

FOODSERVICE EMPLOYMENT AND ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONG HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

One of the largest employers in the United States, the foodservice industry has a history of employee alcohol abuse; a fact that must be taken into consideration when preparing hospitality students for careers in this industry. The social implications of alcohol abuse, combined with associated legal, health, workplace, and overall well-being issues, warrant further investigation on behalf of all parties involved. The purpose of this study was to investigate the alcohol use of hospitality students working in foodservice, as well as their experience with abuse prevention measures at work and college. Results and implications are discussed.

Keywords: alcohol abuse, hospitality student, foodservice

INTRODUCTION

Employing a projected 13.5 million workers in 2014, the foodservice industry in the United States is one of the largest private-sector employers in the nation (National Restaurant Association, 2014). Given the size and scope of this industry, the prevalence of alcohol abuse among its employees makes this a concern at the individual, organizational, and societal levels (Frone, 2003; Larsen, 1994; Larsen, Eyerman, Foster, & Gfroerer, 2007; Pizam, 2010; Zhu, 2008). In fact, hospitality employees were found in one recent study as the most at-risk sector after construction workers for alcohol related problems (Murray, 2009), and the foodservice industry was found to be the third most at risk for heavy alcohol use after mining and construction workers among working adults aged 18-64 who were employed full-time (Bush & Lipari, 2015). Heavy drinking is common among the foodservice industry's employees. Research has shown that one in ten foodservice employees engages in heavy alcohol consumption, defined by the authoring agency. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (2013) category of 'at-risk' or 'heavy drinkers,' and at risk of developing alcoholism and other mental and physical problems is defined as drinking four drinks on any day or 14 drinks per week for men, and three drinks on any day or seven drinks per week for women (NIAAA, 2013).

In addition to social implications of alcohol abuse by employees or students, there are also serious legal implications which may apply to the employer or college. Further, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) advises that "stopping substance abuse before it begins can increase a person's chances of living a longer, healthier, and more productive life" (SAMHSA, 2012, para 3). Consequently, the various health issues and overall well-being associated with excessive alcohol consumption warrants further investigation on behalf of foodservice industry employees, hospitality students, foodservice industry patrons, and society as a whole (Borchgrevink, Sciarini, & Borchgrevink, 2010). Once equipped with a more detailed understanding of this area, academia and industry professionals may better approach the issue and lower potential risks for all parties involved. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to

investigate the alcohol use experiences of hospitality students working in the foodservice industry, and their familiarity with alcohol abuse prevention measures both at work and at college. In order to understand these phenomena, first the impact of alcohol abuse on the workplace will be examined, then the impact of alcohol abuse on the foodservice industry specifically will be explored. After gaining an understanding of these issues, alcohol abuse among college students in general and then hospitality students specifically will be evaluated. Finally, a review of the alcohol abuse prevention measures literature will be conducted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Impact of Alcohol Abuse on the Workplace

Aside from the health and mental consequences of alcohol abuse at the individual level, this behavior has been linked to several negative impacts in the workplace (United States Department of Labor, 2007). Workplace impacts include, but are not limited to, decreased performance, and increased work-related accidents and injuries, healthcare costs, absenteeism, turnover, and undesirable behaviors (i.e. violence, theft, etc.) (Frone, 2003; Larsen, Eyerman, Foster, & Gfroerer, 2007; SAMHSA, 2009; Zhu, 2008).

Legal liabilities from condoning, or even encouraging, alcohol abuse in the workplace may have serious consequences. These consequences include criminal penalties for providing alcohol to underage persons (F.S. §562.11, §562.111), liabilities for injuries or damages to third parties resulting from acts of an intoxicated employee (Adams, 1986; Cannizaro v. Marinyak, 2014; Childers v. Shasta, 1987; F.S. §768.125; Sandner, 2002; Verdeur v. King Hospitality, 1994), injuries suffered by an intoxicated employee (Yoshinaga, 1992), and injuries suffered by a co-employee due to actions of an intoxicated employee (Patton & Campbell, 2003). The business may be liable for an employee's injuries if workers' compensation benefits are denied for an injury or death caused by an employee's intoxication (Wheeler, 2006; McCarty v. Workmen's Comp. Appeals Bd., 1974) and the employer is required to provide rehabilitative treatment for an alcoholic employee (Campbell, 2010; Johnson, 2007). The employer may even be liable for injuries to third parties caused by an employee driving home in a fatigued condition if the employer knew that the employee was consuming alcohol at work (D. Houston, Inc. v. Love, 2002; Ingham, 2010) or if the employer sponsors a social event at which the alcoholic employee is furnished alcohol and subsequently injures a third party (Chastain v. Litton Systems, Inc., 1982). The employer will be liable for injuries to third parties if the employer entrusted a motor vehicle to an employee who was known, or should have been known if properly supervised, to be intoxicated while driving (Parker v. Fox Vacuum, Inc., 1987; Swicegood v. Cooper, 1995).

Alcohol Abuse in the Foodservice Industry

Many studies have focused on foodservice employees exhibiting high levels of alcohol use, alcohol abuse and alcohol dependency (Corsun & Young, 1998; Frone, 2003; Larson et al., 2007; Moore, Ames, Duke, & Cunradi, 2012; Moore, Cunradi, Duke, & Ames; 2009; Zhu, 2008).

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These high levels of employee alcohol consumption in the foodservice industry have been attributed to several factors, including a relatively young labor pool, a work schedule including late-night shifts, low management surveillance, a work culture with norms of 'having an end-of-shift drink' or 'going out after work', and availability of alcohol in the workplace (Kjaerheim, Mykletun, Aasland, Haldorsen, & Anderson, 1995; Kjaerheim, Mykletun, & Haldorsen, 1996; Moore et al., 2012; Murray, 2009; Spector, 2001; Zhu, 2008; Zhu, Tews, Stafford, & George, 2011).

It has been suggested that alcohol abuse may be a learned behavior for employees in the foodservice industry, as the introduction to a work environment where co-workers engage in such behavior may increase an individual's likelihood to do so, as well (Kjaerheim et al., 1995; Kjaerheim et al., 1996). While it may be true of any industry that an individual who is introduced to an environment in which there is a heavy drinking culture may increase drinking behavior, many previous studies support the proposition that the foodservice workplace influences employees to participate in heavy alcohol use (Larsen, 1994; Leigh & Jiang, 1993; Mandell, Eaton, Anthony, & Garrison, 1992; Zhang et al., 1999; Zhiwei & Snizek, 2003). In context, working in the foodservice industry may encourage high levels of alcohol use and abuse among hospitality management students as this is the field in which they are employed, interning, or seeking employment. This concept was central to the development of the second research question that drove this study (presented below).

Alcohol Abuse among College Students

SAMHSA (2013) reports that young adults (ages 18-22) who were enrolled full-time in college were more likely than those not enrolled full-time in college to participate in current alcohol use (60.3%), binge alcohol use (40.1%), or heavy alcohol use (14.4%), as opposed to 51.9%, 35.0%, and 10.7%, respectively. This is indicative of a pattern of higher use among full-time college students that has remained consistent since 2002.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) estimates that four out of five college students in the United States drink alcohol, approximately half of which engage in binge drinking (2013). The importance of addressing heavy episodic drinking among young adult populations has been well documented, as such behavior is accompanied by numerous health and safety issues (Anderson & Mathieu, 1996; Barth, Graves, & Hopper, 1994; Hingson et al., 2002; NIAAA, 2007; Perkins, 1992; Presley, Meilman, & Cashin, 1996). Jayson (2011) suggests that college students' continued alcohol abuse despite knowledge of the negative effects indicates a need for continued exploration of student alcohol consumption in general.

With regards to hospitality students in particular, previous studies on alcohol use and abuse have yielded conflicting results. Studies have found evidence that hospitality students display higher levels of alcohol consumption than their non-hospitality counterparts (Borchgrevink, Sciarini, & Borchgrevink, 2010; Larsen, 1994). Specifically, previous literature has found evidence of higher levels of alcohol consumption among hospitality students as compared with students from other majors, though the results were inconclusive (Borchgrevink, Sciarini, & Borchgrevink, 2010). Based on AUDIT scores, it was found that hospitality majors were at a statistically significantly moderately higher risk for heavy alcohol consumption than were the students from other majors. Additionally, one particular study found that hospitality students had a higher rate of injuries because of drinking behavior and they reported greater incidents in which they consumed six or more drinks in a single sitting. They also reported being unable to stop drinking once they had

started drinking (Borchgrevink, Sciarini, & Borchgrevink, 2010). The two samples in this study were comprised of hospitality students and students from all other majors, and the hospitality students reported higher drinking rates on all of the AUDIT measurement items with the exception of 'failing to do what was expected and needed' (Borchgrevink, Sciarini, & Borchgrevink, 2010).

However, other studies have revealed evidence that no such significant difference exists between the two groups (Larsen & Jorgensen, 2003; Kitterlin, Tanner, & Agrusa, 2012), or that students do not perceive employee alcohol abuse in the workplace as an important workplace issue (Weaver, Choi, & Kaufman, 1997). These conflicting results on such an important topic for such a vulnerable population demonstrate a need for further investigation in this area.

Alcohol abuse statistics among college students combined with those among foodservice workers was used to develop the first research question that drove this study (presented below).

Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policies

Examining alcohol awareness programs has been a concern for hospitality educators since the first issue of *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education* (originally *Hospitality & Tourism Educator*). Alcohol awareness programs were sweeping the U.S. and collegiate educators were responding by developing responsible hospitality curricula for front-line staff and management (Peters, 1988). The educators' goals were to incorporate the importance of hospitality in their establishment, to strengthen human resource skills for carrying out the new legal guidelines, and to find opportunities for boosting profitability in spite of these new regulations. The focus was on the hospitality consumer, not the employee.

In the workplace, the efficacy of employee prevention or assistance programs has remained relatively untested in the foodservice industry (Zhu, 2008) —the focus has been primarily on merchant and consumer policy enforcement (Giesbrecht, Bosma, Juras, & Quadri, 2014). In the workplace in general, such programs have been found to aid in discouraging problem behaviors (Ames, Grube, & Moore, 2000; Bennett & Lehman, 1998; Bennett, Lehman, & Reynolds, 2000; Roman & Blum, 2002). Previous research has revealed that employee awareness programs assist employees with alcohol abuse problems by raising awareness among individuals in the organization of the risk of alcohol abuse behaviors (Roman & Blum, 1996; Roman & Blum, 2002; Sonnenstuhl, 1996). In short, there is a great deal of evidence to support the effectiveness of workplace prevention and assistance programs. An understanding of employed hospitality students' awareness of extant prevention policies was pivotal to the development of the third research question that drove this study (presented below).

The impact of alcohol abuse in the workplace as a whole, and the foodservice industry more specifically, was examined in order to better understand these issues. Additional information on alcohol abuse habits among college students and hospitality students was gathered to determine whether any concrete information existed comparing drinking behavior of hospitality majors to other majors. Finally, a look into alcohol abuse prevention policies was explored to see what information existed. All of this information led to the formation of three research questions.

Research Questions

A variety of undesirable behaviors are attributed to alcohol abuse, both in the workplace and in society. The literature provides evidence that foodservice industry employees engage in higher levels of alcohol

use than employees in other industries. A second group found to engage in higher levels of alcohol use and abuse is college and university students. Further, Zhu (2008) found that a consistent risk factor for alcohol abuse among foodservice employees was holding multiple jobs. For many, being a full-time student is considered a job; this would reasonably place the working full-time student in this "holding multiple jobs" category. Thus, full-time students who are working may be at a greater risk of developing alcohol abuse behaviors. This provokes the inquiries, "What are the drinking behaviors of hospitality students working in foodservice?" and "What is being done to mitigate this two-fold risk of developing alcohol abuse behaviors?" Based on a review of the related literature, and the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formed:

1. What are the alcohol use behaviors of hospitality management students who are working in the foodservice industry?
2. How did entering the foodservice industry affect students' alcohol use patterns?
3. What experience do hospitality students who are also foodservice employees have with alcohol abuse prevention policies, both in the foodservice workplace and at college?

METHODS

Sample

A sample of 30 participants was targeted by emailing a call for participants to all undergraduate students enrolled full-time in a hospitality and tourism management program in a large urban area in the southeastern United States; 30 participants were targeted because this is a sample size generally agreed upon to be sufficient for qualitative studies of this nature (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007). Participants were recruited using university email listservs. The requirements for this study were: (1) a person must be 21 years of age or older, (2) currently employed in the foodservice industry for at least three months, and (3) currently enrolled full-time as a hospitality management student. A time period of three months for the comparison portion was chosen with the thinking that a three-month time period is similar to the general 90-day probationary employment period set forth by both the Workplace Relations Act of 1996 and the Employment Relations Amendment Bill that many establishments will use to determine rather or not to extend continued employment. It stands to reason that if establishments can make an evaluation of work performance behavior over 90 days, that this study can make reasonable deductions regarding participant behavior. This approach was taken in previous studies of foodservice industry employees (Kitterlin, 2010; Stancliffe, 2001).

The first 30 qualified respondents were allowed to participate; in the event that a respondent did not qualify for participation, or opted out of the interview prior to completion, they were not included in the sample. After completing these first 30 interviews, the researchers felt confident that data collection had reached theoretical saturation (Morse, 2004). Theoretical saturation is achieved in qualitative studies when no new data concepts emerge, and therefore, no further data is needed. After the first 25 interviews, the researchers noticed informational repetition as no new concepts were emerging from the data. This redundancy was determined by checking the working list of codes and seeing that no new codes were being created. However, the last five interviews were conducted to ensure saturation was being achieved. Similar studies across several disciplines have employed this technique and achieved saturation with as many or fewer respondents (Berdychevsky, Poria, & Uriely, 2013; Drake, 2013; Leo, 2013; Mustafa, Wood, Butler, & Elwyn, 2014; Notley, Holland, Maskrey, Nagar, & Kouimtsidis, 2014).

Data Collection

Responses were collected through the use of 60 minute in-depth interviews prompted by specified open-response questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). A single research assistant who was trained in qualitative in-depth interviews conducted the interviews with all participants. The interviewer conducted these interviews at times that were convenient for the participants in a private office at a university. The interviewer had no influence over the interviewees and none of the students who participated in the study were students of the professors who were involved in the study.

Interview question development was driven by the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a review of the associated literature. IRB approval was obtained, and participation was voluntary and confidential. Prior to the launch of this study, a pilot test was conducted by interviewing five hospitality and tourism management students currently enrolled in the foodservice industry. Afterwards, each interview question was discussed as to how well the participant was able to understand the question, how comfortable the participant felt answering the questions honestly, and what compensation a participant would expect for participating in the study.

Incentives of \$50 were offered for participation. This incentive amount was deemed suitable based on incentives provided in similar studies. In their analysis of research studies from across the U.S. in which money was offered to research participants, Grady, Dickert, Jawetz, Gensler, and Emanuel (2005) found only 16.5 percent of studies offered less than \$50. It was determined that \$50 was appropriate, and that this amount would not alter the participant's judgment or ability to understand any risks involved in participation. The \$50 participant compensation offered in this study is the same compensation amount offered in other studies of substance use behavior among different populations (Korcha, Polcin, Evans, Bond, & Galloway, 2014; Moll & Kitterlin, 2013; Schafer et al., 2010).

Prior to beginning the final interviews, participants completed a consent form. The participants were then asked to describe their experiences with alcohol use as an undergraduate hospitality management student both before and after entering the foodservice industry (i.e. age of initiation, context of initiation, current use patterns, perception of attitudes among fellow foodservice workers regarding alcohol use, and experiences with use and prevention efforts/policies). Sample questions included: (1) Describe the first time you used alcohol; (2) What type of efforts or messages have you seen at work with regards to alcohol use?

Analysis

Each interview was audio-recorded then transcribed verbatim, and each member of the research team, including the interviewer, independently read, analyzed and coded the data using inductive thematic analysis; reliability was strengthened by these coding procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Data analysis occurred in several steps. First, all research team members read the entirety of the interview transcripts to gain a better understanding of the data. Next, codes that described the content or meaning of the text were used to segment it. Then the researchers compared their independently derived codes and came to an agreement on broad themes into which each of the codes could be categorized. The researchers agreed on and identified common and overlapping themes that were then combined into final themes; 100 percent agreement had to be achieved by the research team in order for a theme to be finalized. Codes and themes are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes and Codes

Theme #	Theme	Code Letter	Related Codes
1	At-Risk Drinking Behavior	A	Alcohol use in past 30 days
		E	Daily alcohol use
		F	Daily use of two or more drinks (at risk)
2	Employment Effect	B	Alcohol use increase after employment
		G	Alcohol use same after employment
		C	Alcohol use cited due to work issue
		Q	Work stress/guests
		I	Late work hours
		O	Drink to relax after work
		H	Drink with tip money/cash
		K	Alcohol use with co-workers
3	Absent Prevention Awareness	N	Alcohol provided by co-worker/supervisor/guest
		L	Not aware of work policy
		M	Not aware of college policy
		J	Not aware of policy enforcement
		P	Policy training
		D	Collateral materials (poster/flyer)

Within-design consistency, conceptual consistency, and consistency of inferences with each other within the study were used to uphold interpretive rigor (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002). Internal validity was strengthened by establishing a clear research framework, and by pattern matching through the use of research questions that were developed from the underpinning literature and defining constructs of the study. Construct validity was strengthened via feedback from the pilot test that was incorporated. External validity and generalizability was strengthened through the use of semi-structured interview during the data collection process. Structured interview questions defined in the protocol and the selection criteria for participation and the sampling method were delineated prior to the study. Additionally, multiple participants were interviewed for this study.

Reliability was strengthened in three ways. First, protocol was developed prior to entry in the field, which ensured that the questionnaire items and interview questions/measures were consistently presented to all participants. Next, inter-rater reliability and a rigorous coding procedure were established through the comparison of initial coding results from the first interview, as each researcher coded the initial findings separately and compared responses for agreement. Finally, multiple researchers evaluated the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts to further ensure inter-rater reliability, agreement, and consistency (Crawford, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sample consisted of nine males and twenty-one females, ages 21-23 (mean = 21.4 years of age), from a variety of ethnicities: seven African American, four Asian, nine Hispanic, and ten White/Caucasian. A comparison of this sample's demographic mix was found to be representative of the demographic mix of college students enrolled in this university program by comparing it to the mix of total student enrollment in the program reported by the university. All students were enrolled full-time in a hospitality management undergraduate program, and all were currently working in the foodservice industry. Positions included: baker, bartender, cashier, chef, food-runner, hostess, line cook, server, and restaurant manager. Table 2 provides a profile of participants.

The participants in this study indicated that heavy alcohol use was normal practice among full-time undergraduate students working in the foodservice industry. Evidence supporting these claims was

apparent in three major themes: (1) at-risk drinking behavior; (2) employment effect; and (3) absent prevention awareness. Representative accounts of employees are provided below. It should be noted that all participants reported having tried alcohol at least once prior to entering college and prior to entering the foodservice industry; no assumptions can be made that either college or the foodservice industry caused participants' initiation to alcohol.

Theme 1: At-risk Drinking Behavior

All participants can be categorized as current alcohol users according to SAMHSA, as they all had used alcohol within the past 30 days. More than half of the participants (17) reported daily alcohol intake of two or more drinks per day, which classifies them as 'at-risk' or 'heavy drinkers' according to the NIAAA, as that would exceed the 14 drink per week threshold, while another eight reported five drinking occasions per week in which they consumed two or more drinks per occasion, which brings them close to being 'at-risk' for men and 'at-risk' for women. This places the majority of participants in the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (2013) category of 'at-risk' or 'heavy drinkers,' and at risk of developing alcoholism and other mental and physical problems; the criteria for 'at-risk' drinking being four drinks on any day or 14 drinks per week for men, and three drinks on any day or seven drinks per week for women (NIAAA, 2013). This prevalence of heavy alcohol use is consistent with the many previous studies that found foodservice employees to exhibit higher levels of alcohol use, alcohol abuse and alcohol dependency (Frone, 2003; Larson, et al., 2007; Moore, Ames, Duke, & Cunradi, 2012; Moore, Cunradi, Duke, & Ames; 2009; Rowley & Purcell, 2001; Zhu, 2008). Further, this alcohol usage rate greatly exceeds estimates from SAMHSA (2013) on rates of heavy alcohol use among U.S. college students overall (estimated at 14.4%).

Theme 2: Employment Effect

The vast majority (27) of participants reported that their alcohol use had increased after entering the foodservice industry; the remaining three participants indicated that their alcohol use had remained the same. This increase, however, could not be provided a standard definition, as participants reported a range of drinking behaviors both before and after entering the industry. For example, one participant reported an increase from zero drinks per week to seven drinks per week, while another reported an increase from seven drinks per week to twenty drinks per week. More than half of these respondents cited 'work issues' as a cause for their increased drinking behavior, such as

Table 2: Participant Profile

Participant #	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Employment Position	Employment Establishment	Employment Status
1	Female	21	Hispanic	Bartender	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
2	Female	21	White/Caucasian	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
3	Female	21	African American	Hostess	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
4	Male	21	White/Caucasian	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
5	Male	22	Hispanic	Bartender	Bar/Lounge	Part-time
6	Female	21	White/Caucasian	Baker	Resort Property F&B Outlet	Part-time
7	Female	22	African American	Line cook	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
8	Female	21	White/Caucasian	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
9	Male	21	Hispanic	Cook	Full-service Restaurant	Full-time
10	Female	21	Asian	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
11	Male	22	African American	Food runner	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
12	Female	21	Hispanic	Bartender	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
13	Female	23	Hispanic	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
14	Female	22	White/Caucasian	Bartender	Bar/Lounge	Part-time
15	Female	21	African American	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
16	Male	21	White/Caucasian	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
17	Female	21	Asian	Hostess	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
18	Female	22	White/Caucasian	Line cook	Resort Property F&B Outlet	Part-time
19	Female	21	Asian	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
20	Female	21	African American	Hostess / Cashier	Resort Property F&B Outlet	Part-time
21	Male	23	White/Caucasian	Chef	Full-service Restaurant	Full-time
22	Female	22	White/Caucasian	Bartender	Full-service Restaurant	Full-time
23	Male	23	Hispanic	Restaurant manager	Full-service Restaurant	Full-time
24	Male	21	White/Caucasian	Line cook	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
25	Female	21	African American	Cashier	Resort Property F&B Outlet	Part-time
26	Female	21	Asian	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
27	Male	21	Hispanic	Bartender	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
28	Female	22	Hispanic	Bartender	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
29	Female	21	Hispanic	Hostess	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time
30	Female	21	African American	Server	Full-service Restaurant	Part-time

stress, late hours, availability of cash on hand, and the nature of the work itself:

When you work on your feet all day you get off and you just want to relax. So, you can either go to sleep, or you can go out and have a drink. Or you can even just go home and instead of going to sleep you can have a drink to relax – have a nice drink before bed (Male, 21, Server).

In the service industry you're basically all in the same situation and you work with the same people every day, and it's stressful, so afterwards you all want to drink, and you have money because you're paid the day of because you get tips. So it's very often that we all party together (Female, 21, Hostess).

This finding adds to the conflicting body of knowledge on hospitality student drinking behaviors, especially the findings of a recent study that saw no difference in the alcohol use behaviors of hospitality students with or without foodservice industry work experience (Kitterlin, Tanner, & Agrusa, 2012). Separately, it should be noted that this also supports previous reports that having cash-on-hand, or tips, contributes to foodservice employee alcohol use (Zhu, 2008; Zhu, Tews, Stafford, & George, 2011).

Another cause cited by many participants was the aspect of serving the public; participants felt that providing customer service and handling guest issues and conflicts provided a level of stress that prompted them to self-soothe both during and after their work shifts

with alcohol use:

If it's a hard night and I have terrible customers I'll go to the bar during my shift and get a drink from the bartender (Male, 21, Server).

When you work with people you just have to have a drink to relax (Male, 22, Food runner).

Some participants actually felt encouraged to drink at work, be it from co-workers, management, or vendors/suppliers:

Being in the industry and exposed to it – [there is] more drinking in this industry than in other industries. You have meetings with suppliers and vendors, and them wanting you to try samples. All the wine and liquor tastings at work (Male, 23, Restaurant manager).

These findings would agree with the tenants of availability theory; in context, there is an assumption that the use of alcohol will increase if alcohol is more available, and the easier a substance is to acquire, the more it will be consumed among a given population (Saunders & Aasland, 1987). This phenomenon was observed by Chaloupka and Wechsler (2004) when student binge drinking significantly increased as did the number of alcohol purchase outlets near campus. In an industry like foodservice, where alcohol is abundantly present, it stands to reason that availability theory can explain some of this abusive alcohol behavior.

Workplace norms may also play a role in the explanation of this workplace drinking behavior. Upon becoming a member of an

organization, the employee begins a formal and informal socialization process during which they identify what constitutes acceptable behavior in the workplace (Victor & Cullen, 1987), and develops an understanding of their cohorts' collective attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs deemed acceptable; these are the workplace 'norms'. Sample responses that support this logic are as follows:

I believe it increased a lot because everybody after the shifts is like "hey let's go to a bar and get drunk" (Female, 22, Server).

Because after work everyone gets together and has beers – it's just normal to drink after work (Male, 21, Cook).

Evidence shows that strong workplace norms play a large role in influencing or deterring certain workplace behaviors (Hammer, Saksvik, Nytro, Torvatn & Bayazit, 2004). In previous studies, workplace norms have been found to be a strong predictor of workplace alcohol use (Ames & Grube, 1999; Bacharach, Bamberger & Sonnenstuhl, 2002; Stubbs, 2001). Stubbs (2001), for example, found that drinking while working was considered normal for bartenders by staff, management, and clientele. If foodservice industry employees see at-work alcohol use as normal, they may be more inclined to engage in such.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory posits that behavior is influenced by a combination of environmental (social) and psychological (cognitive) factors. In context, if an individual enters into a work or social circle where heavy alcohol use is accepted, rewarded, and/or encouraged, they will be more likely to adopt this behavior; thus, the new foodservice employee 'learns' alcohol abuse and perceives it as normal.

This second theme is consistent with the research findings on hospitality student alcohol perceptions over the years. Lundberg (1994) identified that undergraduate hospitality students perceived drinking alcohol after work as acceptable behavior.

Theme 3: Absent Prevention Awareness

The final theme that emerged was that participants had little or no knowledge of any alcohol abuse prevention policies or messages at either college or in their places of employment in the foodservice industry. Two participants reported having been cautioned against alcohol use and abuse upon moving into their dormitories, and two participants reported having seen flyers handed out in the student center and posters located within the student health service center; the remaining twenty-six participants reported no communication from their college about alcohol use or abuse.

Only three of the thirty participants reported having seen any evidence of such at work, which included: (1) being told not to drink at work during orientation; or (2) seeing a poster or being given a flyer every six months, but there being no message or dialogue with supervisors or human resources staff.

At orientation at one of my jobs they said that if you have a problem you could call a hotline, and they gave us the number. Also, there was a poster in the break room. But that's really it. Posters don't really help as much as a different option would – don't just tell me I have a problem, offer solutions and alternatives (Male, 21, Bartender).

The remaining twenty-seven participants reported having no knowledge of any such workplace policy, prevention measures, or assistance programs.

While the effectiveness of workplace prevention or assistance programs has remained relatively untested in the foodservice industry (Zhu, 2008), in general such programs have been found to assist in the deterrent of problem behaviors (Ames, Grube & Moore, 2000; Bennett & Lehman, 1998; Bennett, Lehman & Reynolds, 2000; Roman & Blum, 2002). A study of hospitality students identified that while a large majority of the survey's participants felt that reducing portion size, exercise, and daily fruit and vegetable consumption were important dietary behaviors, less than a third felt it was important to consume alcohol in moderation (McArthur & Chandler, 2003).

Previous studies have found support for employee awareness programs in helping employees with alcohol abuse problems, and raising awareness among individuals in the organization of the risk of alcohol abuse behaviors (Roman & Blum, 1996; Roman & Blum, 2002; Sonnenstuhl, 1996). In short, there is a great deal of evidence to support the effectiveness of workplace prevention and assistance programs. As indicated above, participants were not aware of any such assistance in place at their work or college. While these policies and programs may well exist, they cannot be effective if the intended audience is unaware of their presence.

CONCLUSION AND APPLICATIONS

According to Frone (2013) employee alcohol use in the U.S. workplace is more prevalent than drug use, more damaging to the work organization, and should be a more glaring issue for employers than drug use. Compared to the aforementioned rates of other U.S. college students reported by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2013), this study found hospitality students working in foodservice to exhibit much greater heavy and binge drinking activity. From the information obtained in this study, it can be assessed that hospitality student foodservice employees are being subjected to an environment where heavy alcohol use is not only prevalent, but accepted, and even celebrated. This phenomenon presents serious safety implications for all foodservice operators, employees, and patrons, both on premise as well as outside of work.

Additionally, alcohol abuse prevention policy awareness appeared to be virtually nonexistent among hospitality management students. It should be noted that while alcohol abuse policies and prevention measures may exist, it was clear that the majority of participants were unaware of them. A review of the university student handbook gave proof that a substance abuse policy indeed exists at the university level, and was available in writing to students. This lack of awareness, however, is evidence that a) students are not reading this information, or b) the message is not resonating with students.

These findings indicate a need for stronger or more frequent message delivery, both at the university and program levels. Suggestions include an increase in alcohol abuse awareness on university campuses, and through multiple and dynamic outlets, such as social media. Understanding the multiple consequences of alcohol abuse from a variety of perspectives, in addition to promoting responsible policies for the sale, service, and consumption of alcoholic beverages is an important part of hospitality education curriculum (Barth, et al., 1994; McArthur & Chandler, 2003). Otherwise, academics are negligent in their roles as educators, as they may be sending students ill-prepared into a high risk work environment. Offering or requiring a ServSafe Alcohol® course for undergraduate hospitality programs could increase hospitality students' understanding of alcohol, to prepare them for job challenges and better personal decision-making.

With regards to workplace alcohol use and alcohol abuse prevention measures, participants' hesitation and unwillingness to disclose their

places of employment made it impossible to determine if the policies were in actual existence, as well as how these policies and messages were being disseminated into the workplace. Further, previous studies have found that perceived availability of alcohol at work was positively correlated with work-related drinking. Perceived availability of alcohol decreased when policy enforcement increased, as well as when support for employee assistance programs (EAPs) increased (Ames, Grube, & Moore, 2000). This finding may indicate a need for greater workplace policy communication and enforcement, as well as education and assistance programs in the foodservice industry.

The legal issues regarding control of alcohol consumption in the workplace or in college require vigilant supervision, testing and treatment, all consistent with the mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and personal privacy rights (Hartunian, 2002; Lake & Epstein, 2000; Menikheim & Trelfa, 2004). Further research into methods to accomplish control within legal mandates and restrictions is an important avenue for further study and recommendations of best practices (Johns, 2007).

Limitations and Future Research

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution in the context of the following limitations. First, the small sample size, uneven distribution of male and female participants, and demographic mix of participants do not allow for the generalization of findings to the entire population of hospitality students working in foodservice. Future research should employ quantitative data collection methods and/or a longitudinal design; such studies should also attempt to quantify 'increase' in drinking, as this study could not provide an average percentage for increase in participant drinking behavior. Second, it should be noted that this particular hospitality management program does not require any type of responsible alcohol service training or certification, such as the ServSafe Alcohol® program. Practical implications include the incorporation of such programs into all hospitality curricula. Future research should be conducted with students in programs with such training and certifications in place to determine if results differ. Third, this study relied upon self-reported data on a sensitive topic and sometimes illegal activity (i.e. underage drinking), which may have resulted in participants not being entirely forthcoming with their consumption. Additionally, because participation occurred on a voluntary basis, participant self-selection may have occurred, thus responses may not be representative of the general population for study. Finally, the finding that students were unaware of prevention measures at work or college call for a need for further investigation as to what policies are currently in place, and how they can be more effectively communicated to the intended audience. Whatever the course of investigation, it is the duty of academics to improve upon the current alcohol abuse phenomenon being experienced by hospitality students and foodservice employees.

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