

SUMMARY:

A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SCHOOL CLIMATE & ADOLESCENT SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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BACKGROUND

Promoting positive sexual and reproductive health is an important aspect of helping adolescents thrive. [Healthy Teen Network's Youth 360°](#) model highlights the importance of addressing social determinants of health that occur in the school level, especially since youth spend most of their day at school. Youth 360° includes school factors in multiple levels of the model, and school climate is a community-level factor that encompasses a wide-range of characteristics regarding students' perceptions of their school. Addressing school climate should be considered as a way to

improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) outcomes. This systematic review sought to characterize the current state of the literature on school climate and ASRH. Implications for school-based programs and research are summarized below.

RESEARCH METHODS

Articles about school climate and ASRH published between 1995 and 2014 were retrieved using ERIC, PubMed, and Scopus. Articles were included if they met the following criteria: US-based population of students 6th-12th grade, original research, measure school climate, and measure an ASRH outcome.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The main findings of the analysis of the articles are described below:

- Eighteen of the 19 articles found that higher measures of school climate were associated with lower risk of adverse ASRH outcomes. Articles examined the following ASRH outcomes: ever having had sexual intercourse but recent sexual activity, early initiation of sexual activity, pregnancy, STI diagnosis, contraceptive usage, and sexual intercourse under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Most articles used a general measure of school climate, and a minority examined school norms or school structure, such as socioeconomic status (SES) and family structure. A variety of terms related to school climate were investigated in the articles, and the meanings and measurements methods for these different terms had significant overlap. The school climate concepts studies in the articles included: school connectedness, school bonding, social bonding, school belonging, school engagement and teacher support.
- There was some suggestion of differences in the relationship between school climate and ASRH based on gender, race, and ethnicity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- School climate and other community-level factors should be considered in the design and evaluation of school-based health programs.
- School climate should be measured during evaluation, even if the program is not only targeting school climate.
- Additional research is needed on the different aspects of school climate and standardizing terminology.
- School climate may affect diverse student populations differently, and additional research is needed to disentangle the relationship

A significant limitation of the study is that 10 of the 18 articles used data from the same study (National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health started in 1994). However, despite the limitations, this review shows consensus in the field that school climate is an important determinant of ASRH.

Suggested Citation:

Appelson, Jessica. (2015). Summary: A systematic literature of the association between school climate and adolescent sexual and reproductive health. Baltimore: Healthy Teen Network.