DOES ONE SIZE FIT ALL? – LINKING PARENTING WITH ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE AND ADOLESCENT TEMPERAMENT

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Keywords: parenting, adolescent temperament, substance use, clusters, moderation

Parenting strategies, such as solicitation and behavioral control, as well as adolescent voluntary disclosure of their everyday activities can be protective of adolescent substance use involvement. But is that true for all adolescents? In this study, we explore whether adolescent temperament moderates the longitudinal associations between adolescent disclosure, parental knowledge, parental solicitation, parental control and adolescent substance use.

We used longitudinal data from (N = 1373) early-adolescent Swedish youth of 13.02 years of age at the baseline (51.6 % girls). We performed cluster analysis to identify temperament configurations (of novelty seeking, harm avoidance and reward dependence) and conducted cross-lagged panel design to test the reciprocal associations between the constructs. Multi-group analyses were used to test moderation by temperament.

Main results showed five distinct temperament clusters: detached and fearless, unstable, avoidant, sociable thrill-seekers, social and content. The bidirectional, negative associations between adolescent disclosure and substance use, and the positive longitudinal link between parental solicitation and adolescent substance use were moderated by temperament cluster. The link between T1 adolescent disclosure and T2 substance use was significant for adolescents in the detached and fearless and the unstable cluster, whereas the negative link between T1 adolescent substance use and T2 adolescent disclosure and the positive link between T1 parental solicitation and T2 substance use were significant for adolescents in the detached and fearless cluster.

Individuals and their contexts, in this case adolescents and their parents, are dynamically interactive in the process of an individual’s development. We suggest that parental soliciting efforts may be disadvantageous, while open communication between parents and adolescent is beneficial for adolescent psychosocial development, especially for adolescents who rate high in thrill-seeking, fearlessness, and low in sociability, thus detached and fearless adolescents.