The Effect of Self-Esteem on Alcohol Use Among Latinx Adolescents

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Abstract

The short- and long-term effects of underage drinking are well-known to be severe, harmful and potentially fatal. The goal of the current study was to examine the relationship between self-esteem and alcohol use and binge-drinking in Latinx adolescents. The current study concluded that no significant relationship was found between self-esteem and alcohol use for the total sample population; however, there was a significant gender difference found in the data. This study also found a positive relationship between self-esteem and alcohol use for male individuals. The current study hopes to draw attention to the unique needs within the population to create stronger and more effective prevention, intervention, and treatment programs for youth.

Introduction

Significance of Study:

-The CDC estimates that drunk driving by underage individuals happens about 2.4 million times each month.

-Research has found that youth partaking in risky behaviors during critical developmental stages can cause difficulties during later adolescence and beyond (Baiden et al., 2019).

-The prevalence of alcohol consumption that Latinx adolescents report is 64.7%, which is higher than all other racial/ethnic adolescent groups (Boyas et al. 2019).

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study is to increase knowledge related to alcohol use among Latino adolescents. This study is significant because there is a need for more research to be done on the role that self-esteem plays in alcohol use and abuse. Research helps amplify the significant findings that could inform legislation, psychoeducation, and treatment plans.

Research Question:

This study's research questions are: 1) What is the relationship between self-esteem and alcohol use among Latino adolescents? and, 2) How does alcohol use differ between female and male Latinx youth?

Hypothesis:

This study hypothesizes that self-esteem will be inversely related to both occasional alcohol use and binge-drinking frequency in both female and male Latinx youth.

Literature Review

Some themes present throughout the literature related to youth and underage drinking include an inconsistent link between self-esteem and alcohol consumption, an increase in alcohol consumption in response to a social environment, and differences in the role that drinking plays in the lives of young girls versus young boys.

Family and Social Factors

- Research has found that rates of alcohol use and binge-drinking increase across generations for both females and males.
- Some studies suggest that second-generation Mexican American females are more likely to use alcohol and engage in binge-drinking than male counterparts when family and social protective factors are poor (Wahl & Title, 2000).

Social Incentives and Self-Esteem

- Youth who partake in underage drinking have reported higher self-esteem and overall well-being than older adolescents who drink (Mason & Spoth, 2011).
- Alcohol abuse is positively associated with strong popularity motivations and moderated by the perceived popularity of excessive drinking (Dumas et al., 2019).

Methods

Research Design: The current research was a secondary analysis of data from the "Monitoring the Future Study". This study focused on the relationship between alcohol use and self-esteem. The original study was a multi-stage sampling process across all ethnic groups; however, the current study centered on the responses of Latinx adolescents.

Sampling Method: The secondary analysis focused on a subsection sample of the entire study's data. The sample included only participants under the age of 18, and self-identified as Latinx. Study participants who did not fully answer all of the alcohol use and self-esteem questions were excluded from the study. The sample population for this study consisted of 1,080 12th grade level students.

Measures: The secondary analysis of the survey included the following variables:

Independent Variable: Self-esteem was defined as having positive thoughts about oneself and one's life. This was measured through 8 Likert scale questions with five response categories.

Dependent Variables: Alcohol use and binge-drinking were measured through five questions with nominal- and ordinal-level response categories.

Results

- The mean self-esteem of current alcohol users ($M = 21.71$, $SD = 7.55$) was not significantly different from the mean self-esteem of not current alcohol users ($M = 21.43$, $SD = 7.34$).
- The mean self-esteem for females that reported having three or more drinks in the past 30 days ($M = 19.94$, $SD = 7.61$) was lower than the mean self-esteem of those who reported having two or less drinks in the past 30 days ($M = 21.27$, $SD = 7.48$).
- The mean self-esteem for females who reported drinking five or more drinks in any one occasion ($M = 18.93$, $SD = 7.41$) was also lower than those who reported no binge-drinking ($M = 21.40$, $SD = 7.47$).
- The mean self-esteem of males that reported being current alcohol drinkers ($M = 23.00$, $SD = 7.14$) was higher than the self-esteem of those who were not current alcohol drinkers ($M = 21.59$, $SD = 7.25$).
- The mean self-esteem of males was higher in categories assessing for alcohol use within the past 30 days, 12 months, and binge-drinking.

Table 3

Female Group Alcohol Use and Self-Esteem

		Mean Depression (SD)	Mean Difference	t
Alcohol use (any drink in the past 30 days)	Yes	20.71 (7.72)	.59	-.850
	No	21.30 (7.42)		
Number of drinks (past 30 days)	3 or more	19.94 (7.61)	1.33	-1.228
	2 or less	21.27 (7.48)		
Number of times drunk (past 30 days)	Once or more	19.71 (7.65)	1.49	-.280
	None	21.20 (7.49)		
Binge-drinking (5 or more drinks on any one occasion)**	Yes	18.93 (7.41)	2.47	.513
	No	21.40 (7.47)		

Comparisons made using independent t tests. ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05

Table 4

Male Group Alcohol Use and Self-Esteem

		Mean Depression (SD)	Mean Difference	t
Alcohol use (any drink in the past 30 days)*	Yes	23.00 (7.14)	1.41	-.850
	No	21.59 (7.25)		
Number of drinks (past 30 days)	3 or more	22.94 (6.92)	1.1	.986
	2 or less	21.84 (7.27)		
Number of times drunk (past 30 days)	Once or more	22.50 (8.19)	0.58	.383
	None	21.92 (7.20)		
Binge-drinking (5 or more drinks on any one occasion)**	Yes	24.53 (5.58)	2.98	3.096
	No	21.55 (7.39)		

Comparisons made using independent t tests. ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05

Conclusion

-Self-esteem does not appear to have a significant affect on the alcohol use among Latinx adolescents. There were, however, significant differences when scores were compared within the female and male subpopulation groups. Female Latinx adolescents who identify as current alcohol consumers report lower self-esteem than their non-alcohol consumer counterparts. On the other hand, male Latinx adolescents who identify as current alcohol consumers report higher self-esteem than their non-alcohol consumer counterparts. There is an inverse relationship between female Latinx adolescents' self-esteem and alcohol use. There is a positive relationship between male Latinx adolescents' self-esteem and alcohol use.

Implications for Future Research: It may be helpful to include more variables in future studies related to alcohol use in Latinx adolescents. Further research on alcohol use and the Latinx adolescent population may be helpful in creating prevention and early intervention programs that are strong and effective. There is not much information about the recovery process and how to assist Latinx youth with negative coping skills, low self-esteem, and low self-efficacy. It would be helpful to incorporate these variables into future studies so that gaps in the literature can be addressed.

References

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