Are consumers of alcohol and caffeinated energy drinks risk takers?

Authors:

DAVID NEWCOMBE¹, BREANNA KNAEBE¹, REUBEN MALLOY¹, AMY PEACOCK²,³, RAIMONDO BRUNO².

¹Centre for Addiction Research, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand
²University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia;
³National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia

Introduction: Alcohol mixed with energy (AmED) use has been purported to increase risky behaviour and alcohol consumption. Recent within-subject studies have questioned this. The current study sought to replicate and extend these findings by examining within-subject self-reported risk-taking following AmED use (vs alcohol use only), as well as the difference in risk-taking propensity, in a New Zealand sample.

Method: Data were collected in 2014 using a modified version of an online survey [1] that included a measure of risk-taking behaviour and risk-taking propensity.

Results: Of the respondents (n=330), the majority reported consuming alcohol, and 138 AmEDs in the past 6 months. The odds of engaging in eight of twenty-six risk taking behaviours was significantly lower (p<.05) in AmED versus alcohol drinking sessions. There was no difference in the amount of alcohol consumed between alcohol-only (mean±sd std drinks = 6.41±4.99) and AmED sessions (mean±sd std drinks = 6.07±4.12). Maximum intake during a drinking session in the last six months was greater during alcohol-only sessions (mean±sd std drinks = 12.3±6.96) than during AmED sessions (mean± std drinks = 8.29±5.69). There was no significant difference in general risk-taking propensity between those who consumed AmEDs and those that did not.

Conclusions: Our findings indicate that AmED use does not appear to be related to increase risk-taking behaviour or alcohol consumption, and may in fact decrease risk-taking behaviour. This decrease in risk-taking could be postulated to be the result of the increased alertness provided by AmED use and this hypothesis should be further explored.

Reference:


Disclosure of Interest Statement

DN has received funding from the Health Promotion Agency of New Zealand that is funded from Vote Health, the levy on alcohol produced or imported for sale in New Zealand and part of the problem gambling levy. AP and RB have previously received placebo samples from Red Bull for an experimental study in 2012; this organisation did not provide any funding and had no involvement in study design, analysis and reporting. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study.