

Poster Session I
#18

Risk and Protective Factors Influencing Binge Drinking and Health-Risk Consequences in a National Sample of College Students

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Purpose: Binge drinking among college students and its myriad health-risk consequences is of critical concern to health-care professionals working with college students across the nation. Normally defined as five or more drinks for males and four or more for females on one occasion, binge drinking remains one of the leading problems on college campuses despite the implementation of numerous programs designed to reduce this risky health behavior.

Theoretical Framework: Using a conceptual framework for adolescent risk behavior based on Problem Behavior Theory, the purpose of this study was to test the constructs of this complex theory, identifying environmental, individual differences and behavioral risk and protective factors as predictors of binge drinking.

Methods: Using a retrospective, cross-sectional design, this study used data from the spring 2008 American College Health Association National College Health Assessment representing over 80,000 college students from 106 institutions.

Results: Results from the structural equation models found the constructs of Individual Differences and Behavior accounted for significant variance in the prediction of binge drinking and health-risk consequences in a national sample of college students. Results from the logistic regression model found significant risk and protective factors predicting binge drinking. Protective factors were residing in a parent's home, being in a committed relationship, reporting a low number of academic impediments, having a previous diagnosis of depression, reports of a high GPA, employment and participation in volunteer activities. Risk factors for binge drinking included smoking, the use of marijuana, cocaine or other drugs, Greek membership, having a high social norm perception of alcohol use on campus, and being in an emotionally or physically abusive relationship.

Conclusions and Implications: This study addressed a health promotion topic of critical concern to nurses working with college students in a variety of health-care settings. It utilized a complex and holistic approach to adolescent risk behavior focusing on the identification of specific risk and protective factors related to binge drinking and its subsequent health-risk consequences. The results of this study could lead to the development of more appropriate policies, preventive education programs, screening methods and interventions that focus specifically on these risk and protective factors.