

ABSTRACT

Adolescence heralds a period of exploration, curiosity, risk and vulnerability in the initiation of substance use and depressive symptoms. Currently, in the United States adolescent substance use and depression are a public health care concern as increasing numbers of adolescents report depressive symptoms and engaging in substance use (De Jonge-Heesen et al., 2020; National Center for Drug Abuse statistics, 2020). The study examines how parental support can serve as a protective factor in adolescent depression and substance use. This secondary analysis examined cross-sectional data collected from Gender, Mental Illness, and Crime in the United States, 2004. The current study included participants (N=9,095) who were 15-17 years of age from different races. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test revealed participants who had ever had a drink of alcohol had significantly lower parental support than those who have not had a drink. Results from the Spearman's *Rho* Correlation indicate a statistically significant but weak relationship between parental support and adolescent depression. The results of the current study provide implications for future research on protective factors that buffer the onset of adolescent depression.

INTRODUCTION

Research Questions

- How does parental support relate to adolescent depression?
- How does parental support relate to adolescent alcohol and marijuana use?

Hypothesis

- High levels of parental support is related to decreasing levels of depression and substance use among adolescents aged 15 to 17 years of age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescent Depression Risk Factors

- Negative life events in adolescents have been found to be a predictor of depression and puts teens at a high risk for future depressive episodes not only during adolescence but during adulthood as well (Gerard & Zoller Booth, 2015; Stikkelbroek et al., 2016; Thapar et al., 2012).
- The most common risk factors are: peer bullying, maltreatment and negative family relationships (Hooley et al., 2020; NAMI, 2017; Stikkelbroek et al., 2016; Thapar et al., 2012).

Adolescent Substance Use Risk Factors

- Lack of communication and interaction between parent and youth can lead to poorly defined rules and expectations (Cordova et al, 2014; Whitesell et al., 2013).
- Peer pressure and a desire for popularity in school and social settings can increase the use of substances (Kelly et al. 2011, Stockwell et al., 2004; Whitesell et al., 2013).

Depression and Parental Support

- Poor family functioning including family conflict in depressed adolescence is a predictor for suicide ideations and attempts (Consoli et al., 2013).
- Adolescents with severe depression and low parental emotional support have a higher proportion of suicide ideations and attempts (Jung & Cho, 2020).

Substance Use and Parental Support

- Family environments that experience high levels of adversity such as child neglect, violence, stress, parental substance use and poor parent relationships are associated with alcohol and drug use (Skeer et al., 2009).
- Parental use of alcohol when used excessively increases adolescent's alcohol use as parents implicitly normalized binge drinking (Rusby et al., 2018).

Gaps

- Although there is empirical research on adolescent depression and substance use, there is limited research regarding parental support in association to both disorders.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

- The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from Gender, Mental Illness, and Crime in the United States.
- The original study is a cross sectional study that takes data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.
- Data was collected using computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) methods and participants were interviewed individually using computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) and audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) methods.

Sample and Sampling Method

- In the original study, the total population was 67,760 participants including both female and males aged 12 years and older.
- The current cross-sectional study utilized a sub sample of 9,095 participants between the ages of 15 to 17 years of age varying in gender and ethnicity.

Measures

- Depression was measured using a nine-question item scale that measured different types of depression symptoms in adolescences. The response format for the questions were, "0= does not have symptoms" and "1= has symptoms." A total depression scale was created and the possible scores ranged from 0 to 9. Higher scores indicated higher levels of depression symptoms while lower scores indicated minimal depression symptoms.
- Parental support was measured with a five-item Likert scale ranging from "1= Never to 4=Always." The main areas of focus were parental academic support, parental praise and parental monitoring. A total parental support scale was created and the possible scores ranged from 5 to 20. A higher score indicated a higher level of parental support and lower scores indicated minimal parental support.
- Alcohol and Marijuana was assessed with two single item questions for each substance and the response format was "1=Yes" and "2=No".

Mann-Whitney U Test

- Participants who had ever had a drink of alcohol had significantly lower parental support than those who have not had a drink.
- Participants who drank due to problems with family/friend had significantly lower parental support than those who have not had a drink.
- Participants who ever used marijuana had significantly lower parental support than those who had not used marijuana.
- Participants who used marijuana due to problems with family/friend had significantly lower parental support than those who had not used marijuana.
- All tests show that when adolescents have some type of parental support the consumption of substance use is decreased.

Spearman's Rho Correlation

- The results indicate a negative and statistically significant association between parental support and adolescent depression, $r_s(1964) = -.097, p < .001$. The negative direction means that higher parental support relates to the low level of adolescent depression.
- The strength of the correlation was weak indicating that parental support and adolescent depression have a weak relationship.

Figure 1

Correlation Between Parental Support Scale & Adolescent Depression Scale

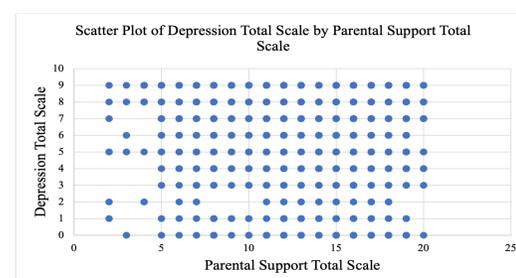


Figure 2

Difference in Ever Using Alcohol When Considering Parental Support

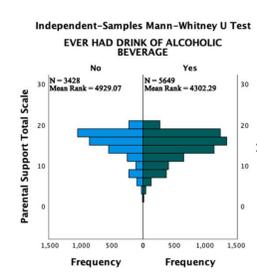


Figure 3

Difference in Ever Using Marijuana When Considering Parental Support

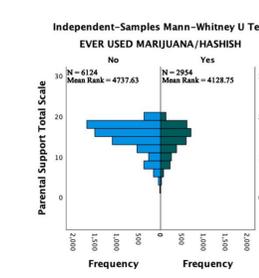


Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N=9,095)

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	4668	51.3
Female	4427	48.7
Age		
14-15 Years Old	3116	34.3
16-17 Years Old	5979	65.7
Racial Identity		
White	5829	64.1
African American	1219	13.4
Native American	158	1.7
Native HI/Other Pac Islander	32	0.4
Asian	249	2.7
More than one race	319	3.5
Hispanic	1289	14.2
Family Income		
Less than 19,999	1666	18.3
20,000 to 29,999	990	10.9
30,000 to 39,999	1055	11.6
40,000 to 49,999	1066	11.7
50,000 to 74,999	1828	20.1
75,000+	2490	27.4
Grade Level		
6 th Grade	2	0.0
7 th Grade	6	0.1
8 th Grade	141	1.6
9 th Grade	1295	14.7
10 th Grade	2877	32.8
11 th Grade	2717	30.9
12 th Grade	1609	18.3
College or University	135	1.6

RESULTS

Table 2

Parental support differences among participants with and without using substances

Variables	Mean rank	U	p
Ever drank Alcohol		110,195.38	<.001
Yes	4302.29		
No	4929.07		
Drank alcohol due to problems w/ family		640,069	<.001
Yes	1373.69		
No	1559.28		
Ever used Marijuana		10258501.500	<.001
Yes	4128.75		
No	4737.63		
Used marijuana due to problems w/ family		211521.500	<.001
Yes	700.12		
No	806.12		

DISCUSSION

Key Findings

Inferential statistical analysis demonstrated significant results related to parental support in adolescent depression and substance use.

- The first finding shows that there is a common predictor to youth substance use, it being parental support.
 - Consistent with the study hypothesis, participants who drank or used marijuana had significantly lower parental support.
- The second finding indicates a statistically significant relationship between parental support and adolescent depression but the strength of the relationship is rather weak.
 - Consistent with existing research which suggest that parental support is one of the greatest influences for adolescent depression as parents are youth's role models in shaping their emotional functioning (Wang & Sheikh-Khaili, 2014).

Strength

- The study included a large number of participants ranging from grades 10th-12th grade.
- The study incorporated two inferential analysis which included Spearman's *rho* Correlation and Mann-Whitney U.

Limitations

- The lack of racial diversity in the sample limits the generalizability of results making it an important focus to consider for future studies.
- The cross-sectional design of the study limits understanding of how parental support is impacting substance use and depression over time.
- The lack of validated measures for substance use variables as they were measured using four single item questions.

Implications for Research and Practice

- The key findings of this study are critical in social work practice because they could be used as preventive measures by implementing interventions that involve simultaneously both the parent and the youth in mental health services.
- Future research would need to focus on the types of parental support to further understand its relationship with substance use among adolescents.
- Future research should address other protective factors that buffer the onset of adolescent depression.

SELECTED REFERENCES

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