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Quality of Relationships and Alcohol Dependence in Young Adults
Darlene Belen, Allie Ramsay, B.A., & Erin Tully, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology

Background

- Alcohol dependence and abuse in young adults is a growing problem, especially on college campuses.
- High-quality parenting may limit risk of alcohol abuse (Abar, 2012).
- Pearson correlations were run to test the associations

Results

Table 2: Correlations between ADS and QRI for Parent (N=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>10.49(2.25)</td>
<td>9.12(3.03)</td>
<td>6.02(2.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Correlation between ADS and QRI for Sibling (N=73)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>9.48(2.21)</td>
<td>8.61(2.93)</td>
<td>5.88(2.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Correlation between ADS and QRI for Significant Other (N=45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Depth</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>10.22(1.80)</td>
<td>10.53(1.98)</td>
<td>5.84(2.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Correlation between ADS and QRI for Same-Sex Friend (N=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>9.04(2.43)</td>
<td>9.56(2.61)</td>
<td>5.04(2.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purpose & Hypotheses

- The purpose of this study was to better understand how different dimensions of relationship quality (depth, support, conflict) in relationships with different people (parent, sibling, significant other, and same-sex friend) relate to alcohol dependence symptoms in young adults.

Method

- Participants completed two surveys:
  - Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI; Piers, 1991)
  - Alcohol Dependence Scale (ADS; Skinner & Allen, 1982)

- Statements describing each relationship were rated on a 4-point scale.
- Ratings: 1=not at all, 4=very much
- 9 items per relationship (QRI items in total)
- Depth items (e.g., “How significant is this relationship in your life?”)
- Support items (e.g., “How much confidence do you put in this person?”)
- Conflict items (e.g., “How angry does this person make you feel?”)

- Higher scores indicate greater depth, support, and conflict.

Table 1: Demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI; Piers, 1991)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84% Female</td>
<td>M=19.64, SD=1.67, Range=18-25</td>
<td>53.1% do not live with parents</td>
<td>Asian: 13.4%</td>
<td>African American: 37.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.5% live off campus with parents</td>
<td>White: 51.1%</td>
<td>Hispanic: 6.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex: 30.5%</td>
<td>India: 2.7%</td>
<td>Mexican: 8.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure

- Participants completed two surveys:
  - Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI; Piers, 1991)
  - Alcohok Dependence Scale (ADS; Skinner & Allen, 1982)

- Measurements of drinking patterns during past 12 months
- 25 items (e.g., “When you drink, do you stumble, stagger and weave?”)
- Number of response choices for each item
- Scores range from 0 to 47
- Higher scores indicate more alcohol dependence symptoms

- Surveys were completed on a computer in the lab using the Survey Monkey website.
- Pearson correlations were run to test the associations between ADS scores and QRI scores.

References


Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all of the participants who participated in our study. We would also like to thank our fellow research assistants who helped to collect the data: Janet Allen, Race Dhinsa, Kelly Harrington, David Holmgren, Ryan Miller, Fadi Montiel, and Taylor Nipper. We would like to thank Anush Garna for her role in coordinating and organizing the study, and Dr. Erin Tully for her patient mentorship and support throughout this process. Finally, we would like to thank Georgia State University and the Department of Psychology for providing us with the opportunity and resources to participate in this research.

Conclusion

- Parent-child relationship hypothesis was partially supported.
- Contrary to our hypothesis, depth and support in relationships between young adults and their parents was negatively correlated with alcohol dependence symptoms, while conflict in relationships between parents and young adults was positively correlated with alcohol dependence symptoms.
- The associations between alcohol dependence symptoms and security of a romantic relationship and availability of a romantic partner are consistent with research on the role of romantic breakups in youth's mental health (e.g., depression). The nonsignificant relationship between conflict and symptoms is consistent with research on associations between alcohol use and interpersonal relationships (e.g., marital conflict, partner violence), but the association in the expected direction and the small magnitude may be due to the young age and/or low level of alcohol dependence symptoms in this sample.

- Same-sex friend relationship hypothesis was supported.
- As hypothesized, depth and support of a same-sex friendship were not correlated with alcohol dependence, and conflict with a same-sex friend was positively correlated with alcohol dependence symptoms.
- The link between unstable friendships and greater alcohol dependence symptoms is consistent with research on interpersonal conflict and alcohol use, and the findings suggest that positive friendships might not offer much buffer against alcohol dependence in young adults.

Implications

- Reflect on the nature of your own alcohol use and consider how relationships may influence your patterns.
- Participate in programs that include a family component.
- Participants did not identify for which parent they completed the QRI. In future research, we would like to distinguish mother-child and father-child relationships.