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Cognitive vulnerability as a predictor of alcohol misuse and posttraumatic stress in trauma-exposed university students.

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ABSTRACT

Cognitive vulnerabilities have been implicated in the development of post-traumatic stress disorder and alcohol use disorders, two disorders that commonly co-occur. The comorbidity of these two disorders continues to pose a significant threat to the well being of university students. This study investigated the associations between the cognitive vulnerability of negative attributional style and both post-traumatic stress symptoms and alcohol use patterns. The number of reported traumatic events were also included in analyses. A battery of self-report questionnaires was completed by 123 university undergraduate students (mean age of 20.41 years). Negative attributional style was found to be significantly associated with post-traumatic stress symptoms, but not with alcohol use. It was also suggested that multiple traumas have an impact on post-traumatic stress, despite levels of alcohol use. These results suggested that the cognitive vulnerability of negative attributional style is predictive of posttraumatic stress in students and research in this area is valuable for increasing resilience, prevention and recovery among trauma survivors. Recommendations for future research, especially concerning multiple traumatisation is discussed.

Keywords: attributional style; alcohol; attribution; cognitive vulnerability; trauma; post-traumatic stress