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# The Chicken or the Harley : specific executive functions in risk takers and non-risk takers.

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Abstract

The literature reports an association between substance use, a form of risk taking, and executive function deficits. In substance users, however, the direction of effect is unclear: substance use may cause, or be caused by, poor executive functioning. The current study examines affect intensity (implicated as an explanatory factor) and the executive functions inhibition, switching, and decision making in 20 Harley-Davidson riders (as risk takers) and 18 golfers (as normal controls) to set the stage for the direction of effect, chicken or egg problem to be answered. Relationships were found between group membership and the negative affect intensity and interference scores. The groups differed significantly on the negative affect intensity score. The researcher concludes that risk taking is associated with the intensity of negative affect and with inhibition alone. Future research into whether the relationship with the inhibition score translates into a real difference is implied as is investigation into the implications of the difference between the risk and non-risk taking groups in negative affect intensity. The stage is set for the chicken or egg problem to be answered. Directions for future research are supplied.