June 2022

The Relationships Between Perceived Social Support, Discrimination, Distress, and Alcohol Usage

Kylie Thorwardson  
*University of Missouri-St. Louis, katdkd@umsystem.edu*

Ryan Carpenter  
*University of Missouri-St. Louis, ryancarpenter@umsl.edu*

Melissa Nance  
*University of Missouri-St. Louis, melissanance@mail.umsl.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://irl.umsl.edu/urs](https://irl.umsl.edu/urs)

Part of the Psychology Commons

**Recommended Citation**  
Thorwardson, Kylie; Carpenter, Ryan; and Nance, Melissa, "The Relationships Between Perceived Social Support, Discrimination, Distress, and Alcohol Usage" (2022). *Undergraduate Research Symposium*. 101. Available at: [https://irl.umsl.edu/urs/101](https://irl.umsl.edu/urs/101)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the UMSL Undergraduate Works at IRL @ UMSL. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of IRL @ UMSL. For more information, please contact marvinh@umsl.edu.
The Relationships Between Perceived Social Support, Discrimination, Distress, and Alcohol Usage

Kylie Thorwardson, Ryan Carpenter, Melissa Nance

INTRODUCTION

- Those who identify as a sexual minority are more likely to face discrimination based on their sexuality.
- This can be explained by the Minority Stress Theory, which proposes that sexual minority health disparities are largely the result of stressors induced by harassment, maltreatment, discrimination, and victimization (Marshal et al., 2008; Meyer, 2003) and may ultimately impact access to care. (Dentato, 2012)
- Sexual Minority individuals may experience a loss of social support like rejection by their friends and family (Snapp et al., 2015).
- This loss of perceived support can heighten the stress that the individual already feels due to discrimination based on their sexuality.
- Previous studies have shown that stress is a trigger for alcohol use (Spanagel et al, 2014).
- Due to the increased stress experienced by individuals who identify as a sexual minority, it is hypothesized that the amount of distress and discrimination faced by the individuals will be more strongly associated with amount of alcohol consumed for those with a sexual minority identity.
- Conversely, it is hypothesized that there is a negative association between the amount of perceived social support (PSS) and alcohol consumption in individuals with a minority sexual identity.

METHODS

- A 28-day alcohol use average was calculated by multiplying the first two questions of the Alcohol Use Questionnaire.
  - During the last 4 weeks, how many days did you drink alcohol? (Drop down menu; range 0 to 28)
  - During the last 4 weeks, how many alcoholic drinks did you have on a typical day when you drank? (Drop down menu; range 0 to 50)
- Correlation Analysis
  - Sexuality and Distress were significantly associated ($r=-.368$, $p<.001$)
  - Sexuality and Discrimination were not significantly associated ($r=1.67$, $p=.066$)
  - Sexuality and PSS were significantly associated ($r=1.90$, $p<.036$)
  - PSS and Discrimination were significantly associated ($r=.296$, $p<.001$)
  - PSS and Distress were significantly associated ($r=-.407$, $p<.001$)
  - Distress and Discrimination were significantly associated ($r=-.247$, $p<.006$)

RESULTS

- Regression Analysis
  - Neither sexuality, discrimination, nor their interaction significantly predicted alcohol use.
  - Neither sexuality, PSS, nor their interaction significantly predicted alcohol use.
  - Neither sexuality DASS (distress) nor their interaction significantly predicted alcohol use.

CONCLUSIONS

- Results of the regressions ran were not significant, indicates that people might be experiencing less discrimination for their sexuality
  - Supported by the correlation ran for sexuality and discrimination
  - The correlations ran were all found to be significant save for the one on sexuality and discrimination. This indicates that those in a sexual minority are experiencing more stress.
  - Alcohol use may not be an outlet for said stress in this sample
  - For future research, a bigger sexual minority population should be used as the main group represented in this sample was bisexuality
  - Additionally, a regression was run on how discrimination affects a sum AUDIT drinking habits which hinted at race having an impact. This could be investigated with further research.