

Alcohol Consumption & Anxiety Amongst College Students

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Introduction

The presence of alcohol tends to lead to overdrinking, especially at college parties and within university-based organizations such as Greek life. Research shows **30% of college females and 40% of college males have partaken in five or more drinks in one sitting** (Kenney, 2018). With the consumption of alcohol it can lead to mental impairment, addiction, and anxiety. Due to this relationship it is crucial to assess if alcohol consumption increases anxiety among college students

Research Question

Does alcohol consumption increase anxiety (specifically social anxiety) among college students?

Methods

We utilized the sites PubMed and Science Direct.

Inclusion Criteria: articles written within 2010-2020, studies done in the U.S. and foreign countries, looked at both female and male studies, word searches consisting of the words "alcohol consumption", "college students", and "anxiety" mainly. Articles were peer-reviewed and academic journals

Exclusion Criteria: middle or high school alcohol consumption, the physical effects of drinking alcohol

After the literature search, thirty initial articles were found. Two articles were eliminated due to both being written prior to 2010 and two others did not correlate with the topic and focus of the question at hand

A positive correlation

exists between alcohol consumption in college students and anxiety.

A systematic review of articles from 2010-2020 found that the relationship between alcohol consumption and anxiety was positively related and that there are certain subfactors that are associated with alcohol consumption including gender, underlying motives and issues, and social anxiety. There are protective strategies of individuals that can lead to more anxiety coupled with alcohol.

- 1- Gender
- 2- Underlying Motive/Issues
- 3- Social Anxiety
- 4- Protective Strategies



Results

The analysis resulted in 26 scientific articles that examined the relationship between these two variables. **Of these 26 articles, 13 of the articles were concerned with the correlation between alcohol consumption and social anxiety in college students**, two of the articles looked at gender differences, two articles examined the roles of protective behavioral strategies underlying the relationship of protective behavioral strategies between alcohol consumption and anxiety, eight articles examined the roles of underlying motives related to anxiety and alcohol consumption, one article looks at the connection between anxiety sensitivity and alcohol consumption in college students.

Discussion

This systematic review looked at the literature between the years 2010 and 2020 to determine if there is a relationship between anxiety in college students and alcohol consumption. Along with looking at this relationship, mediators such as **gender, underlying motives/issues, social anxiety, and protective strategies** were also analyzed.

Sixteen out of twenty-six articles supported the relationship between college student anxiety, the mediators, and alcohol consumption. The mediator concerning articles that did not support our hypothesis had the highest percentage. Therefore we believe that underlying issues and motivations may have had the most influence in disproving our hypothesis. Some of the underlying motives or issues may have masked or overpowered the influence of anxiety in predicting alcohol consumption in college students. In terms of the number of articles supporting our hypothesis, there was not an equal distribution for gender, underlying issues/motives, social anxiety, and protective strategies. Having an equal distribution of articles for each of the mediators that analyzed their influence on anxiety and alcohol consumption in college students, would have shown a more accurate number of the amount of these articles supporting or disproving our hypothesis. Two limitations of this review is that it only looked at the relationship between anxiety and alcohol consumption in college students and omitted high school students and the physical effects of alcohol consumption.