

Spirituality and Health Risk Behaviors among Adventist Students

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Importance of Religious Belief and Substance Use Among Youth

- The Monitoring the Future study is the largest continuous survey conducted on substance use among students in the United States.
- Analysis of these data by Wallace and his colleagues (2003) found that White students who saw their religious faith as very important, compared to those who did not see their faith as important, were:
 - About twice as likely to be abstinent from alcohol for their entire lives
 - Almost twice as likely to be abstinent from tobacco for their entire lives
 - About twice as likely to be abstinent from marijuana for their entire lives
 - While the differences were not as large for Black students, they were statistically significant.
- Wallace further noted that governments and researchers had a history of ignoring the strong positive role of religious faith in prevention.
- In summary, scientific findings show that religion plays as large and important role in prevention and should be recognized and promoted!

Church Attendance and Substance Use

- One of the most consistent findings in behavioral science research is the inverse relationship between church attendance and substance use. In the study by Wallace and his colleagues already noted, it was found that those White youth who attended church more than once a week were about:
 - Twice as likely to be abstinent from alcohol over their entire life
 - 1.5 times as likely to be tobacco and marijuana abstinent over their lifetime
 - While the differences were not as large for Black students, they were again statistically significant.
- As noted previously, Wallace also noted that these findings on the protective effect of Church attendance have been ignored by governments and researchers.

Religiosity and Drug Use

- The inverse relationship between religiosity and alcohol abuse among Christians has been well documented for decades (Jessor and Jessor, 1975; McBride, Mutch & Chitwood, 1996; Wallace et al., 2007).
- Researchers studying Muslims report similar inverse relationships. (Unlu and Sahin, 2016).
- The operationalization of the concept of religiosity has been more complex. An article by Haber and colleagues (2012), notes the importance of identifying and measuring different aspects of religiosity.

Purpose of Presentation

The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Examine data from a survey of Adventist University students showing the relationship between different aspects of religiosity and binge drinking (defined as having or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks).
- About 8% of the sample of 751 reported this level of alcohol use.
- Specifically, taking the suggestion from Haber and colleagues (2012), we will examine the relationship between binge drinking and:
 - Personal devotion
 - Commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church
 - Attendance
 - God wants me to take care of my body by not using alcohol, tobacco or drugs.

Methods

- These questions were a part of a larger study conducted every 5-7 years (at times other schools involved) that examines the relationship between risk and protective factors and substance use.
- Questionnaire took about 45 minutes to fill out.
- Data collected in a class room setting (similar to MTF data collection).
- Data collected by trained research assistants using paper and pencil and placed in blank sealed envelope.
- Anonymous, confidential, and full IRB approval.
- Total N was 751.

Conceptual Framework

- Theoretical concepts of social control and social ecology theory guided the analysis (see, Hirschi and Stark 1969; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
- We were interested in looking at various aspects of religious social integration (as indicated by belief and practice) and their relationship to binge drinking.

Raw Odds Ratios – Binge Drinking

	<u>ORs</u>	<u>95% C.I.</u>
<u>Devotions</u>		
freq. of per. prayer	.704	.625--.793
freq. of Bible reading	.680	.611--.758
<u>Commitment to SDA Church</u>		
SDA True Church	.694	.567--.850
will remain SDA	.537	.396--.729
<u>Attendance</u>		
freq. of Church	.623	.547--.710
freq. of SS	.748	.665--.843
<u>Health Message</u>		
body as Temple	.403	.310--.523

Adjusted Odds Ratios – Binge Drinking

	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% C.I.</u>
<u>Devotions</u>		
freq. of prayer	1.035	.826—1.296
freq. of Bible reading	.811*	.671--.981
<u>Commitment to SDA Church</u>		
SDA true Church	.866	.588—1.274
will remain SDA	1.208	.726—2.012
<u>Attendance</u>		
freq. of Church	.915	.722—1.160
freq. of SS	.893	.759-- 1.052
<u>Health Message</u>		
body as Temple	.466**	.317 -- .687

Summary Discussion

- At an Raw Odds Ratio level, all aspects of religiosity were inversely related to binge drinking in this Adventist student population.
- Personal prayer, commitment to the Church, attendance, and belief in the SDA health message were related to significantly lower odds that one will engage in recent binge drinking.
- This is consistent with the research literature and does suggest that these various aspects of religious involvement are important in substance use prevention.

Summary Discussion Continued

- But once all of these variables are entered into a multi-variate model, only beliefs about God cares what we do to our bodies really remains statistically significant (and at the .01 level).
- This is consistent with Baltazar's (2015) dissertation finding that Body as the Temple wiped out almost all family variables.

Conclusion

- The Adventist Health Message that focuses on the integration of mind, body and spirit may offer a unique protective element to lower rates of health risk behaviors for Adventists.
- Further research needs to examine how belief in the core concept of that God care about what we put into our bodies impacts the decision making process in a way that overrules other core aspects of other protective relationships.

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