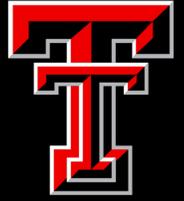




# SELF-REGULATION IS LINKED TO DECREASED COMORBID DEPRESSION AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS IN ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS



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## Introduction

- Recent data suggest one out of four college students can be classified as Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOAs).
- ACOAs are more likely than their peers to develop an AUD and experience other mental health problems such as mood disorders.
- Despite their increased risk, not all ACOAs develop an AUD or experience other mental health problems. Protective factors, such as the use of self-regulation strategies, are thought to play a role in resiliency against developing AUDs.
- High self-regulation has been found to negatively relate to substance abuse.
- Research suggests collegiate ACOAs with higher levels of self-regulation experience fewer negative alcohol consequences, suggesting self-regulation may buffer against negative alcohol consequences in this population.

### Current Study

- Using cross-sectional data, the current study examined the extent to which self-regulation acts as a protective factor in the relation between family history of alcoholism and a) problematic alcohol use, b) depression symptomology, and c) comorbid (i.e. co-occurring) depression symptomology and problematic alcohol use in a collegiate sample.

## Method

### Participants

- 661 undergraduates
  - Mean age = 18.99 years (range 18-25)
  - 66% Female; 75% White, 23% Hispanic; 18% ACOAs

## Method

### Measures

- The Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ)
  - 63-item measure of self-regulatory processes on a 5-point scale.
  - Participant scores less than 213, 214-238, and 239 or greater indicate low, medium, and high levels of self-regulation, respectively.
- Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale short version (CES-D)
  - 8-item measure of depression symptoms on a 4-point scale.
  - Participant scores of 11 or greater indicated risk of depression.
- Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)
  - 8-item measure of alcohol use frequency and alcohol-related problems on a 5-point scale.
  - Participant scores of 8 or greater indicated problematic alcohol use.
- Short Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (SMAST)
  - 13-item measure of parental alcohol problems with a form for mothers and another form for fathers.
  - Participant scores of 5 or greater indicated family history of alcoholism.
- Those who were positive for both AUDIT and CES-D cutoffs were coded as comorbid.

### Analytic Procedure

- Logistic regression was used to analyze the data.
  - SAS 9.4 was used for the analysis.
  - Self-regulation was dummy coded

## Results

- Rates of positive AUDIT, CES-D, and comorbid depression and alcohol problems by ACOAs status and self-regulation level are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Rates of positive AUDIT, CES-D and comorbid depression and alcohol problems by ACOAs status and self-regulation level

	ACOAs			Non-ACOAs		
	Self-Regulation			Self-Regulation		
	Low (n = 58)	Medium (n = 42)	High (n = 21)	Low (n = 128)	Medium (n = 240)	High (n = 172)
AUDIT	63.79	30.95	9.52	38.28	27.50	20.14
CES-D	36.21	11.90	19.05	28.13	9.58	6.40
Comorbid	22.41	4.76	0.00	9.38	2.50	1.74

- AUDIT
  - For both medium and high levels of self-regulation, compared to low levels, there was evidence of a ACOAs by self-regulation interaction
  - The effect of ACOAs was attenuated for those higher in self-regulation
- CES-D
  - There was a marginal ( $p = .08$ ) main effect (OR = 1.59) for ACOAs on depression when adjusting for self-regulation
  - Both medium and high levels of self-regulation had lower rates of depression, compared to low levels
  - Tests of ACOAs\*self-regulation interactions were non-significant
- Comorbid Depression and Alcohol Problems
  - Due to sparse cells, self-regulation was treated as continuous
  - Both ACOAs (positive) and self-regulation (negative) were significantly related to comorbid depression and alcohol problems
  - The test of ACOAs\*self-regulation interaction was non-significant

## Conclusions

- Individual differences in self-regulation may contribute to differential rates of mental health problems among ACOAs.
  - Self-regulation moderated the influence of ACOAs status on alcohol problems
  - Differences in self-regulation may help to explain the resilience of some ACOAs who do not develop problematic alcohol use or other mental health problems.
- Collegiate ACOAs (and non-AOCAs) with lower self-regulation are at increased risk of experiencing depression symptoms, problems related to alcohol use, and comorbid depression symptoms and problems related to alcohol use.
- Targeting self-regulation may enhance prevention and treatment efforts that seek to reduce negative outcomes experienced by ACOAs, especially those with low levels of self-control.

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