



A Case Report of Alcohol Consumption Among Native American Youth Research Brief

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Introduction

Native American youth experience higher alcohol use rates compared to the national average, initiate use at a younger age, and lack access to culturally appropriate prevention efforts that incorporate Native American cultural values and beliefs [1]. One in six Native American adolescents ages 12 to 17 engage in underage drinking, the highest rate of alcohol use of all racial/ethnic groups [2]. Despite a general decline in alcohol use rates over the last decade among youth in the mainstream population, alcohol use among Native American youth remains very concerning. Alcohol is the most frequently used drug of choice among Native American youth. The experience with alcohol during the Native American's teenage years often escalates during an important developmental period yet stressful transitional time period. In a recent study, nearly 9.2% of Native Americans aged 12 and older reported current heavy alcohol use, the highest rate of any ethnic group. Forty-four percent of Native American youth, ages 12-17 reported using alcohol in the last 30 days, and approximately 27.6% reported binge drinking within the last 30 days compared to 24.7% of Non-Hispanic Whites [3]. Studies reporting alcohol use among Native American youth ages 10-12 are almost nonexistent. The purpose of the study was to collect baseline data regarding alcohol use among rural non-reservation based Native American youth, ages 10-12.

Methods

This study used a cross-sectional design to survey a convenience sample of 540 Native American youth, ages 10-12. The Native American Alcohol Measure for Youth (NAAMY) includes 18 items and was used to collect the data. Due to the lack of assessments specific to alcohol use among Native American youth, the research team developed the NAAMY as a new instrument. The psychometric evaluation of the NAAMY is being prepared to be reported in another article.

Participant Responses

Participating Native American youth were recruited and consented to complete the NAAMY baseline measure as part of a larger substance use prevention study being implemented in public schools. The average age of the participants was age 11 which included 280 females and 260 males' Native American youth from three Native American rural non-reservation tribal communities located in North Carolina, Minnesota, and Oklahoma. The data were aggregated, and the youth were not asked about tribal affiliations. Due to IRB restrictions tribes located in the target areas cannot be identified (Table 1) reports the participant responses regarding alcohol consumption.

Table 1: Participants' Responses (*n* = 540).

History of Alcohol Consumption	Percent (Number)
Never	55% (297)
Yes	45% (243)

History of Being Drunk	Percent (Number)
Never	56.7% (306)
Yes	43.3% (234)

Frequency of Alcohol Use in Last 30 Days	Percent (Number)
0 times	54.8% (296)
1-2 times	26.7% (144)
3-9 times	18.1% (98)
10-19 times	0.4% (2)
20-49 times	0.0% (0)

Frequency of Being Drunk Use in Last 30 Days	Percent (Number)
0 times	62.8% (339)
1-2 times	25.9% (140)
3-9 times	10.2% (55)
10-19 times	1.1% (6)
20-49 times	0.0% (0)

Reasons for Using Alcohol	Percent (Number)
My friends drink	89.4% (483)
Drinking makes me feel good	84.6% (457)
Drinking makes me more popular	75.0% (405)
Friends pressure me to drink	85.9% (464)
Family problems	85.7% (463)
Family members drink	88.1% (476)
Media message	60.7% (328)

Discussion and Summary

The participant responses suggest that Native American youth are initiating alcohol consumption at early ages in life. Early initiation of alcohol use has been linked to behavioral issues particularly among Native American youth. The ages of 10-12 is a particularly vulnerable time for essential growth patterns involving psychological, social, emotional, physical development, and behavior. Evidence suggests that the transition from youth into adulthood is a developmental stage where learned behaviors, can increase or decrease one's risk for alcohol use and risky health behaviors [4]. This is also a very crucial time for the development of emotional and peer support. As reflected in the participant responses, when youth lack appropriate emotional, and peer support the potential for alcohol use increases. Prevention and intervention efforts to reduce alcohol use must be addressed during this critical transitional developmental stage among Native American youth.

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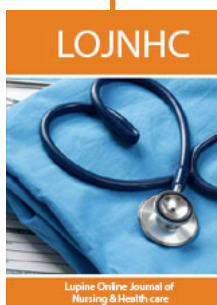
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