

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Journal of Adolescence

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jado

Comparing the associations between three types of adolescents' romantic involvement and their engagement in substance use



Jonathon J. Beckmeyer*

Department of Applied Health Science, Indiana University School of Public Health-Bloomington, School of Public Health Building, Room 144, 1027 E. Seventh St., Bloomington, IN 47405, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 22 May 2015

Keywords:

Romantic involvement
Dating
Romantic relationships
Substance use
Middle adolescence

ABSTRACT

Using data on 838 middle adolescents, the current study compared the associations between three types of romantic involvement and alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use. Off-time (i.e., serious romantic relationships) but not on-time (i.e., romantic socializing and dating) types of involvement were expected to be associated with increased odds of using each substance. Participating in romantic socializing was unrelated to substance use and dating was only positively associated with alcohol use. Participation in serious romantic relationships, however, was associated with an increased likelihood of having used each substance. Associations did not differ between males and females. Based on these results some but not all forms of romantic involvement may place middle adolescents at risk for substance use. Implications for parents and relationship education are discussed.

© 2015 The Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Although romantic involvement (e.g., socializing with potential partners, dating, and participation in dyadic romantic relationships) is a normal part of adolescence, researchers have previously found that it is positively associated with adolescent substance use (Furman, Ho, & Low, 2007; Furman, Low, & Ho, 2009), which itself can undermine other aspects of physical, social, and behavioral health (Barnes, Welte, & Hoffman, 2002; Guttmannova et al., 2012; Hanna, Yi, Dufour, & Whitmore, 2001; Marmorstein, Iacono, & Malone, 2010; Windle et al., 2008). Romantic involvement may not, however, be associated with increased substance use in all circumstances. For example, romantic involvement that is consistent with the typical pattern of romantic development (i.e., on-time behavior) should not undermine adolescents' well-being (see Davila, 2008 a review of the normative trajectory model in the context of depressive symptoms). In the current study, 15 year old adolescents' romantic involvement was separated into three types: romantic socializing (i.e., spending time with potential romantic partners), dating (i.e., going on group and/or dyadic dates), and engaging in serious romantic relationships. Based on the normative trajectory model of romantic development (e.g., Brown, 1999; Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 2004) and the age of the current sample, romantic socializing and dating were considered on-time but serious romantic relationships were considered off-time. Therefore, this study considered if participating in normal and expected romantic activities (i.e., on-time activities) placed adolescents at elevated risk for substance use or if elevated risk was limited to the off-time activity of participating in romantic relationships. Specifically, it was hypothesized that the off-time but not on-time types of romantic

* Tel.: +1 812 856 4220.

E-mail address: jbeckmeyer@indiana.edu.

involvement would be associated with an increased likelihood of substance use. Additionally, biological sex is tested as a moderator of the associations between romantic involvement and substance use.

Romantic involvement during adolescence

Romantic involvement includes activities that provide adolescents with the opportunity to meet and interact with romantic partners (i.e., *romantic socializing*), going on group and dyadic dates (i.e., *dating*), and engaging in dyadic mutually recognized *romantic relationships* (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009; Connolly et al., 2004). Although those experiences are common during adolescence, researchers have demonstrated that they can undermine adolescents' well-being. For example, participating in romantic activities more frequently, having engaged in more types of romantic activities, and having a greater number of romantic partners are all positively associated with depressive symptoms, substance use, and an earlier initiation of sexual behavior (Furman et al., 2009; Starr et al., 2012; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner, & Collins, 2001). Specific to substance use, greater romantic involvement (e.g., being in a romantic relationship or participating in more romantic activities) is predictive of smoking initiation and increased alcohol consumption (Davies & Windle, 2000; Engels & Knibbe, 2000; Fidler, West, Jarvis, & Wardle, 2006; Furman et al., 2009; Kennedy, Tucker, Pollard, Go, & Green, 2011).

On-time versus off-time romantic activities

As noted earlier, on-time romantic involvement (i.e., romantic activities that are consistent with normative trajectory of romantic development) may not undermine adolescents' well-being. The normative trajectory model specifies that the typical course of romantic development is a linear progression that begins with the emergence of romantic feelings and interests during late childhood, socializing with potential romantic partners during early adolescence (i.e., the middle school years), involvement with dating during middle to late adolescence (i.e., the high school years), and engaging in dyadic romantic relationships during the transition to emerging adulthood (Brown, 1999; Connolly et al., 2004). This course of romantic development is followed by the majority of male, female, White, and Black adolescents (Connolly, Nguyen, Pepler, Craig, & Jiang, 2013). Asian adolescents appear to start their romantic involvement slightly later than other ethnic groups (Connolly et al., 2013).

The normative trajectory model illustrates the type of romantic activities are expected during different stages of adolescence. By following the normative course of romantic development adolescents participate in on-time romantic activities, providing them the opportunity to develop romantic competency and be less likely to experience costs (e.g., substance use) to their well-being (Connolly et al., 2013; Davila, 2008). Off-time romantic activities, however, may compromise well-being, particularly when they occur earlier than expected. Based on the age of participants in the current study, 15 years old, and the normative trajectory of romantic development (e.g., Brown, 1999; Connolly et al., 2004), romantic socializing and dating would be *on-time* involvement whereas participation in dyadic romantic relationships would be *off-time* involvement. At earlier and later stages of adolescence, these categorizations would need to be adjusted. For example, during early adolescence dating would be an off-time activity and during late adolescence romantic relationships would be on-time.

The expectation that off-time romantic activities undermine adolescents' well-being is consistent with multiple models that have been proposed to explain why romantic involvement can negatively influence adolescents' well-being. In particular, off-time romantic activities can place adolescents in situations that they are not equipped to handle. For example, the stress-coping model proposes that adolescents who lack appropriate coping strategies and resources to address the new and unique challenges and emotions of romantic experiences will be at risk for adjustment difficulties (Davila, 2008). Romantically involved adolescents must learn how to interact with potential romantic partners, manage romantic expectations and conflicts, and negotiate new forms of intimacy (Collins et al., 2009; Davila et al., 2009; Merten, 1996) and adolescents participating in off-time romantic activities may not be able to cope with these experience. Additionally, the attention impairment model posits that adolescents with greater romantic involvement may be diverted from other important developmental experiences and contexts (e.g., academics, family relationships, and friendships; Davila, 2008). Connections between romantic involvement and substance use may reflect increased opportunities to engage in substance use due to interactions with older peers (Young & d'Arcy, 2005) and less parental supervision (Friedlander, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2007). Earlier and greater involvement in romantic activities may also reflect a pattern of pseudomature behavior that can also include substance use (see Allen, Schad, Oudekerk, & Chango, 2014). Lastly, middle adolescents' romantic involvement typically involves socializing with potential partners and group dating (Connolly et al., 2004, 2013). Prior research has demonstrated that adolescents' willingness to engage in risk-taking behaviors increases when they are with peers (Steinberg, 2004, 2007).

Thus, adolescents with a depth and intensity of romantic involvement that is inconsistent with their developmental stage (i.e., off-time involvement) may lack the romantic competency need to successfully handle these situations (Connolly et al., 2013; Stroud & Davila, 2009) and become diverted from other normal experiences of adolescence (Larson & Richards, 1998; Laursen & Williams, 1997; Merten, 1996). Both of which may result in substance use by leading to feelings of stress and anxiety that adolescents attempt to cope with through substance use (Knutsche & Stewart, 2009; Seiffge-Krenk, 2011; Spooner, 1999). Additionally, adolescents may find themselves in situations (e.g., parties with older peers) that increase access to substances and can compromise their decision making (Hussong, 2000).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/880640>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/880640>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)