

Interpersonal Violence as it relates to Risky Sexual Behavior among Social Service–Involved Females

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Sexually Transmitted Infections and Risky Sexual Behavior

- ▶ Statistics have indicated an increase in rates of STIs among adolescents in the US
- ▶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Statistics:
 - Female adolescents - 30% positive for chlamydia and 24% positive for gonorrhea
- ▶ Majority contract HIV and STIs through risky sexual behavior
- ▶ Several studies sought to examine the underlying pathways that lead to risky sexual behavior
 - Interpersonal Violence and Risky Sexual Behavior

Relationship Violence and Sexual Victimization

- ▶ Being physically abused or sexually victimized in relationships can lead to unhealthy sexual behaviors
- ▶ Interpersonal violence has been associated with:
 - Multiple sexual partners
 - Increase risk of incident STIs
 - Inconsistent condom use
 - Difficulty refusing future sexual advances



Mental Health Concerns

- ▶ Interpersonal violence may increase risky sexual behavior through post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression
- ▶ PTSD
 - Inconsistent condom use, early sexual intercourse, intercourse before knowing partner's sexual history
- ▶ Depression
 - Inconsistent condom use, multiple sexual partners, incident of STIs, poor sexual communication practices, and sex at first meeting

Substance Use

- ▶ Interpersonal violence may increase risky sexual behavior through alcohol and marijuana use
- ▶ Alcohol
 - Unprotected sex and multiple sex partners
 - Abuse victims may have higher likelihood of using alcohol
- ▶ Marijuana
 - Less likely to use condoms and more inclined to have sexual intercourse with strangers



Purpose and Hypotheses

- ▶ Examine whether physical assault and sexual victimization by an intimate partner predicts risky sexual behavior
- ▶ Additionally determine whether mental health issues and substance use mediate the relationship between interpersonal violence and risky sexual behavior
- ▶ Hypotheses:
 - Relationship violence and sexual victimization will be directly related to risky sexual behavior
 - PTSD, depressive symptoms, alcohol and marijuana use will mediate the relationship between the interpersonal violence and risky sexual behaviors

Methodology

- ▶ Participants
 - 179 female adolescents, mean age 18.7
 - 35.7% White, 19.3% Black, 8.3%, 37.9% Multiracial, 5.6% other
 - 57.5% Non-Hispanic, 42.5% Hispanic
- ▶ Inclusion Criteria
 - Sexually active, not pregnant, and plan on engaging in coital sex within the next 6 months
- ▶ Participants derived from four different social service settings:
 - Juvenile Justice
 - Community Mental Health
 - Alternative Schools
 - Residential

Methodology

- ▶ Physical Assault and Sexual Victimization
 - Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus et al., 1996)
 - Measures maltreatment between partners (i.e. physical, sexual, and verbal) in the last three months
- ▶ PTSD
 - PTSD Screen (PCL-S; Lang & Stein, 2005)
 - Assesses whether an adolescent has had any stressful experiences affecting them in the last month
- ▶ Depressive Symptoms
 - Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D; Melchoir et al., 1993)
 - Presence and severity of depressive symptoms

Methodology

▶ Substance Use

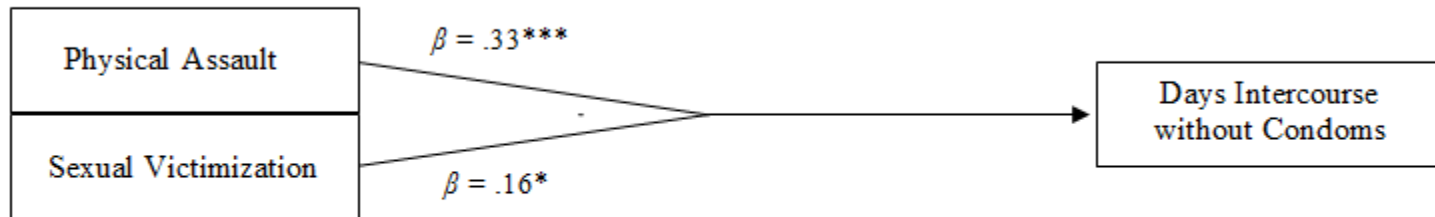
- Alcohol and marijuana assessed using a demographics questionnaire
- Number of days used substances in the last 12 months

▶ Risky Sexual Behavior

- Timeline Follow-back (TLFB; Carey et al., 2001; Sobell et al., 1988)
 - Total number days of sexual intercourse without condoms over the past 90 days

Main Statistical Analyses

- ▶ Multiple Regression Predicting Risky Sexual Behavior from Physical Assault and Sexual Victimization

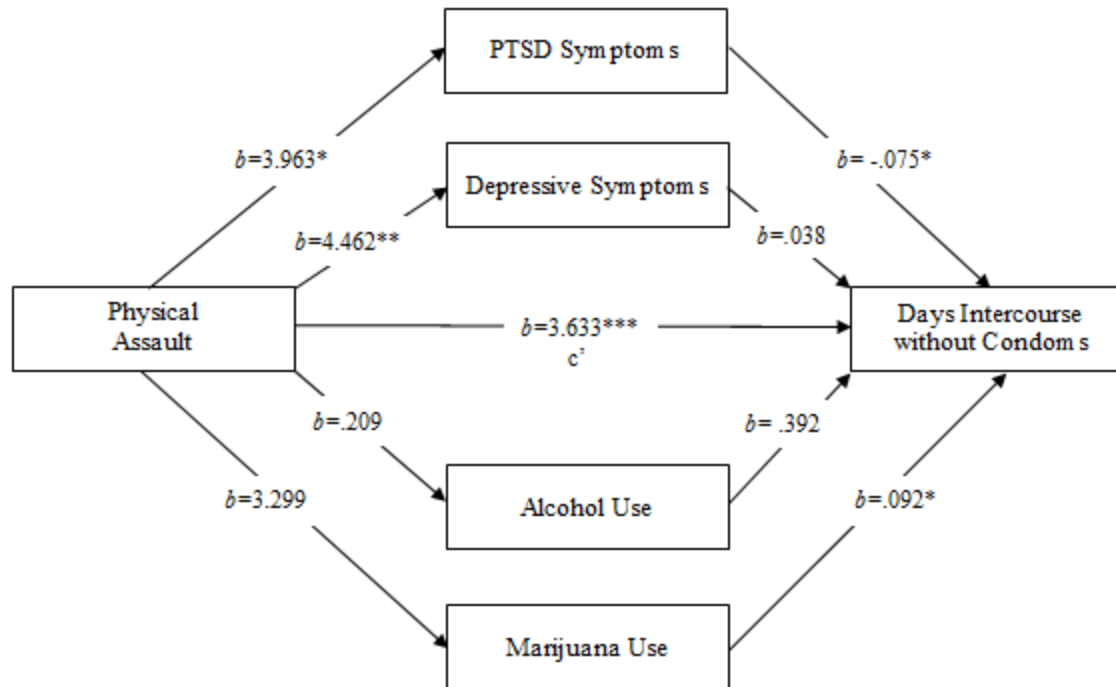


Note: $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

Main Statistical Analyses

► Multiple Mediation Model

Direct effect of individual mediators and direct effect of physical assault.

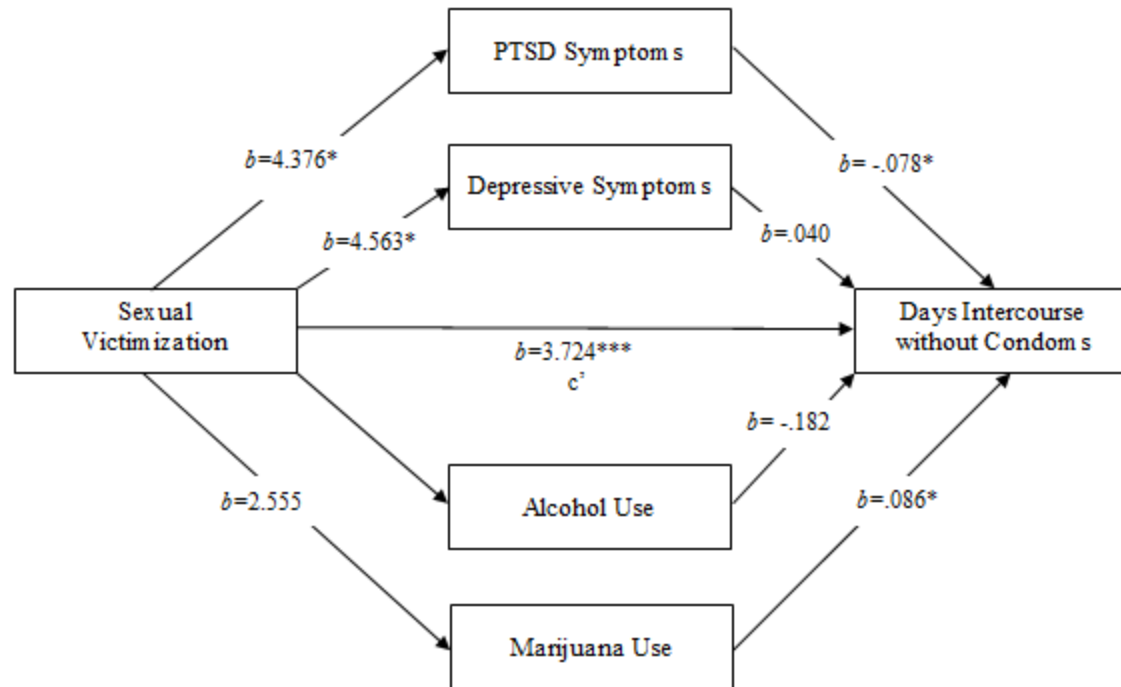


*Note: $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$. The direct effect, c' , represents the relationship between physical aggression and days of intercourse without condoms after accounting for the effects of the mediators. Unstandardized paths, b , shown.*

Main Statistical Analyses

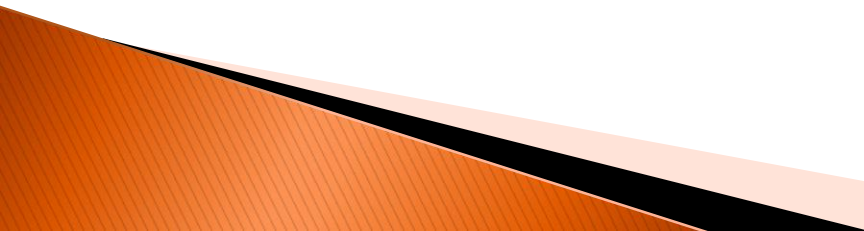
► Multiple Mediation Model

Direct effect of individual mediators and direct effect of sexual victimization.



*Note: $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$. The direct effect, c' , represents the relationship between sexual victimization and days of intercourse without condoms after accounting for the effects of the mediators. Unstandardized paths, b , shown.*

Conclusions

- ▶ Adolescent females who were physically and sexually assaulted by their intimate partners are more likely to engage in risky sexually behavior.
 - ▶ PTSD helps explain the association between interpersonal violence and unprotected sex.
 - ▶ Higher rates of interpersonal violence were related to higher levels of PTSD symptoms, which ultimately led to lower rates of unprotected sex.
 - ▶ Consistent with findings that PTSD can reduce sexual desire and functioning which could lead to fewer sexual interactions.
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Limitations and Future Directions

- ▶ Limitations:
 - Measures assessed behavior using different lengths of time
 - Cross-sectional study
 - Self reported data
- ▶ Future Directions:
 - Examining these factors in longitudinal design



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