

Undergraduate Students' Knowledge about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention

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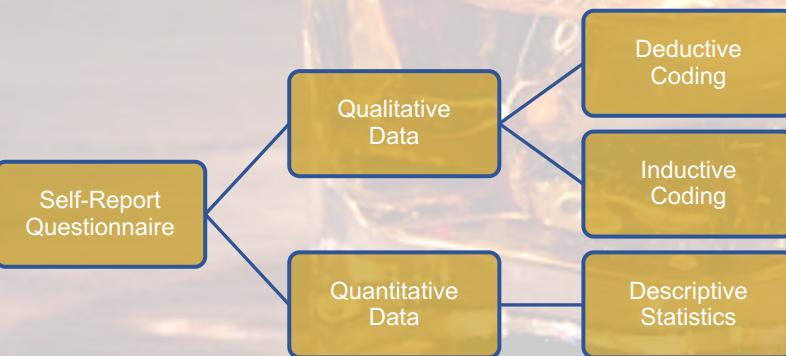
Introduction

Previous research indicates that postsecondary students tend to **lack knowledge about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** and have varying perceptions on what a “**safe amount**” of alcohol is during pregnancy.

As minimal research has explored students’ knowledge of **FASD and FASD prevention initiatives**, it was crucial to investigate undergraduate students’ knowledge pertaining to these topics, given that students represent a potential high-risk vulnerable population for **alcohol-exposed pregnancies**. To date, research on postsecondary student populations has focused primarily on students’ knowledge of the broader impacts of alcohol use (e.g., impaired driving), as opposed to FASD, specifically.

Methods

Laurentian University undergraduate students were recruited to complete an online questionnaire, adapted from previous Canadian surveys developed by the Environics Research Group (2000, 2006) for the Public Health Agency of Canada. **136 undergraduate students** ranging between the ages of **19 to 50 years of age ($M = 24.6$, $SD = 6.57$)** participated in this study from varying programs, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds.



Research Question

What Knowledge do Laurentian University Undergraduate Students' have about FASD and FASD prevention?

Implications

Reduce the prevalence rate of FASD

Increase community-specific FASD prevention initiatives

Decrease the risk of alcohol-exposed pregnancies

Increase awareness of the lifelong impairments of FASD

Educate students on the effects of alcohol use during pregnancy

“A fetus develops a predisposition for alcohol consumption”

“Not sure, but possibly the condition that babies are in when they are born”

“I guess the child is born with a disorder like not being able to talk or physical appearance is not normal”

“The range of abnormalities that can harm an infant's life because the mother over indulged in the consumption of alcohol”

Results

- ❖ 17% of undergraduate students had **not heard of FASD**
- ❖ Participants demonstrated **basic knowledge of the spectrum of FASD**
- ❖ Majority of participants attributed FASD by its cause (*i.e., maternal alcohol consumption*)
- ❖ Students **lacked understanding** of the lifelong impairments of FASD
- ❖ 28% of participants stated that a small amount of **alcohol during pregnancy can usually be considered safe**
- ❖ Unanimous recognition that alcohol during pregnancy can cause **adverse impacts on fetal development**
- ❖ Participants demonstrated confusion regarding what a “**safe**” amount of alcohol is **when planning to become pregnant**
- ❖ 32% of participants stated that there are **resources easily accessible throughout the community** concerning the effects of gestational alcohol consumption

Conclusion

- ❖ Similar to the results of previous studies regarding students’ and professionals’ knowledge of FASD and FASD prevention, undergraduate students in this sample also **lacked knowledge concerning the adverse effects of FASD and prenatal alcohol consumption**
- ❖ Further work is needed to enhance students’ knowledge of FASD to help students make **informed decisions about their drinking behaviours and to reduce the prevalence of FASD** among vulnerable demographics, including students of childbearing age who may be at risk for alcohol-exposed pregnancies
- ❖ Sampling this population provides an opportunity to **increase students’ knowledge of FASD**, while in turn relaying the **importance of abstaining from alcohol consumption during and while planning to become pregnant**