

Research Based Abstract Template

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Implementation of Alcohol Protective Behavioural Strategies among University Students

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Introduction: University students are a vulnerable group for alcohol consumption/negative alcohol consequences. Protective Behavioural Strategies (PBS) when drinking can help reduce alcohol consumption and associated problems, although most literature regarding PBS is from the United States (Cox et al., 2024). Additionally, many university students consume alcohol in social situations, including drinking games (DGs; Zamboanga et al., 2024). The utility of PBS in such settings is questionable (George et al., 2023). Examining PBS among Australian students, including applicability in high-risk settings, is required.

Methods: Data from 353 university students aged 18-25 years ($M_{age}=19.9$ years, female=74%; living on campus=25%) in Australia who had consumed alcohol in the past year was obtained from an online survey. Measures included the Protective Behavioral Strategies Scale-15 (Martens et al. 2005) which assesses: Manner of Drinking, Stopping/Limiting Drinking, and Serious Harm Reduction. Demographics, alcohol consumption/consequences, motives for drinking and DGs participation were also measured.

Results: The most frequently endorsed form of PBS was Serious Harm Reduction (e.g., using a designated driver, as reported always used by 63% of the sample). Most (74%) had played a DG in the prior year. Stopping/Limiting Drinking and Manner of Drinking PBS predicted less alcohol consumption (controlling for demographics, motives for drinking and DG participation). Unexpectedly, no PBS subscale predicted negative alcohol consequences in the prior 30 days. Analysis of open-ended comments highlighted the challenges of PBS implementation for high-risk settings.

Discussions and Conclusions: PBS can be effective for reducing risky alcohol use and negative consequences from drinking, although their implementation in university settings can be challenging. The necessity of considering motives for drinking and strategies for implementation of PBS in high-risk settings is highlighted.

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