College Alcohol Policy Enforcement and Risky Sexual Behavior

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INTRODUCTION

This research analyzes the relationship between college’s enforcement of official alcohol policy and student’s risky sexual behavior. Using a survey of students from 119 four-year colleges or universities in the United States, we examine college alcohol policy, college alcohol education, level of sociability in student, and risky sexual behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Alcohol and risky sexual behavior:

Steele and Josephs’ 1990 study used a cue salience model that states people engage in riskier sexual behavior after drinking alcohol due to alcohol intoxication restricting the cognitive capacity (when intoxicated) to understand and process multiple situational cues because intoxicated people are more likely to focus only on salient cues. Another study found a relationship between drinking alcohol led to decreased condom use during a first sexual encounter, but not with a first sexual encounter with a new partner (Leigh 2002). Still another study determined that it is not clear as to whether risky sexual behavior is directly related to the participant’s drinking or another influencer such as social environment (Weschler et al. 1995).

Alcohol policy and alcohol policy enforcement on college campuses:

Weschler and Nelson (2008) state that students who attend colleges that ban alcohol on campus are less likely to binge drink and more likely to abstain from alcohol, but those students who do drink alcohol will drink just as heavily as their counterparts at alcohol banned college campuses.

College alcohol policy and risky sexual behavior:

The link between college alcohol policy and risky sexual behavior is not often addressed in research. Some articles have small paragraphs related to this topic, but none go in depth on the subject. If alcohol intoxication leads to risky sexual behavior among college students, then it follows that enforcing alcohol policy should reduce the amount of risky sexual behavior.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Does strict college alcohol policy enforcement on college campuses reduce students’ risky sexual behavior?

DATA SOURCE

Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study (CAS), 2001

HYPOTHESES

H1: The level of the enforcement of school alcohol policy has no effect on the students’ risky sexual behavior.

H2: The level of college provided alcohol education has no effect on the students’ risky sexual behavior.

H3: The level of student sociability has no effect on the students’ risky sexual behavior.

METHODOLOGY

In order to measure risky sexual behavior, we used the frequency of condom use and the number of sexual partners in the last 30 days. These dependent variables were categorical, thus we performed an ordered logistic regression. While the logistic regression model accounts for binary dependent variables, the ordered logistic regression allows us to measure our dependent variables in multiple degrees or categories.

DESCRIPTION STATISTICS

Riskier Sexual Behavior = [enforcement, alcohol education, sociability, x] + u

Where:

Riskier sexual behavior: defined by condom use and number of sexual partners in the last 30 days.

Enforcement: high, medium, low, none (base)

Alcohol Education: range from low to high

z: living on campus, year in school, age, gender, race, time spent studying, religious affiliation, parent’s education, transfer student, drug index, and/or risky behavior (other than sexual)

MODEL

EMPIRICAL STUDY

Table 2: Ordinal Logit Regression - Effect of College Alcohol Policy on Risky Sexual Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>Condom Use</th>
<th>Sexual Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enforcement</td>
<td>0.072***</td>
<td>(0.046)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enforcement</td>
<td>0.063***</td>
<td>(0.046)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SchoolDEdu</td>
<td>0.050***</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social2</td>
<td>0.241***</td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oncampush</td>
<td>0.228***</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H2: The level of college provided alcohol education has no effect on the students’ risky sexual behavior.

H3: The level of student sociability has no effect on the students’ risky sexual behavior.

CONCLUSION

- Medium and low levels of enforcement are significant and positively related to the use of condom. Strict enforcement of alcohol policy is insignificant in determining condom use and number of sexual partners.

- There is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis that policy and education have no effect on risky sexual behavior.

- School-provided alcohol education/programming and the sociability of the students are both significant and positively related to the condom use of the student.

- Enforcement, education, and the sociability were all insignificant in determining the number of sexual partners in the last thirty days.

Policy Implications

From these results one may conclude that school-provided alcohol education and student sociability are correlated to condom use. Therefore, if colleges plan to invest in reducing risky sexual behavior, they should invest in programs targeted to educating students on health-related issues regarding alcohol as well as in social activities for the students.

While education and students’ sociability relates to condom use, they do not have a significant relationship with the number of sexual partners in the last thirty days. This finding suggests that the actions of the school can help promote safer practices, even if the general behavior of the student is not affected.

REFERENCES


ECON409: Intermediate Applied Econometrics (Department of Economics, UNM) — Dr. Alok Bohara, University of New Mexico

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SUPPLEMENT: 101

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