

Professor Examines Role of Victim and Perpetrator Substance Use

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A Northeastern University study of college students from an unidentified university found that both the perpetrators and the victims of physical and sexual violence report high substance use during those incidents.

The findings of the study have highlighted the relation between interpersonal victimization and substance use among male and female students, and described study participant and perpetrator substance use at the time of victimization incidents.

“The results of the study suggest that substance use is common among the victim, perpetrator, and both,” noted co-author Dr. Hortensia Amaro, distinguished professor of health sciences and counseling psychology in the Bouvé College of Health Sciences at Northeastern, associate dean for urban health research, and director of the Institute on Urban Health Research. “The findings also suggest that previous documentation among victimization studies of a relation between substance use and subsequent risk for victimization may also be attributable to the substance use behavior of the perpetrator.”

With more than 1,300 random samples of male and female participants completing the survey, the researchers measured data relevant to sexual violence; alcohol, marijuana and cocaine use; drinking behavior at the time of the incident; and demographics.

The results showed similarities, as well as differences, amongst males and females. For example, female students were more likely to report sexual violence compared to males, whereas males were more likely to report physical victimization. In addition, both males and females reported high rates of perpetrator and own substance use during victimization incidents.

The study, titled “The relation between interpersonal violence and substance use among a sample of university students: Examination of the role of victim and perpetrator substance use,” was published in “Addictive Behaviors.”

Amaro, a new member of the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Women's Health Research, has also recently been appointed to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Advisory Council. The SAMHSA National Advisory Council is a 12-member panel of experts that meets regularly to advise the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary and SAMHSA's administrator on a wide range of public health matters related to prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

Provided by Northeastern University

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