

# Study examines ties between alcohol and PTSD

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Alcohol abuse occurs in 52% of men and 28% of women with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Comorbid alcoholism and PTSD leads more frequently to low income, unemployment, and overall social dysfunction than either condition on its own, in part due to the clinical challenges their simultaneous treatment poses. Researchers at North Dakota State University set out to examine relationships between the factors contributing to these challenges. Their findings are available in the *Journal of Dual Diagnosis* from Routledge, a Member of Taylor & Francis Group.

A sample of 313 college-aged participants completed The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), The Multidimensional Experiential Avoidance Questionnaire (MEAQ), The PTSD Checklist Plus–Civilian version (PCL-C), and The Drinking Motives Questionnaire. Results were divided into two groups for analysis, depending on the severity of PTSD symptoms in the respondent. A multi-group path model examined associations between experiential avoidance, drinking motives, [alcohol](#) use, and alcohol problems across these two groups.

Researchers found that respondents with more severe PTSD symptoms showed a higher degree of association between problem drinking and a need to regulate negative affect ("coping motives"). Additionally, associations between negative attitudes toward distress and alcohol-related consequences were stronger among the more severe PTSD sufferers. Thus, for individuals with severe PTSD, practicing the ability to carry out uncomfortable activities may be associated with a decreased likelihood of comorbid alcohol use disorder. The less severe PTSD symptom group was associated significantly with drinking to avoid stressful situations, running counter to the researchers' hypothesis in this area. Overall, these findings point towards the need for PTSD treatment that takes into account the relationship between co-occurring symptoms and varying

degrees of alcohol involvement.

**More information:** "Problematic Alcohol Use, Trauma History, and PTSD Symptom Level: A Path Analysis." Robert D. Dvorak, Ashley M. Arens, Nicholas J. Kuvaas, Thomas J. Williams, Tess M. Kilwein

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