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[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



Abstract

This paper focuses on the critical analysis of two major studies revolving around the growing problem of teenage drinking. The two studies critically analyzed in this paper are “ Does binge drinking in teenagers affect their everyday prospective memory?” and “ Exposure to alcohol advertising and teen drinking”. The report begins by summarizing both the articles, followed by an elaboration of the strengths and weaknesses of each study, and the similarities and differences between both of them. Towards its end, the work will discuss on the gist of both the studies and proceed towards the conclusion. This work is expected to bring out the gravity of the said problem and how advertising on alcohols by different brands can impact the choices of teenagers.

Introduction

Consumption of alcohol among the teenagers and adolescents has become a major problem in many modern day developing as well as developed countries. The problem of over-drinking in teenagers brings along with it many health risks. In order to understand the nature of impact of this problem, many researches and studies have been conducted across the world. In this paper, we will be critically discussing two such studies which analyze the effects of drinking on teenagers.

Summary

The first study revolves around the examination of the effects of binge drinking on the prospective memory of teenagers. In this study, the researchers conducted experiments on a set of fifty students of North East

England to test out their abilities to remember a particular series of tasks. They were shown a short video clip of a shopping district, following which they were asked to undertake a set of instructions on seeing specific locations.

Prospective memory plays a key aspect of the memory functions used in daily activities and can be defined as the cognitive ability to remember to perform a task in future. For e. g., remembering to pay a bill, or attend an appointment, etc.

The study concluded that the non-binge drinkers tend to remember more items than their bingeing counterparts. These observations were carried out after having screened out the students under the influence of other substances, like ecstasy or tobacco, or alcohol within the last 48 hours.

The second study that we reviewed for this work revolves around the influence of advertising of alcohol on the patterns of underage drinking.

Multiple works used for conducting this study have shown consistent patterns of association between the alcohol advertising, alcohol use, and the problems associated with the consumption (Anderson et al, 2009).

This study analyzed the impacts of exposure of teenagers to the advertisements of alcohol and the problem behavior patterns across the data collected over 4 years. This study focused on a major hypothesis that the teenagers who like the advertisements of the alcohol are more likely to elaborate and act on the contents of the ads, and hence, are more likely to indulge in the consumption. It was also assumed that the drinking among adolescents is also associated with their likeability of the characters in the ads.

Discussion

The first study emphasized on two major questions revolving around teenage drinking. The first one was to analyze whether the binge drinkers experienced more prospective memory lapses on a day-to-day basis, as compared to the non-binge drinkers.

Before performing the experiment for the study, the students were classified according to their drinking patterns. A sample of about 101 students, aged between 17 and 19 were selected from various universities of North England. Out of these 101 participants, 51 were omitted because they had reported the consumption of alcohol or were believed to be under the influence of other substances, like tobacco or ecstasy. Out of the 50 remaining participants, 21 were classified as binge drinkers (14 out of whom were females). In order to be classified as a binge drinker, a man had to be drinking at least six pints of beer twice or thrice a week. For a woman, this criterion changed to the consumption of alcohol of the amount equivalent to six glasses of wine. The remaining participants fell into the category of non-binge drinkers. None of the participants used for the study had consumed alcohol in the last 48 hours.

The participants were made aware of what the study targeted to achieve. They were eventually made to fill three questionnaires - one each for substance abuse, general mood, and how well they remembered to do certain tasks. Along with these forms, they were also made to watch a short video clip of a shopping spree and were asked to remember certain specific details of the video. The whole procedure lasted for about 30 minutes. The study was led by Dr. Tom Heffernan. According to Heffernan, the

mechanisms which lie beneath the daily cognitive activities and their association with binge drinking have not been properly understood as yet. He also hints at a possibility of an interference of excessive drinking with the cognitive development of the brains of teenagers.

An important fact to be noted here is that there are no set levels of drinking for teenagers. However, the amount of alcohol consumption was particularly high in the bingeing sessions during the study. What was more shocking was this has come to become a norm among the teenagers. This is particularly worrying for various reasons. For one, their brains are still undergoing development and extensive alcohol consumption can have adverse effects. Secondly, they are not very experienced when it comes to drinking and have low tolerance levels. What's worse is that these teenagers who are involved in bingeing fail to acknowledge the fact that their memory is being affected because of over-drinking, or that it has to do anything with any kind of damage to their systems.

The second was to analyze if binge drinkers recalled fewer tasks/items in comparison to their non-bingeing counterparts.

For this study, the sample of participants was collected from three states of Germany. 120 schools were listed, out of which 29 schools participated with 174 classes. The total students in these classes were 4195, who were sixth to eighth graders of these schools. Out of these students, 645 had to be eliminated because they could not provide the permission from their parents/guardians for participating in the study, and 134 students were absent. The final sample for the study consisted of 3415 students

(Morgenstern et al, 2011).

This was a pilot study, which involved the advertisements of 34 TV ads, a mix of both alcohol and non-alcohol products. In this study, the students were made to see the advertisements with masked images and all information about the brands digitally removed. This sample of advertisements was further filtered out to contain a total of 17 images - 9 alcohol-based ads and the remaining eight were non-alcohol based ads. The students were asked to rate how often they have seen the ad for each image and name the brand. The brand names which were guessed correctly were coded as 1 and the wrong ones as 0.

The mechanisms underlying such associations and influences are not understood in its entirety as yet. However, there are possibilities to indicate that over consumption of alcohol by teenagers can cause the damage to the brain structures, which are yet in their developmental stage, and interfere with their cognitive development (Crews et al, 2007). It was found that at the neural level, consistent overdrinking can damage to the white cell matter, which is responsible for binding various structures of the brain together, responsible for forming memories (Oscar-Berman & Marinkovic, 2007).

The second study focused on the association between the exposure to the advertisements of alcohol and the consumption of alcohol among sixth to eighth graders. The analysis clearly brought evidential statistics to conduce that the higher exposure to ads of alcohol led to higher consumption of alcohol, including the binge and non-binge drinking. This was one of the first studies to link up the ad exposure to specifically binge drinking, something

that previous studies failed to take into consideration (Smith & Foxcraft, 2009).

Strengths and Weaknesses

The first study focuses on the patterns of binge drinking among the teenagers. It brought out a growing problem of the time in the open – that over consumption of alcohol was becoming a norm among the teenagers, and that apart from the health effects of overdrinking, it also impacts the development of the structure and the cognitive abilities of their brains, which are not yet fully mature.

The study did come with its own set of limitations, though. The participants reporting about the drug use themselves cannot be trusted fully, owing to the factors of honesty and accuracy of the facts coming into picture. A biological/scientific method of screening the drugs would have been a better alternative. Moreover, the correlational calculations carried out may not hold much of real significance, since the correlation varies with varying sample sizes of the participants.

The second study, which revolves around analyzing the impact of advertisements on the alcohol consumption patterns among teenagers, brought out strong evidences of association between these two factors. The strongest advantage of the study was that this was one of the first research works produced that primarily focused on the problem of binge drinking in particular, and not drinking as a mix of binge and non-binge drinking. This study used statistical calculations for the analysis, which makes the results more reliable and credible.

However, like the first study, this study also does not come without any

limitations. The primary disadvantage of the study is its cross-sectional design. The data, which is cross-sectional in nature, fails to indicate anything about the sequence of events, i. e. whether the consumption of alcohol sequentially followed the exposure to the alcohol ads. The associated results come with an ambiguity - whether the overdrinking was caused by exposure to ads, or if the alcohol consumption led to the higher exposure to the advertisements. Another disadvantage of the study is that it made use of the masked images of the advertisements. This could have caused incorrect estimates of the amount of exposure to the alcohol ads. Lastly, the variables relating to alcohol consumption used in the study were self-reported. Like the first study, in this case also, there is a possibility of binge drinkers over or under reporting their consumption patterns and behaviors.

Similarities and Differences between the studies

Although both the studies were undertaken in completely different situations, there were many similarities that both of them exhibited.

With these similarities, there were also lines of differences between both the studies. The first study started with a scenario and conducted a shopping trip experiment on the participants and noted the outcomes. On the other hand, the second study began with a hypothesis and the research work that followed was to prove the hypothesis either right or wrong. While one study concentrated on doing practical experiments on the participants, the other one relied on mathematical statistics to analyze the scenario. Another difference was in the age group of the samples used. The sample participants in the first research work were chosen from university, while the

participants in the second study were only sixth to eighth graders. The number of the participants used in the study also varied for both the studies.

Conclusion

In this paper, we reviewed two important studies which revolved around the daily growing problem of binge drinking among the young adults and teenagers. This problem is not confined to a particular location or country. Off-late, it has started to obtain a global status. The two studies that we analyzed revolve around two different scopes of the same problem.

The first study concerns with the impact of over consumption of alcohol on the prospective memory of the teenagers. During this study, we found that binge drinking has become a norm for the teenagers of the modern society.

During this age, the brains of the teenagers are immature and still undergoing development, over consumption of alcohol can significantly hinder this development and hamper the structure and cognition of the brain. The second study revolves around the impact of modern

advertisements on alcohol on the drinking patterns among the teenagers.

After discussing the studies, the critical analysis of the studies followed with discussing the strengths and limitations of both the studies. While both studies had their own positives, they did come with their own set of weaknesses which were the focus point of the next section. The report concludes with a discussion on the similarities and differences between both the studies.

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