

# Towards narrowing the intention-behaviour gap: the case of quitting binge drinking among the youth

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## Abstract

Binge drinking is a problematic behaviour and of high prevalence in many countries around the world including South Africa, particularly among the youth. The behaviour has serious health and social consequences which negatively impact the individual engaging in it and the society they are a part of. Efforts to reduce binge drinking from a social marketing perspective have been made and focus on applying behaviour theories to understand factors that influence desired behaviour change. Previous research that drew from behaviour theories such as the theory of planned behaviour confirm that intention is one of the strongest and most proximal predictors of behaviour. However, an intention-behaviour gap exists, as intentions do not always translate into behaviour. Past studies have investigated the gap in other behaviours, but not on quitting binge drinking. To further understand how to narrow the gap, this study drew from behaviour theories and prior studies to investigate whether social support and habit strength moderated the intention-behaviour relationship in the context of quitting binge drinking. An online survey was conducted using a sample of 810 youth aged 18 to 34 from Gauteng province in South Africa. Structural equation modelling using SmartPLS was used to test the relationships of an extended theory of planned behaviour and the moderation. The findings confirmed that intention is the strongest predictor of behaviour. The study also contributed new knowledge as social support and habit strength were found to moderate the relationship between intention to quit and actual behaviour of quitting. This knowledge can inform social marketers involved in planning campaigns focused on reducing binge drinking among the youth. Building social support structures when designing social marketing campaigns such as support groups as well as promoting other non-alcohol related fun activities for new habit formation is recommended to narrow the intention-behaviour gap.

Key words: social marketing, behaviour change, social-support, habit strength, binge drinking