

Use of alcohol protective behavioral strategies among college students: a critical review

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Abstract

Protective behavioral strategies (PBS) are specific behaviors one can utilize to minimize the harmful consequences of alcohol consumption. Recently, there has been an increasing amount of interest in use of PBS among college students, especially as an intervention target. The purpose of the present comprehensive review of the PBS literature was to examine the measurement of PBS and summarize the quantitative relationships between PBS use and other variables. The review found inconsistency across studies in terms of how the use of PBS is operationalized and found only two PBS measures with good psychometric properties that have been replicated. Although several antecedents to PBS use were identified, most were only examined in single studies. Moderators of the predictive effects of PBS use on outcomes have similarly suffered from lack of replication in the literature. Of all 62 published reports reviewed, 80% reported only cross-sectional data, which is unfortunate given that PBS use may change over time and in different contexts. In addition, only two attempted to minimize potential recall biases

associated with retrospective assessment of PBS use, and only two used an approach that allowed the examination of both within-subject and between-subject effects. In terms of the gaps in the literature, there is a dearth of longitudinal studies of PBS use, especially intensive longitudinal studies, which are integral to identifying more specifically how, when, and for whom use of PBS can be protective.

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