

# Differences in Mental Health and Drinking Behaviors between Couples Concordant for Aggression versus Couples with No Aggression

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## Introduction

- In an alcoholic treatment program for men, couples with more severe problems reported more accurately on high rates of concordant psychological aggression with women admitting to perpetrating more than men reported experiencing (Panuzio et al., 2006).
- In another study in a substance use disorder (SUD) treatment program found that depression is a proximal factor to various forms of aggression, include psychological, from both partners (Chermack, 2008).
- One study found that heavy drinking wives experienced more physical violence while husbands who were the only one to smoke marijuana experienced more physical violence from their wives (Cunradi et al., 2015).
- Hypothesis:** Couples with concordant psychological aggression will have greater struggles with alcohol use, depression, and anxiety compared to couples concordant without psychological aggression.

## Methods

### Participants

- N = 154 participants recruited from MTurk. Ages ranged from 22 to 42, with a mean of 36.43 (SD = 5.5).
- 53.2% of participants were female and 46.8% were male.
- Relationship lengths ranged from 3 months to 161 months, with a mean of 69.48 (SD = 39.7).
- 62.3% Caucasian, 3.3% Native American, 7.1% African American, 22.7% Asian, 0.7% Pacific Islander, 2.6% Multiethnic, & 1.3% Other.

### Procedures

- Participants completed an online study through Mechanical Turk.

### Measures

- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ;** Spitzer, Williams, Kroenke, 1999): participants were asked a series of questions on their symptoms of depression by rating items such as "feeling down, depressed, or hopeless" and "poor appetite or overeating" by if they have experienced in the past two weeks not at all, several days, more than half the days, and nearly every day.
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7;** Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, Lowe B., 2006): participants were asked to rate the frequency of their symptoms of anxiety from the past two weeks in questions asking them if they have "trouble relaxing" and "feeling afraid as if something awful might happen" on a scale of not at all, several days, more than half the days, and nearly everyday.
- Quantity Frequency Measure (QFHDE;** Dimeff et. al, 1999): participants were asked about their frequency of drinking such as "How many times in the past month have you felt drunk?" rated on a scale of 0 to 8 or more times.
- Short Inventory of Problems - Drug and Alcohol (SIP;** Blanchard et al., 2003): participants were asked if they have either had experienced a range of alcohol-related problems within the past 90 days, in their lifetime but not past 90 days, or has never happened to them with items like "My family has been hurt by my drinking or drug problems" and "I have failed what is expected of me because of my drinking or drug use".
- The Drinking Context Scale (DCS;** O'Hare, 1997): items were rated from 1 - extremely low chance to 5 - extremely high chance on items such as "I drink excessively when I'm angry with myself or someone else".
- The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2;** Straus et al., 1996): items on various conflicts such as "I insulted or swore at my partner" and a followup of "my partner did this to me" were ranked from this has never happened, not in the past year, but this has happened before, once in the past year up to more than twenty times in the past year.

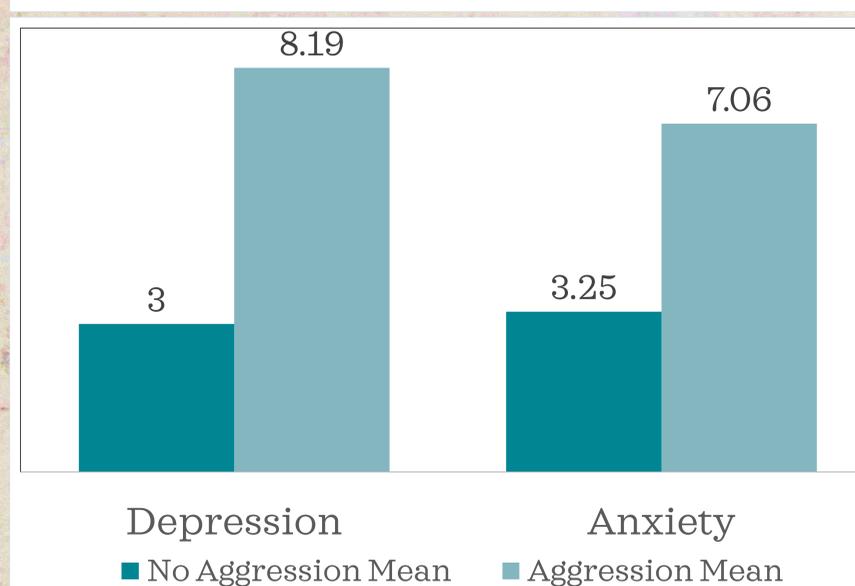
## Results

Table 1

Variable	Coefficient	Test Statistic	P-value
Anxiety	3.55	2.87	0.0049
Depression	4.42	3.31	0.0012
Heavy Drinking	1.16	5.51	0.0189
Alcohol-related consequences	0.98	6.96	0.0083
Drinking to Cope	0.47	1.69	0.0950
Drinking Together	-0.06	-0.23	0.8170



Table 2



## Discussion

- Couples with concordant psychological aggression did display significantly higher rates of anxiety, depression, heavy drinking, and alcohol-related consequences. However, concordance of aggression was unrelated to drinking to cope with negative affect and drinking together.

### Limitations

- This study was not from a dyadic dataset, so we were not able to compare responses within a couple. It may be possible that like Panuzio et al. (2006) found, the couples with heavier drinking were more willing to admit to committing and experiencing more aggressions.
- Very few participants (<15) reported only one person being psychological aggressive so we could not evaluate this in this study.

### Future Directions:

- More research into mental health's impact in couples who often have conflicts would be very beneficial by determining how much of a factor these variables are and if so, if treatment of anxiety and depression could lead to better relationship outcomes.

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