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The Significance of the Motivation to Stop Drinking and Self-regulation of Individuals Who Consume Alcohol on the Characteristics of Alcohol Use and Psychosocial Factors

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Abstract

Alcohol consumption is a major health and social problem both in Lithuania and globally. Self-efficacy and self-regulation are central psychological constructs in contemporary models of motivation and behavior change, yet their joint and conditional roles in alcohol use remain insufficiently understood. Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Determination Theory, the present study examined whether self-efficacy functions primarily as an antecedent to motivation or as a moderator of motivational and self-regulatory pathways predicting alcohol use among young adults. The study also analyzed how regulatory styles and satisfaction of basic psychological needs in the context of alcohol use were interrelated with self-efficacy, the use of self-control strategies, trait self-control, alcohol consumption, and psychosocial factors. A cross-sectional sample of 488 students aged 18–25 was used for the analyses. Multiple regression analysis with commonality and dominance analysis demonstrated that drinking control strategies, trait self-control, and self-efficacy emerged as the strongest predictors of alcohol use, jointly explaining substantial variance of alcohol use, beyond motivational variables. Kmeans clustering analyses revealed that clusters did not differ in self-efficacy or trait self-control, indicating that behavioral engagement and motivational quality, rather than internal capacity alone, distinguished risk profiles. Structural equation models consistently supported indirect pathways from motivation to alcohol use via self-regulation. Contrary to theoretical expectations, self-efficacy did not robustly moderate motivation and self-regulation or self-regulation and alcohol use pathways. Instead, models specifying self-efficacy as an antecedent demonstrated more consistent effects, with self-efficacy predicting competence satisfaction, trait self-control, and self-regulatory engagement. The results highlight the importance of targeting self-efficacy and behavioral self-regulation alongside motivation strategies in interventions aimed at reducing risky drinking among young adults.

Keywords: Health promotion; Self-control; Self-Determination Theory; Self-regulation theory; Social Cognitive Theory