

Simultaneous Alcohol with Other Substance Use in a Community-Based Sample of Young Adult Drinkers

Cathy Lau-Barraco^{1,2}, Caitlin Turner¹, Amy L. Stamates^{1,3}, and Kenacia Goings¹
Old Dominion University¹, Virginia Consortium Program in Clinical Psychology², and
University of Rhode Island³

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Introduction

- Simultaneous substance use (i.e., use of two substances at the same) has been linked to more deleterious psychosocial and health-related outcomes than concurrent use (i.e., use of two substances in a given period; see Baggio et al., 2014).
- Simultaneous use could potentiate drug effects, resulting in greater harm than the use of a single substance.
- Given these increased risks, further investigations are warranted that examine patterns of simultaneous substance use and how these patterns vary for different types of young adults (i.e., students and nonstudents).
- Findings could inform interventions designed to cut across multiple substance use and tailored to the needs of young adult sub-groups to maximize their efficiency and efficacy.
- Thus, the aims of the present study were to: (1) examine rates of past-year simultaneous 2-drug combinations with alcohol among young adults and (2) explore patterns by college status.

Method

- Participants were 623 (31.1% women; 29.5% nonstudents) young adult (M age = 21.46, SD = 1.70) drinkers recruited online (i.e., Craigslist.com).
- Procedures: Participants recruited online across major cities in the United States completed an online survey. Participants were compensated \$15.
- Ethnicity: 69% Caucasian, 15.6% African American, 7.4% Native American/Indian, 6.1% Asian, 4.5% Hispanic, and .6% “other”.
- Measures:
 - o Demographic questionnaire

- Simultaneous Polydrug Use Questionnaire (DUQ; Martin et al., 1996) assessed past-year simultaneous substance use with alcohol (i.e., cannabis, cocaine, hallucinogens, stimulants, depressants, opioids, tobacco)
- Nonstudents were those without current or prior college experience, while students were those currently enrolled in a 4-year college/university.
- Simultaneous use was defined as use of the two substances occurring within a few hours of each other.

Results

- Among the sub-sample that endorsed the use of at least two substances in the past year, 95.2% endorsed at least one combination of simultaneous use with alcohol over the past year.
- Among the overall sample that endorsed the use of at least two substances, the most frequently endorsed drug combination with alcohol included: alcohol with cannabis (84.5%), alcohol with tobacco (83.9%), and alcohol with stimulants (72.4%).
- When examined within each college status, the 2-drug combinations most frequently endorsed within *nonstudents* were alcohol with tobacco (73.7%), marijuana (56.6%), and stimulants (34.2%); most frequently endorsed within *college students* were alcohol with marijuana (91%), tobacco (86.3%), and stimulants (81.4%).
- Student status was associated with user frequency (weekly vs. monthly) for alcohol with cannabis, $\chi^2(1, N = 622) = 34.29, p < .001$, stimulants, $\chi^2(1, N = 622) = 22.71, p < .001$, tobacco, $\chi^2(1, N = 622) = 11.82, p = .001$, cocaine, $\chi^2(1, N = 622) = 5.20, p = .023$, and opioids, $\chi^2(1, N = 622) = 11.26, p = .001$.

Discussion

- Our findings indicated elevated prevalence of simultaneous substance use in young adult drinkers regardless of educational status.
- Regardless of educational status, the most frequent substance combinations with alcohol were cannabis, tobacco, and stimulants.
- Consideration of patterns within each group showed that simultaneous use of alcohol with tobacco is relatively more prevalent than alcohol with marijuana for nonstudents (73.3% vs. 56.6%); the converse holds for college students (86.3% vs. 91%).
- It should be noted that within nonstudents, there were relatively higher rates of weekly versus monthly simultaneous use of alcohol with marijuana (60.5% vs. 39.5%) while among college students, there were relatively higher rates of monthly (80.7%) versus weekly (19.3%) use.
- These results suggest the need to consider patterns of simultaneous substance use for intervention programming, particularly given that simultaneous substance use is associated with a range of harms (Midanik et al., 2007).

- Efforts to decrease other substance use, whether sequentially or simultaneously, may elicit greater change and enhance drinking reduction efforts.

References

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