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Poly-Victimization Among Adolescents Adjudicated for Illegal Sexual Behaviors

Apryl A. Alexander, PsyD

University of Denver

Kate McCallum, PhD

Denver Forensic Institute for Research, Service, and Training

Kelli R. Thompson, PhD

Auburn University

Until recently, much of the research on childhood victimization examined one type of victimization in isolation, typically sexual abuse. Over the last decade, increased attention has been spent on examining poly-victimization—the experiencing of multiple forms of abuse. Person-centered analyses, such as latent profile analysis (LPA) and latent class analysis (LCA), have been used to capture information at the personal level, assist researchers distinguish patterns of characteristics in subgroups, and identify heterogeneity in samples (Contractor, Caldas, Fletcher, Shea, & Armour, 2018; Rosato & Baer, 2012). More recently, these person-centered approaches have been used to identify sub-groups of poly-victimized youth.

The present study aims to investigate sub-categories of poly-victimized in AISB through a person-centered analytic approach. The objectives of the present study were (1) to examine the number and characterization of latent classes of multiple victimizations, and (2) examine the differences in trauma symptomatology across latent classes. The present study models the person-centered approach Charak, Ford, Modrowski, and Kerig (2018) used to identify poly-victims in a juvenile justice sample. It was hypothesized that classes of AISB with varied experiences of childhood victimization would be identified, with a high exposure poly-victimization group with high level of trauma symptomatology, including anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress, and sexual concerns.

Method: Latent variable analyses (LPA and LCA) have been favored statistical approaches to investigate the impact of trauma exposure on mental health outcomes (O'Donnell et al., 2017). In an LPA, class probabilities (the probability that a specific individual belongs to the emerging latent class) are measured for each individual case in the dataset. LPA with robust maximum likelihood estimation was performed in Mplus 7.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 2011). To identify the model that best fit the data, solutions with gradually increasing numbers of latent classes were compared with each other on several parameters. For the present study, the optimal number of classes was decided based on the convergence of model-fit criteria, such as the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1974) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978). To assess for relative fit, how one solution compares with a nearby solution, the Lo-Mendell-Rubén adjusted Likelihood Ratio Test (L-M-R LRT) and the bootstrap likelihood ratio test (BLRT; McLachlan & Peel, 2000) *p* values were used. The optimal model is that with the smallest number of classes that is not significantly improved by adding another class.

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Results: For the AISB sample, a two-class solution best fit the data. Although the BIC value was lowest for the three-class model, neither the LMR LRT or BLRT for the three-class model were significant, indicating an additional (third) class did not significantly improve the model. LPA identified a *low poly-victimization subtype* ($n = 54, 71\%$) with 8.85 victimizations on average and subclinical scores on the TSCC, and a *high poly-victimization subtype* ($n = 22; 29\%$) with 15.86 victimizations on average and subtest scores in the clinical range on the TSCC.

Discussion: The current study overwhelmingly highlights the need for comprehensive psychological evaluation of justice-involved youth to include screening for poly-victimization and trauma symptomology. Further implications for treatment considerations, comprehensive assessment, and policy implications will be discussed.

Kate McCallum, Ph.D. is the current post-doctoral fellow in forensic psychology at the Denver Forensic Institute for Research, Service, and Training (Denver FIRST), where she primarily completes forensic evaluations, supervises, and teaches. Her research has focused on bias and evaluator practices in forensic psychological evaluations, psychopathy, and issues specific to sex offender risk evaluations.

Apryl A. Alexander, PsyD is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Professional Psychology at the University of Denver (DU). Dr. Alexander primarily teaches in the master's in forensic psychology program and serves as Director of the Forensic Institute of Research, Service, and Training (Denver FIRST) Outpatient Competency Restoration Program. Her research broadly focuses on violence and victimization, forensic assessment, sex offending, and trauma- and culturally-informed practice.

Kelli R. Thompson, PhD is currently an Assistant Research Professor and Director of the Juvenile Delinquency Lab in the Department of Psychology at Auburn University. Her current project is funded by a multimillion-dollar public-public partnership between the Alabama Department of Youth Services and the Department of Psychology at Auburn University. This research project serves as the foundation for a comprehensive evaluation of the residential treatment program, the Accountability Based Sex Offense Prevention (ABSOP) Program. The ABSOP Program has provided comprehensive, empirically informed, evidenced-based clinical services to youth adjudicated for serious illegal behavior, primarily illegal sexual behavior, for nearly 20 years in southeast Alabama. Her broad research interests pertain to developmental pathways of delinquent behavior including the assessment, treatment-related outcomes, and public policy issues facing justice-involved youth.