

## ABSTRACT

Author: Joaquina Travia  
Title: High School Health Education, Cybersex Prevention And Cybersex Propensity  
Thesis Advisor: Katherine Marsland  
Department: Department of Psychology and Honors College  
Year: 2021

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which health education in high school regarding cybersex is associated with reduced risk of cybersex engagement among young adults. This study further focused on whether college students were aware of the risks of participating in cybersex and the effectiveness of their health education program. This study used the definition of comprehensive sex education as seen in Yeager (2018) and Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2020) to examine the association between the format (Discussion or Lecture) and environment (Traditional or Comprehensive) of high school health education classes and cybersex propensity and risk perception in young adults. Responses from 143 participants were collected through an online survey system, Qualtrics, of whom 112 were included in the analyses. The final sample comprised participants who were under 25 and were in a Psychology 100 class at Southern Connecticut State University and who reported having received high school health education. Whether cybersex was covered during high school health education classes was not associated with differences in propensity to participate in this behavior, perception of risk or participation rates. Additionally, perception of cybersex risk was not associated with either the format or environment of high school health education classes. However, a Comprehensive class environment was associated with fewer cybersex behavior markers than a Traditional class environment. This suggests that a comprehensive high school health education class environments may reduce the risk of engaging in cybersex during adolescence and early adulthood, a time at which young people are particularly at risk of engaging in such risky activities.