Drinking and Driving Motives, Negative Consequences and Other Traffic Safety Behaviors

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Introduction

- 35.5% of college student drivers report drinking and driving in the past month (Wechsler, Lee, Nelson, & Lee, 2003).
- Young adults who drink and drive are more likely to engage in other unsafe driving behaviors, such as not wearing a seatbelt or speeding (Vassallo et al., 2007).
- The Positive Expectancies for Drinking and Driving for Youth (PEDD-Y) Questionnaire measures motives for drinking and driving.
  - Convenience
  - Control
  - Avoiding Consequences
  - Excitement Seeking
- The Convenience and Avoiding Consequences factors have been shown to predict engagement in drinking and driving behavior in youth and young adults (McCarthy, Pedersen, Thompsen, & Leuty, 2006).
- The present study tested the PEDD-Y scales as predictors of:
  - Experiencing negative consequences from drinking and driving.
  - Avoiding unsafe behaviors while drinking and driving.

Method

Participants

- 1056 college student drinkers (mean age = 18.75).
- 88.6% Caucasian, 42.2% male.

Measures

- Demographics.
- Alcohol Use. Drinker/nondrinker status and past month quantity and frequency of use.
- Positive Expectancies for Drinking and Driving for Youth (PEDD-Y). Self-reported motivations and perceived reinforcement associated with drinking and driving.
- Driving after alcohol use. Past year driving within 2 hours of drinking one drink, three drinks, or five drinks.
- Risky traffic safety behaviors while drinking and driving. Self-reported carefulness, seatbelt use, radio volume, and speeding concurrent with drinking and driving.
- Driving and Drinking Consequences. Lifetime history of trouble with police or car accidents after drinking.

Procedure

- Participants were recruited from introductory psychology courses using an online sign-up system.
- Written consent was obtained and questionnaire forms were completed in a group setting.

Results

- Logistic regression was used to test whether the PEDD-Y factors predicted:
  - Experiencing negative consequences from drinking and driving.
  - Engagement in other unsafe behaviors while drinking and driving.
  - Controlling for drinking and driving attitudes and normative beliefs:
    - Convenience was associated with:
      - likelihood of getting in trouble with the police ($OR = 1.54, p < .01$).
      - getting in a car accident ($OR = 1.53, p < .05$) after drinking and driving.
    - Excitement Seeking was uniquely associated with likelihood of speeding while driving after drinking ($OR = 1.92, p < .05$).
    - Convenience was associated with reporting an increased likelihood of wearing a seatbelt ($OR = 1.18, p < .05$) and driving more carefully ($OR = 1.23, p < .05$) when driving after drinking.
    - Avoiding Consequences was also associated with reporting an increased likelihood of driving more carefully ($OR = 1.20, p < .05$).

Discussion

- Results of this study suggest that drinking and driving motives, as assessed by the PEDD-Y, are associated with:
  - Engagement in drinking and driving behavior.
  - Likelihood of experiencing negative consequences (e.g., accidents, trouble with the police).
- These motives were uniquely associated with these behaviors over and above other risk factors (attitudes, normative beliefs).
- Motives for convenience and avoiding consequences were associated with perceiving oneself as driving more safely.
  - Despite this, these motives were associated with drinking and driving consequences.
- Those who view drinking and driving as exciting or thrilling are more likely to simultaneously engage in other unsafe behaviors (e.g., speeding).
- The cross-sectional nature of the study means that the direction of influence is unclear.
  - An alternate hypothesis is that those who experience negative consequences adjust their perceptions to justify their behavior.
- Longitudinal studies are required to understand the influence of reciprocal influence of perceptions about drinking and driving and engagement in the behavior.

Table 1. Drinking and Driving Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wearing a Seatbelt</th>
<th>Driving more Carefully</th>
<th>Turning the Radio Down</th>
<th>Speeding</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>1.18*</td>
<td>1.23*</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1.28*</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding Consequences</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.20*</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excitement Seeking</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.84*</td>
<td>1.92*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$

Note. Values are Odds Ratios.

Acknowledgements

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