Substance Use and Mental Health Treatment Utilization Among Latinx Adolescents

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Abstract

Statement of the Problem: Mental health needs and service utilization among Latinx youth specifically are critical to consider as ethnic minority youth experience decreased access to mental health care, and underrepresentation in the mental health care system (Dong et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2005). Grounded in an understanding of the intersection of sociocultural factors, accessibility, mental health needs, and the Theory of Planned Behavior, the present study aims to identify how ethnic minority adolescent use is related to seeking non-substance use mental health services.

Subjects Used: Participants were Latinx adolescents, aged 12-17 who participated in the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). For the purposes of this study, secondary data analysis was conducted on a subsample of 3,012 Latinx adolescents.

Procedure: Analyses were conducted using the SPSS complex sample function to account for the sampling design of NSDUH. Data analysis included descriptive and logistic regression analyses.

Results: Results from unadjusted logistic regression analyses revealed significant associations between demographic variables and treatment utilization. Specifically, English language usage (O.R. = 1.59) and male sex (O.R. = 67) were associated with more and less treatment utilization, respectively. Past year major depression (O.R. = 3.27) was associated with greater odds of treatment utilization. Finally, unadjusted associations were also found between alcohol use (O.R. = 1.44), marijuana use (O.R. = 1.86) and illicit drug use (O.R. = 1.94) and mental health treatment utilization. In the final adjusted model, only major depression and illicit drug use were associated with treatment utilization. Major depression increased the odds of treatment utilization nearly three times (O.R. = 2.7). Illicit drug use also increased the odds of treatment utilization (O.R. = 1.47).

Discussion

This investigation adds to research surrounding substance use and treatment utilization for reasons other than substance use in Latinx adolescents in the United States. In this study, major depression and illicit drug use increased the odds of utilizing mental health treatment. Understanding substance use trends in Latinx adolescents is key to informing how practitioners should approach their work with adolescent clients, as well as how behavioral health policymakers define problems, needs, and solutions with prevention and intervention systems. Specifically, the findings underscores the importance of mental health practitioners assessing substance use when working with Latinx adolescents.

References


