Autonomy in relation to alcohol use and motivation to alcohol use: A prevention perspective

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Background
• The role of psychological factors in students’ drinking and drinking patterns is very important not only for targeting prevention programs but also for the identification of those factors which might be important for behavior change (Kuntsche et al., 2010).

• Autonomy is a relatively new concept of the current theory in health psychology and its importance has been recognized in the process of inducing as well as maintaining behavioral change (Ng et al., 2012).

• The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between autonomy and alcohol use among university students and test whether the motivation to drink mediates this relationship.

Materials and methods
Sample
• The data used in the analysis consisted of 719 students (Mean age = 21.25; SD = 1.99; 59% women) studying in Slovakia.

Measures
• Autonomous functioning was measured by the Index of Autonomous Functioning scale (Weinstein et al. 2012) which measures three aspects of inter-individual differences in the tendency to function in an autonomous way: Self-congruence/Authorship (Cronbach’s α=0.80) Interest-taking: (Cronbach’s α= 0.81) Susceptibility to control (Cronbach’s α= 0.60).

• Alcohol use was assessed by the AUDIT (The Alcohol Use Identification Test) (Barbor et al. 2001). Two subscales were used measuring alcohol consumption (α=0.80) and negative consequences of alcohol use (α=0.80).

• Motivation of alcohol use was measured by the DMQ-R (Drinking Motivation Questionnaire-Revised version) (Kuntsche & Kuntsche 2009). This measure consists of 20 items and identifies four types of motivation of alcohol use: mood enhancement, social motivation, conformity and coping (α=0.70-0.90).

Statistical analyses
• The data were analyzed using regression analyses and bootstrapping procedures were used to test the indirect effects.

Results
• The regression model revealed that autonomy (Authorship/Self-congruence) was negatively related to alcohol use when measured by the total score of AUDIT [β=-.174, p≤.001]. Further analysis showed that this relationship was found for both the components consumption [β=-.130, p≤.001] and alcohol related consequences [β=-.164, p≤.001].

• The observed effects were found to be mediated by four motivations to drink: mood enhancement, social motivation, coping and conformity (Figures 1 & 2).

• The remaining components Interest-taking and Susceptibility to control were not significantly related to alcohol use variables.

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Figure 1 AUTONOMY- MOTIVATION- ALCOHOL USE

Figure 2 AUTONOMY- MOTIVATION- ALCOHOL RELATED CONSEQUENCES

Conclusion
• Autonomy as a relatively new concept in health psychology should be recognized as a relevant factor in prevention research and prevention practice of alcohol use among university students.

• Pathways such as motivation to drink are important mediating agents and should be considered in prevention strategies.

References