

Alcohol Use and Mental Health Well-Being Among Adults

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ABSTRACT

Alcohol abuse and dependence is a serious problem in the United States among adults. Research has shown a significant association of alcohol abuse/dependence and effects on a person's mental health. This study aimed to provide further evidence for this research and gain a better understanding of that relationship. The current study hypothesizes that individuals with higher rates of alcohol use will have a significant correlation with a higher level of depressive symptoms and higher rates of suicidal ideation. Researchers conducted a secondary analysis of data taken from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014. The study included adults aged 26 and older, with a wide variety of demographic backgrounds (n=28,602). Alcohol abuse/dependence was significantly associated with depression within one year. The same results were found for alcohol abuse/dependence and suicidal ideation in that there was a significant association. This study provides implications for future research and the development of programs and preventative measures like psychoeducation and creating more jobs for social workers in the substance abuse field.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2017) found that 86.3% of people aged 18 or older had reported drinking alcohol at some point in their life.
- About 7.1% of U.S. adults have been affected by depression in some way (SAMHSA, 2017).
- Han et al., (2014) found that among 183,100 participants aged eighteen years or older, 6.6% (18-25 years old) and 4.0% (26-49 years old) had suicidal ideation in the past year.

Purpose of Research

- The purpose of this study is to look at the relationship between alcohol use, specifically alcohol abuse and dependence, and depression/suicidal ideation.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between alcohol use and depressive symptoms among adults 26 and older?
- What is the relationship between alcohol use and suicidal ideation among adults 26 and older?

Hypotheses

- The current study hypothesizes that higher rates of alcohol use will have a significant association with a higher level of depressive symptoms.
- The study also hypothesizes that higher rates of alcohol use will have a significant association with higher rates of suicidal ideation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Alcohol Use Among Adults

- Research states that alcohol use causes significant health concerns such as the increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and types of cancer, including breast, liver, oral cavity, and esophagus (Baan et al., 2007; Rehm, 2011).

Depression Among Adults

- Those with depression are also at a higher risk for developing some physical illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke, and Alzheimer's disease (National Institute of Mental Health, [NIMH], n.d.).

Suicidal Ideation Among Adults

- Researchers found that participants who initially reported suicidal ideation were more likely to report having attempted suicide in the 13-year follow up (Kuo et al., 2001).

Alcohol Use, Depression and Suicidal Ideation Among Adults

- Alcohol use has been linked to increased rates of depression among adults (Levola et al., 2011; Matsumoto et al., 2011; Patel, 2007).
- Researchers found that the rate ratio for alcohol dependence was 1.7 and 2.5 for the lifetime prevalence of suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts, respectively (Bernal et al., 2007).

Systems Theory

- Systems theory is guiding this study because when looking at alcohol abuse/dependence, it is important to look at the other factors surrounding that person's addiction.

Gaps and Limitations

- While there is various research regarding alcohol abuse/dependence and its link to depression and suicidal ideation, this study hopes to add to the literature and help researchers gain a deeper understanding of the relationship.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

- The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014 (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).
- This survey was considered cross-sectional because the participants were only interviewed once and were not asked to participate in interviews in later years.
- This study was conducted by the NSDUH and RTI staff members.
- The interviewers conducted this survey using the computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) method. The original study utilized a combination of in-person interviews and audio from a computer to pose questions to the participants. They utilized a handheld computer for the CAI portion of the survey.

Sample and Sampling Method

- The original study included civilian, non-institutionalized, participants over the age of 12, who lived in the United States during the time of the survey. The sample for this study was chosen using a stratified and multistage sample design (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).
- The current study is focused on adults aged 26 or older and, therefore, only utilized data from participants who identified as 26 or older. The age requirement (26 and older) was the only inclusion criteria for the current study.
- The sample size for the current study is made up of 28,602 participants.

Measures

- The current study focuses on the dependent variable: alcohol abuse or dependence, as well as the two independent variables: depression and suicidal ideation (within the last year).
- Alcohol abuse and dependence was measured by recoding several variables to determine if the participant was alcohol dependent or abusive.
- Depression was measured to only include incidents within one year from the time of the study and was a nominal measurement where 0= no and 1= yes. Participants answered this question based on whether a doctor or medical professional told the respondent that they had depression
- Suicidal ideation was also measured to only include incidents within one year from the time of the study. The question utilized in the study was as follows: At any time in the past 12 months, did you seriously think about trying to kill yourself? This was a nominal measurement where 0= no and 1= yes.

RESULTS

Chi-Square Test

- A chi-square test was used to analyze the independent variables and the relationship with the dependent variable (alcohol abuse/dependence).
- Depression
 - Analysis suggests that participants who identified as having alcohol abuse/dependence in the past year were more likely to have depression (14.3%) compared to those who did not report having alcohol abuse/dependence (8.4%).
 - A significant association was found ($\chi^2(1) = 76.11, p < 0.01$), while a Phi statistic suggested a weak relationship (.052).
- Suicidal Ideation
 - The participants who reported experiencing alcohol abuse or dependence were more likely to experience suicidal ideation (10.3%) compared to those who did not report alcohol abuse or dependence (3.3%).
 - A significant association was found ($\chi^2(1) = 241.63, p < 0.01$), while a Phi statistic suggested a weak relationship (.092).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics: Study Variables (N=28,602)

Variables	f	%
Alcohol Abuse (Past Year)		
No	26,681	93.3
Yes	1,921	6.7
Depression (Past Year)		
No	25,757	90.1
Yes	2,845	8.7
Suicidal Ideation (Past Year)		
No	27,404	95.8
Yes	1,198	3.8

Table 3
Frequency of Alcohol Abuse/Dependence with and without Depression

Alcohol Abuse or Dependence (Past Year)	Participants with Depression		Participants without Depression	
	n	%	n	%
No	2,211	8.4	24,135	91.6
Yes	270	14.3	1,622	85.7

Table 1
Sample Characteristics (N=28,602)

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	13,146	46
Female	15,456	54
Age		
26-34 years old	8,390	29.3
35-49 years old	11,235	39.3
50-64 years old	5,361	18.7
65 or older	3,616	12.6
Race		
Non-Hispanic White	18,843	65.9
Non-Hispanic Black/African American	3,160	11
Non-Hispanic Native American/Ak Native	433	1.5
Non-Hispanic Native HI/Other Pacific Islander	145	0.5
Non-Hispanic Asian	1,191	4.2
Non-Hispanic more than one race	732	2.6
Hispanic	4,098	14.3
Education		
Less than high school	3,692	12.9
High school graduate	7,882	27.6
Some college	7,405	25.9
College Graduate	9,623	33.6
Marital Status		
Married	16,259	56.8
Widowed	1,289	4.5
Divorced or Separated	4,598	16.1
Never been married	6,456	22.6
Employment Status		
Employed full time	16,771	58.6
Employed part-time	3,369	11.8
Unemployed	1,133	4
Other	7,329	25.6
Family Income		
Less than \$20,000	4,840	16.9
\$20,000-\$49,999	8,822	30.8
\$50,000-\$74,999	5,074	17.7
\$75,000 or more	9,866	34.5

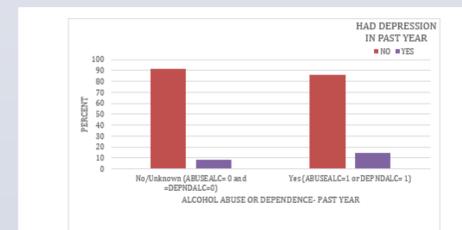


Figure 1. Alcohol Abuse/Dependence with and without Depression

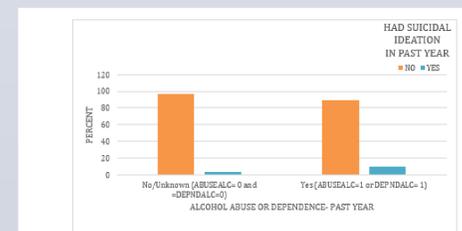


Figure 2. Alcohol Abuse/Dependence with and without suicidal ideation

Table 4
Frequency of Alcohol Abuse/Dependence with and without Suicidal Ideation

Alcohol Abuse or Dependence (Past Year)	Participants with Suicidal Ideation		Participants without Suicidal Ideation	
	n	%	n	%
No	879	3.3	25,695	96.7
Yes	197	10.3	1,709	89.7

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

- This study found that those individuals who report alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence have a higher tendency of also reporting depression within the same year.
- This finding indicates that individuals who report alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence are more likely to experience suicidal ideation within the same year.

Implications for Research and Practice

- This study highlights the importance of interventions for individuals struggling with alcohol abuse or dependence.
- These findings are also significant for suggesting preventive measures for those that have alcohol abuse or dependence.
- Social workers should advocate for funding in this field, along with creating more jobs.
- This research could be implemented by creating mental health programs specifically for the substance abuse field.
- Social workers can provide direct treatment to clients that will help them cope with depression or suicidal ideation.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

- The ratio of males to females was relatively equal, 46% and 54% respectively.
- The current study also had a large sample size, which allowed researchers to gain a better understanding of a large group of adults in the United States.
- The study allowed participants to fill out personal information on a computer rather than in-person to the researcher, meaning they may have been more likely to report alcohol use/mental health issues.

Limitations

- The study is a cross-sectional study which limits the ability to understand the information in a longitudinal setting.
- The questions for the study were nominal and therefore gathered limited information on the participant's depression or suicidal ideation.
- A majority of the participants were under the age of 49 years old (68.6%), meaning that it may not be generalizable to the older adult population.
- Participants also identified mainly as Non-Hispanic White (65.9%), which unfortunately means the survey lacked diversity.
- The research relied heavily on self-report, which may have biased the information given to researchers.

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