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Effect of Alcohol on Nutritional Habits and Mental Well-Being

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The Association Between Binge Drinking and Depressed Mental Health

Abstract

Alcoholism is a pervasive disease believed to affect nutritional choices and mental state. This study examined the effects of drinking on diet quality, and mood. An anonymous online survey was administered through a Google survey that was distributed on social media platforms. The survey included basic demographic questions, and questions aimed at gauging alcohol consumption, nutritional habits and self perceived mental well-being. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze data in SPSS version 28.0. There is an association between binge drinking, and depressed mental health. In addition, alcohol drinking influences food choices and overall mood after a night of drinking. Future research can further explore the relationship between dietary choices, amount of alcohol and mental status.

Introduction

Studies on alcohol and mood have identified significant associations between alcohol consumption and mental health in adolescents and adults. Binge drinking is associated with the development of depression and anxiety in young females, as well as with externalizing and internalizing problems in both males and females (Valente, 2023).

Neuroimaging studies revealed that binge drinking is associated with structural and functional changes in the prefrontal cortex of the brain, leading to impulsive behaviors (Perez-Garcia, 2022).

Additional, mental health is impacted by peer pressure to drink, as students who are exposed to peers who are drinking are more likely to consume more alcohol, leading to increased rates of depression (Kenney, 2018).

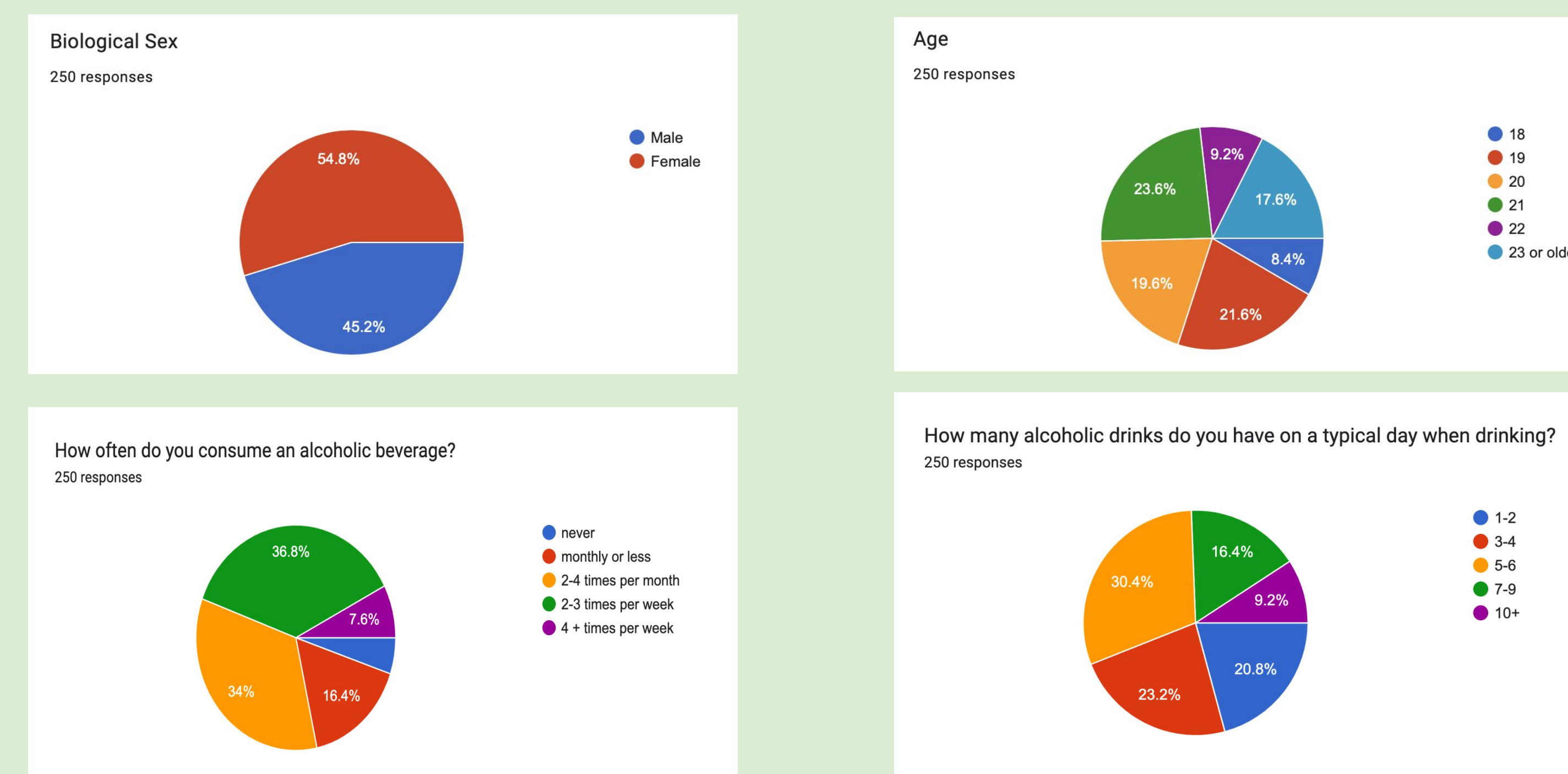
There is a relationship between unhealthy eating patterns and alcohol consumption, as well as between binge drinking and lower odds of obesity in younger adults (Wynne & Wilson, 2022).

Overall, these findings suggest that alcohol consumption may be associated with various mental and physical health concerns, particularly in younger populations, and highlight the need for continued research and interventions to address the negative effects of alcohol on mood and well-being.

Methods

Demographics	Males and females; Adults: 18 years or older
Number of Participants	250
Survey	Drinking, Nutrition, and Mood Assessment
Deliverance	Word of mouth, social media, GroupMe, text messages
Statistical Analysis	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, SPSS version 28.0

Results



- Males tend to drink and consume more alcohol than females, $p=0.001$
- The younger you are the more you tend to drink, $p=0.021$
- People generally are not mindful of how much or how little they eat before consuming alcohol, $p \sim 0$
- The younger you are and the more alcohol you drink in one sitting, $p=0.031$
- The less people eat before drinking, the more likely they were to feel:
 - Hopeless, $p \sim 0$
 - Depressed that nothing could cheer them up, $p=.001$
 - That everything was an effort $p=0.001$
 - Worthless and alone, $p=0.004$, $p = 0.007$
- The more sugary foods consumed while drinking, the more likely they were to feel overwhelmed by:
 - Course-load, $p=0.003$
 - The pressure to succeed, $p= 0.007$

Discussion

Our findings include:

- A relationship between
 - Gender and alcohol consumption
 - Age and consumption habits
 - Food choices/aggregate consumption before drinking and feelings of hopelessness

Why is this important?

- College-aged students often struggle with symptoms of anxiety and depression as the pressure of academic success mounts.
- Our findings amongst college students suggests that there is a link between binge drinking and higher rates of anxiety, as well as depressive symptoms.

Conclusion

- There is a strong association between binge drinking and poor mental health
- Those who consume larger quantities of alcohol on frequent occasions may be increasing their risk of mental health issues
 - Further research is recommended to draw ties between alcohol consumption and mental health. Studies have shown college-aged individuals to binge drink commonly, so researchers may analyze the relationship between binge drinking and academic performance in college students- and the impact this has on their overall well-being.

Limitations

- One limitation of the study was that our cohort was mostly those enrolled in a college/degree program (77.2% college students), therefore the results are not generalizable to the entire population.

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