

# The Association Between Parental Alcoholism and Offspring Depression

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## Introduction

- There has been shown to be a strong association between alcoholism and increased symptoms of depression and overall mental health decline (Jacob, 2021).
- Children of parents suffering from alcohol-abuse have also been found to be at an increased risk for developing alcoholism later in life compared to children of non-alcoholic parents (Anda, 2002).
- Research over several decades has exposed an expansive gender gap between men and women regarding depression symptoms and diagnosis.
- According to the Journal of Affective Disorders, it is thought that the nearly two-fold rate of Major Depressive Disorder diagnosis in women compared to men is due to a combination of biological and environmental factors (Kessler, 2003).

## Research Questions

- Is there an association between parental drinking habits and offspring depression?
- Is frequent drinking by parents disproportionately associated with depression in daughters versus sons?
- Does parental depression confound a relationship between parental drinking and offspring depression?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents were drawn from the U.S. National Epidemiological Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC).
- NESARC is representative of the civilian, non-institutionalized adult population in the United States and included oversampling of younger adults (18-24).

### Measures

- Parental drinking habits were assessed using the questions "How often drank to feel intoxicated in the last 12 months?" and "Ever have period when drinking interfered with taking care of home or family?" Being intoxicated every day to 2-3 times per month was coded as "frequent" and less than once a month was coded as "rare."
- Depression in sons/daughters was assessed by the yes or no questions "Any natural sons/daughters ever depressed?"
- Parental depression was assessed as a possible confounder using the question "Felt uncomfortable or upset by low mood or these other experiences." The experiences indicated in the question were feelings of worthlessness, inability to focus, and suicidal thoughts.

## Discussion

- There is a strong association between periods of heavy drinking interfering with parents' ability to take care of their family, and offspring depression.
- Daughters in households where alcohol intake effects the environment are .14 times more likely than sons in the same reported environment to have depression.
- Parental depression status was a stronger predictor of offspring depression status than parental drinking habits.

Anda, R. F., Whitfield, C. L., Felitti, V. J., Chapman, D., Edwards, V. J., Dube, S. R., & Williamson, D. F. (2002). Adverse Childhood Experiences, Alcoholic Parents, and Later Risk of Alcoholism and Depression. *Psychiatric services* (Washington, D.C.), 53(8), 1001-1009. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.53.8.1001>

Jacob, L., Smith, L., Armstrong, N. C., Yakkundi, A., Barnett, Y., Butler, L., McDermott, D. T., Koyanagi, A., Shin, J. I., Meyer, J., Firth, J., Remes, O., López-Sánchez, G. F., & Tully, M. A. (2021). Alcohol use and mental health during COVID-19 lockdown: A cross-sectional study in a sample of UK adults. *Drug Alcohol Depend*, 219, 108488. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108488>

Kessler, R. C. (2003). Epidemiology of women and depression. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 74(1), 5-13. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-0327\(02\)00426-3](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-0327(02)00426-3)

## Results

### Univariate

- 3.2% of responding parents reported that drinking had affected their ability to take care of their families.
- 5% of parents reported that their daughters and sons had experience depression.

### Bivariate

- A Chi-Square analysis showed that there was a significant association ( $p < .001$ ) between parental drinking habits interfering with home life and son depression status.
- A second Chi-Square analysis showed that there was also a significant association ( $P < .05$ ) between parental drinking habits interfering with home life and daughter depression status.
- Children in home environments reportedly impacted by parental drinking were more likely to have depression than children in households that were not impacted by alcohol.
- Logistic regression analysis showed that **both son and daughter depression was significantly associated with parental drinking habits interfering in home and family life.** Sons of parents whose drinking habits were not impactful on home life **were .58 times less likely to have depression.** Daughters of parents whose drinking habits were not impactful on home life were **.44 times less likely to have depression.**

Figure 1: The presence/absence of son depression based on whether parental drinking habits interfered with home life.

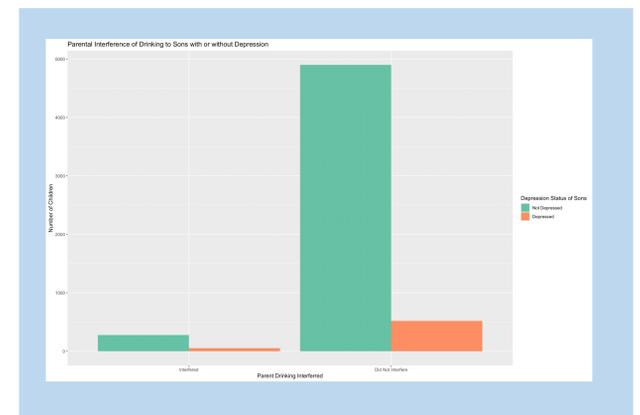


Figure 2. Depression status of sons when accounting for both parental drinking habits interfering in home life and parent depression status

