

The Role of Impulsivity in the Relationship Between Affect and Alcohol Consumption in Young Adults

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Background: Theoretical frameworks of alcohol use propose that individuals consume alcohol to relieve negative affect or to heighten positive affect. Currently, it appears that positive affect is a stronger predictor of daily consumption in young adults. It remains unclear, however, whether trait impulsivity moderates the relationship between daily affect and alcohol use. Therefore, the current study employed a large sample of young adults to determine whether positive and negative affect predict total drinks consumed on drinking days and whether facets of impulsivity influence these relationships.

Methods: Six-hundred and ninety-three young adults ($M_{age} = 19.71$ years, $SD = 2.04$; female = 62.9%) completed the Behavioral Inhibition System/Behavioral Activation System (BIS/BAS) scales at baseline followed by daily assessments of positive and negative affect and self-reported alcohol use for 13 days. Generalised linear mixed models were computed to assess the role of pre-consumption affect on total drinks consumed and to determine the moderating effect of each BIS/BAS subscale.

Results: Participants were significantly more likely to drink in greater quantities on occasions preceded by higher positive affect but not negative affect. While fun-seeking was found to positively predict total drinks consumed, there were no significant interaction effects between the BIS/BAS subscales and affect on total drinks consumed.

Discussions and Conclusions: These findings place into question existing affect regulation models and have implications for ecological momentary interventions that aim to minimise hazardous drinking behaviors.

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