A Comparative Analysis of Canadian University Policies toward Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling Use

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University Students

- University students comprise one of the largest groups of young adults in Western countries

- Part of a unique transitional period, marked by increased exploration of newly acquired independence

- Often partake in many risky behaviors (e.g., alcohol, substance use, gambling)

(Shaffer, Hall, & Vander Bilt, 1999; St. Pierre et al., 2014)

University Students

- Amongst adults, young adults (18-25 years) have shown the highest rates of problem gambling

- Risky behaviors higher among college students vs. those not attending college

- Excessive involvement in these risky behaviors has been show to be associated with multiple deleterious consequences (personal, academic, mental health, familial, social, economic and legal)

- High rates of comorbidity between alcohol and substance-use with gambling participation

(CPRG, 2015; Volberg et al., 2010;Thomas & Kimura, 2014; Shaffer et al., 2005; Geisner et al., 2016)

College Policies

- College policies have been shown to impact students behaviors

- Previous research on smoking prevalence rates showed decreases in universities that implemented smoke-free policies, whereas control universities saw increased prevalence rates

(Lupton & Townsend, 2015; Martin et al., 2014; Shaffer et al., 2005; Shaffer et al., 2000; Zhao et al., 2017)

College Policies

- A large number of colleges/universities have had alcohol and substance use policies and have begun to implement smoking policies

- Less is known about gambling policies

- Many college administrators are generally unaware of the potential negative consequences associated with excessive gambling

(Shaffer et al., 2000; Zhao et al., 2017)

Objectives

RQ1 Identify and compare the prevalence and patterns of college and university gambling, alcohol, and substance-use related policies

RQ2 Examine whether school characteristics (e.g., undergrad enrollment rates) have any association with the presence of various types of school policies

H1 Substance and alcohol policies will significantly outnumber gambling policies on college and university campuses

H2 Schools with larger enrollment rates may be more likely to have established policies in place

EQ Further analyze school policies in order to examine differences within each type of policy

Methods

College/University Selection

- 96 College/ Universities included (76 English; 18 French)
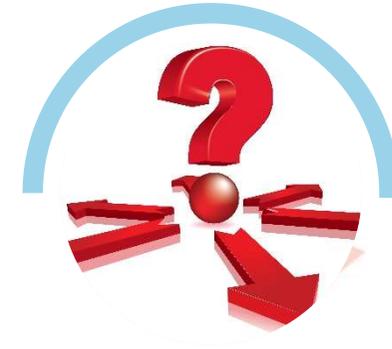- Examined available online institutional policy information

Eligibility Criteria

1) Had to regulate students' gambling, alcohol or substance use behavior
2) Had to be currently in effect
3) Had to be readily available
4) Had to be in place no later than March 31, 2017

Identifying Policies

Two types of policies identified:
1) Campus/student policies
2) Student residence policies

Policy Coding

1) Record keeping variables
2) Eligibility criteria
3) Key institutional characteristics
4) Policy

(www.univan.ca; Shaffer et al., 2005; McKinley et al., 2016; Zhao et al., 2017)

Results

Canadian Universities/Colleges Policies
- 90% had alcohol policies
- 83% had substance-use policies
- 32% had gambling policies

X^2 (2, 96) = 87.75, p < .001

Prevalence of Policy type
- Alcohol or Substance-use policy
  - General student manual ($n_{alcohol}$ = 56%; $n_{substance}$ = 53%)
  - Residence regulations ($n_{alcohol}$ = 74%; $n_{substance}$ = 67%)
- Gambling
  - General student manual (n = 6%)
  - Residence regulations (n = 24%)

Results
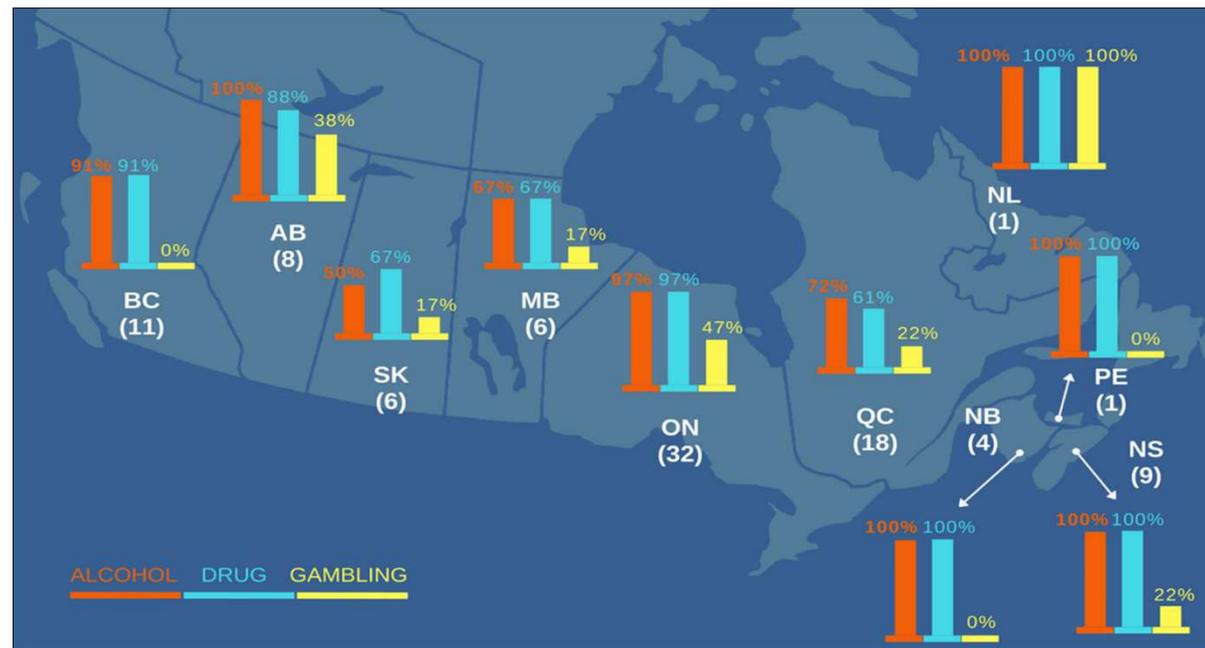
Prevalence of Policies by Province

Figure 1. Prevalence of alcohol, drug and gambling policies across Canadian universities by Province
Note. The numbers in brackets under each provinces' abbreviated name represents the sample size within the corresponding province

Results

Relationship between Policies and School Characteristics
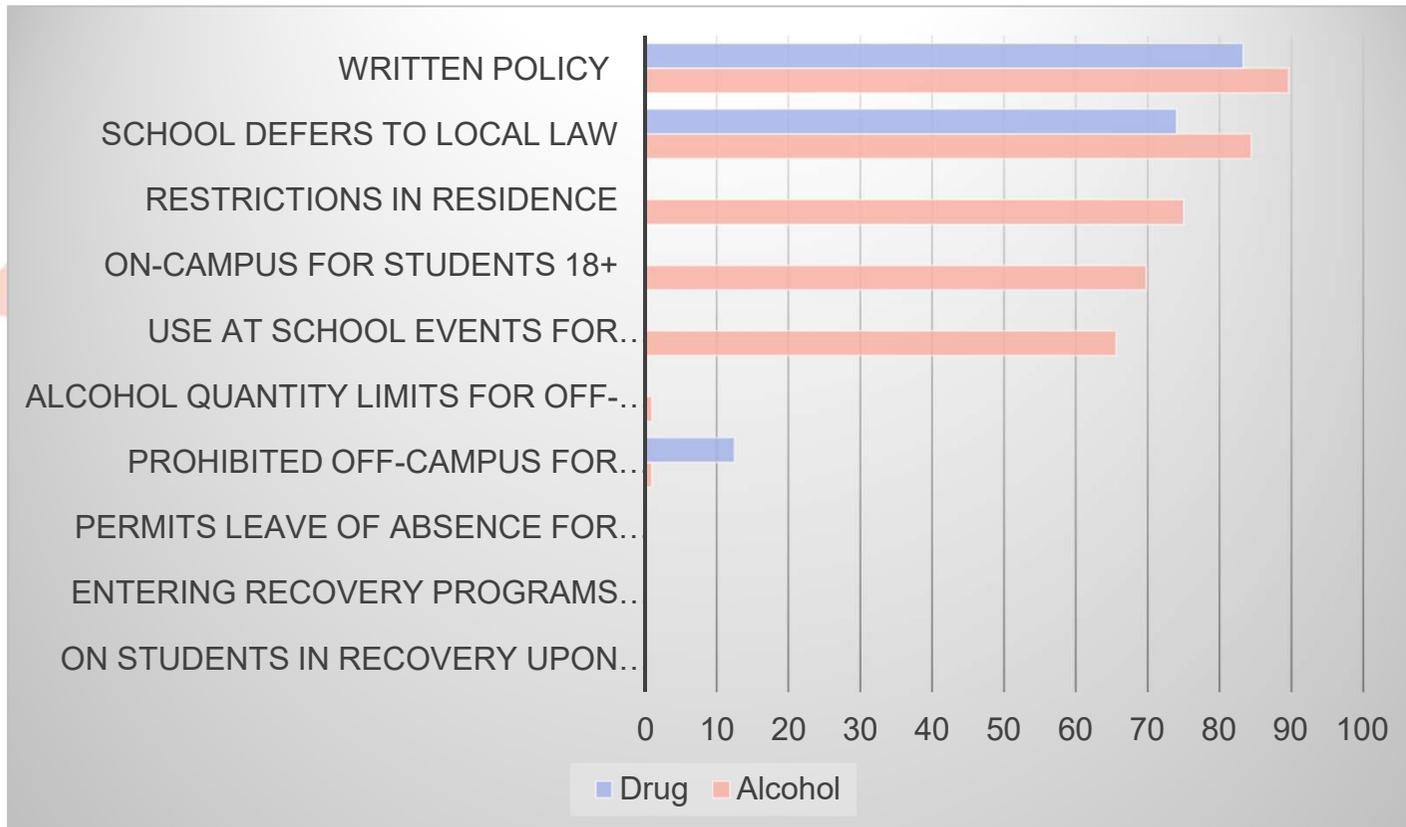

Larger Schools	Smaller Schools
$M_{enrollment}$ = 16,976; SD = 11,797	$M_{enrollment}$ = 1,818; SD = 1,194

Results

Alcohol and Substance Use Policy Prevalence

Discussion

- Although most schools had alcohol/substance use policies; no schools had policies concerning students in recovery when entering school
    - However even with implemented policies there is still a lack of support and tools available for struggling students

- As previously seen in the U.S., there were significantly fewer gambling-related policies compared to others
    - Despite estimates of increased participation from 42% to 75% and high gambling disorder rates

(Shaffer et al., 2005; Barnes et al., 2010; Nowak et al., 2014; McComb et al., 2009)

Future Research

- Identify whether and how policies are implemented across all types post-secondary educations

- Examine the overall effectiveness of these policies in reducing gambling and gambling problems among college students

Conclusions

- Concern given lack of gambling policies compared to alcohol and substance use related policies

- Increased awareness is needed among university administrators

- Clearly defined policies have potential benefit to sensitive students to issues surrounding problem gambling

Questions?

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