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Maria E. Niculete  
University of Missouri - Columbia

Hayley R. Treloar  
University of Missouri - Columbia

Sarah L. Pedersen  
University of Missouri - Columbia

Denis M. McCarthy  
University of Missouri - Columbia

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

Maria E. Niculete, Hayley R. Treloar, Sarah L. Pedersen, & Denis M. McCarthy

University of Missouri - Columbia

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.
  • Engagement in other 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>
</tr>
</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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