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Patterns and social determinants of substance use among Arizona Youth: A latent class analysis approach

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Highlights

- Used a comprehensive list of 15 substances for latent class analyses.
- Yielded six types of youth substances use patterns.
- Examined multi-levels factors on youth substance use patterns.
- Used a large sample of state-level survey data.
- Connected the findings with youth substance use prevention interventions.

Abstract

Background

Substance use among youth often involves multiple types of substances. Little is known about how the use of common, lower-risk substances (e.g., alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana) co-occur with the less common and higher-risk substances (e.g., opioids and methamphetamine).

Objectives

This study aims to identify distinctive substances use patterns and investigate the multi-level factors associated with substance use patterns under the social determinants of health framework.

Methods

This study used data from the 2016 Arizona Youth Survey ($n = 30,187$). Latent class analysis (LCA) was used to identify the patterns based on 15 types of substances. We used multinomial logistical regression to explore the correlates of substance use classification.

Results

We identified a five-group model: (1) Serious Users, (2) Moderate Users, (3) Non-progressive Users, (4) Common Substance Users, (5) Abstainers. We found that variables at the individual, peers, family, school, and community levels were associated with the group membership.

Conclusions/Importance

The findings advanced knowledge about key eco-systemic factors and their role as predictors of substance use patterns. Examining the predictors at multi-levels also provided a strong foundation for the design of future interventions.

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Keywords

Social determinants of health; Substances use; Latent class analysis; Youth; Arizona Youth Survey

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