The Relationship Between Juvenile Alcohol Abuse, Depression, and Violence

Julianna Ferguson, Faculty Mentor Steven Barkan
Sociology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Maine Orono

Abstract

This research paper examines the relationship between juvenile alcohol abuse, depression, and violence through a sociological and psychological lens. Mental illness and substance abuse alone are known to have a major role in triggering serious and violent behavior among juveniles. Alcohol is the most common substance abused by youth. Similarly, depression is a common mental illness that juveniles suffer from. The point of my research is to determine how significant the co-occurrence of juvenile alcohol abuse and depression is in predicting violence among juveniles. There is currently a lack of research on how mental illness and substance abuse affects adolescent violence. My goal is to try to fill in this research gap and help direct and transform juvenile violence and gun policy. Secondly, my goal is to uncover more information about the correlation between juvenile depression, alcohol abuse, and violence in order to help provide insight on which segments of the population need more mental illness and/or substance abuse preventative programs and treatment services. My analysis used data from Wave I of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), which involved students in grades 7-12. Results show a complex role for depression and mental illness in the commission of violence and point to the need for understanding the exact role they play in violent behavior among subgroups of the juvenile population.

References: