



TRAUMA IMPACT ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND BENEFITS OF ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

- Current study is a secondary analysis of school-based data derived from the Raising Healthy Children study (2011)
- Study sample utilized demographic data when participants were in first/second grade
- Analysis data for this study was collected when participants were age 18
- Statistical analysis used to examine how supports through community, family, and school, and a adolescents' relationship within the ecological systems might impact their development

INTRODUCTION

- Childhood exposure to trauma has been a pressing public and mental health issue
- Children exposed to substances and family conflict are at a greater risk of developing emotional and behavioral problems
- The presence of ample social supports has been linked to supporting positive developmental outcomes

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Estimated that one in five children live in a home in which someone misuses substances



- Increased understanding of ecological influences (e.g., school, community and family) and youth's involvement within systems can promote mitigating effects as youth prepare for life and navigate inherent developmental transitions

Purpose

- Explore the relationship between ecological systems and how an adolescent's connection within various systems might differentially impact their development
- Examine connections between family, community, and neighborhood involvement and substance use

Hypothesis

- Increased school, family and community connections will be related to a decrease in substance use among adolescents

METHODS

Research Design

- Longitudinal research study, intended to address developmentally salient risk and protective factors among youth
- Data was collected from 2004-2011, in waves, when students were age 18, 21 and 24/25

Sample

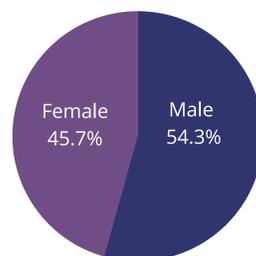


Figure 1. Percentage of male and female participants

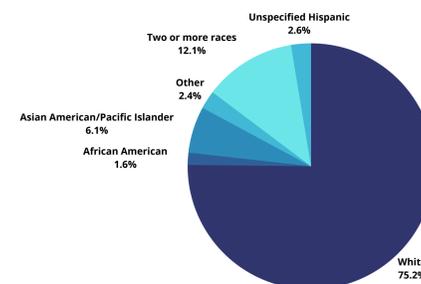


Figure 2. Race and Ethnicity among participants

Operational Definitions and Measures

Independent Variables

- **Community/neighborhood attachment:** Five items were used to assess community and neighborhood attachment; items were quantified on a four-point Likert scale.
- **School connectedness:** Measured with seven questions about participants' experiences in school and participants answered on a four-point Likert scale

Dependent Variables

- **Family Conflict-** Defined as a clash in views or beliefs that lead to arguments and physical aggression. Measured with four statements on a four-point Likert scale
- **Substance Use-** Measured through questions that assessed for alcohol use, marijuana use, and cigarette smoking.

Data Collection

- Data collected through mixed methods: questionnaires, surveys and interviews, assessment test,
- Parents of the participants completed questionnaires about their child's behaviors, family dynamics and parenting issues
- Teachers completed academic and behavioral measures on student participants
- Interview times varied based on the questions and methods, however, the average time was approximately 45 minutes

RESULTS

Significant Relationships

Family conflict and school connectedness

Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficient was computed to examine relationship

Results: relationship was statistically significant, ($r_s(402) = .190, p = .000$), increase in family conflict related to an increase in school connectedness

Family conflict and community/neighborhood attachment

Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficient was computed to examine relationship

Results: relationship was statistically significant, ($r_s(453) = .110, p = .019$), increase in family conflict was related to an increase in community attachment

Substance use and community attachment

One-way ANOVA utilized to compare relationship

Results: significant relationship was found, ($F(2, 454) = 3.713, p = .025$), post hoc test indicated no significant differences in frequency of use and attachment

School connectedness and gender

One-way ANOVA utilized to compare relationship

Results: no significant relationship was found, ($F(12, 447) = .557, p = .876$), however females had a higher mean school connectedness score

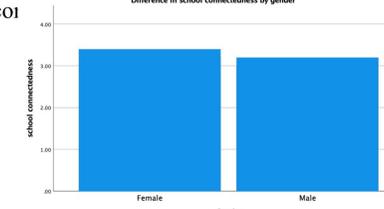


Figure 3. Difference in school connections by gender (Left=female, Right=male)

Insignificant Relationships

- School connectedness and ethnicity groups
- Substance use and school connectedness
- Alcohol/marijuana use and community attachment
- Community attachment and ethnicity

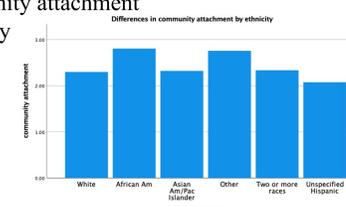


Figure 4. Community attachment by ethnicity (Left to right: White, African Am., Asian Am./Pac. Islander, Other, Two or more, Unspecified Hispanic)

DISCUSSION

Implications

- In the case of family conflict, adolescents tend to seek out supports within their school environment.
- School connectedness and community attachment were not impacted by gender

Study Limitations

- Use of one variable to measure family conflict, unable to effectively gather the depth of how negative family relationships may impact development
- Data collected across one geographical area—Seattle, Washington. Caution should be taken when generalizing the information to other regions of the country

Recommendations

- Trauma-informed training should be considered across all entities that work with children and adolescents
- Funding for long-term, investigative and observational research be made available for professionals in the field of social work