



FirePsych, Inc.

*Specializing in Firesetting Behavior
Assessment • Training • Research*

Tanner, A. K., Hasking, P., & Martin, G. (2016). Co-occurring non-suicidal self-injury and firesetting among at-risk adolescents: experiences of negative life events, mental health problems, substance abuse and suicidality. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 20, 233-249. doi:10.1080/1381118.2015.1008162.

Background Information

- Co-occurring of problem behaviors during adolescence has been associated with especially detrimental outcomes, including heightened risk of psychiatric disorder, involvement with criminal justice systems, and death by suicide or misadventure.
- Both NSSI and firesetting are considered maladaptive responses to distressing affective, cognitive, and/or social experiences in the absence of more adaptive coping strategies.
- Almost 23% of self-injurers also reported high-frequency firesetting.
- Little empirical data exists regarding which adolescents are most at risk of co-occurring NSSI and firesetting, as well as the mental health and psychological outcomes for adolescents engaging in both behaviors.
- Previous studies confirm that co-occurrence of internalizing and externalizing problems has graver consequences than engagement in either behavior alone, including more serious and severe psychological disturbance, and higher rates of school failure and deviance.

Present Study

- Expansion of previous research, seeks to identify the specific negative life events, mental health, substance use, and suicidality associated with co-occurring NSSI and firesetting, compared to engagement in either behavior alone.
- Aims to examine possible differences in the nature of NSSI between adolescents engaging in NSSI only and self-injurers who also set fires.

Method

- Initial sample comprised of 2,637 participants recruited as a part of a larger study on NSSI among Australian adolescents.
- 384 participants (226 females, 158 males)
- Aged between 12-18 years
- Participants were disproportionally recruited from areas of greater socio-economic advantage.

Measures

- Self-Harm Behavior Questionnaire (NSSI)
- Adolescent Life Events Scale
- General Help-Seeing Questionnaire.
- Australian Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test.

- Suicidality was measured by asking “Have you ever thought about ending your life?” and “Did you ever try to end your life?”
- Firesetting frequency was assessed with “How many times have you set fire to something you weren’t supposed to?” (Adolescents who reported setting 1-2 fires were excluded from final analysis).

Results

- Descriptive statistics suggest those engaging in both NSSI and firesetting were more likely to report adverse life events and poor psychosocial functioning.
- Adolescents engaging in NSSI and firesetting were more likely to be male than those engaging in self-injury only, and more likely to be female than those engaging in firesetting alone.
- Adolescents engaging in both NSSI and firesetting, rather than firesetting alone after Bonferroni correction, were seven times more likely to report having trouble with the police.
- Adolescents engaging in both NSSI and firesetting were more than 3 times as likely than firesetters to report self-injury of a close friend or family member, and twice as likely to report having experienced a distressing life event.
- Adolescents reporting both NSSI and firesetting were more likely to report an emotional or behavioral problem than those engaging in either alone.
- Adolescents engaging in both NSSI and firesetting were more likely to report having tried cigarettes and illicit drugs than those engaging in either behavior alone.
- Adolescents reporting both NSSI and firesetting were more likely to report suicidal ideation, and more likely to report suicide attempts, than those engaging in either behavior alone.
- Severity of NSSI was greater among adolescents who engaged in both behaviors compared to those engaging in NSSI alone.

Abstract completed by Alaina Millard