



Alcohol expectancies, self-efficacy and coping in an alcohol-dependent sample

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Abstract

This study expanded earlier work conducted by this laboratory by examining the independent and interactive effects of avoidant coping strategies, positive and negative alcohol expectancies and self-efficacy, in predicting volume and frequency of alcohol consumption in a sample dependent on alcohol ($n=296$). Coping strategies were found to be salient predictors of frequency of drinking, while venting emotion interacted with negative expectancies to predict both volume and frequency of drinking. Venting emotion was also found to interact with drinking refusal self-efficacy in predicting volume of alcohol consumed. These interactions are discussed in terms of the cognitive and behavioural mechanisms thought to underlie drinking behaviour.

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1. Introduction

In 1985 Marlatt and Gordon proposed a model of relapse prevention, grounded in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1969, 1977). This model explained how coping, expectancies and self-efficacy interact to predict relapse of addictive behaviours. Marlatt and Gordon proposed that after a period of abstinence, being in a high-risk situation without an effective coping strategy would result in an individual having a low self-efficacy for their ability to cope with the high-risk situation. Coupled with positive outcome

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expectancies concerning alcohol, this lack of self-efficacy heightens the chance that the individual will engage in drinking.

While numerous studies have supported the roles of coping strategies (Chung, Langenbucher, Labouvie, Pandina, & Moos, 2001; Hasking & Oei, 2002a; Longabaugh & Morgenstern, 1999; Williams & Clarke, 1998), alcohol expectancies (Armeli, Carney, Tennen, Affleck, & O'Neil, 2000; Baldwin, Oei, & Young, 1993; Brown, 1985; Brown, Goldman, & Christiansen, 1985; Lee, Greeley, & Oei, 1999; McMahon & Jones, 1994; Oei, Fergusson, & Lee, 1998; Wall, Hinson, & McKee, 1998; Young & Oei, 1993) and drinking refusal self-efficacy (Oei & Baldwin, 1994; Oei, Hasking, & Young, 2004; Skutle, 1999; Young, Oei, & Crook, 1991) in governing drinking behaviour, few studies have simultaneously examined these variables in order to determine how they may interact in predicting volume and frequency of alcohol consumption.

The few studies that have attempted to investigate the combined effects of these variables have produced inconsistent results. In their attempts to empirically test these elements of social cognitive theory, Cooper and colleagues (Cooper, Russell, & George, 1998; Cooper, Russell, Skinner, Frone, & Mudar, 1992) observed an interaction between avoidant coping and positive expectancies in predicting alcohol use and alcohol problems. In investigating the role of these variables in predicting adolescent drinking behaviour Laurent, Catanzaro, and Callan (1997) found positive alcohol expectancies but not avoidant coping to be predictive of alcohol use. Laurent et al. (1997) did observe an interaction between positive expectancies and avoidant coping; however, the nature of the interaction differed from that noted by Cooper et al. (1992). Specifically, while Cooper et al. (1992) noted a relationship between avoidant coping and drinking only for those with strong positive expectancies, Laurent et al. (1997) found that in participants with weaker positive expectancies, a negative relationship between avoidant coping and drinking was observed. In the only study to explicitly examine the interaction between alcohol expectancies, self-efficacy, and coping in predicting alcohol consumption Evans and Dunn (1995) concluded that positive expectancies and self-efficacy independently contributed to the prediction of alcohol consumption; however, no interaction was found between expectancies and coping. Unfortunately the three-way interaction between the variables was not examined.

Such mixed results may have arisen from a number of limitations common to the above studies, such as the exclusive focus on positive alcohol expectancies and the reliance on global measures of coping strategies and alcohol consumption. The role of negative expectancies is becoming increasingly central to expectancy research (Jones & McMahon, 1992, 1994, 1996); however, the interactive effects of negative expectancies with coping strategies or self-efficacy have largely been ignored. In addition, research has suggested that different cognitive factors may govern the decision to drink and the volume consumed (Lee & Oei, 1993; Lee et al., 1999), suggesting that delineation of consumption measures is vital to a complete understanding of drinking behaviour. Finally, the use of a composite scale assessing avoidant coping strategies may limit the power of the above studies to detect main and interactive effects in their analyses. Given the apparent salience of avoidant coping, investigating different forms of avoidant coping, such as denial, emotion-focussed coping and using drugs or alcohol to cope may reveal differential patterns related to drinking behaviour.

This laboratory recently attempted to address some of the shortcomings in the literature by simultaneously examining the social cognitive constructs and their differential association with both frequency and volume of alcohol consumption. It was found that these constructs are differentially related to different measures of alcohol consumption in dependent and community drinkers (Hasking

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