Performance in a State of Texas Alcohol Awareness Class for Minors

Amelia D. Coffman, Maurice E. Dennis, PhD
Texas A&M University
Department of Health and Kinesiology

ABSTRACT

Alcohol use and abuse by minors is a significant problem in Texas, costing the state money and resources. In 2005 there were at least 26,100 citations of illegal purchase, attempted purchase, consumption, possession, or misrepresentation of age by minors (this figure represents only those completing a MIP Alcohol Awareness course) (Texas Department of State Health Services, 2006). It is also worrisome that the youngest age group in Texas (18-24) remains the group with the largest amount of alcohol- and/or drug-related problems, since young alcohol users often graduate to DWI offenses or alcohol dependence (Liu, 2000). Currently, the state of Texas requires that minors who receive a Minor in Possession (MIP), Public Intoxication (PI), or Driving Under the Influence (DUI) take a six-hour Alcohol Awareness class as one part of their penalty. Fortunately, alcohol use is decreasing across age groups, but most dramatically among younger students, suggesting that current programs may be having a positive effect (Liu, 2004). This study seeks to examine prior history of Minor in Possession (MIP) citations and scores on the administered instruments.

METHOD

Participants (*n* = 138) were those who took Texas A&M's state-approved Alcohol Awareness course (required by Texas for alcohol offenses by minors) from November, 2005 to November, 2006. Because of its location, this course is primarily made up of Texas A&M students. Only participants age 18 or above were included, eliminating 6 participants from the original 144. Participants were 60.9% male and 39.1% female with an average age of 19.21, *s* = .787. Most participants were either freshman or sophomores (66%) and 17.4% had at least one prior MIP. Participants began drinking at an average age of 16.42, *s* = 1.43. Participants reported that their parents had a history of alcohol problems in 13.8 percent of cases, and 29.7% reported that someone else in their family had a history of drinking problems.

Procedure

Minors who register for the Alcohol Awareness class complete two instruments, the Personal Alcohol Profile (PAP) and the Alcohol Drug Profile (ADP) as well as an alcohol knowledge pre- and post-test. Information is also collected on parent and family drinking problems, the age the participant began drinking, favorite beverage, prior alcohol offenses, school year, and age. Chi-square tests, linear regression models, and Pearson correlations were reviewed.

RESULTS

All items were analyzed using chi-square to determine if participants reporting prior MIP arrests answered significantly differently than those not reporting prior MIPs. Chi-square values revealing significant relationships between instrument items and prior Minor in Possession citations were found for three PAP items and five ADP items, listed in Chart 1 (below). These items may prove useful in identifying future multiple-offenders.

A correlation matrix was also reviewed to assess relationships. The age the participant began drinking was by far the most significant correlate with high alcohol-abuse scores, with 6 out of 8 α levels significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

In regression analysis, the age the participants began drinking is the single best general predictor from all data collected of total PAP total score with an R^2 = .114. The overall best regression model included the age the participants began drinking and whether they reported someone in their family as having problems with alcohol abuse (R^2 = .126). When the dependent variable is changed to ADP full-scale score, the best prediction model included prior reported MIPs and the age the participant began drinking (R^2 = .158).

Chart 2 (right) shows the increased risk for alcohol-related problems when they started drinking at an earlier age, as measured by the participants' PAP total score (higher scores indicate more alcohol problems). This finding is also reflected in previous research (see Grant, Stinston, & Harford, 2001; York et al., 2004; Pitkanen, Lyyra, Pulkkinen, 2005; Hingson et al., 2002; Grant & Dawson, 1997).
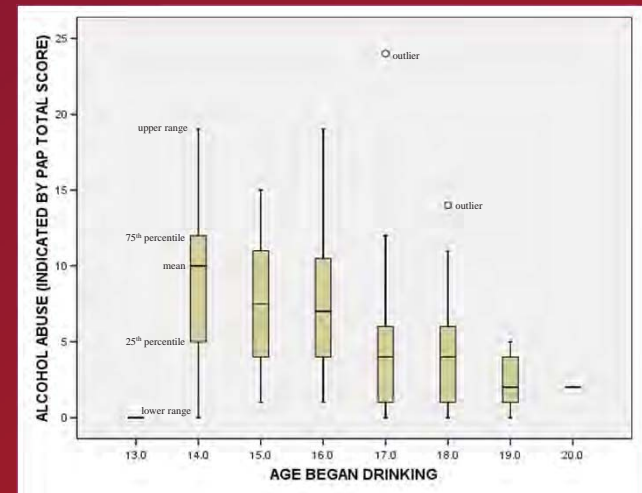
Chart 1. *Survey Items with Significant Chi-square Values*

x^2	α	Item
6.821	.033	**PAP 13** Have you missed morning classes or went to work late because of drinking?
11.809	.003	**PAP 21** Have you damaged personal or school property after drinking?
8.119	.017	**PAP 29** Have you engaged in sex after drinking that you were later sorry for or embarrassed about?
6.711	.035	**ADP 6** I have missed work or been late to work because of my use of alcohol or other drugs.
8.428	.015	**ADP 9** My head and stomach always feel fine the morning after drinking alcohol. (reverse scored)
8.090	.018	**ADP 13** I have been in an alcohol or other drug abuse treatment program.
8.159	.017	**ADP 29** Alcohol or other drug use has influenced my job selection.
8.090	.018	**ADP 36** When I do not drink alcohol I feel sweaty, sick to my stomach, or my hands shake.

FINDINGS

- Symptoms of alcohol abuse are greater when participants started dinking at a younger age. This is true across both measures.
- Other statistically important factors include parent or family alcohol problems and a history of prior MIPs.
- Eight specific items on the measures used in the Texas Alcohol Awareness class (PAP & ADP) do distinguish prior offenders.

Chart 2. *PAP Total Score and Age Participant Began Drinking*

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