Alcohol, Other Drugs and Sexual Assault

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Research Overview

- Between 50-70% of Collegiate Sexual Assault (CSA) involves alcohol\(^1\),\(^2\)

- Alcohol use with Generation Z is declining, while marijuana use is increasing\(^6\)

- Findings suggest that marijuana use is associated with a 54% increase in the odds of physical dating violence victimization, and a 45% increase in the odds of perpetration\(^7\)
Research Overview

• Alcohol is the most often used drug to facilitate sexual violence, both on and off campus\textsuperscript{1,2}

• Alcohol is more likely to be a factor in collegiate assaults than those in the general population\textsuperscript{20}
  o the odds of experiencing sexual aggression were 9x higher on heavy alcohol consumption days
  o 3x higher on non-heavy days of alcohol consumption\textsuperscript{27}

• With regard to sexual violence, alcohol works in conjunction with other risk factors, not in isolation\textsuperscript{2,3}
Research Overview

• Correlational personal traits that lead to both heavier drinking and greater likelihood to perpetrate assault:\(^2\)
  - Antisocial behavior
  - Low empathy
  - Traditional gender role belief
  - Acceptance of rape myths
  - Internalizing of stereotypes of women who drink
  - Socializing with others that normalize objectification of women and delinquent behavior
  - Childhood sexual abuse
Audience Question

• Can you have consensual sex under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?
Something to talk about...

- Our culture as a whole has a complicated relationship with alcohol and sex.
- Mixed messages in the media
- Consent education is largely absent in K-12 settings
- Lack of comfort with talking about sex and sexual activity articulated by college students
- Nuanced conversations around this topic are so crucial
Substance Use and Consent

- Current research on consent and alcohol is complicated and somewhat contradictory\(^4\)
  - Internal vs. External Consent\(^4\)
    - College students begin to assess consent cues in contexts where alcohol is consumed such as bars, clubs, or parties\(^4\)
  - Alcohol effects are very different between men and women.
Impairment, Intoxication and Incapacitation

Both male (180 lbs) and female (120 lbs) have 2 drinks and 2 shots in an hour.
Substance Use and Consent

- Alcohol Myopia - Alcohol impairment narrows your focus of attention and thoughts to the most obvious information in your surrounding environment\(^2\)\(^8\)
  - perpetrator may perceive the victim as being encouraging when he/she really is not\(^4\)
  - For the victim, alcohol’s effects on motor skills may limit his/her ability to communicate resistance\(^4\)
Impairment, Intoxication and Incapacitation

• We must teach:
  • AOD impairs judgement, decision-making and communication
  • Everyone reacts different to alcohol and other drugs.
  • Students to err on the side of caution when engaging in sexual activity after using alcohol or other drugs$^{1,2,4}$
Impairment, Intoxication and Incapacitation

• Have nuanced conversations discussing the effects of alcohol on decision making, judgement and emotions\textsuperscript{1,2,4}

• Not all sexual contact is considered sexual assault if alcohol/other drugs are involved, but it adds another layer of risk to a sexual encounter, especially if you don’t know the person well
Audience Question

• What should be your talking points when a sexual assault occurs and both parties have been drinking?
Some special populations to consider...

....as it relates to drug-facilitated sexual assaults

• First year students
• LGBTQ/Transgendered students
• Sorority women
First Year Students

• Traditionally a high-risk group
• Research on Generation Z indicates these students have less experience than previous generations with alcohol use and sexual experiences \(^ {24, 25}\)
• Lack of experiences may increase vulnerability to alcohol misuse and lack of knowledge of appropriate sexual consent/confidence in self-assertion \(^ {24, 25}\)
LGBTQ/Transgendered students

• Research has indicated that LGBTQ students have a higher percentage of binge-drinking and illegal drug use when compared to heterosexual students 18

• Transgendered students have been found to be at a higher risk for alcohol-related assaults 20

• Bisexual women are at the greatest risk for sexual, IPV, and stalking when compared to lesbian and heterosexual women 17
Sorority women

- Women who reside in sorority houses or belong to sororities are at higher risk for AOD related sexual violence than non-sorority members \(^{12, 19}\)
- Participation in sisterhood events, general level of activity within the organization, and participation in events where alcohol is not served is negatively correlated with sexual victimization \(^{19}\)
- Greek Life cultures may be insular and protective. Having campus partners in this area can be crucial
Audience Question

- Trauma brought on by victimization causes many victims to turn to substance use as a way of coping.

What do you think are some of the post victimization factors that would cause victims to abuse substances?
Post Victimization Factors for Abusing Alcohol/Other Drugs

• Dealing with PAIN - Both emotional and physical

• Stress – dealing with the student conduct system, criminal justice system, friends, other factors

• The CYCLE of violence if this is repeated victimization

• FEAR of repeat victimization
Post Victimization Factors for Abusing Alcohol/Other Drugs

- Lack of opportunity/outlets to talk – secrets/shame

- Expectations by others that the victim just “get over it”… “be happy”

- Repressed Anger

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – characterized by nightmares, anxiety, depression, insomnia
Alcohol and Other Drugs and Coping with Victimization

• Substance use after victimization increases risk for PTSD\textsuperscript{8}

• This is not only true for alcohol use but also for marijuana\textsuperscript{9}

• Victims of sexual assault report feeling more guilt or self-blame if they drank before the assault occurred.\textsuperscript{2}
Identity, Culture and Social Justice Implications

We have to do better.

- Most of the research is on white, cisgender men and women who are heterosexual.
- Advocates and prevention specialists are typically white women while those in leadership positions are more often white men.
- Culture and identity influence all aspects of an assault/recovery particularly when substances are involved.
Audience Question

How have you incorporated a broader understanding of the importance of culture and identity into practice on your campuses?
Dating Violence

- At least 18% of collegiate women reporting some type of physical victimization while in a dating relationship.
  [13]
- Alcohol and other drug use has been found to be a risk factor in dating violence perpetration and victimization.
  [21]
- Both male and female perpetrators were 5x more likely to use alcohol than non-perpetrators. For males, alcohol was the most significant predictor, second for women.
  [21]
- While alcohol is frequently correlated to IPV, illegal drug use may have a more significant correlation.
  [22]
Stalking

• In a 2002 study, 13.1% of collegiate women reported being stalked. \(^{25}\)
• Stalking victimization was significantly higher when perpetrated by people who used both alcohol and drugs than those who did not use either. \(^{22}\)
• One of the risk factors found in the 2000 Sexual Victimization of College Women study by the NIJ for stalking was “the propensity to be in places with alcohol” (p.28). \(^{23}\)
• Stalking is frequently associated with IPV. \(^{22}\)
Audience Question

How does your campus address the issue of victim under-aged alcohol or illegal drug consumption in their conduct process?
Navigating Conduct Processes

• Amnesty codes
  o Solidifying our own understanding to better support victims
  o Assisting in educating the campus community in their scope and utilization

• Support for reporting
  o Understanding our role and its limitations
  o Articulating the process, in its entirety, to the victim as well as options for testimony/advisors/etc.

• Education of staff and boards on effects of trauma and victim blaming
Engaging Others

• An evaluation of campus partners is important to the work of prevention and response

• First responders (emergency clinicians, campus safety, resident assistants, athletic coaches) to incidents are important campus allies

• Bystander intervention programs offer the opportunity to educate and involve the entire campus community in violence prevention and awareness
First Responders

• A drug-facilitated sexual assault may initially present with other symptoms.
• Signs that may accompany a DFSA:
  o Altered mental status
  o Apparent or reported memory loss
  o Impaired speech or coordination
  o Physical injuries without explanation
  o Apparent intoxication out of proportion to amount of substances consumed/used
  o Absent or rearranged clothing
  o Reported out-of-body experience
  o Strong emotions including denial, shock, anger, sadness, shame, and anxiety ¹⁵
First Responders

• Need to work with campus partners to:
  o Recognize the possibility of an accompanying incident of sexual/relationship violence
  o Understand the role of trauma in initial reactions
  o Utilize language that is non-blaming and supportive in fulfilling their roles

• Important to support them with multi-doses of training and informational updates.
Bystander Intervention Programs

• Evidence-based prevention strategy

• Several national models (Green Dot, Bringing in the Bystander, Step UP)

• Engages the campus community in understanding their role in prevention and general campus safety\(^\text{10}\)

• Removes the primary prevention burden from the victim\(^\text{10}\)
References

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