Examining Parental Alcohol Use and Peer Relationships as Predictors of Substance Use Severity

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Background

- Adolescents report increasing rates of both alcohol and other substance use (SU; Johnston et al., 2018).
- Parental SU is related to both psychological stress and personal SU (Brook et al., 2010).
- Male adolescents are more likely to engage in alcohol use than females (Johnston et al., 2018).
- This study aims to observe the effects of parental alcohol use on subsequent substance use disorder (SUD) severity.
- Additionally, we were interested in the effects of pro-social peer relationships on the development of SUDs.

Method

Sample

- 216 participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) with prior histories of both SU and criminal justice involvement.

Measures

- Parental alcohol use: Maternal and paternal alcohol use was measured using the 6-item Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST-6).
- Peer socialization: TCU Family & Friends Form was used to measure pro-social peer relationships.
- SUDs: TCU Drug Screen 5 was used to assess SUD severity on a continuum (0-11) and determine if they meet criteria for a diagnosable SUD (none/mild/moderate/severe). Only none & severe were analyzed.

Analysis

- Logistic regression analysis was used to examine the influence of parental alcohol use and peer relationships on SUD severity.

Demographic\n
(\(N = 216\))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.7</td>
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</table>

Results

Main effect of Child of an Alcoholic Mother (COAM):

- \(b = 1.14 (SE = 0.41)\), Wald = 7.77, \(p = .005\)
- Being a COAM raises like likelihood of having a severe SUD by 3.13 times.

No main effect of Child of an Alcoholic Father (COAF):

- \(b = -0.16 (SE = 0.03)\), Wald = 0.20, \(p = .651\)
- Being a COAF does not have a significant impact on a severe SUD.

Main effect of Peer Socialization:

- \(b = -0.10 (SE = 0.03)\), Wald = 13.38, \(p < .001\)
- Associating with pro-social peers reduces the odds of having a severe SUD by 0.91.

Conclusions

- Participants whose mothers struggled with alcohol use were significantly more likely to develop a severe SUD.
- Having a father who struggled with alcohol use did not affect respondents’ likelihood of having a severe SUD.
- For those with a strong peer support system, subsequent SUD development is reduced regardless of parental alcohol use.

Discussion/Future Directions

Previous research suggests children with parents who engage in SU are more likely to engage in SU on their own.

- We found that COAM are more susceptible to developing a severe SUD. Additionally, having a peer support system reduces the risk of developing a severe SUD.

Why are COAM more likely to develop a severe SUD, but COAF are not?

- Perhaps mothers have a greater effect due to their primary care role. Fathers are traditionally less involved in a child's care.

Limitations:

- Use of MTurk and subsequent demographic inaccuracy, self-report error, and subjectivity of parental relationships.

Future Directions:

- Expand upon the role in which environmental factors (peer influence, societal institutions, etc.) can impact SUD development and severity.
- Additional research could examine the role of parenting style and attachment style in children’s future SU.

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References