

THE PRESENCE OF NON-DRINKING PARENT BEHAVIORAL MODEL IN A FAMILY PREVENTS ADOLESCENTS FROM SOCIAL ALCOHOL

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Summary

Parental alcohol drinking is associated with an increased risk of alcohol consumption in adolescents and social drinking is often the first step to regular alcohol consumption. The purpose of the study was to investigate the association between social drinking in adolescence and parental alcohol consumption. We conducted a survey, using a self-completed questionnaire about alcohol drinking habits. Of 903 students (aged 15-19), 279 (30.9%) were found to be abstainers (NDA) and 455 (50.39%) were social drinkers (SDA). These two groups were statistically compared for drinking patterns of their parents. It was found that SDA are fourfold less likely than NDA to have two alcohol abstaining parents (OR=0.26, 95%CI =0.19-0.37) and fourfold more likely to have two alcohol drinking parents (OR=3.89, 95%CI =2.77-5.45). There were no significant differences between SDA and NDA regarding probability to have one abstaining and one socially drinking parent, and SDA were less likely to have one abstaining and one regularly drinking parent (OR=0.54, 0.37-0.8). The social learning theory explains well adolescent drinking patterns when there is no contradiction in parental modeling. It seems, however, that the presence of contradicting patterns of parental alcohol drinking needs another explanation. Since contradicting parental modeling prevents adolescents from social drinking, it could be considered in health prevention intervention.

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Introduction

It is well known that parental alcohol drinking associates with an increased risk of alcohol consumption in adolescents [1-3]. The attitudes and actions of parents influence the degree to which adolescents use substances [4] and significant effects have been shown for parental alcohol use on alcohol use of their child, depending on the amount and

frequency of use in each parent [5, 6]. The role of parents for adolescents alcohol drinking is often explained by means of the social learning theory and social control theory [7, 8]. The social learning theory [7-11] emphasizes exposure to alcohol-using role models and posits that adolescent alcohol use is learned behavior acquired through social interactions [7] and parental modeling [1, 6, 12, 13]. According to this model, youths formulate "alcohol schema" by generating beliefs around parental drinking prior to personal use [14, 15]. Social control theory focuses on the constraining function of social bonds and explains adolescent alcohol use with poor parenting style [13, 16-18].

Social learning and social control are in fact manifestations of social dominance (unilateral social relations). The unilateral parental control is mainly represented by parental monitoring and consistent discipline that have been shown to reduce adolescents' alcohol use [16-18] and/or delay initiation of alcohol use [1, 16]. Poor parent monitoring and inconsistent discipline have been found to associate with adolescents' alcohol use [13, 19]. In middle and late adolescence, youths tend to shift from unilateral to bilateral (mutual) relations with their parents. While in early adolescence [16] parent discipline is the dominant type of positive parenting style, later relations shift to bilateral interactions [20], based on communication, nurturance, and support. Adolescents' emancipation seems to be a part of the process of establishment and validation of their own personality.

Social learning theory does not predict adolescents drinking behavior if parents expose different drinking pattern, as in this case a contradiction between models appears. In this regard it is interesting to see what behavior children would choose to copy if their parents expose different behavioral patterns. We have already reported [21] that the presence of an „abstainer parent" behavioral pattern is an important protective factor against regular drinking in adolescence, no matter whether the other parent drinks alcohol socially or regularly. In this paper we aim to find out if such a conclusion could also be referred to social drinking in adolescence.

Methods

Conception and measurements

In order to test social modeling and parental

supervision, we asked questions about association between drinking patterns of parents and adolescents. As we studied drinking models (habits), we did not ask respondents to give details about the quantity and type of alcohol consumed by them and their significant others, but to focus on the drinking pattern. In this regard we categorized three drinking patterns: no drinking (abstainers); casual drinking (social drinking – only on special and rare occasions) and regular drinking (no need of special occasions to drink). Respondents were asked to indicate which pattern corresponds to drinking behavior of their fathers and mothers, as well as to their own drinking behavior.

In addition, questions about drinking offers coming from fathers and mothers were used as an indicator of parenting style.

Study design

All students from 9th to 12th grade (age range 15-19) in three secondary schools of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria were invited to participate in the survey. The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee for Clinical Research of the Medical Faculty, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria and the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education of Bulgaria. To increase response rate, the survey was conducted in class hours in cooperation with school authorities. Students were placed in a large room situated at sufficient distance from each other to provide independent and anonymous answers to the questions. To provide maximum reliability of the data, the questionnaires were collected in a sealed urn and each student was free to refuse participation.

Participants

A total of 1077 students were invited to participate in the survey. Of these, 1051 accepted to participate (consent rate: 97.6%), and 903 filled out the questionnaire correctly, so they were included in the study (response rate: 83.8%). Among 903 respondents, 455 students (50.39%) identified themselves as social (occasional) drinkers (SDA) and 279 (30.9%) – as abstainers (NDA).

Data analysis

The groups of abstainers (NDA) and social drinkers (SDA) were compared statistically about drinking patterns of their parents. Statistical analysis was performed with the SPSS statistical package. Descriptive statistics, Chi-

square test and logistic regression were applied.

Results

Analysis of the drinking patterns (Table 1) revealed that SDA were about fourfold less likely to have both parents abstainers (OR=0.26) and about twice less likely to have one parent abstainer and other – regular drinker (OR=0.54). SDA were significantly more likely to have both parents drinkers (OR=3.89). Among the three possible combinations of parents' drinking patterns, SDA were most likely to have both

parents social drinkers (OR=3.64) although they were also more likely to have one parent social drinker and other – regular drinker (OR=2.13) as well as both parents – regular drinkers (OR=2.23).

SDA were less likely to have negative attitude to drunkenness (OR=0.58) and this attitude did not seem to be replicated from parents, as no significant differences in parents' attitude to drunkenness were found, but SDA were more likely to have received offers for alcohol consumption from both their parents (Table 2). In this regard fathers seem more encouraging than mothers.

Table 1. Significant differences in drinking patterns of significant others of SDA and NDA

	SDA (n=455) % (SE)	NDA (n=279) % (SE)	p<	OR	95%CI
Both parents are abstainers	15.38 ±1.69	40.86 ±2.94	0.001	0.26	0.19-0.37
One of the parents is an abstainer	32.53 ±2.20	37.28 ±2.89	NS	0.81	0.59-1.11
One of the parents is an abstainer, the other is a social drinker	18.90 ±1.84	14.70 ±2.12	NS	1.35	0.90-2.03
One of the parents is an abstainer, the other is a regular drinker	13.63 ±1.61	22.58 ±2.50	0.010	0.54	0.37-0.80
Both parents are alcohol drinkers	52.09 ±2.34	21.86 ±2.47	0.001	3.89	2.77-5.45
Both parents are social drinkers	25.49 ±2.04	8.60 ±1.68	0.001	3.64	2.28-5.81
One of the parents is a social drinker, the other is a regular drinker	16.04 ±1.72	8.24 ±1.65	0.010	2.13	1.30-3.49
Both parents are regular drinkers	10.55 ±1.44	5.02 ±1.31	0.010	2.23	1.21-4.13

Table 2. Significant differences in attitudes to drinking and drinking offers coming from parents of SDA and NDA

	SDA (n=455) % (SE)	NDA (n=279) % (SE)	p<	OR	95%CI
Drunks are very unpleasant for the:					
respondent	38.68 ±2.28	51.97 ±2.99	0.001	0.58	0.43-0.79
respondent's father	21.76 ±1.93	23.30 ±2.53	NS	0.92	0.64-1.31
respondent's mother	42.42 ±2.32	38.71 ±2.92	NS	1.17	0.86-1.58
Offers for alcohol consumption coming from the:					
father	20 ±1.88	9.32 ±1.74	0.001	2.43	1.53-3.87
mother	8.57 ±1.31	3.58 ±1.11	0.010	2.52	1.24-5.14
at least one of the parents	21.98 ±1.94	11.11 ±1.88	0.001	2.25	1.46-3.48

Discussion

Our findings confirm the widespread opinion that parents' alcohol drinking associates with an

increased risk of alcohol consumption among adolescents [1-3] depending on the frequency of parent's alcohol use [5, 6]. According to our data, this association may be due to social learning and

parental modeling, but only if both parents drink. It seems that SDA tend follow their parents' drinking patterns especially when both parents have same drinking patterns. But this is not true in case of confronting drinking patterns. When one of the parents is an abstainer, the other parent's drinking did not increase the chance of adolescent social drinking. Obviously, when parents expose contradicting behavioral models social learning theory cannot explain children's behavior. It seems that parental behavioral consistence is important condition for the effectiveness of parental modeling. Parental models are convincing if both parents act in same manner.

Although SDA did not replicate the parents' attitude to drunkenness they were more likely to be encouraged to drink in family. This parenting style supposes more permissive attitude to drinking in SDA parents and confirms the role of poor parenting style [13, 16-18] in adolescent alcohol use. We found that both parents were not equally encouraging SDA drinking and fathers seem more encouraging than mothers (20.0% versus 8.0%). Parental drinking encouragement increases 2.5 times social drinking in adolescence, but about 80% of SDA did not receive drinking offers from their parents while 52.0% of SDA have both parents alcohol drinkers. It seems that parental control is less influential than parental modeling in adolescence.

Conclusion

Although both parental modeling and parenting style are responsible for social drinking in adolescence:

Parental modeling seems to be more influential than parenting style.

Parental modeling demands consistency in parental drinking patterns.

Parental drinking encouragement, although less effective, do not need both encouraging parents, one is enough.

Nevertheless that fathers offer alcohol more, mother's and father's offers are equally influential on social drinking in adolescence.

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