

## PERSONALITY RISK PROFILES AND DRINKING – MODERATORS TO CONSIDER

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### Aim of Abstract

This symposium aims to better understand how personality risk profiles (sensation seeking, impulsivity, anxiety-sensitivity and depression proneness) relate to drinking initiation in early adolescence and problem drinking in early adulthood. To achieve this, the first presentation examines how personality risk profiles interrelate to predict drinking initiation; the second presentation examines how peer influences moderate the relationship between impulsivity/sensation seeking and drinking initiation; and the third presentation examines how self-efficacy to control heavy drinking moderates the relationship between personality risk profiles and problem drinking in early adulthood.

## **PRESENTATION 1 – THE MODERATING EFFECT OF FRIENDS’ DRINKING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND DRINKER STATUS IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE**

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**Introduction / Issues:** Adolescent drinking has been linked to lifetime alcohol use disorders and comorbid alcohol and mental health disorders, at age 21. The Substance Use Risk Profile Scale (SURPS) is widely utilised to examine the relationship between personality and substance use in young people. However, research is yet to determine how the SURPS personality profiles interact to predict drinking in young people.

**Design and Methods:** Baseline data from 7,018 early adolescents (mean age = 13.52) participating in the Climate Schools Combined study, a national, school-based randomised control trial (74 schools across QLD, NSW, and WA) was used. A hierarchical logistic regression was performed to examine the interactive effects of the SURPS personality profiles on drinker status (ever had a full standard drink).

**Results:** A three-way interaction between the SURPS sensation seeking, impulsivity, and hopelessness profiles was significantly associated with drinker status,  $X^2(9) = 601.995$ ,  $p = .017$ . Individuals high on all three personality profiles (sensation seeking, impulsivity, and hopelessness) were most at risk of initiating drinking.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Currently, personality-targeted interventions treat personality profiles as independent, targeting an individual’s predominant personality profile. However, this study indicates that adolescents who present with high levels of sensation seeking, impulsivity, and hopelessness may be a particularly high-risk group. The results of this study can be used to inform the development of better-targeted early interventions for substance use.

## PRESENTATION 2 – THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMPULSIVITY/SENSATION SEEKING AND SOCIAL COGNITIVE PROCESSES ON DRINKING INITIATION DURING EARLY ADOLESCENCE

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**Introduction and Aims:** Impulsivity and sensation seeking are key risk factors for drinking initiation in early adolescence. Peers also have a notable influence. Yet, there is limited understanding of how these two risk factors interrelate. Using a social cognitive framework the moderating effect of peer influences on the relationship between impulsivity/sensation seeking and drinking was examined.

**Method:** Participants were 2259 (54% Male) predominately Australian (90%) early adolescents in Grade 7 ( $M_{age} = 12.27$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) and 8 ( $M_{age} = 13.12$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ) from 14 schools in South-East Queensland. Regression analyses were conducted examining the moderating influence of peer drinking, and anticipated social outcomes from peers, on the relationship between impulsivity /sensation seeking and drinking initiation.

**Results:** While anticipated social outcomes, peer drinking, sensation seeking and impulsivity all significantly predicted drinking initiation, the only moderating effect found was between impulsivity and anticipated social outcomes. When peers disapproved of drinking, high impulsivity related to greater likelihood of drinking initiation. However, when peers approved of drinking, although adolescents were more likely to initiate drinking, the relationship between impulsivity and sensation seeking was weakened.

**Discussion and Conclusions:** Impulsivity positively relates to drinking, only when peers disapprove of drinking. When peers approve of drinking, adolescents are more likely to initiate drinking regardless of their level of impulsivity. These findings highlight the importance targeting peer approval on drinking, even more so than impulsivity, to delay drinking initiation during early adolescence.

## **PRESENTATION 3 - SELF-EFFICACY TO CONTROL HEAVY DRINKING AS A MODERATOR OF PERSONALITY FACTORS AND PROBLEM DRINKERS**

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**Introduction and Aims:** Impulsivity, sensation seeking, anxiety sensitivity and depression proneness are identified risk factors for youth substance use and abuse. The influence of social cognitive processes on the relationship between these personality profiles and problematic alcohol use is not well understood. The moderating effect of self-efficacy to control drinking was therefore examined.

**Method:** Participants were 394 (54% Female) predominately Australian (85.1%) young people aged 16 to 25 years ( $M_{age} = 20.30$ ,  $SD = 2.13$ ), who, due to their drinking, had come into contact with an emergency department (17.2%) or crisis support centre (82.8%). Alcohol had been consumed on 5.83 ( $SD=4.23$ ) occasions, or 1.70 (1.48) times a week in the four weeks prior, with a total of 57.97 (60.39) standard drinks consumed, or 10.16 (6.00) standard drinks per drinking occasion.

**Results:** Controlled drinking self-efficacy (CDSE) was found to moderate the relationships between anxiety sensitivity and quantity / frequency of drinking; impulsivity and quantity consumed / alcohol-related harm; and depression proneness and alcohol-related harm. In most instances the relationship between the personality profiles and drinking outcomes existed for low, but not high, levels of CDSE.

**Discussion and Conclusions:** It is important to consider the impact of personality risk profiles, in the context of other known determinants of drinking. Building confidence in one's belief to control heavy drinking has the potential to modify the impact of personality risk profiles on problematic drinking.

**Discussion Section:** At the conclusion of the symposium there will be a panel discussion, led by the symposium chair, with an opportunity for questions from the audience. In this discussion there will be a particular focus on practical implications of the moderation findings, and how the targeting of personality risk profiles, and social cognitive processes, can be better integrated into existing and new interventions aimed at delaying drinking initiation and problem drinking in young people.

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