



# The Comorbidity of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Substance Abuse Disorder and Alcohol Abuse Disorder: The Role of Minority Stress



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## Introduction

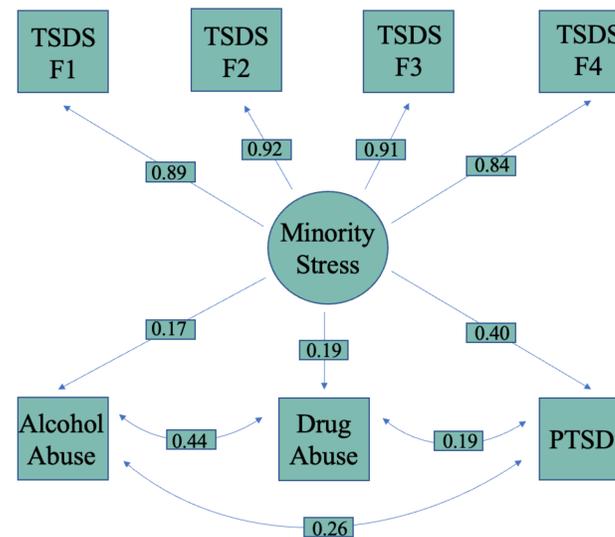
- Substance abuse disorder (SUD), alcohol abuse disorder (AUD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are highly comorbid conditions that cause substantial impairment and warrant research attention.
- A potential source of the comorbidity may include experiences of trauma, which include *minority stress* – i.e., considerable distress caused by experiences of discrimination based on historically minoritized identities.
- In order to investigate the relevance of minority stress as a shared correlate of SUD and PTSD, a path model was estimated in a sample of young adults who reported at least one minoritized identity (N = 216).

## Methods

- Path models were estimated to examine hypothesized correlations between minority stress, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and PTSD.
- Minority stress was measured as a latent variable with four subscales from the Trauma Symptoms of Discrimination Scale as indicators. PTSD symptom severity was measured by PTSD Checklist for The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.
- Substance abuse and alcohol abuse were calculated as a sum score of corresponding items from the 57-item version of the Externalizing Spectrum Inventory-Brief Form.
- All measures had good psychometric properties.

### Sample Demographics

	N(%)
Age M(SD)	19.5(1.892)
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	159 (73.6%)
Female	44 (20.4%)
Non-binary, gender fluid, or nonconforming	13 (6.0%)
<b>Transgender</b>	
Transgender	207 (95.8%)
Not Transgender	6 (2.8%)
Prefer Not To Answer	3 (1.4%)
<b>Race</b>	
White/ Caucasian	131 (60.6%)
African American or Black	35 (16.2%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	23 (10.6%)
Multiracial	21 (9.7%)
Other	6 (2.8%)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	93 (43.1%)
Not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	123 (56.9%)
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	
Heterosexual	132 (61.1%)
Non-Heterosexual	84(38.9%)



The figure to the left displays a Path Model used to examine the correlations between the variables of minority stress, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and PTSD. The model reveals the meaningful correlation between the variables through standard deviations.

## Results

The estimated path model fit well (Robust Comparative Fit Index: 0.991; Robust Tucker-Lewis Index: 0.985; Robust Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: 0.054). Correlations between minority stress and alcohol abuse ( $b = 0.30$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ), minority stress and drug abuse ( $b = 0.26$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ), and minority stress and PTSD ( $b = 1.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were all significant.

## Discussion

- Results support the hypothesized meaningful correlation of minority stress with drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and PTSD. Results suggest that minority stress, a consequence of experience of discrimination, may confer risk for comorbid substance abuse, alcohol abuse, and PTSD.
- Given such correlations, treatment that targets minority stress may be beneficial in treating minoritized individuals who present with comorbid alcohol abuse, substance abuse, and PTSD symptoms.
- Limitations include the cross-sectional nature of the study that precludes causal inferences.

## References

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