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JOURNAL OF
ADOLESCENT
HEALTH

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Original article

Teen Dating Violence Victimization and Patterns of Substance Use Among High School Students

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Article history: Received January 29, 2015; Accepted June 19, 2015

Keywords: Teen dating violence; Alcohol; Marijuana; Tobacco; Adolescents

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Substance use in adolescence is a significant concern, particularly the use of multiple drugs. Yet, most studies examine a single substance in isolation, with limited consideration of the use of multiple substances. Furthermore, few studies have examined how teen dating violence (TDV) victimization is associated with patterns of substance use.

Methods: Using latent class analysis and latent class regression, the present study aimed to (1) identify subtypes of substance use among high school students and (2) examine the association between past-year physical and psychological TDV victimization and pattern of substance use. We focused on 30-day use of alcohol, binge drinking, marijuana, cigarette, cigarillo, and prescription drug use. Analyses were conducted on data from 18,680 adolescents in Grades 9–12, across 58 high schools.

Results: The latent class analysis indicated a five-class model best fit the data; the largest class was composed of nonusers, whereas the other classes were high polysubstance use, alcohol use, alcohol and marijuana use, and moderate polysubstance use. The multinomial regression analyses indicated that adolescents who had experienced physical and psychological TDV were more likely to be in the two polysubstance use classes and the alcohol and marijuana use class, as compared with nonvictimized adolescents.

Conclusion: There is heterogeneity in adolescents' self-reported recent substance use, although a large proportion of substance-using youth reported recent alcohol and marijuana use. Preventive interventions should focus their efforts on preventing substance use among victims of TDV, in part because substance use is a risk factor for TDV victimization.

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IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

There is heterogeneity in the pattern of adolescent substance use; however, alcohol and marijuana use appear to be particularly salient. Preventive interventions should target high-risk groups, such as polysubstance using students, or varied patterns of substance use. Prevention efforts to address teen dating violence victimization should include a substance use component given victims increased risk of substance use.

Adolescence is a developmental period in which several risk behaviors, such as substance use, may begin to emerge and have

Conflicts of Interest: This work was funded in part by grants from the U.S. Department of Education and William T. Grant Foundation awarded to C.P.B. of Johns Hopkins University and a NIDA T32 Training Grant (3T32DA007292-21) to Debra Furr-Holden of Johns Hopkins University.

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important consequences in adulthood [1,2]. National data indicate that a considerable proportion of adolescents use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Data from the 2013 Monitoring the Future study revealed that 26% of 10th graders and 39% of 12th graders reported consuming alcohol in the past 30 days and 13% and 26% of 10th and 12th graders, respectively, reported being drunk in that same time period [3]. Although the prevalence of marijuana and tobacco use is lower than that of alcohol, marijuana use among adolescents is still sizable. Specifically, 18% of 10th graders and 23% of 12th graders reported using marijuana

(past 30 days), whereas 9% of 10th graders and 16% of 12th graders reported using cigarettes (past 30 days). Another form of tobacco used by adolescents is cigarillos or little cigars, with 20% of 12th graders reporting using cigarillos in the past year [3]. Nonmedical use (NMU) of prescription medications is also a growing public health problem, with 7% of 12th graders reporting that they used these medications in the past 30 days [3].

It is common for youth to use more than one substance [4]. Before reaching the age of 16 years, among adolescents who are using or experimenting with substances, it is more common to experiment with multiple substances than just one [5]. However, use of various substances is associated with increased risk for a range of serious health and behavioral problems [6]. For example, polysubstance users generally have poorer mental health [7] and may be more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors [2] compared with those who use no or few substances.

There is a substantial body of literature documenting the role substance use plays in incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV) among adults [8,9] and adolescents [10–12]. However, less is known about teen dating violence (TDV) victimization and patterns of substance use among teens. Specifically, physical TDV victimization by a boyfriend/girlfriend includes pinching, hitting, shoving, slapping, punching, or kicking, whereas psychological TDV victimization includes being sworn at, insulted, or threatened [13]. The consequences of victimization can be severe and may include depression, anxiety, risky sexual behavior, and poor educational outcomes (e.g., dropout) [10,14]. Adolescents who experience TDV are also at increased risk for experiencing IPV in adulthood [15]. Adverse health outcomes associated with TDV victimization have been found to vary by sex. For example, in a study using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, compared with nonvictimized students, female participants who experienced TDV victimization reported increased smoking, heavy episodic drinking, depressive symptomatology, and suicidal ideation [16]. Males who experienced TDV victimization reported increased marijuana use, antisocial behavior, and suicidal ideation [16]. As such, the aim of the current article was to explore the associations between TDV victimization and patterns of adolescent substance use.

A possible explanation for the association between TDV victimization and substance use stems from research regarding the clustering of risky behaviors among some adolescents [17,18]. In a study of 1,153 females, it was found that health risk behaviors including substance use (i.e., alcohol, marijuana), risky sexual behavior (i.e., intercourse without use of birth control), and physical fighting, clustered with sexual victimization [19]. Similarly, using data from a modified Youth Risk Behavior Survey administered to 2,227 early adolescents, it was found that early initiation of substance use (i.e., cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana) was associated with engaging in more health risk behaviors as measured by the Health Risk Behavior Scale [20].

Another explanation is suggested by the lifestyle theory, which contends that adolescents' social activities may put them in higher risk situations where greater exposure to potential offenders and thus victimization are increased [21]. Substance use during adolescence is a lifestyle risk linked with myriad of adverse outcomes [22,23]. For example, consuming alcohol or using marijuana is risk factors for TDV victimization because their use puts an individual in an environment where victimization may be more likely to occur [10]. It has also been suggested that adolescents may use various substances as a form of self-medication (i.e., avoidance coping) in an effort to avoid

arousal or anxiety related to TDV victimization [24]. This relationship has been examined in adult survivors of IPV, including one study that found women's experiences of IPV in the first year of marriage were positively associated with greater frequency of heavy episodic drinking [25]. It is possible that the same association holds for TDV victimization.

Previous studies on the link between TDV and substance use have generally employed variable-center analyses (e.g., analysis of variance, regression models) [11], which assume predictors influence relationships among variables similarly across populations [26]. With this orientation, emphasis is placed on the variables, which means only conclusions about those variables, and not individuals, can be made (e.g., TDV victimization is associated with alcohol use) [26]. Although this approach improves our understanding of the substances adolescents use, for example, these traditional analytic approaches do not allow for the examination of combinations of substances used or determination of whether TDV victimization, for example, is differently associated with those combinations. In contrast, person-center analysis, such as latent class analysis (LCA), focuses on identifying common patterns of behaviors among a larger population [26]. LCA allows researchers to model heterogeneity within the data and extract common patterns using a latent variable approach. It may aid in identifying subgroups of youth who display a similar pattern of substance use and thus could benefit from targeted preventive interventions that meet their specific needs. Many of the previous studies using LCA to examine patterns of substance use have used data from clinic-based populations [27] or specific populations that may not be generalizable, including students in California [4]. Additionally, prior studies have examined a limited number of substances, namely alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana [2,4]. Despite the variability in adolescent samples examined in prior research, a consistent finding across these studies is that patterns of substance use generally include a no use, alcohol use, and polysubstance use classes [2,4].

Present study

The present study aimed to address gaps in the extant research regarding co-occurring patterns of adolescent substance use by using LCA to examine patterns of substance use among high school students. We also examined how physical and psychological TDV victimization were associated with adolescent substance use. We were particularly interested in the polysubstance use category and the extent to which it was associated with TDV victimization. The results from this study may inform our understanding of the association between TDV victimization and substance use and may inform prevention strategies for adolescents at risk for substance use.

Methods

Sample

Data come from 58 high schools in 12 Maryland school districts participating in a statewide project focused on measuring and improving the school climate, called the Maryland Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative. Data were collected from adolescents in Grades 9–12 using a Web-based survey in Spring 2013. An average of 25.6 classrooms per school participated in the data collection. A total of 27,758 adolescents in Grades 9–12, with a

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