The Center for Research and Outreach

Putting Research to Work
for Military Families

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Focus:
Civilian

Cyber Victimization and Aggression: Are They Linked With Adolescent Smoking and Drinking?

SUMMARY: An examination of the associations between cyber victimization and adolescent smoking and drinking was conducted. Adolescents completed self-report measures assessing peer victimization, peer aggression, and the frequency of cigarette and alcohol use. Overall, cyber victimization and cyber aggression co-occurred with adolescent cigarette and alcohol use.

KEY FINDINGS:
- Greater cyber victimization was associated with a higher frequency of smoking, drinking, and binge drinking, when controlling for traditional victimization.
- Gender was not part of the relationships between cyber victimization and any substance use outcome.
- Cyber Victimization and Aggression: Are They Linked With Adolescent Smoking and Drinking?

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:
- Engage youth of Service members in peer education efforts around cyber victimization and peer aggression via electronic media
- Provide Service members and parents workshops on cyber victimization and peer aggression

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:
- Cyber Victimization and Aggression: Are They Linked With Adolescent Smoking and Drinking?
- Integrate a module into anti-bullying and victimization programs that addresses adolescent substance use and the association to cyber victimization

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:
- Support collaboration between military branches and community level organizations that are building awareness and developing programming around cyber victimization and peer aggression
- Encourage awareness campaigns among Service member parents and military professionals about cyber victimization and peer aggression via electronic media

REACH

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover℠

USDA

METHODS

- Participants were recruited through their science classes in two public schools in southeastern United States.
- Adolescents completed questionnaires on topics about peer experiences, and cyber peer aggression, and substance abuse during class time and were supervised by trained research assistants.
- Preliminary analyses and correlations were conducted to test interactions between several covariates (e.g. gender, age, and school), frequency of substance abuse, and cyber victimization.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 1,064 adolescents between the ages of 13-19 years old.
- Criteria for inclusion in the study required that students speak English and were enrolled in a science course at one of the two high schools.
- Adolescents were predominantly of Hispanic descent, with 71.2 % identifying as White-Hispanic, 12.2 % Black, 10.4 % Non-Hispanic White, 3.9 % Asian, and 2.2 % unknown.

LIMITATIONS

- Study data were cross-sectional and correlational; therefore, inferences regarding causation and directionality between study variables cannot be made.
- The sample in this study was predominantly Hispanic, which may limit the findings' generalizability to other ethnic/cultural groups.
- The focus on just peer risk variables, limits a holistic understanding of risk factors for youths' substance use.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Incorporate community and family level variables so as to provide a more comprehensive picture of risk factors for youths' cigarette and alcohol use
- Focus more deeply on what some of potential mechanisms underlying the associations between aggression and substance use may be
- Include multiple stakeholder perspectives, including adolescents and their parents from different diverse backgrounds (e.g. socioeconomic, race, ethnicity, age)

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS

Design
★ ★ ☆
Appropriate
Research Plan and Sample

Methods
★ ★ ☆
Appropriate
Measurement and Analysis

Limitations
★ ★ ☆
Few

For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works