

The effect of the Safer Bars programme on physical aggression in bars: Results of a randomized controlled trial.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Safer Bars, an intervention to reduce aggression in bars. A total of 734 pre-post-intervention observations were conducted by trained observers on Friday and Saturday nights between midnight and 2 a.m. in 18 large capacity Toronto bars and clubs assigned randomly to receive the intervention and 12 control bars. As part of the intervention, owners/managers completed the risk assessment workbook to identify ways of reducing environmental risks, and 373 staff and owners/managers attended a 3-hour training session focused on preventing escalation of aggression, working as a team and resolving problem situations safely. The main outcome measures were rates of severe aggression and moderate physical aggression. Hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) comparing pre-post aggression for intervention versus control bars indicated a significant effect of the intervention in reducing severe and moderate aggression. This effect was moderated by turnover of managers and door/security staff with higher post-intervention aggression associated with higher turnover in the intervention bars. The findings indicate the potential for a stand-alone relatively brief intervention to reduce severe and moderate physical aggression in bars.

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