Emotion Regulation and Prosocial Tendencies Mediate the Association between Parenting Styles and Later Substance Use

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INTRO

• Previous work suggests that parenting styles are associated with substance use outcomes.
• Emotion regulation and prosocial tendencies are associated with lower levels of substance use and may represent mechanisms by which parenting styles influence substance use.

METHODS

• Spit for Science, a longitudinal study of behavioral and emotional health in college students (Dick et al., 2014)
• Parenting styles, emotion regulation, prosocial tendencies, family members’ problems with alcohol or other drugs, and recent substance use assessed via self-report

ANALYSIS

• Structural equation modelling was used to examine the mediated associations between parenting styles and polysubstance use through emotion regulation and prosocial behavior after adjusting for heritable familial risk. All analyses controlled for age, sex, ethnicity.

Sample

• Overall n = 755, 70.0% female, 21.1% Asian, 21.5% Black/African American, 5.9% Hispanic, 7.2% Other, 42.6% White, 1.2% Missing Race/Ethnicity

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

• A significant indirect effect was identified: parenting style predicts emotion regulation, emotion regulation predicts prosocial tendencies, and prosocial tendencies predicts polysubstance use
• Encouraging parenting styles marked by autonomy-granting and support for emotion expression early in development may improve a constellation of outcomes throughout development.