

Social- Consciousness, Social- Responsibility and Sensation- Seeking as Predictors of Alcohol Craving among Undergraduates in a Nigeria University

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Abstract

This study investigated social-consciousness, social-responsibility and sensation-seeking as predictors of alcohol craving among undergraduates of the University of Uyo, Nigeria. Participants were one hundred and thirty seven (137) undergraduates of University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom who were randomly selected among the population of undergraduates in the institution. Their ages ranged between 16 to 40 years with a mean age of 20.49 years (SD = 5.42). A cross sectional design was adopted for the study and result of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that sensation-seeking significantly predicted alcohol craving ($\beta = .29, p < .01$). It was also revealed, however, that social-consciousness did not significantly predict alcohol craving. Similarly, social-responsibility did not significantly predict alcohol craving among undergraduates of University of Uyo. The three predictor variables also jointly significantly predicted alcohol craving among the undergraduates ($\beta = .52, p < .01$), contributing 33% to the explanation of the variance in alcohol craving among undergraduates collectively (total $AR^2 = .66$). The implications of these findings were discussed, and suggestions for further studies were equally made.

Keywords: Social Consciousness, Social Responsibility, Sensation Seeking, Alcohol Craving, Undergraduates, Nigeria.

Introduction

Human brain activity is generally accompanied by intense craving; as humans are naturally hedonistic in nature (Freud, 1930). Part of this craving may be alcohol craving. And this may explain why Tiffany (1990), Verheul, van den Brink, and Geerlings (1999) maintained that

craving has long played a central role in theories concerning the development and maintenance of alcoholism.

Presently, alcohol dependence has become a major social problem in most societies. In recent times, studies have implicated alcoholism as escalating in both male and female gender groups. Perhaps, the greatest reason for this is the fact that alcoholic beverages are considered as legal and viewed by many as a benign substance. To a large degree, alcoholic beverages, unlike other illicit substances, enjoy across-the-board social approval. Although inconsistent, associations between self-reported craving and alcohol use have been reported by researchers (Drummond, 2001; Tiffany, 1990). For instance, Bottlender and Soyka (2004) reported that craving predicted subsequent relapse in a sample of alcohol dependent individuals in outpatient treatment. In contrast, in another study, only 7% of patients who had relapsed in a rehabilitation program identified craving as a cause (Miller & Gold, 1994).

A number of theoretical models have been proposed to address the complex relationship between craving and alcohol use. Some theoretical models have hypothesized that individual differences may affect the experience of craving and substance use (e.g., Verheul et al., 1999), whereas others have aimed to differentiate the relative roles of unconscious, automatic processes from conscious, deliberate processes involved in obtaining and consuming alcohol (Robinson & Berridge, 2001; Tiffany, 1990). In his cognitive processing model, Tiffany (1990) postulates that when alcohol seeking behaviours have become well practiced, they can eventually become unconscious and automatic. This process is set in motion by stimulus triggers, which can be internal (e.g., stimulating effects of the substance) or external (e.g., alcohol-related cues). In the Tiffany model, craving is viewed as a conscious, higher order cognitive process that is activated when efforts to obtain alcohol are blocked either externally (e.g., the liquor store is closed) or internally (e.g., use of coping skills to avoid drinking).

Although Tiffany's (1990) model pertains directly to dependent individuals, it may also apply to frequent social drinkers. These individuals consume alcohol regularly in stereotyped environments (e.g., bars, parties), which contain drinking cues (e.g., other young people drinking, beer glasses). Thus, it stands to reason that alcohol consumption can become a well-practiced activity for a frequent social drinker, in the manner described by Tiffany. Accordingly, in a manner similar to what has been observed in dependent individuals (Franken, 2003), positive correlations have been found between magnitude of attentional bias to alcohol-related cues and self-reported craving for alcohol in social drinkers (Field, Mogg, & Bradley, 2005).

Social consciousness, or social awareness, is defined as consciousness shared by individuals within a society. It essentially means to be conscious or aware of the problems within a society or community. According to German philosopher Karl Marx (1818-1883), human beings enter into certain productive, or economic, relations and these relations lead to a certain form of social consciousness. In particular, self-consciousness (SC), a trait which refers to the propensity to direct one's attention to the self, has been found to be related to negative affects and alcohol-drinking (Hull, Young, & Jouriles, 1986). As a result, Hull and his colleagues developed a theory of drinking which suggests that drinking alcohol should decrease or even inhibit the level of SC in alcohol-dependent subjects (Hull, Young, & Jouriles, 1986).

Social responsibility is an ethical framework which suggests that an entity, be it an organization or individual, has an obligation to act for the benefit of society at large. Social responsibility is a duty which every individual has to perform so as to maintain a balance between the economy and the ecosystems. Students' Social Responsibility (SSR) is the

responsibility of every student for his/her actions. It is morally binding, and suggests that each person act in such a way that minimizes the adverse effect to those immediately around them. It is a commitment that everyone should have towards society; contributing towards social, cultural and ecological causes. SSR is based on an individual's ethics. Instead of giving importance only to those areas where one has material interests, the individual supports issues for philanthropic reasons. SSR may be slightly impractical, especially in the modern competitive world, where everyone works for self-interest, but it will succeed if we take decisions based on what will benefit a large number of people and respect everyone's fundamental rights. As individuals, we can make our small contributions to society by donating money to trustworthy NGO's, saving our resources by reducing our consumption, e.g. by switching off lights or computers when not in use, avoiding drinking or smoking in public places when the laws demand such from us etc. These are markers of Social Responsibility.

Sensation-seeking, the tendency to seek out novel experiences, is a general personality trait that has been extensively studied in psychological research, but neuroscience is just beginning to take aim at it. Beyond understanding why one person relishes the fright factor while the next studiously avoids it, scientists are asking how sensation-seeking relates to substance abuse and craving, and addiction, as well as other areas where the clinical and public-health implications are most clear. Some studies (e. g. Scalese, Curzio, Cutrupi, Bastiani, Gori, Denoth and Molinaro, 2014; Zukerman and Kuhlman, 2000; Ogunleye, Adebayo and Abe, 2005) suggest that people who seek out high-sensation experiences even at great personal risk, so-called high-sensation seekers, are more vulnerable to drug and alcohol abuse and more likely to engage in other risky behaviors, such as sex with multiple

partners. Such views as highlighted above, expressed as a result of studies with participants elsewhere, may not be generalizable across all culture and situations. It is in the light of this therefore that this study proposes to investigate whether social responsibility, social consciousness, and sensation seeking will predict alcohol craving among undergraduates in a Nigeria University.

Hypotheses Tested

Social Consciousness would significantly predict alcohol craving among undergraduates (H₁)

Social Responsibility would significantly predict alcohol craving among undergraduates (H₂)

Sensation Seeking would significantly predict alcohol craving among undergraduates (H₃)

Method

Participants:

Participants were one hundred and thirty seven (137) undergraduates of University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State; Nigeria (drawn from across the levels 100 to 400) who were randomly selected among the population of undergraduates in the institution. Their ages ranged between 16 to 40 years with a mean age of 20.49 years (SD = 5.42). Information about participants demographics such as gender, religion and ethnic group were gotten using a questionnaire.

Measures:

The participants completed the Alcohol Craving Questionnaire – Short Form (ACQ-SF-R: Singleton, 1997), Social Consciousness Scale (SCS: Flewelling, Paschal & Ringwalt, 1993), Social Responsibility Scale (SRS: Nedwek, 1987) and Brief Sensation Seeking Scale (BSC: Zuckerman et al., 1978).

The Alcohol Craving Questionnaire (Short Form) contains 12 items from the original 47 items Alcohol Craving Questionnaire (ACQ-NOW) developed by Singleton (1997) to assess craving for alcohol among alcohol users in the current context (right now). Sample items from the ACQ-SF-R include: I miss alcohol; If I had alcohol, I would have probably drank it; I am not making any plans to drink, etc. The ACQ-SF-R 12 items strongly correlated with the four sub-scales and total ACQ (Tiffany et al., 2000). Response options ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Scores from ACQ-SF-R have high internal consistency ranging from .79 to .86. An internal consistency reliability of .74 to .83 was observed in the current study.

The Revised Self-Consciousness Scale (RSCS) was developed by Lewelling, Paschall and Ringwalt (1993). The scale has 6 items designed to assess how perception of people's behavior affects other. The intended range is between 1 – 4, with a high score indicating a greater sense of how one's behavior may affect others. The items are rated on a 4 point likert format of strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 4. Sample items include: "the problem of others don't really bother me", "if I was a mean to someone, I would feel bad about it later", "telling a lie makes me feel uncomfortable". The internal reliability was found to be .82 by the developers. For the present study, internal reliability coefficient of .80 was realized by the researchers.

The Social Responsibility Scale by Nedwek (1987), a 6 items scale developed to assess civic responsibility and awareness, was used to measure social responsibility in the present study. The intended range for social responsibility is between 1 – 4, with a high score indicating a greater sense of one's social responsibility. The items are rated on a 4 point likert format of strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 4. Participants were asked to

indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements; “ I don’t owe the world anything”, “I really care about how my actions might affect others”, “I have a responsibility to make the world a better place” etc. The internal consistency reliability as reported by the developer was found to be .78. For Present study, internal reliability coefficient of .73 was realized by the researchers.

The Brief Sensation Seeking Scale developed by Zuckerman et al., (1978) is a 12 items measure designed to measure individual’s traits that leads to thrills, adventures, and new experiences through the two major dimensions of sensation seeking namely; intensity and novelty. The two sub scales and the items describing them were developed on the basis of novelty and intensity of stimulation, and risk taking. For each item, participants indicated the extent to which the item describe them (1 = Describe me very well, 2 = Describe me somewhat, 3 = Does not describe me very well, 4 = Does not describe me at all). Internal reliabilities for the scale have been found to range from 0.83 to 0.86. An internal consistency reliability of .65 was observed in the current study.

Procedure:

The participants were approached through their class representatives. After which rapport was created before administering the questionnaire. Participants were equally assured that their responses will be treated with confidentiality; and that participation in the study was voluntary. They were asked to respond truthfully as the questionnaire is for academic exercise. A questionnaire comprising four scales and demographics was administered to the participants to fill. Of 150 questionnaires that were completed and returned, after cross checking, only 137 copies were properly completed and used for this present study.

Design/Statistics:

Cross sectional design was adopted. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to predict alcohol craving from social consciousness, social responsibility and sensation seeking. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was employed for the data analyses.

Result

The results of analysed data are presented on the tables below.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix Table Showing Relationships of social consciousness, social responsibility, sensation seeking and alcohol craving

Variables	1	2	3
1 Social Consciousness	-		
2 Social Responsibility	.28***	-	
3 Sensation Seeking	.10	.02	-
4 Alcohol Craving	.05	.06	.29***

*** p < .001

Correlations in Table 1 showed that among the studied variables, only sensation seeking has positive significant association with alcohol craving ($r = .29$, $p < .001$). There was a positive significant relationship between social consciousness and social responsibility ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), while social consciousness have positive but non significant relationship with sensation seeking.

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression table showing the prediction of alcohol craving from social consciousness, social responsibility and sensation seeking.

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	B	β	T	B	β	t	B	β	t
Social Consciousness	.31	.05	.55	.22	.03	.37	.02	.00	.04
Social Responsibility				.28	.05	.54	.31	.05	.60
Sensation Seeking							.40	.29****	3.45
AR ²	.00			.00			.09***		
ΔR^2	.00			.00			.08***		
ΔF	30			29			11.49		

p < .001

Hierarchical multiple regression results in Table 2 showed that Social Consciousness (step 1) was not a significant predictor of alcohol craving ($\beta = .05$). In step 2, social responsibility was not a significant predictor of alcohol craving among undergraduate ($\beta = .03$). In step 3, sensation seeking was a significant predictor of alcohol craving ($\beta = .29$, $p < 0.001$). It accounted for 8% of the variance in alcohol craving ($\Delta R^2 = .08$).

Discussion of Results

This study investigated social consciousness, social responsibility, and sensation seeking as predictors of alcohol craving among undergraduates. The finding of the study showed that social consciousness is not a significant predictor of alcohol craving among undergraduates. This finding did not confirm the first hypothesis that social consciousness will significantly predict alcohol craving among undergraduates. The finding is consistent with the previous findings of Norman and Mark (1994) that drug seeking and use are such highly ritualized, automatic behaviours that the addict may appear not to require the intervention of self conscious thoughts or distinct craving states to use. However, the finding is inconsistent with the findings of a recent study by Timary, Cordovil, Denoël, Hebborn, Derely, Deseilles, and Luminet, (2013) which found that social consciousness was a significant predictor of alcohol

craving. Variations in the findings here may thus be attributed to personality and environmental differences among participants in the studies.

The finding of the study equally showed that social responsibility is not a significant predictor of alcohol craving among undergraduates. This finding did not confirm the second hypothesis that social responsibility will significantly predict alcohol craving among undergraduates. This is consistent with the finding of Butts, (2009) which indicated that social responsibility did not yield to more alcohol craving and use. In contrast, the finding is inconsistent with the previous finding of Lorant, Nicaise, Soto and d'Hoore (2013), which found that the more a student was exposed to college environmental factors, the greater the risk of heavy, frequent, and abusive drinking. And that alcohol consumption increased for students living on campus, living in a dormitory with a higher number of room-mates, and having been in the University for a Long Spell. Most such environmental factors were explained by social involvement, such as participation to the student folklore, pre-partying, and normative expectations.

The finding showed that sensation seeking is a significant predictor of alcohol craving among undergraduates. This supports the third hypothesis that sensation seeking will significantly predict alcohol craving among undergraduates. The is consistent with previous studies (e.g Viktoriya, Michael, & Craig, 2007; Hittner, & Rhonda, 2006; Brian, & Loreen, 1995), indicating that sensation seekers such as alcoholics and cocaine mis-users, as well as gamblers scored significantly higher on inability to resist craving; that sensation seeking were associated with alcohol use and craving problems through different mediational pathways; while analysis of the four sensation seeking components indicated that disinhibition was most strongly correlated with alcohol use and craving.

There are some general implications from the findings of this study that may be applicable in today's society. Sensation seeking was found to be a significant predictor of alcohol craving among undergraduates. The practical implication of this is that for undergraduates or youths to engage in risk taking behaviours, they tend to make use of some substances such as alcohol. This means that ordinarily or without being under the influence of alcohol, undergraduates/youths may not easily engage in risk taking behaviours. Therefore, alcohol can be regarded as a major sustaining factor of all forms of sensation seeking among undergraduates. However, this empirical study advocates that strict measures be adopted in controlling alcohol usage among undergraduates/youths. This is particularly important because students who are constantly engaged in risk taking may lose their lives, sustain disfiguring injuries etc. They will also be unable to apply original imaginations or creativity in research undertakings. More so, risk takings that are not for positive outcomes or innovative ventures should not be allowed by government.

Social consciousness and social responsibility are not significant predictors of alcohol craving among undergraduates in Nigeria. This finding implies that undergraduates who are always conscious of themselves and their environment; and those who are busy and socially responsible will less likely engage in alcohol craving.

This research work is not without limitations. The sample size for the study is quite limited. The study also failed to show which dimension of sensation seeking (intensity or novelty) predicts alcohol craving more. Therefore, future researchers interested in this kind of study should investigate this while also employing a larger sample of participants; possibly across ethnic groups and cultures. The use of large sample size, drawn from across cultures and

wide geographical spread may enable researchers to make comparisons wherever necessary amongst undergraduates.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The present study has indicated that sensation seeking is a strong factor in predicting people's alcohol craving ability. Since alcohol can be regarded as a major sustaining factor of all forms of sensation seeking among undergraduates therefore, this empirical study advocates that strict measures be adopted in controlling alcohol usage among undergraduates/youths. Similarly, it is pertinent that programmes that will always keep undergraduates busy, responsible and conscious of their environment are introduced in their curricular to wade them off engagements and craving for alcohol.

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