

Gender Differences in Drinking Habits Among College Students

Margaret Anne DeMayo
Dominican University of California



Introduction

Binge drinking is a common problem found in college students, which can be harmful to peers. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines binge drinking as a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 grams percent or above." According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in six adults in the United States binge drink about four times a month, consuming about four times a month, consuming about eight drinks per binge." Over time, binge drinking in college caused consequences for students such as, poor academics and health problems. Some poor academics college students may experience are low exam scores, skipped classes, and incomplete assignments. Health problems college students may experience are mental health problems, such as stress and depression. Students who experience mental health problems while consuming large amounts of alcohol are at risk to endanger their well being and that of others.

The relationship between binge drinking and college students can be influential. The impact of binge drinking showed that students may experience academic failure, depression, and stress. Males and females have different quantities of the maximum alcoholic drinks they can consume. Most drinking starts during high school or freshman year of college. College students are influenced to drink due to drinking regularly with friends and living on campus.

Data from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study (CAS) and Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) provides information where high and low binge-drinking rates are within a state or community. Researchers examined and found how depression and school stress can impact with binge drinking. Alcohol is used as a coping mechanism when someone feels emotionally unstable or sad. Individuals who binge drink use alcohol as a companion when their mental health is at risk and as a way to heal when he or she is feeling pain and unhappiness.

Method

Procedure

The study used primary data analysis to conduct a quantitative analysis. The program Survey Monkey, was used to distribute the questionnaire. The data was kept on one of the three computers of the collaborators to keep the data organized. The questionnaire had a total of twenty-three questions. The purpose of the questionnaire was to better understand how college students deal with their stress, anxiety, depression, physical activity, and binge drinking patterns. Some questions were used from the BRFSS survey. The six questions part of the questionnaire measured the relationship between mental health and alcohol. The study had a sample size goal of 100 participants.

References

- Drinking Levels Defined | National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). (n.d.). Retrieved November 21, 2016, from <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/moderate-binge-drinking>
- Fact Sheets - Binge Drinking. (2015). Retrieved November 21, 2016, from <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/binge-drinking.htm>
- Hundersmarck, S. F. (2015). Apprenticeship in drinking: Learning to play and binge drinking on a college campus. *Applied Psychology In Criminal Justice*, 11(1), 40-51.
- Nelson, T. F., Naimi, T. S., & Brewer, R. D. (2005). The State Sets the Rate: The Relationship Among State-Specific College Binge Drinking, State Binge Drinking Rates, and Selected State Alcohol Control Policies. *American Journal Of Public Health*, 95(3), 441-446.
- Renner, P., O'Dea, B., Sheehan, J., & Tebbutt, J. (2015). Days out of role in university students: The association of demographics, binge drinking, and psychological risk factors. *Australian Journal Of Psychology*, 67(3), 157-165. doi:10.1111/ajpy.12077

Hypothesis

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate how stress factors such as environment and peer relationships negatively affect male and female drinking habits in college students. Students experience stress factors such as, peer relationships, school, family, and appearance. The goal of the study was to evaluate gender differences in binge drinking among college students. The research question is 'How do stress factors such as environment and peer relationships negatively affect genders' drinking habits in college students?'

Figure 1. Maximum amount of drinks between males and females.

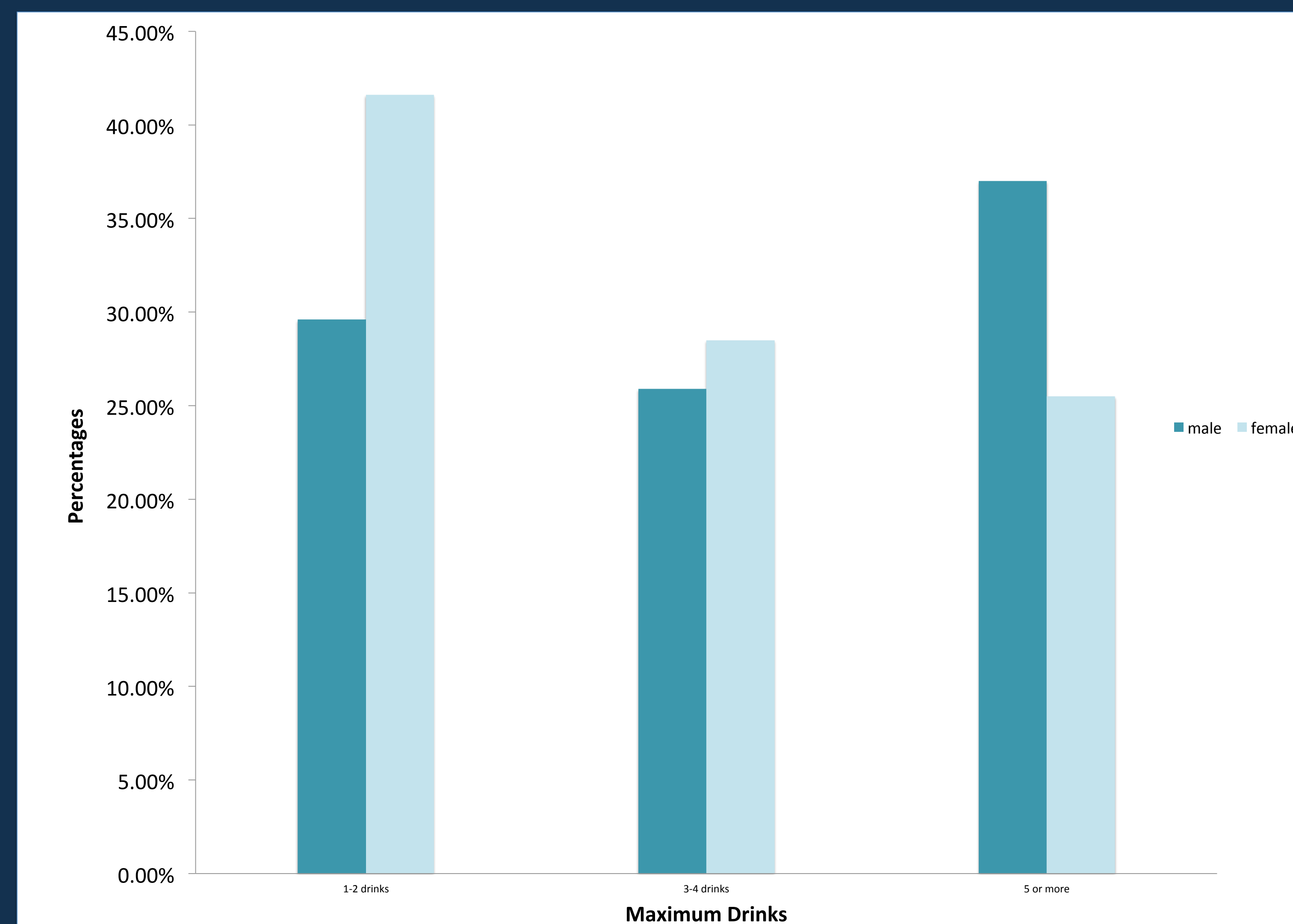
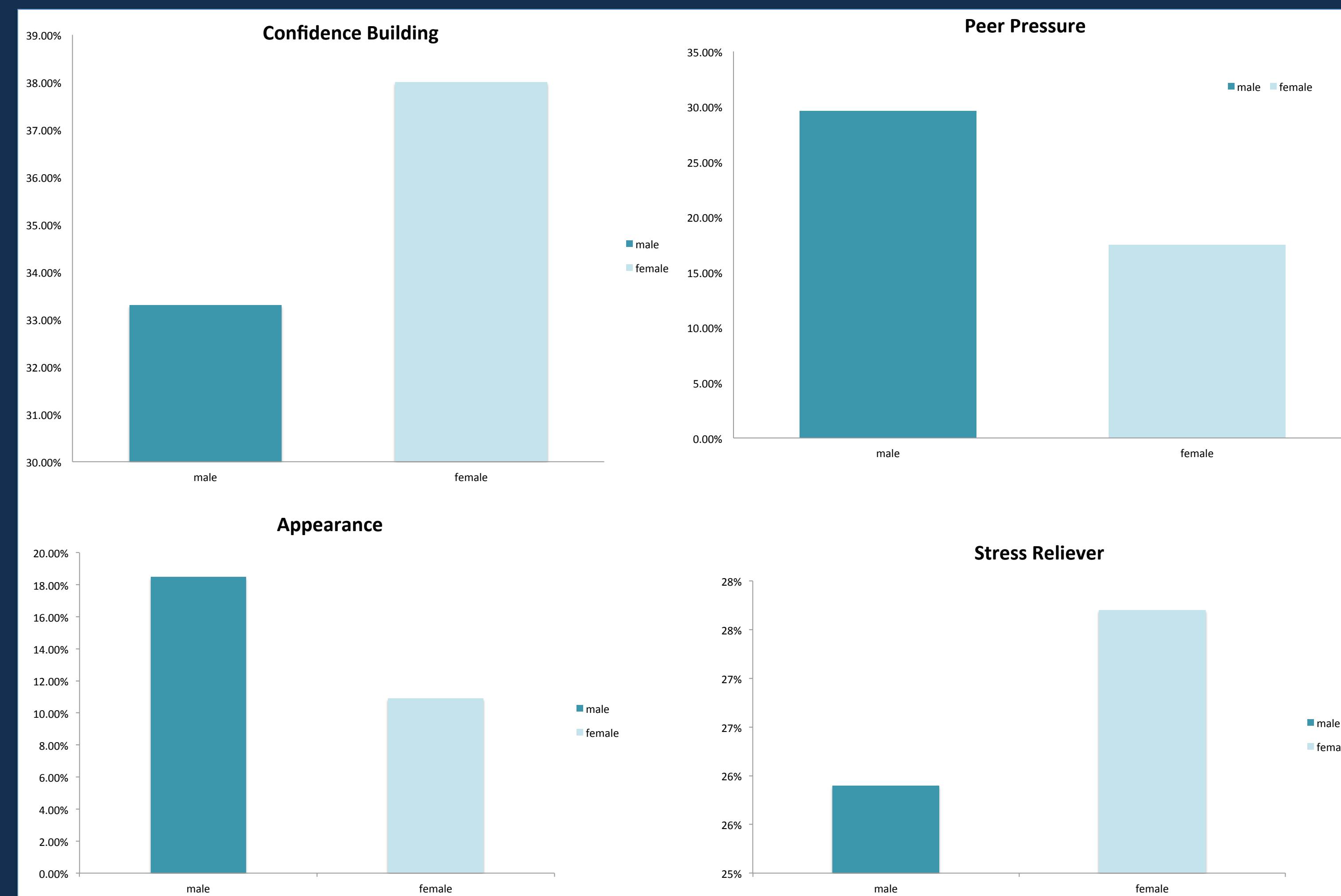


Figure 2. Gender difference on alcohol influence among different variables.



Results

Participants

- 166 undergraduate college students
- 27 males, 137 females, & 2 prefer not to answer

Demographic characteristics

The study conducted t-tests and chi-squared in SPSS. Within the age group, 67.3% were over age 21 and 31.5% were under age 21. More upperclassmen responded to the questionnaire than underclassmen. In the sample, there were 16.1% males, 81.5% females, and 1.2% that preferred not to answer

Binge drinking differences among groups

Binge drinking between males and females differed on a number of variables. Results showed females using alcohol as a source of confidence building and stress relief. Females were more likely to drink less than 4 drinks than males. Males were found to consume more than 4 drinks compared to females. In addition, males abuse alcohol when their friends peer pressure them into drinking. Also, the relationship with males and appearance were more likely to drink more compared to females. Age group showed differences in drinking behavior. 19 year olds were more likely to drink more than four alcoholic drinks. In addition, 19 year olds were more likely to drink alcohol from appearance concerns. Participants aged 21 and over were more likely to use alcohol to build confidence and had friends that peer pressured others to drink. Grade levels in schools differentiate in binge drinking behavior. Seniors were more likely to drink more than 4 drinks than other grade levels. In addition, fifth year students used alcohol as a stress reliever and had friends that peer pressured them to drink. Seniors were likely to use alcohol to build confidence. Also, results showed Juniors were more likely to drink because of their appearance. The grade level differences showed how each grade level differed among the analyzed variables.

Conclusion

There was a significant gender difference in drinking habits. Females were more likely to use alcohol to influence stress relief and confidence. Males were more likely to drink more than the maximum amount of drinks. They are also likely to drink because of their appearance and being peer pressured. In addition, age, grade level, and major impact drinking as well. Underclassmen students were more likely to engage in drinking behaviors because they were able to gain access to alcohol and seen a "social norm" in college. The differences in gender need more evaluation and schools need to provide more coping mechanisms so students are not lead to developing alcoholism. Healthy coping mechanisms need to be addressed to college students.

Acknowledgements

The study would like to acknowledge the collaborators, Kaleigh Landberg and Lawrence Yu, for collaborating and creating the questionnaire. Also, the study appreciates the students that participated in the questionnaire. The researcher would like to acknowledge Dr. Bayles and Dr. Rusk for support and feedback during the research study.