

Alcohol Dose and Aggression: Another Reason Why Drinking More is a Bad Idea

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Abstract

ABSTRACT. Objective: Numerous studies have examined the impact of alcohol on violence; however, only a small number have addressed differences elicited by different doses of alcohol. Such studies are limited by mixed findings, small sample sizes, inconsistent alcohol doses and control conditions, a bias toward studying only male participants, and the predominant use of only one particular measure to assess aggression. The present laboratory investigation was designed to elucidate and advance this literature by improving on these limitations. Method: Participants were 187 (95 men and 92 women) social drinkers. Following the consumption of one of six alcohol doses (i.e., 0.0 g/kg, 0.125 g/kg, 0.25 g/kg, 0.5 g/kg, 0.75 g/kg, and 1.0 g/kg), participants were tested on a laboratory task in which electric shocks were received from and administered to a fictitious opponent under the guise of a competitive reaction-time task. Aggression was operationalized as the intensity and duration of shocks administered to ones opponent. Results: Analyses revealed a highly significant positive linear trend between alcohol dose and aggression for both genders. Conclusions: Our data aid in clarifying a body of literature that has been afflicted with numerous limitations and will help guide the selection of alcohol doses for researchers conducting future laboratory-based aggression studies.

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