

SOCIAL DRINKING CONTEXTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON PROBLEMATIC DRINKING AT AGE 30: AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

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Introduction and Aims: It is important to understand the social drinking contexts in which problematic drinking occurs. Most evidence on the subject has been conducted among college students and may not be appropriate to the growing trend of alcohol use as young people grow into their thirties. We aim to investigate the social contexts associated with problematic drinking among adults aged 30 years old.

Method: We used data from 2,490 young adults who completed the 30-year follow-up phase of the Mater-University of Queensland Study of Pregnancy and its Outcomes (MUSP) a prospective study that commenced in 1981. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to identify latent constructs of drinking contexts and regression analysis to assess the role of these contexts in problematic drinking (measured using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test).

Results: Three distinct drinking contexts were identified, each for men and women, which differed by gender. Subsequent Structural Equation Models, adjusted for potential confounders indicated that for both men and women, 'drinking alone', and 'drinking with friends', at parties or licenced premises were associated with problematic drinking. Among women, 'drinking alone' was more strongly linked to problematic drinking than was drinking in other contexts. 'Drinking in the workplace' (men only) and 'drinking at home' (women only) did not lead to problematic drinking.

Discussions and Conclusions: This is the first study that examines the impact of drinking contexts on problematic drinking among young adults entering their thirties. Drinking both socially and alone, appeared to be associated with problematic drinking.

Implications for Practice or Policy: The study advances our understanding of which drinking contexts present risks for problematic drinking among this understudied age group.

Implications for Translational Research: This study adds to the limited evidence on young adults in regards to which drinking contexts can be targeted for prevention.