

PRESENTATION TYPE: Individual Paper

CATEGORY/THEME: Epidemiology

TITLE: School matters! Academics and alcohol, cigarette and marijuana use among a national sample of Hispanic adolescents

ABSTRACT BODY:

Introduction: Schools play a vital role in the prevention of substance use and abuse. Not only have many students initiated substance use by 8th grade (Johnston, et al, 2009), they are also consuming substances on campus, with Hispanics more likely to use at school than other racial/ethnic groups (Finn, 2006). Initiation and use of substances undermines adolescents' abilities to engage in academics which may lead to school failure and drop out. This is a particular problem for Hispanic youth who show lower rates of educational attainment and higher rates of school dropout (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003; KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007). As such, prevention that bolsters academics may prevent both the initiation of substance use and poor educational outcomes for Hispanic adolescents. The purpose of this study is to investigate academic factors and substance use among Hispanic youth.

Methods: This study was a secondary data analysis of the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Participants were 2,984 Hispanic adolescents who are currently attending school. About 52% of the sample was male with an average age of 14.45 (S.D. = 1.67). Independent variables consisted of academic performance, school bonding, school utility, parent involvement in school, number of school activities, and school misbehavior. Control variables included gender and language version of the survey. Dependent variables included lifetime use of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. Logistic regression analyses using the complex sampling procedure in SPSS (to account for NSDUH's sampling weights) was used.

Results: Results from logistic regressions found that school utility (O.R.=.52, $p<.01$) and parent involvement in school (O.R.=.55, $p<.001$) were protective against alcohol use while skipping school (O.R.=1.32, $p<.01$) and fighting at school (O.R.=2.14, $p<.001$) were risky. Again, for cigarette use school utility (O.R.=.61, $p<.05$) and parent involvement in school (O.R.=.59, $p<.001$) were also protective and fighting in school (O.R.=2.08, $p<.001$) was a risk. For marijuana use completing the survey in Spanish (O.R.=.25, $p<.001$) and parental involvement in school (O.R.=.70, $p<.001$) were protective. Failing grades (O.R.=2.00, $p<.01$), fighting in school (O.R.=1.83, $p<.01$) and skipping school (O.R.=1.20, $p<.05$) were associated with increased odds of marijuana use.

Conclusions: Results of this study highlight salient academic factors that predict substance use among Hispanic youth. Prevention that address the needs of Hispanic students in school settings might include fostering parental involvement in school and creating learning activities that show real world utility. These strategies may also increase engagement in school thereby decreasing school misbehavior.