



THE PRESENCE OF BEHAVIORAL PATTERN "ABSTAINER PARENT" IN FAMILY PREVENTS ADOLESCENTS FROM REGULAR ALCOHOL DRINKING

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ABSTRACT

This work presents data about the importance of drinking behavioral patterns of parents in relation to regular drinking in adolescents. We conducted an inquiry using an original questionnaire, classifying alcoholic drinking as regular, social (incidental) and abstinence. The adolescents were asked to evaluate the patterns of drinking used by them and their parents. 903 students (aged 15-19) were investigated: 169 of them identified themselves as regular drinkers (RD), and 279 - as abstainers (ND). These two groups were compared statistically. We found that if both parents are abstainers, the risk for adolescents to consume alcohol regularly decreased four fold (OR=0.24; 95%CI=0.15-0.39). If only one parent drinks alcohol, regardless of the drinking pattern, he or she does not create a risk of regular drinking among teenagers. If both parents drink alcohol, the risk of regular drinking among adolescents increases four times (OR=4.07; 95%CI=2.69-6.16). If both parents are social drinkers, the risk increases twice (OR=1.84; 95%CI=1.02-3.35), but if both parents drink regularly – the risk increases five times (OR=5.31; 95%CI=2.77-10.16). It seems that the presence of behavioral pattern "abstainer parent" is an important protective factor against regular drinking in adolescence. Perhaps it gives the adolescents an alternative vision over the lifestyle that allows them to create correct attitude to drinking.

Key words: social learning theory, modeling, parenting behavior, parental drinking

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time characterized by the onset and escalation of alcohol use (1) and experimentation with alcohol is a normative behaviour. It is well known that adolescents' alcohol drinking patterns can predict heavy alcohol consumption and alcohol abuse at a later age (2-7). Thus, a better understanding of the various risk and protective factors that influence adolescent alcohol use is crucial in developing initiatives for health promotion and effective prevention strategies, at both the individual and societal levels.

It is well known that parents alcohol drinking associates with an increased risk of alcohol consumption among adolescents (8-10). The

attitudes and actions of parents both influence the degree to which adolescents use substances (11) and significant effects have been shown for parents' alcohol use on the alcohol use of their child depending on the amount and frequency of each parent's use (12, 13). One of the major theories that examine development of alcohol use in adolescence is social learning theory (14-17). This theory emphasizes exposure to alcohol-using role models and posits that adolescent alcohol use is learned behavior acquired through social interactions (17). The positive association between parental alcohol use and drinking in their children is typically understood as evidence of social learning (18) and parental modeling (8, 13, 19-20). Youth formulate "alcohol schema" by generating beliefs around parental drinking prior to personal use (21, 22). In this regard it is interesting to see what behavior would choose to copy children

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if their parents expose different behavioral patterns. Our purpose is to investigate the importance of drinking behavioral patterns of parents in relation to regular drinking in adolescents.

METHOD

We conducted an inquiry using an original questionnaire. The adolescents were asked to evaluate the alcohol drinking of themselves and their parents, classifying the frequency of drinking as regular, social (occasional) and abstinence. 903 students (aged 15-19) were investigated: 169 of them (18.72%) identified themselves as regular drinkers (RD), and 279 (30.9%) - as abstainers (ND). These two groups were compared statistically about drinking habits of their parents.

RESULTS

The analysis of the data shows that the RD had significantly more risky family environment in relation to alcohol use. If at least one of the parents drinks alcohol, the risk of adolescent drinking increased significantly (OR=4.17; 95%CI=2.55-6.84). Conversely, if both parents are abstainers, adolescents' regular alcohol consumption is significantly less likely (OR=0.24; 95%CI= 0.15-0.39). It seems that parental alcohol drinking predisposes regular alcohol drinking among adolescents, but we also found that if only one parent drinks alcohol, parental alcohol drinking does not increase the risk of adolescent regular alcohol drinking ($P<0.05$) regardless of the parental drinking pattern (occasional or regular). Parents drinking significantly affects the risk of adolescents regular alcohol drinking only if both parents drink alcohol (OR=4.07; 95%CI= 2.69-6.16) and the risk increases progressively with the increase in the frequency of parents' drinking. If both parents are social drinkers, the risk increases almost twice (OR=1.84; 95%CI=1.02-3.35), if one parent is social drinker and the other one is regular drinker, the risk increases more than twice (OR=2.21; 95%CI=1.23-3.98), and if both parents drink regularly, risk increases five times (OR=5.31; 95%CI=2.77-10.16)

CONCLUSION

As other authors, we also found that parents alcohol drinking associates with an increased risk of alcohol consumption among adolescents (8-10) depending on the frequency of parent's use (12, 13) . In contrast with social learning theory (14-17) our data do not confirm that

adolescent alcohol use is only learned behavior (17) and direct result of parental modeling (8, 13, 19-20) . The positive association between parental alcohol use and adolescents regular drinking that we also found is hardly understood entirely as evidence of social learning (18) as well as our data demonstrate that the presence of behavioral pattern " abstainer parent" is an important protective factor against regular drinking in adolescence, nevertheless other parent drinks alcohol socially or regularly. Obviously, when parents expose contradicting behavioral models social learning theory can not explain childrens' behavior. In this cases we found that conscious choice could probably dominate over modeling in some circumstances and this protects adolescents from regular alcohol drinking. These findings show that the determinants of conscious behavior should be understood and employed in prevention of the regular alcohol use among adolescents.

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