



Short Communication

Acute alcohol use temporally increases the odds of male perpetrated dating violence: A 90-day diary analysis

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Substance use is theorized to increase intimate partner violence (IPV).
- We examined the temporal relation between substance use and male perpetrated IPV.
- Alcohol use temporally increased the odds of psychological, physical, and sexual IPV.
- Marijuana did not temporally increase the odds of IPV.
- Dating violence prevention should target reduced alcohol use.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Despite an extensive theoretical literature on acute alcohol intoxication likely increasing the odds of aggression between intimate partners, there have been few temporal studies on the relation between alcohol use and increased odds of intimate partner violence (IPV). Moreover, the literature on the temporal relation between marijuana use and IPV is in its infancy. The existing temporal research has yet to examine in the same study the three distinct types of IPV that occur most often between partners: physical, psychological, and sexual. Thus, the present study examined the temporal relationship between acute alcohol use, marijuana use, and male perpetrated physical, psychological, and sexual dating violence.

Method: College men who had consumed alcohol in the previous month and were in a current dating relationship participated ($N = 67$). Men completed daily surveys that assessed their alcohol use, marijuana use, and violence perpetration (psychological, physical, and sexual) for up to 90 consecutive days.

Results: On any alcohol use days, heavy alcohol use days (5 or more standard drinks), and as the number of drinks increased on a given day, the odds of physical and sexual aggression perpetration increased. The odds of psychological aggression increased on heavy alcohol use days only. Marijuana use days did not increase the odds of any type of aggression.

Conclusions: These findings contribute to a growing body of research on the temporal relation between acute alcohol use and IPV perpetration among college men. Combined with previous research, our findings suggest that dating violence intervention and prevention programs should target reductions in alcohol use.

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1. Introduction

Numerous theories detail the relation between alcohol use and intimate partner violence (IPV; e.g., Leonard, 1993; Finkel, in press), with the key premise being that acute alcohol use increases the probability of violence perpetration. Indeed, some researchers have even concluded that alcohol use is a contributing cause of IPV (Leonard, 2005). However, temporal research on the acute effects of alcohol

increasing the odds of IPV is rare, making research in this area imperative for our understanding of alcohol-related IPV. Likewise, there is some theoretical reason to expect marijuana to contribute to aggressive behavior (see review by Moore et al., 2008), although there is even less temporal research on the marijuana-IPV relation. Thus, the present study examined the temporal relationship between alcohol use, marijuana use, and male perpetrated dating violence among college men.

Each year approximately 80% of college men will perpetrate psychological aggression; 20–30% physical aggression; and 15–20% sexual aggression against a dating partner (Shorey, Cornelius, & Bell, 2008). A recent review demonstrated that alcohol use is robustly associated with psychological, physical, and sexual dating violence by

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men in cross-sectional studies (Shorey, Stuart, & Cornelius, 2011). This review also suggested that marijuana may be related to male perpetrated aggression. However, without temporal research on the relation between alcohol, marijuana, and male perpetrated dating violence, we are limited in our understanding of whether it is the acute effects of these substances that increase the risk for dating violence.

To date only one study has examined the temporal relationship between alcohol, marijuana, and college men's dating violence perpetration. Moore, Elkins, McNulty, Kivisto, and Handsel (2011) used a 60-day daily diary design to demonstrate that the odds of psychological aggression ($OR = 7.03$) was higher on a drinking day relative to a non-drinking day; that physical aggression ($OR = 3.64$) was higher on a drinking day relative to a non-drinking day among a combined analysis of men and women, with no difference between genders; and psychological ($OR = 1.16$) and physical ($OR = 1.13$) aggression increased with each additional drink consumed. Aggression was not more likely to occur on marijuana use days. This study did not examine sexual aggression perpetration or whether heavy alcohol use days increased the odds of aggression relative to non-heavy use days. Additionally, this study only contained 38 men.

Although other researchers have examined the temporal relationship between substance use and IPV, the results of these studies are difficult to generalize to college men, as one study examined women arrested for domestic violence (Stuart et al., 2013) and one study examined adolescents seeking emergency department services (Rothman et al., 2012). In addition, both studies utilized retrospective interviews and not prospective designs. Still, these studies also demonstrated that IPV perpetration was more likely on drinking days relative to non-drinking days, but not more likely on marijuana use days. However, there is a need for continued research in this area.

The present study therefore examined the temporal relationship between alcohol use, marijuana use, and male perpetrated dating violence. We hypothesized that male perpetrated dating violence (psychological, physical, and sexual) would be more likely to occur on drinking days (any, heavy, and as the number of drinks increased) relative to non-drinking days, but not more likely on marijuana use days relative to non-marijuana use days.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Male undergraduate students from a southeastern university participated in the current study. To participate, students had to (a) be at least 18 years of age, (b) be in a one-month or longer current dating relationship with a partner who was at least 18 years old, (c) have consumed alcohol in the previous month, and (d) have an average of at least 2 face-to-face contact days with their dating partner weekly. Students from psychology courses were screened for eligibility through an online survey website. A total of 170 students met eligibility; 103 (60.5%) agreed to participate in a one-hour survey session to confirm eligibility and assess other personal characteristics. Students were then invited to participate in the 90-day diary study. Of the 103 men, 79 (76.7%) began the daily diary. The final sample is comprised of 67 male students who reported at least one day of face-to-face contact with their partner over the course of the study.

The mean age of participants was 19.74 ($SD = 2.42$) and the average length of participants' dating relationship was 14.20 ($SD = 12.29$) months. Academically, 44.8% were freshmen, 28.4% were sophomores, 11.9% juniors, 13.4% seniors, and 1.5% post-bachelors. Ethnically, 86.6% were non-Hispanic Caucasian, 4.5% were African American, and the remainder identified as "other" (e.g., Hispanic, Asian American). The majority of students were heterosexual (95.5%).

2.2. Procedure

Each day participants received an email at 12:00 a.m. with a link to that day's surveys, completed on surveymonkey.com. Each set of surveys asked about their previous day's behavior, defined as the time elapsed from when they awoke until they went to sleep. An informed consent was completed prior to the first assessment. As compensation, participants received .50 cents for each completed daily survey and were entered into a random drawing for a \$100.00 gift card to an online retailer if they completed at least 70% of the surveys. Participants were informed all portions of the study were confidential. All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the first author's institution.

2.3. Daily questions

2.3.1. Contact with partner

Participants were asked if they had face-to-face contact with their partner the previous day.

2.3.2. Dating violence

On face-to-face contact days, participants were asked to answer questions regarding their aggression perpetration using a "Yes/No" format. The Physical Assault and Sexual Coercion subscales of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) were used to assess physical and sexual aggression. The Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory – Short Form (Tolman, 1989) was used to assess psychological aggression. For all types of aggression separately, participants who reported perpetration were coded with a "1" and participants who reported no perpetration were coded with a "0."

2.3.3. Alcohol use

Participants were asked each day if they (1) consumed alcohol and (2) whether they consumed alcohol prior to the aggression on days in which aggression occurred. The number of standard drinks consumed was also assessed. Days in which people drank alcohol before perpetrating violence, or drank alcohol but did not perpetrate violence, were coded with a "1"; days on which people drank alcohol after, but not before, violence, or did not drink alcohol, were coded with a "0." A count index of the number of drinks consumed on drinking days was also created. On aggression days, this variable was limited to the number of drinks consumed before aggression. Lastly, days on which participants reported heavy drinking (5 or more standard drinks; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1995) were coded with a "1" and all other days were coded a "0." When alcohol was consumed both prior to and after aggression, only the number of drinks prior to aggression was included.

2.3.4. Marijuana use

Participants indicated each day (1) whether they consumed marijuana and (2) had consumed marijuana prior to aggression, if applicable. Marijuana use days were coded a "1" and non-use days a "0." Days in which marijuana occurred following aggression were recoded into non-use days.

2.4. Data analytic method

Multilevel modeling was used to examine whether the odds of perpetrating psychological, physical, and sexual aggression were (a) higher on drinking days relative to non-drinking days (and higher with greater alcohol consumption; and higher on heavy drinking days relative to non-drinking days) and (b) higher on marijuana use days relative to non-use days. To estimate the unique associations between aggression and drinking and marijuana, we regressed each form of aggression onto each drinking variable, one at a time, and marijuana,

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