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Introduction

- ❖ *Externalising* symptoms (e.g. impulsivity, sensation seeking) and *internalising* symptoms (e.g. negative thinking, anxiety sensitivity) have been strongly linked with alcohol abuse in adulthood.
- ❖ Research suggests these two sets of symptoms may be linked to different drinking trajectories prior to adulthood.
- ❖ *Externalising* personality traits have been linked with early onset drinking and alcohol misuse in adolescence.
- ❖ The link between *internalising* personality traits and alcohol use is less clear. Some research suggests these are risk factors for early use, others suggest they may be protective in adolescence (e.g. anxious teens may avoid alcohol because of a fear of losing control).



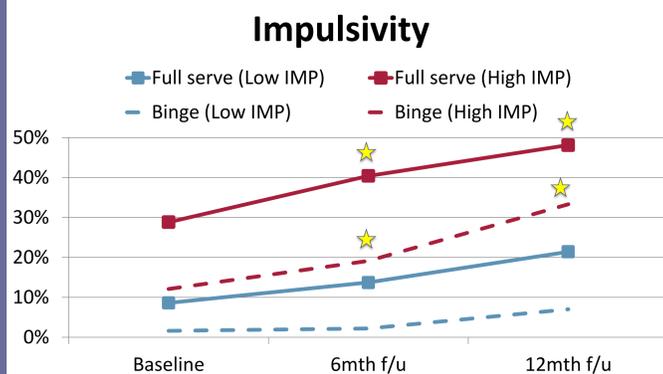
Aim

- ❖ To examine whether impulsivity, sensation seeking, negative thinking or anxiety sensitivity predict early alcohol misuse in an Australian adolescent sample over the course of 12 months.

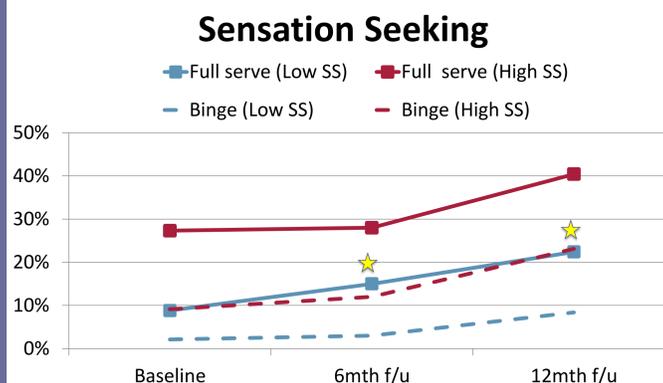
Method

- ❖ Data was collected as part of a larger RCT of a high school-based intervention, designed to reduce alcohol and substance use. The 605 students assigned to the control condition in 7 schools across NSW and VIC were used for analysis.
- ❖ Participants were assessed at baseline (mean age was 13 years), at 6-month follow-up and at 12-month follow-up.
- ❖ **Personality traits:** Participants were measured using subscales (Impulsivity, Sensation Seeking, Hopelessness, Anxiety Sensitivity) of the Substance User Risk Profile Scale. Participants were classified as high on a trait if more than one standard deviation above the sample mean.
- ❖ **Alcohol use:** Participants were asked if they had ever consumed a full standard alcoholic drink and if they had ever binged (consumed 5 or more standard drinks on one occasion).
- ❖ **Statistical analysis:** Eight logistic regressions were run using SPSS. Odds ratios are presented controlling for gender and baseline score on outcome variable.
- ❖ *Note: 51 participants were found to have responded inconsistently over the three data collection time points. They indicated they had consumed alcohol by baseline, but had not ever consumed alcohol by 6-month or 12-month follow-up. They were excluded from subsequent analyses. The final sample size was 554.*

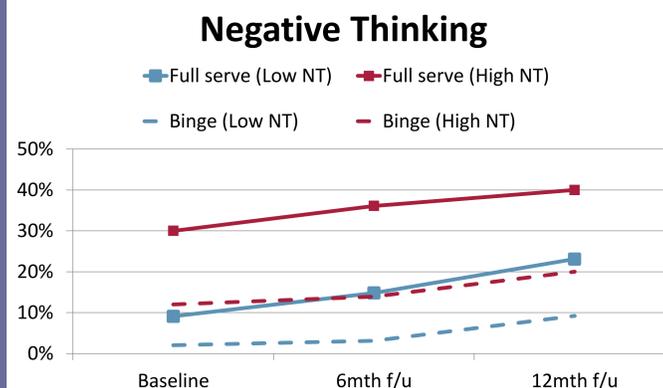
Results



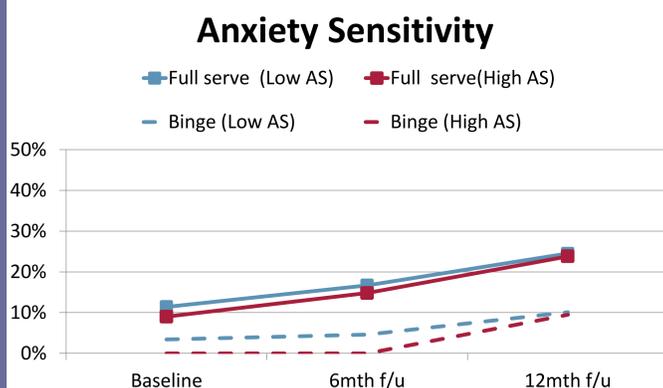
High impulsive group were significantly more likely to have tried a full serve of alcohol by 6-month follow-up (OR=4.1, $p=0.002$) and by 12-month follow-up (OR=3.1, $p=0.003$). High impulsive group were significantly more likely to have binged by 6-month follow-up (OR=9.3, $p=0.003$) and by 12-month follow-up (OR=5.6, $p<0.001$).



Sensation seeking did not predict full serve consumption by 6-month ($p>0.05$) or 12-month follow-up ($p>0.05$). High sensation seeking group were significantly more likely to have binged by 6-month follow-up (OR=7.3, $p=0.008$) and by 12-month follow-up (OR=3.0, $p=0.008$).



Negative thinking did not predict alcohol use (full serve or binge) by 6-month ($p>0.05$) or 12-month follow-up ($p>0.05$).



Anxiety sensitivity did not predict alcohol use (full serve or binge) by 6-month ($p>0.05$) or 12-month follow-up ($p>0.05$).

Discussion

- ❖ Impulsivity and sensation seeking predicted alcohol misuse by both 6 and 12 month follow-up.
- ❖ Negative thinking and anxiety sensitivity did not predict alcohol misuse in this age group.
- ❖ *Externalising* and *internalising* teens may follow different drinking trajectories.
- ❖ Those with *externalising* symptoms have started misusing alcohol by early adolescence (13-15 years old).
- ❖ Those with *internalising* symptoms are at no more risk of misusing alcohol than their peers in early adolescence (13-15 years old).
- ❖ Previous research has linked both sets of symptoms with alcohol abuse later in life, but current findings would suggest there are two distinct pathways to this point – an *externalising* pathway characterised by problematic use starting in early adolescence, and an *internalising* pathway characterised by problematic use starting in later adolescence.
- ❖ This study will follow-up participants until they reach late adolescence to map out drinking trajectories in later teen years.

Conclusion

- ❖ These results have important implications for early intervention programs. Those with *internalising* symptoms are not at risk of misusing alcohol in early adolescence, but may be in later adolescence. Thus early intervention programs may be more beneficial to *internalising* teens if implemented beyond 15 years of age.



Acknowledgments and Contact

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