

Salient Beliefs regarding Alcohol Reduction and Cessation among Thai Teenagers

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Abstract : Alcohol consumption ranks among the top six of health-risk behaviors that lead to disability and death among Thai teenagers. Underage drinkers have higher health risks than their non-drinking peers do. This study, therefore, aimed to explore salient beliefs of Thai teenagers with alcohol reduction and cessation based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour theoretical framework. Participants were 225 high-school and vocational school students, most of whom (60.9%) consumed alcohol almost daily (5-6 times / week), and one-third of whom (33.8%) reported habitual moderate drink. The average age was 16.5 (SD = 0.9), and the average age of the first use of alcohol was 13.7 (SD = 2.2). Instrument was an open-ended questionnaire that elicited beliefs about having alcohol reduction / cessation in the past 12 months. Findings revealed salient benefit beliefs of alcohol reduction / cessation among the teens such as improved physical and mental health, accident and violence avoidance, less sexual risks, money and time saving, better academic performance, and improved relationships. In contrast, the teens identified several disadvantage beliefs such as deteriorating health, social awkwardness, lack of little fun, excitement, and experience, physical uneasiness, stress, and lack of self-confidence. Salient normative groups for alcohol reduction / cessation included parents, elder relatives, siblings, close friends, teachers, boy / girlfriends, and seniors / juniors at school. Situations influencing alcohol reduction / cessation included quarrels with boy / girlfriends, family conflicts, peer pressure, partying and socializing, festive holidays and anniversary celebration, and visiting entertainment places, etc. This study provides empirical evidence that help to identify normative attitudes towards alcohol reduction / cessation and may thus be an important knowledge for public health campaigns seeking to reduce alcohol consumption in this population.

Keywords : alcohol consumption reduction, cessation, salient belief, Thai teenagers

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