Exploring Depression and Alcohol Use: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Perceived Consequences

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ABSTRACT

Dual-Diagnosis is the existence of comorbid disorders in an individual (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Alcohol related disorders, and depression related disorders are common in dual-diagnosis, making them issues that ignite each other. This study aimed to understand the relationship between alcohol use and depression, to further analyze their impact on an individual's personal life. The methodology of this study included a cross-sectional design, and used secondary data to compile the findings. The data was derived from The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2014), and was utilized at six measurement points. The sample size for the study was made up of 67,901 individuals, and was conducted as a survey (NSDUH, 2014). The current findings indicate there is a negative impact from increased alcohol use, to more depression. Alcohol use was shown to negatively impact mental health, and depression was shown to negatively impact substance use. The implications of this research will guide future practice in understanding the detriment of depression and alcohol use without intervention.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

- Around 45% of the U.S. population that suffers from a mental health disorder also suffers from comorbidity (Center for Behavioral Statistics and Quality, 2015)
- 1 in 4 individuals will struggle with a mental health disorder in their lifetime (Lesser, Kohler, and Dietrich, 2021) and substance abuse affects around 50% of individuals with severe mental health disorders (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020).

Purpose of the Research

- The purpose of the current study is to understand how the two types of disorders affect each other and impact an individual's life.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between alcohol use, perceived consequences of alcohol use, and depression?
- What is the relationship between comorbid conditions and an individual's personal life, family life, work life, and personal hygiene in the U.S.?

Hypothesis

- It is hypothesized that individuals suffer a negative impact from the existence of comorbidity, in turn negatively affecting multiple aspects of personal life functioning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Findings

- Typically, mental health disorders onset earlier on than substance use disorders (Kessler, 2004).
- The onset of comorbid disorders can be attributed to trauma, stress, peer pressure, social stressors, feelings of failure, burnout, and more (Kessler, 2004).

Discrimination in Treatment

- Racial minorities will experience a lack of availability in services, funding for services, accessibility of services, and quality in services (Benjet et al., 2010).

Systems Theory

- The systems theory promotes attentiveness to the complexity of the dichotomy of individuals and the difficulties that accompany an individual in their life (Kihlstrom, 2011).

Gaps

- There is a lack of knowledge and representation for those that struggle with comorbid disorders despite the prevalence of them.
- There is a lack in research that pertains to underserved, oppressed, and marginalized populations.

METHODS

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

- The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) of 2014 was a cross-sectional research study that compiled data to provide an estimate of the extent of substance use and mental illness in individuals across the United States (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration [SAMSHA], 2021).
- The original study was a randomized sample and included the data from 67,901 individuals. The survey is quantitative, and cross-sectional, as individuals were interviewed only once in the year.
- The original data was collected by conducting in-person interviews with the individuals in the sample groups by Field Interviewers (FI) (NSDUH, 2014).

Sample and Sampling Method

- The current study consists of a systematic sample of individuals across the United States who are noninstitutionalized and over twelve years of age. There was an 81.94% response rate, which translates to a weighted amount of 55,678 participants from the original 67,901 (NSDUH, 2014).

Measures

- Substance use was measured by frequency of use in the past month and frequency of use in the past year (NSDUH, 2014).
- Mental Illness was measured by reports of the frequency of symptoms of mental illness in the past month, and difficulty with symptoms in the past year (NSDUH, 2014).
- Items that measured the effects of both on life functions were quantified by a short form scale (1 = Yes, 2 = No) and used to create a composite score of the answers given.
- The effect of substance use on personal hygiene and vice versa was measured by five items in the NSDUH (2014).

Table 1
Demographic Variables

	n	%
Gender		
Male	26322	47.6
Female	28949	52.4
Marital Status		
Married	17785	32.2
Widowed	1289	2.3
Divorced/Separated	4801	8.7
Never Married	24713	44.7
Age Category		
12-17	13600	24.6
18-25	13069	23.6
26-34	8390	15.2
35 or older	20212	36.6
Race/Ethnicity		
White	33534	60.7
Black/African American	6693	12.1
Native American	907	1.6
Native HI/Pacific Islander	299	.5
More than one race	1959	3.5
Hispanic	9524	17.2
Highest Level of Education		
Less than high school	5627	10.2
High school graduate/GED	12537	22.7
Some college	11965	21.6
College Graduate	11542	20.9
Still in school (12-17 year olds)	13600	24.6
Number of People in the Household		
One person	4442	8.0
Two people	12607	22.8
Three people	12272	22.2
Four people	13271	24.0
Five people	7392	13.4
Six or more people	5287	9.6
	n	%
Employment Status		
Employed full time	22256	40.3
Employed part time	8391	15.2
Unemployed	3389	6.1
Other	14552	26.3
	M	SD
Depression	1.7249	.85508
Number of Days Drank 1+ Drinks	7.79	7.697

RESULTS

Independent *t* Tests Comparing the Mean Scores of Depression and Problems Caused by Alcohol

FIGURE 1: Comparing the mean score of depression to the number of participants who had problems with their home, work, and school caused by alcohol showed a significant relationship (t(26638) = 27.438, p=<.001). The mean for participant's depression and problems caused was (m=2.5928, SD=1.12948), while those who had no problems caused was (m=1.7086, SD=.82491).

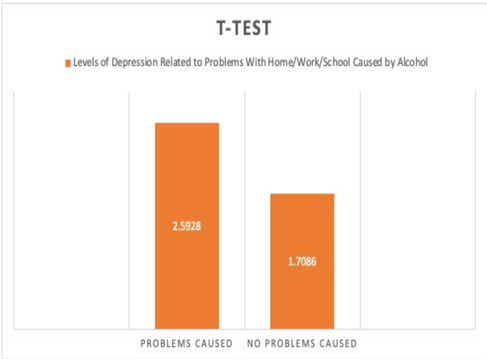
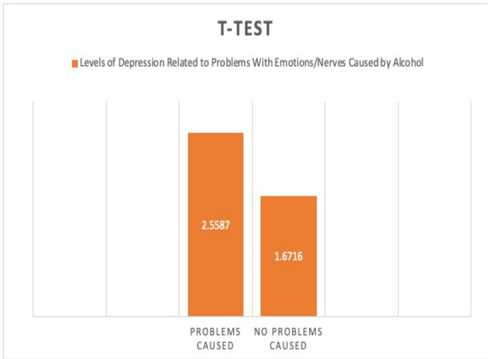


FIGURE 2: Comparing the mean score of depression to the number of participants who had problems with their emotions and nerves caused by alcohol showed a significant relationship (t(701) = 1.122, p=.000). The mean for participant's depression and problems caused was (m=2.5587, SD=1.03360), while those who had no problems caused was (m=1.6716, SD=.79865).



DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

- The current study's results indicate that there is a significant relationship between problems with work, school, social, and family life, and physical problems, and the use of alcohol.
- The data provided evidence that increased alcohol use was associated with more issues in personal life functions.
- Results showed that more depression, or symptoms of depression, was associated with issues in personal life due to alcohol.
- These results provided substantial evidence that higher rates of depression was correlated to more alcohol use, and thus more issues in personal life.

Practice and Policy Implications

- This study was conducted to further understand the impact depression and alcohol use may have on an individual's life. The relevance for practice include the implications for comorbid disorders and dual-diagnosis disorders.
- Social workers should learn to implement intervention and treatment that works in consideration of levels of alcohol use and depression, and how these affect their client's daily lives.
- Opportunities for understanding, and other implications of this research, are case planning in conjunction of each client's personal life.

Strengths and Limitations

- Strengths of the current study include the large sample size, the inclusion of survey questions for both symptoms of depression and alcohol use, as well as the inclusion of varying age and gender data.
- Limitations of the current study are as follows; a large sample size does not assume generalizability, data collection was done at a singular point in time, and the study does not have the inclusion of longitudinal data, making it difficult to apply on a long-term scale.

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