



# Frequency of low sexual assertiveness in female university students and its association with possible Generalized Anxiety Disorder: a cross-sectional study

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## INTRODUCTION

The ability to decide about sexual practices is a component of human sexuality and is recognized as sexual assertiveness. Inadequate sexual education prevents men and women from acquiring greater sexual assertiveness. There are insufficient studies that explore the capacity of Latin American women to decide about their sexual practices and their relationship with mental health disorders.

## OBJECTIVE

To identify in university women how frequently they initiate sexual activity when desired, reject unwanted sexual practices, prevent unwanted pregnancy or Sexually Transmitted Disease [STD] and if they have low sexual assertiveness, as well as to estimate the association with possible Generalized Anxiety Disorder [GAD].

## MATERIALS & METHODS

Cross-sectional study  
DISEU project

[Psychosocial Dynamics in University Students]

Approved by the ethics committee of the Universidad de Cartagena, Colombia  
It was applied brief-version of Sexual Assertiveness Scale [SAS]

Sexual assertiveness of initiation [Items 1,2,3]  
Sexual assertiveness of rejection [Items 4,5,6]  
sexual assertiveness of prevention of unwanted pregnancy and STD [Items 7-8-9]  
• Global evaluation [sexual assertiveness]  
Score above the average: greater sexual assertiveness; lower than average score: low sexual assertiveness

With the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale, possible GAD was established [score  $\geq 5$ ]  
Bivariate logistic regression was performed among GAD with the domains and the global evaluation of sexual assertiveness

## RESULTS

603 women who were sexually active participated. Age:  $21.3 \pm 2.6$  years

Even if they wanted it (%)	
Never initiated sexual relations	5.4
Never asked to touch their genitals	9.7
Never requested oral sex	17.9
Low capacity to initiate sexual intercourse	22.1
Even if the partner insisted and as long as they did not want it	
Not let them caress them	63.5
Not let them touch their genitals	67.8
Refused to have sex	65.8
Low capacity for sexual rejection	19.4
Always refused to have sex if the partner did not use a condom	45.4
Low capacity to prevent unwanted pregnancy or STD	30.3
Low sexual assertiveness	16,9
Possible GAD	70.9

Associated with possible GAD OR [CI95%] p	
Low ability to initiate sexual activity when desired	2.02 [1.25 - 3.20] p < 0.01
Low ability to reject unwanted sexual practices	1.64 [1.01 - 2.65] p < 0.05
Low ability to prevent unwanted pregnancy or STD	1.12 [0.76 - 1.65] p = 0.54
Low sexual assertiveness	2.12 [1.23 - 3.66] p < 0.01

## CONCLUSION

Between two to three out of ten had low capacity to decide about their sexual practices and low sexual assertiveness. Additionally, low decision-making capacity and low sexual assertiveness were associated with a greater probability of possible GAD.