

The Effect of Free Beer on Depression

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Abstract

In this article a radical new treatment for depression is tested: free beer. Subjects were either given free beer or expensive beer for a month. At the start and end of the month the subjects were tested on their level of depression. Results indicate that the treatment works, but only for males.

Many people suffer from depression. Especially amongst students the prevalence of depression is exceedingly high due to the amount of stress students undergo from fixing auto correction errors made by their text editors (Doe & Doe, 2008; Gates, 2003). Recent research show the effect of several new treatments of depression. Non stop smoking can greatly reduce depression for a brief period of time (Spender, 2011) and a new medicine, *Felix Felicis*, can completely cure a person of depression for a whole day (Potter & Snape, 2005). The downsides of such treatments however is that they are very expensive.

In this article we propose a radical new treatment of depression: Free Beer Therapy (FBT). Our earlier research indicate that beer can greatly decrease the level of depression for a short period (Doe & Doe, 2009a). However, having to pay money for anything can increase the level of depression (Doe & Doe, 2009b). FBT builds on these principles by making the beer available for free! We have tested the effect of FBT on first year psychology students and examined the level of depression before and after FBT or a waiting list. Because we have looked at our results before writing this paper we expect that FBT will especially be effective in males.

1 methods

Participants A total of 60 first year psychology students (31 males and 29 females) participated in the research. These subjects were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control condition. The mean age was 23.2 with a standard deviation of 2.

Materials The level of depression was measured with a single question: “How depressed are you feeling?”. This question could be answered with 0: Not depressed, 1: Slightly depressed, 2: Quite depressed, 3: Very depressed and 4: Extremely depressed.

Procedure The depression of subjects was measured when they signed up for the study. Half the subjects were assigned the experimental condition and received 10 bottles of free Heineken beer every day for a month. The other subjects did not receive any free beer, but were able to buy beer at slightly overpriced prices for a month. After the month the subjects were again measured on their level of depression.

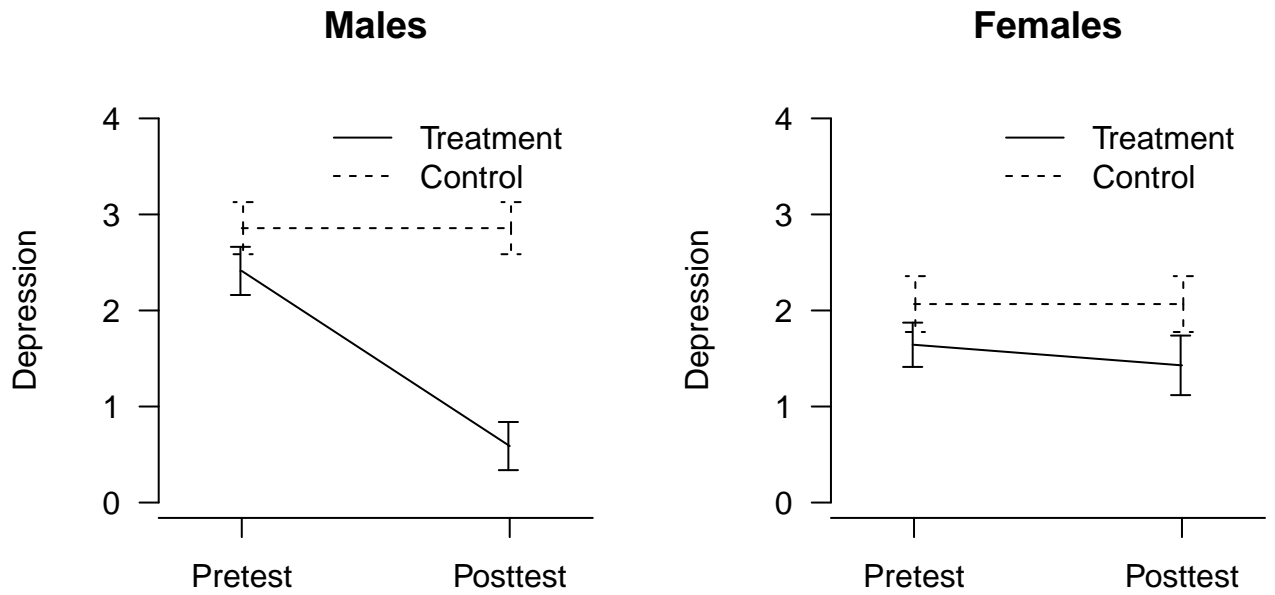


Figure 1: Means of depression ratings with 95% confidence intervals

2 results

The results can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 1.

condition	sex	Mean pretest	SD pretest	Mean posttest	SD posttest	# Subjects
control	female	2.07	0.80	2.07	0.80	15
control	male	2.86	0.77	2.86	0.77	14
treatment	female	1.64	0.63	1.39	0.85	14
treatment	male	2.41	0.71	0.59	0.71	17

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of the scores on the depression item.

To analyze the effect of the treatment and its interaction with gender a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed design ANOVA was performed. On average, subjects that received free beer did not improve significantly better than subjects that did not receive free beer ($F(1, 56) = 3.857$, ns). However, the interaction with gender is significant ($F(1, 56) = 113.942$, $p < 0.001$); only males had a lower level of depression after the treatment.

3 Discussion

Giving away free beer can be a very good treatment for depression, but only for men. Why this therapy does not work on women is not clear. Perhaps they simply did not like the Heineken beer we presented them. Future research should focus on the effect of other types of beverages.

References

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