Exploring Gender Differences in Coping Styles Among Heavy Drinking Latinos

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Abstract

Although Latinos suffer a heavier burden of alcohol-related health and social consequences than other racial/ethnic groups, little is known about the relationships between coping styles, heavy drinking and depression among Latinos. Understanding these relationships will improve the efficacy of tailored empirically-based treatments.

Procedure: As part of an ongoing randomized trial, Latinos (n=46) who met criteria for hazardous drinking (≥5 drinks/occasion or ≥14 drinks/week men; ≥4/occasion or ≥7/week women) ages 18-65 completed the Drinker Inventory of Consequences (DrInC); Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT); Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) and Ways of Coping Scale Revised (WOCs-R).

Results: 83% met AUDIT criteria for hazardous drinking (AUDIT ≥8), 58% for Alcohol Dependence [AD; ≥15 men; ≥13 women]. The average CES-D score was 19.5 (SD = 12.5). CES-D scores correlated with AD (r=.29, p<.05), alcohol-related negative consequences scores (r=.56, p<.0001), and wishful coping (r=.70, p<.0001). Gender positively correlated with AD, but not depression or alcohol-related negative consequences; men in this sample are more likely to be alcohol dependent than women. Wishful thinking was positively correlated with negative consequences related to drinking (r=.53, p<.001), and negative consequences related to drinking significantly correlated with alcohol dependence (r=.53, p<.001).

Discussion: Consistent with past research, we found depression was associated with wishful coping styles, AUD and alcohol-related negative consequences. The temporal relationship between poor mental health and heavy drinking needs to be better understood in order to identify whether depression is a risk factor for alcohol use, or vice-versa, among Latinos. Men employing an avoidant, wishful coping style may be more at risk for developing AD than those who employ practical coping strategies. Data from the ongoing trial will be used to better address these questions.

Introduction

There is a well-known link between depression and alcohol use disorder. The presence of either disorder doubles the risk of developing the other, although the causal relationship is still unclear (Boden, 2011; Vitaliano et. al., 2010). Previous studies have found positive correlations between wishful thinking coping styles and depression (Coyne, 1981).

Those who suffer from major depressive episodes are more likely to employ passive, avoidant coping skills such as wishful thinking. People who score higher on wishful thinking scales and do not use practical coping skills like problem solving are more likely to use alcohol as a coping mechanism (Cooper et. al., 1992).

Additionally, wishful thinking, a form of avoidant coping, is more consistently correlated with alcohol consumption in men than women (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2004).

Study Goals

- Explore relationships between coping styles, at-risk alcohol use and alcohol use disorders, and negative social consequences.
- Explore potential gender differences in coping styles
- Hypothesis: Avoidant coping styles will be associated with increased depression, alcohol dependence, and negative social consequences.

Methods

Participants:
- 42 years old
- 45% married
- Average annual household income was <$30,000
- 41% reported a high school diploma or equivalent as the highest level of education.
- Nearly 75% were born in the Caribbean, or were from other Hispanic national sub-groups. Of the foreign-born, 45% arrived at age 18 or younger.

Conclusions

- Our study demonstrates that hazardous drinking, which influences a greater proportion of the population than alcohol use disorders (AUDs), is highly implicated in depression among Latinos.
- Depression found to be associated with avoidant coping styles, AUD and alcohol-related negative consequences.
- The temporal relationship between poor mental health and heavy drinking needs to be better understood in order to identify whether depression is a risk factor for alcohol use, or vice-versa, among Latinos.
- Men employing an avoidant, wishful coping style may be more at risk for developing AUD than those who employ practical coping strategies. Data from the ongoing trial will be used to better address these questions.
- Based on these preliminary findings, providing referral to mental health treatment, or encouraging patients to consider seeking extra social support following their intervention, is highly recommended. Modifications to the ongoing trial are underway.

Results

Having more years of education was significantly correlated with full-time employment status (r=.38, p<.05) and with greater household income (r=.64, p<.001).

Correlations

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<th>Gender</th>
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<th>AUDIT RISKY DRINKING</th>
<th>AUDIT ALC</th>
<th>BL CES-D</th>
<th>TOTAL WISHFUL THINKING</th>
<th>TOTAL DRINKING SCOR</th>
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References


Acknowledgments

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