

Problematic Drinking Habits and Depressive Symptoms in College Students: A Study Through the Lens of Text Message Analysis

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A plethora of research suggests that college students not only are more likely to be depressed than the general population, but also more likely to engage in alcohol use, potentially as a coping mechanism. Previous research also suggests that the way individuals talk reflects their behavior, and vice versa. However, very little research has been conducted on how depression and alcohol use affect college students' texting behaviors, which may serve as a lens into these detrimental experiences. The current study examined how depressive symptoms may be associated with isolation and, in turn, increased drinking habits. A sample of college students (N = 262) completed a survey and allowed researchers access to a two-week window of personal sent and received SMS text messages. Results indicated that while depression and alcohol use were associated, digital isolation is not a significant factor in this relationship. However, they did reveal potentially meaningful connections in gender and affiliation in Greek life (boys and Greek life members were more likely to engage in drinking and talk about drinking, and Greek members were more likely to have larger texting networks and higher engagement). These results indicate potential future research directions in the effect of Greek life on depression, drinking, and texting behavior.