of Education/Professional Occupation ( $r = -.352, p < .001$ ).

**Conclusions:** There is a relationship between the onset of sexual activity, the number of sexual partners and BMI: corroborating the literature, the number of sexual partners will tend to be higher for a lower BMI, people with obesity and overweight self-report fewer of sexual partners compared with normal weight people. In addition, it was found that people with a higher education level tend to have more sexual partners. It is also suggestive that the variability of the increase of BMI to occur with the decrease in the number of partners and education level.

**Key Words:** Sexual initiation, Sexual Frequency, BMI

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