

Normative Feedback Interventions: What happens when perceptions of heavy drinking correctly reflect actual behaviour?

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Student Drinking is a Problem

- Students drink heavily
(e.g., Kypri, Paschall, Langley, Baxter, Cashell-Smith and Bourdeau, 2009)
- Residential College students tend to drink more heavily than their non-residential peers
(Kypri, Langley and Stephenson, 2005)

Interventions

- Social norms
- Personalised feedback interventions
- Normative interventions rely on the assumptions:
 - norms guide behaviour
 - people misperceive average drinking norms

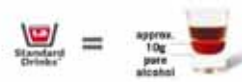
Research Surrounding Accuracy of Perceived Norms is Conflicting

- Most research finds students overestimate others' drinking (e.g., Perkins, 2007)
- One study found students were accurate or even underestimated others' drinking (Wechsler and Kuo, 2000)
- This research will further examine the accuracy of students normative perceptions

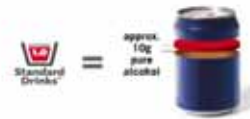
Measurement of Standard Drinks

- Past research asks participants to list the number of standard drinks they consumed
- Example: American studies include the one standard drink definition
 - A 12 oz beer, a 4 oz glass of wine, a shot of liquor or a mixed drink

30ml straight spirits:



330ml can of beer:



100ml glass of table wine:



Present Study

- Measured students perceived drinking norms (injunctive and descriptive) and drinking behaviour at three time points (2 wks, 8wks and 6mths)
 - Injunctive example:
What is the MINIMUM number of drinks that you think is acceptable for a typical First Year University student of the same sex as you to consume when drinking alcohol?
- Online web based diary used
- Actual drinking measured through open questions and later transformed into standard drinks

Present study

- Participants
 - 198 first year students
 - 62.6% females
 - 37.4% males

Results

- Heavy drinkers (females > 4 standard drinks, males > 6 standard drinks)
 - 87.5%
 - male= 79.2%
 - female= 88.7%
- Average drinks consumed per session
 - Females =9.50 std drinks
 - Males= 12.07 std drinks

Norms Not Overestimated

	Female			Male		
	Actual	Perceived	Sig.	Actual	Perceived	Sig.
Number of standard drinks (wk2)	9.2	7.0 (74)	.002	11.2	10.6 (51)	.623
Number of standard drinks (wk8)	9.2	7.4 (49)	.005	12.4	12.3 (27)	.982
Number of standard drinks (6mths)	8.9	7.8 (60)	.153	10.9	13.0 (24)	.092

Note: Number in parentheses indicates the number of participants included in the analysis

Injunctive Analysis

- Average minimum acceptable drinks
 - Males = 3.68
 - Females = 2.29

- Average maximum acceptable drinks
 - Males = 16.68
 - Females = 10.33

- Binge drinking
 - Males = 13.05 drinks
 - Females = 9.33 drinks

Participants Wanted to Drink Less

- Participants' indicated they wanted to drink less
 - males = 38.5%
 - females = 32.3%
- Participants felt they had to drink to meet others' expectations
 - males = 48.7%
 - females = 22.2%

Discussion

- Majority of students engaged in heavy drinking
- Student's normative perceptions were largely accurate (except females at wk2 and wk8)
 - Norms and actual behaviour are above upper limits of responsible drinking
- A need for an intervention was evidenced by the high level of consumption

Discussion

- Extends research by:
 - Monitoring norms over time
 - Addressing underestimation of norms using actual alcohol consumption
 - Only females found to underestimate
 - Fits with Weschler and Kuo (2000) findings
 - Critiqued for using what resembled a peer norms measure instead of actual consumption
 - Our study adds support to Weschler and Kuo (2000) findings by using actual drinking consumption

Findings Pending on Normative Intervention but Feedback from Students....

- Number of people who said yes the intervention was helpful, or no, they didn't think the intervention was helpful (N=149)
 - Yes = 77.18% (n=115)
 - No = 22.82% (n=34)