

Alcohol Use and Drinking-Related Eating Restriction Behaviors among College Students

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Introduction

- Problematic eating (Eisenberg et al., 2011) and drinking (Johnston et al., 2016) behaviors are each prevalent among college students.
- Some students may combine eating restrictions and drinking behaviors in order to save calories and/or enhance their intoxication (Peralta, 2002).
- Despite the known risks of drinking on an empty stomach (White, 2003), little research has examined drinking-related eating restrictions and the characteristics that associate with who uses these behaviors (Burke et al., 2010).
- The present study examined:
 - (1) the association between drinking-related eating restrictions and alcohol use behaviors (e.g. quantity, frequency, binge-drinking, problems)
 - (2) psychological traits (e.g., self-control, emotion regulation, perceived weight) as potential correlates of drinking-related eating restriction behaviors.
- It was hypothesized that:
 - (1) engaging in drinking-related eating restrictions would be associated with riskier alcohol outcomes
 - (2) that lower self-control, lower emotion regulation, and higher perceived weight would be associated with greater endorsement of drinking-related eating restrictions.

Method

- Participants were 1053 (72.7% women) university students (M age = 20.23, SD = 1.94) who were primarily Caucasian (50.2%) and African American (38.8%).
- Participants completed an online survey about their typical drinking (Daily Drinking Questionnaire, DDQ; Collins et al., 1985), drinking-related food restrictions (Eating and Alcohol Use Questionnaire, EAUQ; Lloyd-Richardson et al., 2008), self-control (Brief Self-Control Scale, BSCS; Tangey et al., 2004), emotion regulation (Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, ERQ; Gross & John, 2003), and perceived weight (e.g., Brener et al., 2004).
- On average, participants consumed 10.39 (SD = 14.73) standard drinks per week.

Results

- For Aim 1, one-way ANOVAs revealed that relative to individuals who do not engage in food restriction on drinking days, restrictors report higher typical weekly alcohol use quantity [$F(604, 1) = 9.60, p = .002$], drinking frequency [$F(611, 1) = 6.41, p = .012$], number of binge drinking days [$F(609, 1) = 5.04, p = .025$], and alcohol-related problems [$F(604, 1) = 25.76, p < .001$].
- For Aim 2, logistic regression analysis indicated self-control ($B = -.057, p < .001$) to be associated with restriction behaviors, such that lower self-control was associated with increased likelihood of restricting.
 - However, findings did not support emotion regulation ($B = -.008, p = .469$) or perceived weight ($B = .095, p = .543$) as being associated with restricting.

Discussion

- Overall, findings support that individuals who engage in drinking-related eating restrictions endorse higher levels across several drinking outcomes than non-restricting drinkers.
- Further, higher self-control served as a protective factor for restricting, perhaps challenging the notion that drinking-related eating restriction behaviors are a disciplined way for individuals to manage calories (Crescioni et al., 2011).
- Instead, restricting behaviors could be used to enhance the effects of alcohol, such that lower self-control serves as a risk factor for restriction behaviors in the same manner it does for drinking (Muraven et al., 2002).
- Future research should further examine these relationships using daily or momentary assessments to understand within-person differences in eating restrictions on drinking days.

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