

THE EFFECTS OF BINGE DRINKING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

LAUREN BOGGS, JACQUIE HARRIS, KRISTIN HAYS, MAGGIE YOUNG

This paper received the Hines Award. It was written for Dr. Sauter's NURS 4432 (Nursing Research) and NURS 4440 (Community Health Nursing) courses.

Binge Drinking statistics are continuing to climb among the college population (Simons, Lantz, Klichine, & Ascolese, 2005). Reports of excessive alcohol consumption on college campuses and within the college communities are numerous. Research indicates that this population seems to be particularly susceptible to the practice of binge drinking, (consuming an excess of five drinks in one setting) (Boyd, McCabe & Morales, 2005). This is very distressing as general alcohol consumption has been linked to many physical health problems such as: direct death by coma, injury, weight gain, heart problems, and elevated blood pressure. (Harrington-Dobinson & Blows, 2007). Alcohol consumption has also been linked to many mental health concerns that including: suicide attempts, depression, and other cognitive impairments (Ridner, Staten & Danner 2005). And as if all these repercussions weren't bad enough, the actual practice of binge drinking has been associated with risky behaviors like unsafe sexual practices, motor vehicle accidents, and substance abuse and dependence (Antai-Otong, 2006).

So, why do young people, with so much ahead of them, continue to participate in this unsafe activity? Students seem to be under the assumption that their actions now won't have much effect on their future. They feel as though they are young and binge drinking practices don't carry the same drawbacks as chronic drinking (Vickers, Patten, Bronars, Lane, Stevens, Croghan, Schroeder & Clark, 2004). It is possible these young people are setting themselves up for problems due to their misconceptions about the results of their actions (Gupta, 2007).

PURPOSE

Through this study the researchers explored the relationship between alcohol consumption, particularly in the form of binge drinking, and health. With this information more successful education and awareness strategies might be implemented to inform the young population of the many harmful effects of alco-

hol, thus allowing them to make better decisions to support better health.

SPECIFIC AIMS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Our study targeted the drawbacks associated with binge drinking. Much research has been done on the effects of generalized drinking, but information specific to the binge drinking pattern of alcohol use is limited. With this research the researcher sought to gain first hand insight into some of the unpleasant aspects of this popular practice.

QUESTIONS

Research questions encompassed the negative effects of binge drinking. The researchers asked our participants what health consequences related to this practice were personally experienced. This was done in an attempt to discover if there were, in fact, many individually perceived repercussions due to episodic binge drinking activities. The survey consisted of questions concerning demographic data as well as their recent drinking habits and the effects of those.

METHOD/DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY

The results for this descriptive correlational study were obtained by use of a convenience sample, of 52 college students, surveyed in from the dining hall of Lagrange College. This college is a dry campus, thus special precautions needed to be made to insure confidentiality for the safety of the participants. Students ages 18-25 were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. Each participant filled out an informed consent that outlined the research and acknowledged that the person understood the purpose of the research and was willing to allow their information to be used. After completion, the consents were immediately placed in a covered box and the individual was then given an anonymous survey.

The survey instrument consisted of two parts. The first contained questions related to the effects of alcohol consumption from the Harvard School of Public Health's College Alcohol Study. The second part was one question that encompassed all of the effects that the researchers found in background readings supporting the effects that one might suffer from alcohol consumption. Upon completion, the survey forms were placed in a separate covered box to be compiled at the completion of data collection.

Fifty-two surveys were collected from a variety of students. Males and females were both represented and there were also

many participants from different racial and economic backgrounds to participate in the study. The group was a small representation of a variety of college students.

RESULTS

Researchers compiled the survey data to find that of the 52 participants, 28 reported no incidences of binge drinking, (consuming 5 or more drinks in one setting) within the last two weeks, 11 participated once in this act within the last two weeks, and 13 admitted to engaging in this practice two or more times in the last two weeks.

Of the 24 students who recently participated in binge drinking 30% of them experienced hangovers following the episode, 10% missed class, 19% regretted the act, 16% experienced blackouts, 14% found themselves arguing with others, 6% engaged in unprotected sex, 3% got injured and 2% damaged property.

NURSING IMPLICATIONS

This study represents practices of college students on a small scale. However, even with this relatively small group of participants it is noted that almost half of them have actively practiced binge drinking within the past two weeks. Thus, this tells nurses that there is a significant need for other research on this fairly common practice in the young population.

The study also found there to be a relationship with many negative physical and emotional health effects and binge drinking. As well as, verifying there to be some links to risky behaviors that influence both these areas. These young people are potentially harming themselves without knowing it. The prevention and risks of this action are simply not at the fore front of healthcare. Nurses in the community and the hospital setting need to be creating strategies for prevention of binge drinking in this population, while promoting healthy practices that will provide the young people with good foundations to build their emotional and physical wellness.

CONCLUSION

It is the responsibility of all nurses and others in healthcare to educate the public and interventions should be centered on the needs of the particular individual. Thus, this study indicates a significant need for further research on the practices of binge drinking, specifically in college students. While it also shows there to be a relationship between drinking over 5 alcoholic beverages in one setting and negative physical and emotional health effects, along with an increase in the incidence of risky behaviors.

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