Dependent Variables

These severity scores were summed and averaged to create Syndemic Degree:

Syndemic Degree:

Syndemic Extent:

Inclusion Criteria:

Past research on syndemics have primarily focused on adult Latinas.

No studies have taken a preventative framework to explore

the onset of substance use, violence, and depression as a syndemic among adolescents

Methods

Using secondary data analysis from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) 2011, we evaluated risk profiles for N= 2,753 adolescent girls by race/ethnicity.

Substance Use included alcohol, tobacco, & drug/marijuana use.

Violence included partner violence, interpersonal violence, & physical violence.

Depression included feeling sad/hopeless, considering suicide, and attempting suicide in the past 12 months.

Syndemic Extent: Syndemic extent was created to measure the number of individual factors reported by participants. This variable ranges from 0 to 3 and tallied any behavior reported (substance use, violence, and/or depression).

Syndemic Degree: Syndemic degree was created using the average severity across all individual factors reported. For substance use violence, and depression, a possible severity score of 3 was created to account for the number of behaviors in each area listed above.

These severity scores were summed and averaged to obtain an mean score of severity across the syndemic.

Syndemic degree had a possible range of 0 indicating no severity and 3 indicating high severity.

Dependent Variables

Multiple sex partners: Participants reporting 25 sexual partners in the last 3 months. (Yes/No)

Condom Use at last sex: Whether participant used a condom during their last sexual encounter. (Yes/No)

Drugs/Alcohol at last sex: Whether participant used drugs or alcohol during their last sexual encounter (Yes/No)

Results

Degree of Individual Factors by level of Syndemic Extent

Individual Variables

Overall, 28.7% of the sample reported one syndemic factor, 33.1% reported two factors, and 22.3% reported a full syndemic.

By race/ethnicity, Latinas (24.9%) and Other race/ethnicity (25.8%) had the lowest (13.8%).

Regarding severity, for one syndemic factor, the average degree was only 1.34, while the average syndemic degree for the full syndemic was 1.72, showing degree increases with extent.

Conclusions

Participation in multiple syndemic factors occurs early in life.

Both syndemic extent and degree are associated with sexual risk during adolescence.

Black adolescents are particularly affected by this syndemic, specifically increasing their likelihood of having multiple sex partners.

Black adolescents had the lowest reported rate of syndemic extent, but experienced the greatest effect by syndemic factors.

Future research should continue to explore sexual risk outcomes as they relate to sexual risk syndemics to fully understand the onset and burden of syndemics during adolescence.

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