

Daily Fluctuations in Alcohol Expectancies and Affect are Related to Alcohol Use among College Students

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Introduction

- Expectancy theory supports alcohol expectancies, or beliefs about the expected effects of drinking, as an important factor in alcohol use behaviors (see Jones et al., 2001).
- Although traditionally considered a “trait” variable (Goldman et al., 1991), recent research supports alcohol expectancies as a “state” variable that could fluctuate daily (Lee et al., 2015).
- Experimental research has found that manipulations on mood impact an individual’s alcohol expectancies (Hufford, 2001).
- Despite evidence suggesting mood also fluctuates daily (Stamatēs et al., 2018), to the best of our knowledge, no research to date has examined whether expectancies and affect together predict drinking on a daily level.
- It could be that an individual’s affect on a given day impacts the relationship between expectancies and drinking that same day.
- Consequently, the present study:
 - (1) examined the daily association between expectancies (e.g., Sociability, Tension Reduction, Liquid Courage) and alcohol use (i.e., quantity)
 - (2) tested affect (e.g., Positive, Negative) as a moderator of this association.
- It was hypothesized that:
 - (1) there would be a positive association between alcohol expectancies and daily drinking quantity
 - (2) that affect would moderate these associations.

Method

- Participants were 140 (81.4% women; M age = 20.77, SD = 2.06) university students who were primarily Caucasian (51.4%) and African American (35.0%).
- Following a baseline survey, participants completed daily diary surveys for 14 days, whereby they reported on their expectancies (Comprehensive Effects of Alcohol Scale, CEOA; Fromme et al., 1993, mood (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Scale, PANAS; Watson et al., 1988, and drinking quantity (Daily Drinking Questionnaire, DDQ; Collins et al., 1985).
- A total of 405 drinking days (M = 2.89 drinking days per participant) were analyzed across the two-week period.
- Participants consumed an average of 3.08 (SD = 2.56) standard drinks per drinking day.
- Intraclass correlations (ICCs) for expectancy subscales were between .712 and .788.
- ICCs for affect scales were between .431 and .534.

Results

- Hierarchical linear modeling showed that sociability was the only expectancy subscale to predict same day quantity ($B = .025$, $CI [1.001, 1.051]$, $p = .039$).
- However, the relationship between each daily expectancy subscale and drinking was moderated by positive affect.
 - On days where individuals reported higher positive affect, stronger positive associations were observed between each of Sociability ($B = .003$, $CI [1.001, 1.006]$, $p = .016$), Tension Reduction ($B = .002$, $CI [1.000, 1.005]$, $p = .047$), and Liquid Courage ($B = .003$, $CI [1.000, 1.005]$, $p = .050$) expectancy subscales with alcohol quantity.
- Negative affect was not supported as a moderator in the expectancy-drinking association.

Discussion

- Findings supported within-person variability between alcohol expectancies and drinking.
- Daily fluctuations in expectancies are related to levels of positive affect, but not negative affect.
- Our findings support the notion that expectancies could be a state variable (Lee et al., 2015), which may fluctuate day to day and therefore differentially impact daily drinking (Patrick et al., 2016).
- Results also support the importance of positive affect in impacting the association between positive alcohol beliefs and daily drinking.
- While drinking has been theorized and supported as a way to cope with negative emotions for some (Greeley & Oei, 1999), our study findings highlight the role of positive moods in daily drinking behaviors.

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