The Association Between Unemployment Status and Drinking Level among American Adults

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Introduction

- Many previous studies have focused on **the role of employment status in affecting alcohol consumption.**
- Alcohol dependence is associated with decrease in the probability and working hours of full-time or part-time work (Johansson et al., 2007; Butler et al., 2010)
- Being unemployed or employed can influence if an adult is or is not a heavy drinker (Layne & Whitehead, 1985).
- While the association between individuals' different job/employment situations and frequency of alcohol consumption has been established, previous literature didn't provide much updated information about this association and if this association is under the control of individuals' gender and their spouse situation.

Methods

Sample

- Young adults (age 18 to 25) who reported they consumed alcohol in the past year (n=1320) were drawn from the first wave of the National Epidemiologic Study of Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC).
- NESARC is a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults in the U.S.

Measures

- The unemployment status was evaluated from questions on if individuals are currently employed or unemployed.
- Drinking level was evaluated through quantity ("How often drank liquor in last 12 months?") Respondents who had a drinking level more frequent than once a month were classified as frequent drinker, while those who drank less than that are classified as nonfrequent drinker.
- Spouse was evaluated through the question ("Spouse of respondent (husband/wife, domestic partner, boyfriend/girlfriend) in household")

Research Questions

- Are being unemployed associated with frequent drinking habit?
- Does the association between being unemployed and drinking frequency differ for individuals based on their gender?
- Does the association between being unemployed and drinking frequency differ for individuals with and without spouses?

Results

Univariate

- Among 1320 American adults who consumed alcohol during the past year, only 6.934% of them were unemployed.
- A total of 46.65% was classified as having a frequent drinking level in the past year.

Bivariate

- Chi-Square analysis showed that American adults who consumed alcohol during the past year **are more likely to have a frequent of drinking if they are currently unemployed** (53.6%) than those who are employed (50.0%) (Figure 1). X^2=4.3385, 1 df, p<0.05.
- As expected, the drinking level was significantly associated with the current unemployment status.

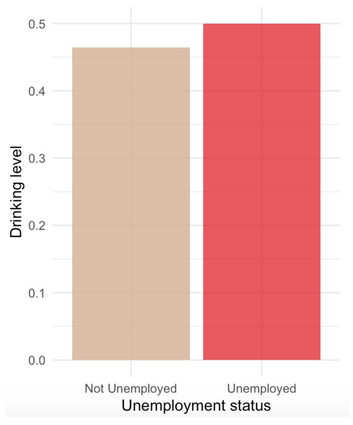


Figure 1: Drinking level for individuals who are currently not unemployed and who are unemployed

Multivariate (Part I)

- Level of drinking frequency is **significantly** associated with individuals' unemployment status after controlling for gender. p<0.05.
- After controlling for unemployment status, the frequency of drinking level is **significantly** associated to gender. p<0.05. **The drinking level is higher among male than female.** (Figure 2).

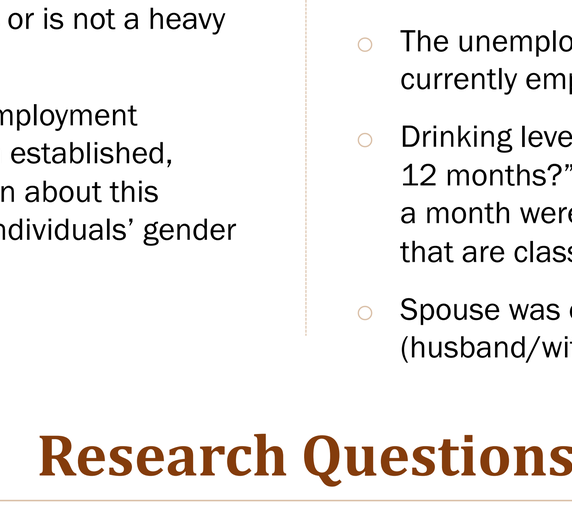


Figure 2: Unemployment status and Level of drinking frequency by gender among American adults who consumed alcohol in past year

Multivariate (Part II)

- Level of drinking frequency is **significantly** associated with unemployment status after controlling for whether the respondent has or doesn't have a spouse in household. p<0.05

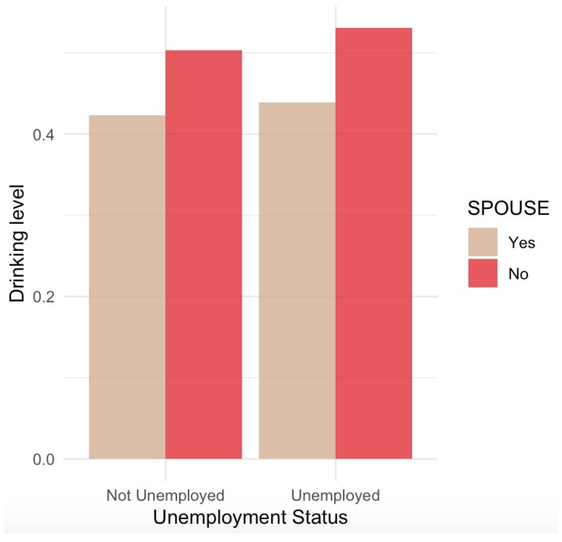


Figure 3: Unemployment status and Level of drinking frequency by gender among individuals who have and don't have spouses

- After controlling for unemployment status, the drinking level is **significantly** associated to whether is the person has a spouse or not. p<0.05. **Respondents who have spouses have a lower level of drinking frequency than those who don't have spouses** (Figure 3).

Discussion

- There is a positive association between unemployment status and drinking level.
- Although respondents' gender and whether If they have spouses have influence on their drinking levels, but these two factors do not change the positive association between unemployment status and drinking level.
- If individuals' unemployment status influences their drinking levels, this could represent the ability of work and job to affect alcohol consumption.
- This research is based on observational studies, so it is only reasonable for the author to conclude possibilities of association. Further research is needed to explore if there is a casual relationship between unemployment status and drinking level and further reasons behind this association.

Butler, A. B., Dodge, K. D., & Faurote, E. J. (2010). College student employment and drinking: A daily study of work stressors, alcohol expectancies, and alcohol consumption. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 15(3), 291–303. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019822

Johansson, E., Alho, H., Kiiskinen, U., & Poikolainen, K. (2007). The association of alcohol dependency with employment probability: evidence from the population survey 'Health 2000 in Finland.' Health Economics, 16(7), 739–754. https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.1201

Layne, N., & Whitehead, P. C. (1985). Employment, marital status and alcohol consumption of young Canadian men. Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 46(6), 538–540. https://doi.org/10.15288/jsa.1985.46.538