Drinking Motives Behind Alcohol and Energy Drink Use

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Background: Approximately 70% of college students report dysfunctional alcohol use. Not only are students drinking more frequently, but they are also drinking for the sole purpose of getting drunk. Drinking motivations are the final decision one must make before choosing whether or not to engage in drinking behavior. Examining these motivations may predict the behavioral outcomes of a drinking episode. Since mixing alcohol with energy drinks (EDs) to intensify its effects is a common phenomenon, but is known to lead to more risk taking and negative consequences than the ingestion of alcohol alone, it is necessary to explore motivations for alcohol and ED use.

Purpose: To uncover drinking motives in/between students who consume beverages containing alcohol only (Alcohol-Only Users; AOUs) and those who combine alcohol with EDs (Combined Users; CUs).

Methods: An online survey containing Drinking Motives Questionnaire-Revised (DMQR) and questions regarding ED usage/patterns was completed by 540 students at a large Midwestern university.

Results: Independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in drinking motives between CUs ($M = 48.90 \pm 12.89$) and AOUs ($M = 43.36 \pm 12.08$); $t(334) = 4.03$, $p < 0.000$ (two-tailed). CUs also scored higher than AOUs on the DMQR.

Conclusions: This study suggests that the motives behind drinking behavior(s) are different between CUs and AOUs, and that CUs have more motives (e.g. social, coping, enhancement, and conformity factors etc.) than AOUs. Knowing this, health educators can now develop/implement effective programs specifically addressing perceptual fallacies and drinking motives to decrease the dangers associated with all types of alcohol consumption.