



The Association between Social Phobia Level and Alcohol Dependence among Varying Aged Adults

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Introduction

- Social Phobia and dependence on alcohol are problems that plague people **of all ages and genders**.
- There is a correlation between **depression** (distress intolerance) and use of **alcohol** and cannabis (Buckner & Schmidt, 2007).
- Having **another medical/mental issue** put subjects at higher risk of having a **social anxiety/phobia disorder**, hinting at the fact that having an alcohol issue could exacerbate social anxiety (Kessler, 2002).
- People with **social anxiety/phobia** may be vulnerable **to more frequent drinking** in particular contexts (Buckner & Terlecki, 2016).
- In **adolescents**, the **presence of a psychiatric disorder** was associated with **disordered use of alcohol**, whereas alcohol issues came second (Rhode et al., 1996).

Research Questions

- Is there an association between level of social phobia and alcohol dependence?
- Does the association between one's level of social phobia and alcohol dependence differ based on one's age?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=43,093) were drawn from the **National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions** (NESARC), a nationally representative survey that covered alcohol, drug and psychiatric disorders, risk factors and consequences among adults in the U.S.

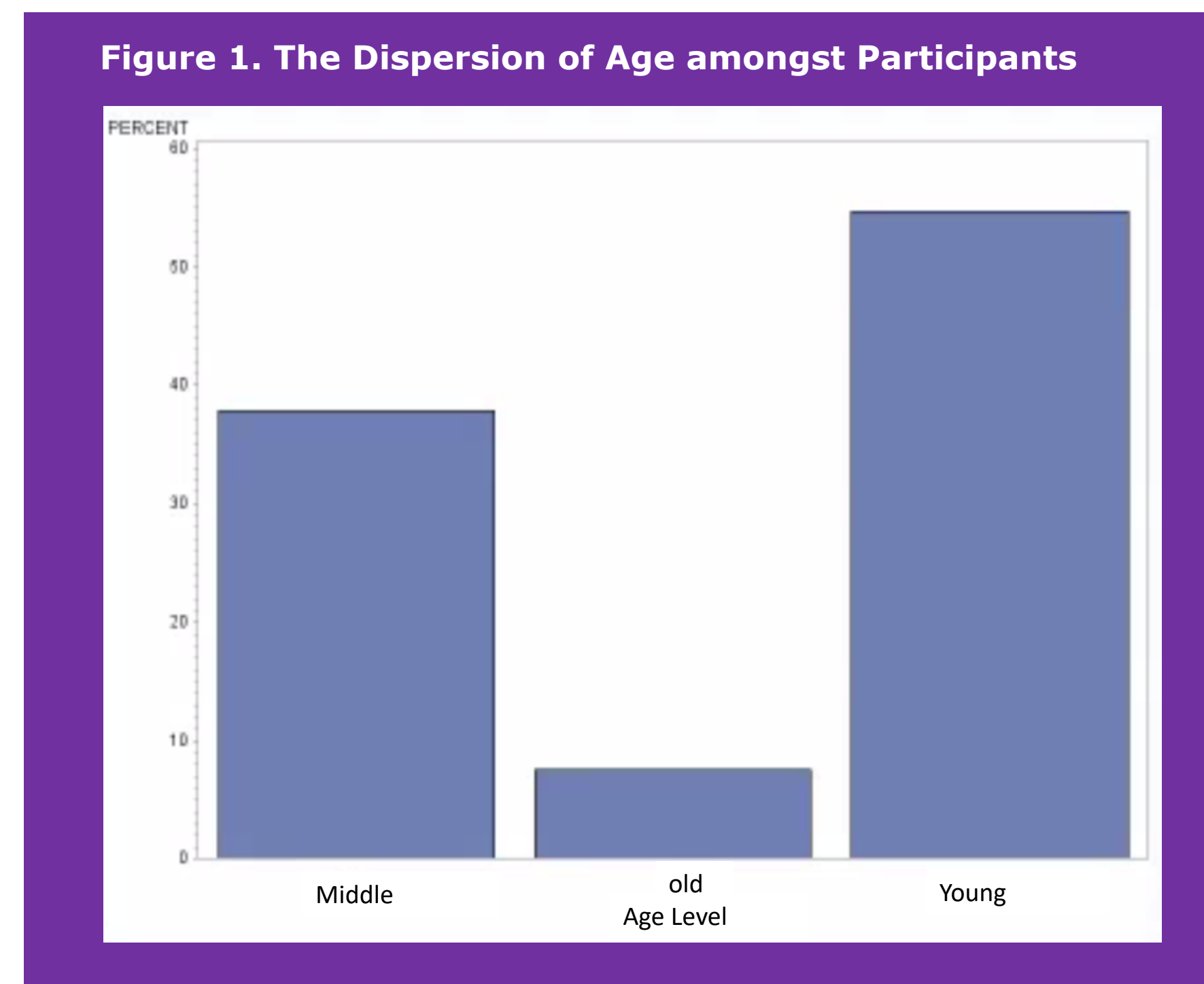
Measures

- **Alcohol dependence** was assessed by combining the questions "number of episodes of alcohol dependence" and "ever have a period when spent a lot of time drinking"? If the participant had one or more episodes of alcohol dependence and said yes to having had a period of heavy drinking, they were coded as having an alcohol dependence.
- Presence **of social phobia** was measured with the question "Number of episodes" where participants felt social anxiety/fear of social situations. This variable was coded dichotomously in terms of low level of social phobia and high level of social phobia (i.e. had more than 20 social phobia episodes over lifetime.)
- The variable **Age** was split into 3 categories: older aged, middle aged, and young aged

Results

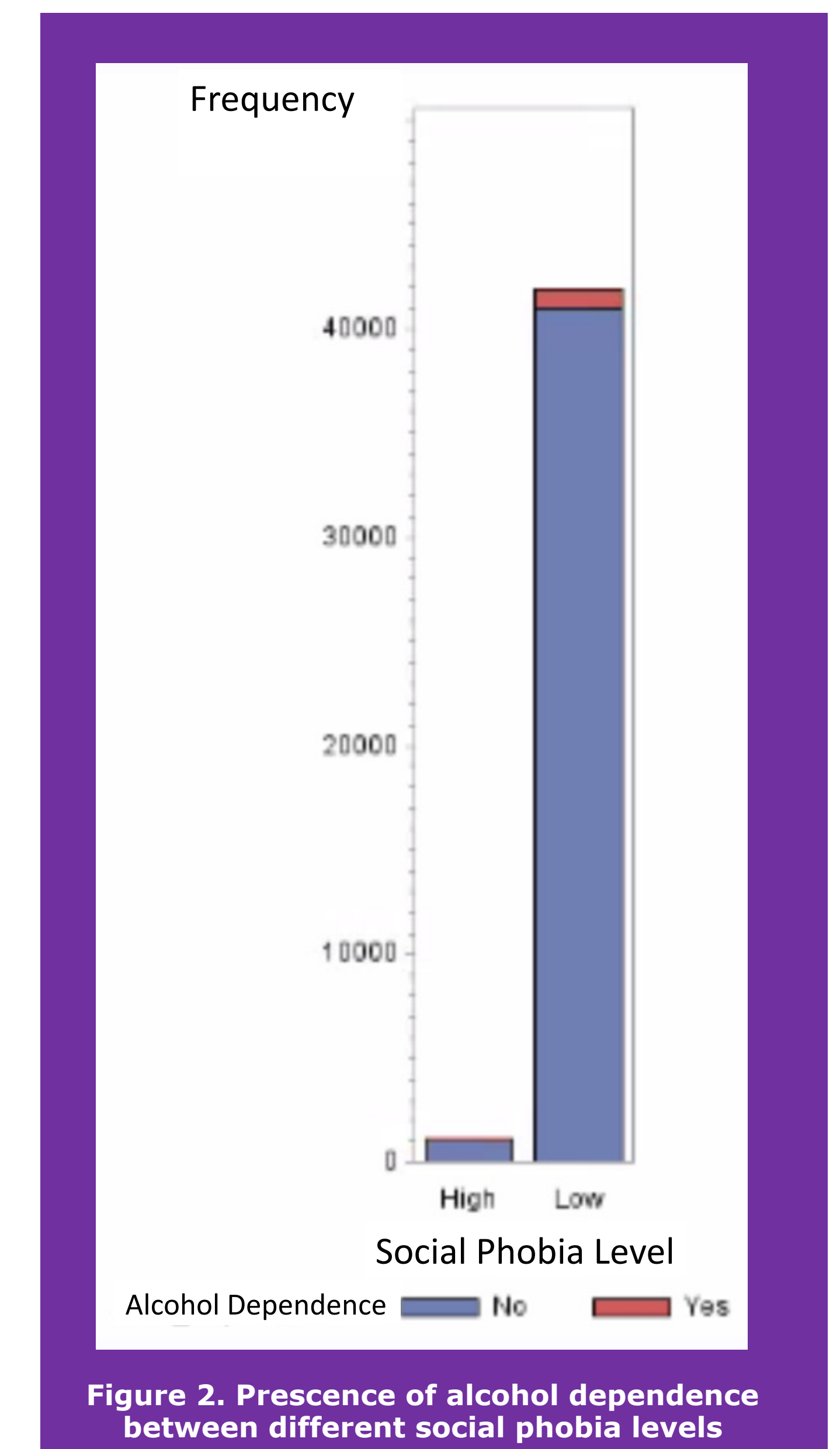
Univariate

- **2.38%** of participants are **alcohol dependent**
- **2.68%** of participants have a **high** level of social phobia
- **7.48%** of participants are **older**, **37.84%** of participants are **middle aged**, and **54.68%** of participants are **young** (figure 1).



Bivariate

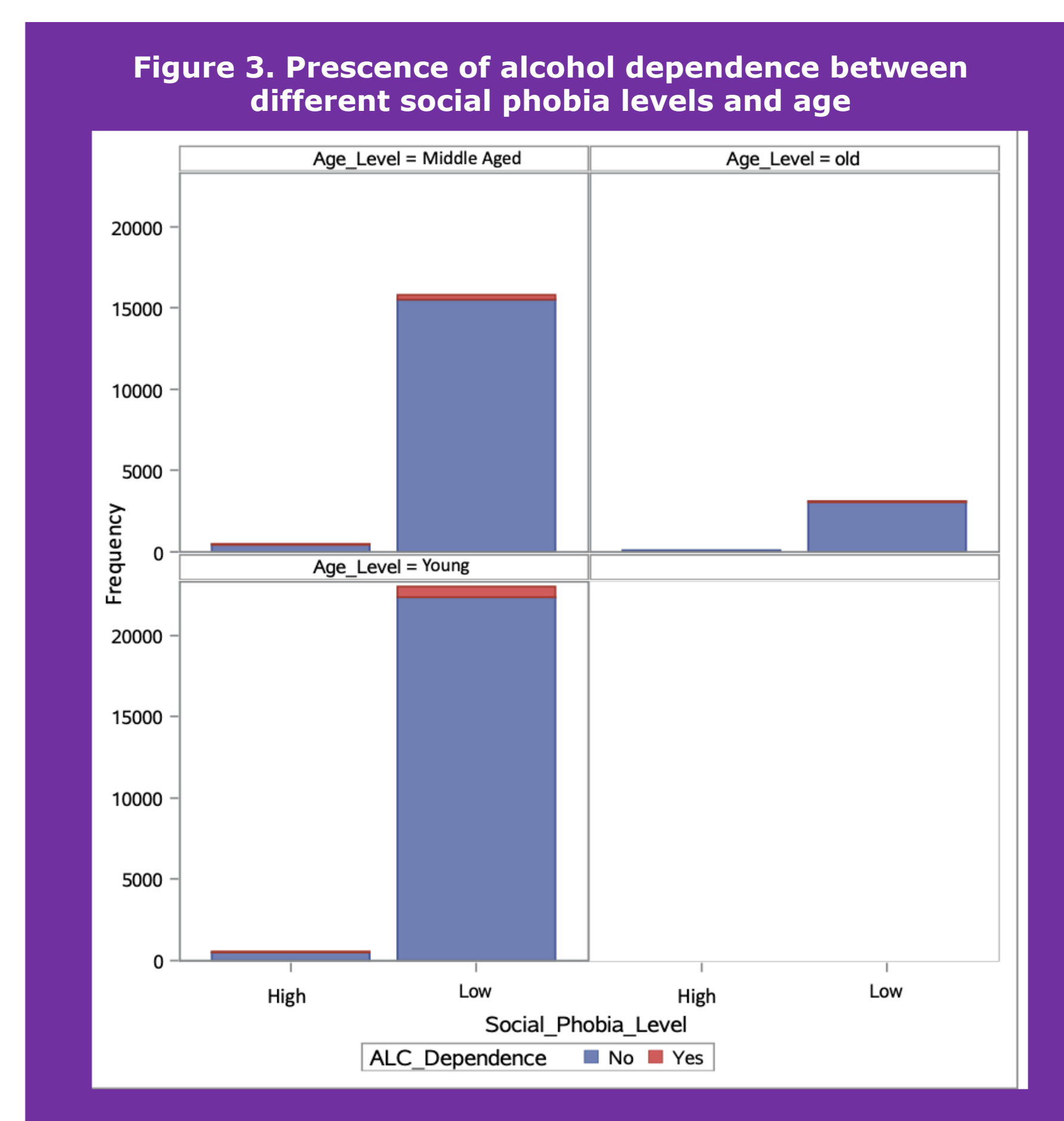
- A chi-square test showed that severity of social phobia **was significantly associated** with if alcohol dependence was present ($p < .0001$).
- When examining the association between Alcohol Dependence (categorical response) and severity of social phobia (category explanatory), a chi-square test of independence revealed that those with a **high social phobia level** were **more likely to experience alcohol dependence** (6.91%) than those with a low social phobia level (2.58%), (Beta=71.99, 1 df, $p < .0001$) (figure 2).



A **bivariate logistic regression** showed that social Phobia Level (O.R. 2.803, CI: 2.186-3.593, $p < .0001$) is **significantly associated** with whether or not someone is alcohol dependent. Those with a **high social phobia** level have an **expected odds** of alcohol dependence that is **2.803 times higher** than those with low levels of social phobia.

Multivariate

- A multivariate logistic regression showed that age does **not appear to moderate** the relationship between social phobia level and presence of alcohol dependence (figure 3).
- After controlling for age, social phobia level is still **significantly associated** with whether or not someone is alcohol dependent (O.R. 2.939, CI: 2.290-3.772, $p < .0001$).



Discussion

- Having a high level of social phobia may lead to a higher risk of being alcohol dependent.
- Age does not affect the association between social phobia level and alcohol dependence.
- This information can be used by clinicians to find ways to ultimately prevent people from falling into alcohol dependence, such as creating targeted alcohol dependency intervention programs for people with high social phobia levels.
- Future research is needed to determine what other factors play into alcohol dependency so the risk factors present, and recovery measures needed can be ultimately understood.
- Future research is needed to determine if/how high social phobia levels serve as risk factors for other mental/physical illnesses and disorders.

References

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