

PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON ADOLESCENTS' ALCOHOL USE

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Introduction:

Many Australian adolescents are exposed to regular drinking in the home. However, the relative importance of mother's or father's drinking, and whether this varies by gender of the adolescent, is still unclear. Another important issue is the role of parental monitoring in moderating or mediating links between parent and adolescent drinking. This paper will use recent data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) to examine these relationships. This is the first study to examine the relationship between parent drinking and adolescent drinking in a contemporary, nationally representative Australian cohort.

Method / Approach:

Using data from the LSAC K cohort, we focus on the relationship between parents' drinking when children were aged 12-13 and adolescents' drinking at age 14-15. Multivariate analysis is used to examine the relationship between parents and adolescents alcohol use, controlling for a range of characteristics of the study child and their household. A structural equation model is used to examine the pathways between mother's drinking, parental monitoring and adolescents' alcohol use.

Key Findings:

Risky parental drinking increases the likelihood of adolescent drinking, after controlling for a range of socio-demographic risk factors, including drinking amongst adolescents' friends. Poorer parental monitoring explains some of this association for boys, but not for girls.

Conclusions:

Parent drinking, especially if it is frequent and heavy, increases the likelihood of early adolescent drinking. However, this association is only one part of a complex developmental pathway involving parenting practices, family resources, community disadvantage, peer groups and alcohol availability.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

The results are important for the development of family-based policy and prevention strategies that endeavour to reduce early adolescent drinking. For example, our findings may be helpful for public health agencies that provide parents with information about parenting and strategies to delay their children's introduction to alcohol.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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