



DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS FOR REGULAR ALCOHOL USE IN ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is an investigation of the association between regular drinking (RD) in adolescence, drinking behavioral patterns of significant others and their alcohol offers. We conducted an interview using an original questionnaire, classifying alcoholic drinking as regular, social and abstinence. The adolescents were asked to evaluate the drinking patterns used by them and their significant others and to indicate who offers them alcohol. 169 regularly drinking adolescents were compared with 279 abstainers. We found that regular drinking is the dominant pattern of drinking among significant others of RD adolescents and increases the risk of regular drinking (RRD) two (in fathers - OR=2.15; 95%CI=1.46-3.18), five (in mothers - OR=5.27; 95%CI=2.85-9.74) and seven fold (in friends - OR=6.82; 95%CI=4.46-10.44 and lovers - OR=7.15; 95%CI=4.07-12.56). The social drinking in fathers and lovers do not affect the RRD, but in mothers it increases RRD threefold (OR=2.73; 95%CI=1.77-4.20), and in friends - decreases RRD three fold (OR=0.34; 0.19-0.62). Alcohol offers increase RRD if they are made by fathers (OR=3.12; 95%CI=1.82-5.32), mothers (OR=3.21; 95%CI=1.44-7.12) and friends (OR=1.71; 95%CI=1.16-2.53), but not by lovers. **Conclusions:** RD in adolescence is influenced by significant others much more indirectly through behavioral pattern „regular drinking” than through direct offers of alcohol.

Key words: parental behavior, significant others, behavioral modeling

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 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 known that parents alcohol drinking associates with an increased risk of alcohol consumption among adolescents (8-10). Parent drinking rather than parenting style predicted heavy drinking by offsprings and mothers'

drinking is a slightly better predictor than fathers' drinking for both daughters and sons (11).

There is also strong and unequivocal evidence for a positive relationship between peer substance use and adolescent substance use (12), but it is not clear how exactly peers impact adolescent substance use. Chassin et al. (12) suggests that peer selection processes, peer influence processes, and cognitive biases (i.e., the false consensus effect) all may play a role, and it is important to remember that the peer

context grows increasingly influential, as adolescents mature (13).

Two major theories examine differently development of alcohol use in adolescence: social learning theory (14-17), and social control theory (17, 18). Social learning theory emphasizes exposure to alcohol-using role models and posits that adolescent alcohol use is learned behavior acquired through social

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interactions (17). Social control theory focuses on the constraining function of social bonds. The social bond may be weakened when parents do not exercise supervision of their adolescents (19) and there is much research supporting a relation between adolescent alcohol use and parenting style (12, 20-23).

In this regard it is interesting to investigate the association between adolescents regular drinking and drinking behavioral patterns of significant others and their alcohol offers.

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 and alcohol offers of their significant others.

RESULTS

The data of the study indicate that social drinking of fathers and lovers does not affect the risk for regular drinking among adolescents. Mothers' social drinking increases the risk for regular drinking among adolescents almost threefold (OR=2,73; 95%CI=1,77-4,20) and social drinking of the friends decreases the risk three fold (OR=0,34; 0,19-0,62).

The regular drinking of significant others increases significantly the risk for regular drinking among adolescents. Fathers regular drinking increases the risk twice (OR=2.15; 95%CI=1,46-3,18). Mothers regular drinking increases the risk five fold (OR=5.27; 95%CI=2,85-9.74). The most significant increase of the risk of adolescents' regular drinking is due to the regular drinking of the friends (OR=6.82; 95%CI=4.46-10.44) and girlfriends/boyfriends (OR=7.15; 95%CI=4.07-12.56).

Alcohol offers made by significant others increases significantly the risk of adolescents' regular alcohol drinking if it is made by fathers (OR=3,12; 95%CI=1,82-5,32), mothers (OR=3,21; 95%CI=1,44-7,12) and friends (OR=1,71; 95%CI=1,16-2,53), but not by girlfriends/boyfriends.

CONCLUSIONS

Our data are consistent with the data from the literature about higher impact of mothers' drinking modeling on adolescents regular alcohol consumption, compared to fathers one. Even occasional mothers drinking increases the risk of adolescents regular alcohol drinking, while fathers occasional drinking has no impact and mothers regular drinking seems to be more risky for adolescents regular alcohol consumption than fathers one. Mothers and fathers alcohol offers seem to have equal impact on adolescents regular alcohol consumption. Taken together this data suggest that mothers behavior is more important in the context of modeling behavior but equally important in the context of parental supervision.

According to our data peers modeling dominates over parental modeling as it concerns alcohol consumption. We found that occasional alcohol drinking in friends had protective effect over adolescent regular alcohol consumption while peers regular alcohol drinking increased the risk much more than fathers or even mothers regular drinking. On the contrary, alcohol offers made by peers have less impact than those made by parents. May be Brown (13) correctly supposes that peer context grows increasingly influential, as adolescents mature but risky parent modeling and supervision may contribute for peer selection processes that increases the risk for adolescents regular alcohol consumption.

This results indicate the importance of mothers modeling and parents supervision for the reduction of the risk of adolescents regular alcohol consumption. Another important task for investigation is discovering the determinants of peer modeling, in order to develop effective preventive interventions.

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