

Introduction

When studying child development, parenting styles play a pivotal role (Baumrind, 1975). More specifically, prior literature shows that parenting styles may increase one's likelihood of substance abuse and engagement in other risky behaviors during adolescence (Sharma, 2015). In addition, parenting behaviors have been shown to significantly affect adolescent mental health outcomes. For example, poor parenting practices have been linked to elevated levels of psychopathy in adolescents (Brennan & Shaver, 1998). The current study aims to examine the relationship between perceived parenting styles, history of substance use, and self-rated antisocial personality traits among male adolescents in a residential boot camp facility.

Methods

Participants:

- 273 at-risk adolescent males in a residential boot camp
- Ranging 16-19 years of age
- Primarily Caucasian (61.2%) and African American (30.2%)
- 24.7% raised by both biological parents, 51.8% raised by one (mother or father) biological parent, 23.5% raised by someone else

Measures:

- *Alabama Parenting Questionnaire* (APQ; Frick, 1991), a measure of the adolescents' perception of their mother's and father's parenting style
- *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey* (YRBSS; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015), a measure of the adolescents' risky behavior, including substance use
- *Personality Assessment Inventory for Adolescents* (PAI-A; Morey, 2007), a measure of the different facets of psychopathology in adolescents
- *Peer Conflict Scale* (PCS; Marsee & Frick, 2007), 40-item questionnaire designed to assess aggressive behavior in children and adolescents

Procedures:

Parenting behaviors in accordance with substance use, aggression, and antisocial personality disorder factors were examined in the total sample, specifically in the youth who were primarily raised by at least one biological parent.

Terminology

Parenting Behaviors:

- Inconsistent discipline: lack of clear rules and consequences for behaviors
- Mother and father involvement: how involved the parents are in the adolescents' life
- Positive parenting: parents and children operate together to reach a conclusion, rules and consequences are established and discussed, parents allow children to correct behavior without extensive corporal punishment
- Poor monitoring: lack of awareness of children's whereabouts and activities

Aggression:

- Reactive: reaction to being provoked, Proactive: intent to harm
- Relational: nonphysical, intent to harm another's social status or self-esteem by boosting one's own, Overt: physical

Antisocial Traits:

- Disregard for rules and rights of others
- Egocentricity
- Thrill seeking
- History of criminal behavior

Results

- 18 participants were excluded due to missing data
- 60 participants were excluded because they were raised by someone other than their biological parents

Correlations

	Inconsist Discipline	Mother Involve	Father Involve	Positive Parent	Poor Monitor
Reactive Overt	.111	-.200**	-.103	-.211**	.103
Proactive Overt	.162*	-.204**	-.147*	-.235**	.178*
Reactive Relational	.223**	-.089	-.010	-.141	.197**
Proactive Relational	.223**	-.094	-.078	-.133	.162*
Drugs Used	.052	-.215**	-.064	-.207**	.152*
Antisocial Traits	.189*	-.288**	-.182	-.326**	.143

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

- The current findings support prior research in that parental involvement (particularly maternal) is correlated with elevated levels of overt reactive and proactive aggression in addition to the number of drugs the adolescents' used and the presence of antisocial traits.
- Father involvement is directly related to overt proactive aggression.
- Lack of parental involvement and poor monitoring of the adolescents' is correlated with an increase in the number of drugs used.

Implications

Moving forward with these results, techniques to reduce adolescent substance abuse could be implemented early on based on which parenting practice limits the abuse. Also, knowing what parenting practices increase negative psychopathy in adolescents' could create interventions that also could be implemented early on to reduce these negative outcomes. In addition to the techniques, these positive parenting practices could be used in child development classes to reduce the likeliness of the problems ever existing and; by extension, reduce adolescent substance abuse and aggression.

References

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- Sharma, M. (2015). Substance Abuse in Adolescents: Implications for Research and Practice. *Journal of Alcohol & Drug Education*, Vol 59, Issue 1.