

ABSTRACT

In current day, alcohol is one of the most widespread substance of use in the United States (National Survey on Drug Use and Alcohol, 2017). The purpose of this research is to identify the relationship between alcohol use, depression, and adult social functioning in order to help readers identify some of the potential problems correlated to alcohol use. This current study is secondary analysis of the data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2014. The total sample size for this study included 41671 participants. The results demonstrated a significant association between alcohol use and social functioning. Results also demonstrated a relationship between alcohol abuse and depression. Some of the findings in this study suggest that there is a connection between alcohol use, depression, and social functioning. These findings suggest that problematic drinking, such as alcohol abuse has huge implications on individuals, therefore further research is needed in order to address this nation-wide problem of alcohol use and abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

Alcohol is the most widespread substance of use in the U.S. As well, depression is one of the most prevalent mental health disorders in the country (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2019). Finding the correlation between alcohol use, depression, and social functioning can help the field in understanding some of the issues that this population faces as well as appropriate preventative services to combat some of the issues that could be correlated to substance use.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how alcohol use relates to depression and adult social functioning in order to understand the relationship between these variables.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between alcohol use and adult social functioning?
2. What is the relationship between alcohol use and depression?
3. What is the relationship between alcohol abuse and depression?

Hypotheses

- There will be a negative correlation between alcohol use and adult social functioning.
- There will be a positive association between alcohol use and depression
- There will be a positive association between alcohol abuse and depression.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Alcohol Use and Social Functioning

Research has shown that higher levels of alcohol consumption have higher negative effects on adult social functioning. Further studies have also revealed lower levels of functioning when higher levels of alcohol are consumed among college students (Brook, & Willoughby, 2016; Tembo, Burns, Kalemba, 2017).

Alcohol Use and Depression

Research has demonstrated that depression and alcohol use are highly frequent in the common population and have often shown to co-occur, however there is a lack of research to determine the causality between the relationship.

Systems Affecting Substance Use, Depression, and Social Functioning

There are various systems that affect alcohol use, depression, and social functioning. Family, and society at large play a huge role in the effects of alcohol use behavior and leading consequences. Systems theory helps to explain how people relate to their environment and how human behavior is influenced by the various systems that people interact with. This theoretical perspective helps to address some of the structures, organizations, and institutions affecting alcohol use behavior as well as help identify how to strengthen those systems in order to help individuals with alcohol related problems.

Research and Knowledge Gaps

Research has suggested that understanding the relationship between alcohol use and depression is critical for effective treatment when both are present, yet there is a limited amount of research concerning the causal relationship. As well, relatively few studies have addressed how different levels of alcohol use affect social functioning in adults.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collecting Procedures

- The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2014. In the original study a cross sectional survey design was utilized as participants were only interviewed once based on random sampling. The targeted population was the civilian, noninstitutionalized population of the United States.
- The data for the NSDUH 2014 was collected through a series of various steps. First, participants were contacted with information letters. Letters were sent out to selected sample addresses in order to introduce the survey. Field interviewers (FIs) then visited each sample address and conducted face to face screenings and interviews. The FIs used handheld computers to record the results of the dwelling units (DUs) screening process, select sample of respondents, and conduct the NSDUH 2014. The survey was conducted using a computer-assisted interview (CAI) method that included both computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) and audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI).

Sample and Sampling Method

- A five-stage stratified random sampling design was used in order to gather the group of participants that reflected the overall population of the U.S based on projections from the 2010 census reporting.
- The current study utilized a subsample of the original study that only include participants ages 18 and older in order.
- The total sample size for this study included 41671 participants.

Measures

- **Alcohol Use:** Alcohol use was measured utilizing a scale that recorded the total number of days participants used alcohol in the past 12 months.
- **Alcohol Abuse:** Alcohol abuse was defined based on the alcohol abuse criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, fourth edition (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The participants were defined as having alcohol abuse in the past year if they reported a positive response to one or more questions for alcohol abuse criteria.
- **Depression:** Depression was measured by asking participants one question. The question asked, "have you had depression in the past year?" The participants than answered yes or no.
- **Adult Social Functioning:** Social functioning was measured utilizing a total score of 36 variables drawn from the World Health organization Disability Assessment Schedule, which measures functional impairment by assessing for interferences in social adjustment and behavior.

RESULTS

Correlation

A spearman's *rho* correlation coefficient was computed to examine the relationship between alcohol use and social functioning. The results indicated a negative and statistically significant association between alcohol use and social functioning, the strength of the correlation was weak.

Mann-Whitney U Test

A Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to examine the difference in alcohol use between participants who reported yes to having depression in the past year to those who reported not having depression in the past year. There was a significant difference in alcohol use between these two groups. Those who reported yes to experiencing depression in the past year reported lower number of days used alcohol in the past 12 months.

Chi-Square Test

A chi-square test was calculated comparing the frequency of alcohol abuse in participants with depression and without depression. A significant association was found. Those who reported yes to having depression in the past year were more likely to report alcohol abuse (5.0%) Than those who reported no to having depression in the past year (4.2%).

Depression	Alcohol Abuse (No)		Alcohol Abuse (Yes)	
	n	%	n	%
No	36010	95.8%	1594	4.2%
Yes	3296	95.0%	174	5.0%

Table 1

Sample Characteristics (N=41671)

Characteristic	f	%
Gender		
Male	19412	46.6
Female	22259	53.4
Age		
18-25 years old	13069	31.4
26-34 years old	8390	20.1
35-49 years old	11235	27.0
50-64 years old	5361	12.9
65 or older	3616	8.9
Race		
Non-Hispanic White	26012	62.4
Non-Hispanic Black/African American	4925	11.8
Non-Hispanic Native Am/Ak Native	681	1.6
Non-Hispanic Native HI/Other Pacific Islander	224	0.5
Non-Hispanic Asian	1844	4.4
Non-Hispanic more than one race	1251	3.0
Hispanic	6734	16.2
Education		
Less than high school	5627	13.5
High school graduate	12537	30.1
Some college	11965	28.7
College graduate	11542	27.7
Overall Health		
Excellent	9785	23.5
Very good	15816	38.0
Good	11307	27.1
Fair/Poor	4748	11.4
Marital status		
Married	17785	42.7
Widowed	1289	3.1
Divorced or Separated	4801	11.5
Never been married	17796	42.7

Table 3

Correlations Analysis of Alcohol Use and Social Functioning

Independent and Dependent Variables	<i>r_s</i>	df	p
Alcohol Use and Social Functioning	-.015	30593	.007

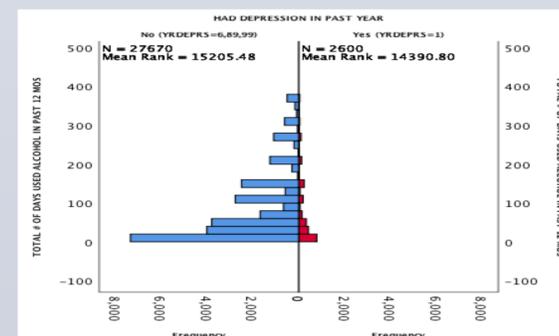


Figure 1. Differences in alcohol use among participants with and without depression in past year

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Several of the findings in this study were consistent with prior research. The results demonstrated a significant association between alcohol use and social functioning. Those who reported consuming alcohol more days in the past 12 months demonstrated lower levels of social functioning. Results also demonstrated a relationship between alcohol abuse and depression, as those who reported experiencing depression were more likely to report alcohol abuse than those who reported not experiencing depression. However, some of the findings were unexpected as the results demonstrated that those without depression consumed alcohol more days in the past 12 months than those who reported experiencing depression.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

Strengths of the study included the survey sampling method as a five-stage stratified random sampling technique was utilized to gather the group of participants. This sampling method reduced sampling error which allowed for a better representation of the general population. Another strength of this study was its survey method as it provided respondents with more confidentiality and privacy that allowed for more honest reporting to survey questions.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included the way in which depression was measured as participants were asked to self-report if they had experienced depression in the past 12 months, which is subjected to participant bias. Lastly, the way alcohol use was measure is a limitation as the frequency of alcohol use may not fully address the difference between casual drinking and problematic drinking.

Implications for Research and Practice

These findings are particularly important for social work practice as social workers are often service providers to populations who experience problems with alcohol use and depression. The findings in this research can help service providers identify problems that people with alcohol abuse may be experiencing, as findings suggested that those with alcohol abuse appeared to have a relationship with lower social functioning and depression. Further, this study can help future researchers formulate more effective interventions to address this population, as results demonstrate that depression and alcohol abuse tend to co-occur.

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