

26/07/2022

Alcohol consumption expectations in university students: the APNE scale



Young adulthood is a stage of changes in social environments and responsibilities, being the age threshold with the highest alcohol consumption in Spain. A study led by the Departments of Clinical and Health Psychology and of Psychobiology and Methodology at the UAB has explored the expectations related to alcohol consumption in university students with the help of the APNE assessment instrument.

Istockphoto/Anastasiia Korotkova

Young adulthood constitutes a developmental age characterized by large vulnerability of engaging in risky behaviors (such as substances use), due to new socialization patterns, changes in responsibilities, and new habits and routines. Alcohol is the most consumed psychoactive substance in Spain, peaking in the 15 to 34 age group. It is known that some environments such as university can increase alcohol use, due to engaging in social settings with legal access to liquor and a shift from parental monitoring to peer influences. The increasing prevalence of alcohol consumption and the number of physical and mental effects correlates (in the short and long terms, including liver problems, pancreatitis, acute gastritis and certain organic-brain syndromes) have generated major efforts to identify alcohol drinking habits within this highly vulnerable group, and individuals with hazardous patterns of alcohol use.

Studies have observed that the excessive alcohol intake at young ages may be mediated by many individual and societal factors such as motivations, personality traits, age, sex, affective states, beliefs, and parenting styles. Theory of Expectations is a cognitive model

addressed at explaining this excessive consumption among young people, based on beliefs and/or expectations that people have regarding the effects that alcohol could have on their behaviors and emotions. These expectations are generated by both vicarious learning and direct previous experience, creating memory networks with information about the effects of alcohol intake that in turn not only influence the onset but also the persistence of a given drinking pattern.

A study led by Dr. Montserrat Gomà-i-Freixanet (Department of Clinical Psychology and Health), with the methodological support of Dr Roser Granero (Department of Psychobiology and Methodology), has explored the profile of expectations with regard to alcohol consumption in university students and its potential association with the individuals' sex and age. Additionally, the reliability and validity of the new screening measurement tool APNE was assessed. A total of $n = 1,513$ participants participated (909 women and 400 men, with ages into the range 20 to 25 years). The results showed that women reported mean in the negative expectations scale compared to men. Alcohol consumption expectations were also significantly related to the participants' age: while positive expectations tended to decrease among older age individuals, negative expectations tended to rise with age. Once controlling for sex and age, higher level for positive expectations and lower level in negative expectations increased the likelihood of problematic alcohol use. Regarding the psychometric properties of the APNE, the study proved evidence regarding good reliability and validity.

In the current era of pandemic, in which heavy alcohol consumption has increased so much among young adults, tools like the APNE can be useful for understanding positive and negative beliefs with regard to consumption and can therefore support policymakers to make informed decisions about the implementation of prevention and treatment programs targeted at this segment of the population, the development of personalized alcohol programs and the reappraisal of public campaigns.

Montserrat Gomà-i-Freixanet (1) i Roser Granero (2)

1 - Department of Clinical Psychology and Health

2 - Department of Psychology and Methodology

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

roser.granero@uab.cat

References

Gomà-i-Freixanet, M., Ferrero-Rincón, G., & Granero, R. (2022). **Assessing Alcohol Expectations in University Students: the APNE Scale**. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, doi: 10.1007/s11469-022-00854-6.

[View low-bandwidth version](#)