Does Engaging in Deviant Behaviors Influence Desire to Attend College?

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Background: Truancy and alcohol use are quality indicators of academic achievement and success. However, there remains a paucity of substantive research articulating the impact these deviant behaviors have on an adolescent's educational aspirations. The purpose of this study is to assess whether recent alcohol use and truancy impact students' educational aspirations among a nationally representative sample of United States high school seniors.

Methods: This study conducted a secondary data analysis of the Monitoring the Future project data, 2006. Logistic regression was conducted to assess how alcohol use and truancy affected educational aspirations. Subsequent interaction effects were assessed in the final multivariable model. Demographic variables such as age, sex, race, and father and mother's educational level were included as covariates in the regression model.

Results: Results indicate that as students engage in increased alcohol use and/or truancy, educational aspirations decrease. Thus, students who indicated a desire to attend a 4 year college/university were less likely to engage in high-risk drinking behavior and/or truancy. Moreover, in testing the interaction between truancy and alcohol use, as it relates to educational aspirations, the logistic regression model found both of these independent variables to be statistically significant predictors of the likelihood students will attend a 4-year college/university.

Conclusions: In order to ensure that adolescents further their education and maximize their potential life opportunities, school and public health officials should initiate efforts to reduce alcohol consumption and truancy among students. Furthermore, future research should examine the risk and protective factors that may influence one's educational aspirations.