‘Web of Violence’, Depression, and Impairment in a Clinical Sample of Adolescents

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Youth exposure to ‘web of violence’ is associated with impairments in mental and physical health. The current study aimed to identify subgroups of violent events, such as maltreatment, bullying perpetration and peer victimization and explore how these relate to depressive symptoms, hopelessness, and impairment among a sample of clinically-referred youth. A sample of 151 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 years was evaluated at a mood disorders program in an outpatient hospital-based clinic. Cluster analysis was used to identify subgroups based on ‘web of violence’ experiences. Group differences were then analyzed by demographics and clinical variables. Overall, rates of exposure to maltreatment, peer victimization and bullying perpetration were high. Cluster analysis identified two subgroups of adolescents which can be characterized as low versus high exposure groups. The high exposure group reported more severe depressive symptoms, greater hopelessness, and more impairment than the low exposure group. Among this clinical sample, distinct subgroups of youth were identified that differed based exposure to maltreatment and peer fighting and victimization. Adolescents in the high exposure group showed significantly worse clinical outcomes compared to the low exposure group. These findings further highlight the importance of a comprehensive assessment for involvement in violence when evaluating adolescents with depression.

Journal:

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Authors: Benton TD, Jones JD, Julye S, Butler LL, Boyd RC

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