

Influence factors of adolescent drinking behavior

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Abstract: Adolescent drinking as a long-standing social issue that has been exacerbated with economic development, has always been a matter of keen interest to research fields such as public health, education, and mental health. Many scholars have conducted extensive theoretical and empirical studies on the influence factors of adolescent drinking behavior, from aspects such as adolescents' own characteristics and social environmental factors. Therefore, this article attempts to review the influence factors of adolescent drinking behavior.

Keywords: Adolescents, Drinking Behavior, Personal Characteristics, Social Factors, Review

1. Introduction

The harm of adolescent drinking behavior and its influencing factors have always been a concern for scholars in the fields of public health, education, and mental health. Worldwide, the harm caused by adolescent drinking to individuals, families, and society is becoming increasingly prominent. The results of a survey on risky behaviors among American adolescents show that 78.2% of students have consumed alcohol at least once, 29.1% of students started drinking before the age of 13. In the 30 days prior to the survey, 47.1% of students had consumed one or more drinks on at least one day, 29.9% of students had five or more drinks in a row within a few hours, and 4.9% of students had consumed one or more drinks at school on at least one occasion [1]. Ji Chen Ye's survey on the prevalence of drinking behavior among Chinese middle school students shows that the rate of ever drinking among various groups of middle school students in China is very high, with 70.0% of graduating high school students having a history of drinking. In terms of current drinking rates, it is 36.4% for boys and 23.8% for girls; in terms of ever being drunk, it is 17.6% for boys and 10.8% for girls; in terms of heavy episodic drinking, it is 3.3% for boys and 1.2% for girls [2].

Adolescent drinking behavior not only directly affects physical health but also poses a significant threat to mental health. According to the World Health Organization, the serious consequences of drinking during adolescence and early adulthood (such as death, disability), or the global burden of disease caused by drinking has exceeded that of smoking and drug use. Globally, the number of people aged 5-29 who die from alcohol-related causes accounts for 5% of annual deaths. Health problems caused by long-term or chronic alcohol intake, as well as intentional or unintentional injuries, are more common among adolescents [3].

Controlling and preventing adolescent drinking behavior is one of the important measures to promote the healthy development of physical and mental health in adolescents. The analysis and research on the influencing factors of adolescent drinking behavior are the foundation of control and prevention work. In recent years, research on the causes and mechanisms of the formation of adolescent risky behaviors has become more in-depth, and the previous single-factor explanations have been replaced by multi-factor, multi-level models. In summary, the factors affecting adolescent drinking behavior mainly include the following aspects.

2. Age

Midanik and Clark's research found that compared to people in other age groups, children, adolescents, and the elderly are more susceptible to the harmful effects of alcohol when consuming the same amount of alcohol. Adolescents tend to show a reluctance to avoid risks and are more likely to engage in reckless behavior when intoxicated [4]. The age at which an individual first starts drinking is also an important

predictor of future drinking behavior. Studies have shown that the earlier an individual begins drinking, the greater the likelihood of developing alcohol dependence. Compared to those who start drinking at an older age, individuals who start drinking during adolescence are more likely to experience alcohol-related unintentional injuries in the future [5-6].

3. Gender

Gender is an influencing factor in adolescent drinking behavior. Compared to females, males exhibit higher frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption, and they are less willing to quit drinking. The disease burden brought about by drinking is also heavier for males. According to statistics, the rate of heavy drinking among males is three times that of females (16.8% versus 6.2%). There is a significant difference in global deaths attributable to drinking between genders; in 2012, the proportion of male deaths related to alcohol was 7.6%, while for females it was 4.0% [3].

4. Family background

Research indicates that whether a child is an only child may affect adolescents' drinking behavior. Only children grow up in a unique family environment and are often perceived as having strong self-centered tendencies, high dependency on parents, bossiness, loneliness, and emotional fragility [7]. Compared to non-only children, only children are more likely to be spoiled by family members, receive more pocket money, and have greater purchasing power for alcohol, yet they may have a lower tolerance for setbacks, making them more likely to resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drinking when facing adversity. However, a series of studies conducted domestically and internationally on the drinking behavior of only children have yielded inconsistent conclusions. For instance, Ye Gang's survey on dangerous behaviors among adolescents in the Suzhou area found that only children's drinking behavior was significantly more severe than that of non-only children [8]. Zhao Yong's research did not find a difference in drinking behavior between the two [9]. Tavares' study on Brazilian adolescents found that only children reported a lower rate of alcohol poisoning than non-only children (39%:72.3%), suggesting that this difference may be due to only children receiving higher levels of parental supervision [10].

Another aspect of family background affecting adolescent drinking behavior is family structure. In Western countries, since the 1960s, there has been a dramatic increase in divorce rates. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, there have been three waves of divorce. The negative impact of parental divorce can continue to affect the next generation throughout childhood, adolescence, and even into adulthood. Studies show that adolescents from divorced families have lower levels of psychological health and exhibit more drinking behavior and other substance abuse and antisocial behaviors compared to adolescents from intact families [11]. Adolescents from non-intact families also have significantly higher frequencies and quantities of alcohol consumption and start drinking at a younger age [12]. Challier's research on the relationship between family environment and adolescent smoking, drinking, and illegal drug use found that not living with parents is one of the risk factors [13]. Survey data from Brazil indicate that the drinking behavior of adolescents aged 6 to 18 who live with their parents and attend school is much lower than that of adolescents who loiter on the streets and are homeless; among the latter group, 25% reported that they drink every day [14].

Another aspect of family environment influence comes from family cohesion, the freedom of parent-child communication, and the overall family atmosphere. A harmonious and positive family environment can provide more emotional support for children and help them learn healthier behavioral patterns. Webb and others' research found that a harmonious family environment directly affects adolescents' alcohol use and social skills related to drinking, which in turn affects the amount of alcohol consumed through the impact on adolescents' self-efficacy in using these skills in specific environments. Adolescents with better social skills are more confident in controlling their alcohol consumption [15-16]. Adolescents from disharmonious families have more immature social skills in coping with stress and are more likely to choose drinking as a coping mechanism in the face of stress [15].

The drinking behavior of parents also directly affects adolescents' drinking behavior. Merigankas and others' research indicates that, genetically, having a family history of alcoholism is a predisposing factor for

future alcohol addiction [17]. Parental problematic drinking behavior can create a negative family atmosphere for children. Parents with alcoholism often accompany child abuse behaviors, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional neglect. These behaviors, coupled with the specific drinking patterns they exhibit in front of their children, make children more likely to develop problematic drinking behaviors when exposed to alcohol [18].

5. Economic factors

According to a World Health Organization report, in developed countries, there are more drinkers, more occasions for alcohol consumption, higher per capita alcohol consumption, more severe alcohol abuse, and lower rates of alcohol withdrawal. However, compared to high-income countries, drinkers in countries with lower economic levels exhibit more dangerous drinking patterns: they drink less frequently, but when they do, they consume a large amount of alcohol in a single occasion, leading to more serious personal economic and health problems associated with drinking [19].

Currently, research on the impact of personal economic status on drinking behavior has not reached a consensus. Wiles, in a review and analysis of longitudinal studies on childhood economic status and later alcohol use, found no evidence of a link between lower childhood economic status and later alcohol use or abuse [20]. In contrast, Keyes' research found a significant positive correlation between economic status and the dangerous use of alcohol [21].

Redonnet believes that when adolescents experience a low socioeconomic status, substance abuse, including tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, is more common [22].

6. Emotional and behavioral problems

Problems that an individual exhibits, which are contrary to their social context and social evaluation and hinder their adaptation to normal social life, without intellectual disabilities or mental disorders, are called emotional and behavioral problems [23]. Emotional and behavioral problems are one of the manifestations of an individual's unhealthy psychological development, and adolescents in a turbulent period of development are more likely to be troubled by them. Adolescent emotional problems include anxiety, depression, and interpersonal difficulties. Behavioral problems include attention issues, cognitive issues, disciplinary behavior, and aggressive behavior. Compared to ordinary adolescents, those with emotional and behavioral problems have poorer emotional regulation abilities and often lack skills in emotional regulation and interpersonal communication, making them easily controlled by negative emotions. When encountering negative emotions or interpersonal dilemmas, they often vent through inappropriate behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and destruction. Researchers have proposed the tension reduction hypothesis in studies exploring the relationship between anxiety and drinking. The hypothesis suggests that individuals with anxiety symptoms often use drinking as a way to cope with stress and anxiety, and drinking behavior increases with the emergence of stress, treating alcohol as a negative reinforcer. When individuals experience a reduction in stress after drinking, they will continue to choose drinking to cope when they encounter negative emotions such as anxiety again [24-25]. A study among college freshmen showed a significant positive correlation between anxiety scores and drinking behavior [26]. According to the psychological adjustment theory, depression can induce and promote the occurrence of drinking behavior [27]. Both domestic and foreign studies have revealed a correlation between adolescent depression and drinking behavior. Kelder's study on the relationship between depressive symptoms and substance abuse among American middle school students showed a significant positive correlation between the two [28]. Deykin's longitudinal study of 16-19-year-old college students showed that the probability of alcohol abuse in students diagnosed with major depression was 3-4 times that of the control group [29]. Tao Fang Biao's survey of 3,127 middle school students in Hefei revealed that depression is one of the risk factors for health-harming behaviors such as daily heavy drinking [30]. Hawkins' research points out that social disorganization problems are an important factor in predicting alcohol abuse. The early manifestations of individual isolation from peers, social barriers, and aggressive behavior towards peers are related to later drinking behavior [31].

7. Personality traits

Research both domestically and internationally has found that there is a close link between adolescent drinking behavior and their personality traits such as rebelliousness, aggressiveness, impulsivity, sensation-seeking, and low self-esteem. Adolescents with high scores in impulsivity and sensation-seeking personality traits often act without thinking, make hasty decisions and take actions. These behaviors are usually inappropriate or risky, incongruent with the environment, and often lead to negative outcomes. Kotchick's research pointed out that impulsivity and sensation-seeking can partially explain the reasons for the occurrence of adolescent risky behavior and dangerous behaviors such as alcohol abuse, street racing, and drug use. They have higher scores in impulsivity and sensation-seeking and feel less behavioral control [32]. Cloninger and others found that impulsivity and aggressive hostility personality are predictive factors for the onset of drinking behavior and problematic drinking behavior in the future [33]. Tubman's research also showed that adolescents with aggressive behavior in childhood are more likely to start drinking earlier in life [34]. Challier's research pointed out that adolescents who reported personality traits such as conscientiousness, focus, calmness, and organization in self-rated personality trait scales have significantly lower drinking behavior than those who reported irritability, aggressive hostility, indifference, and loneliness [13]. Walitzer conducted a 4-year follow-up study among American adolescents, and the results showed that low self-esteem played an important etiological role in drinking problems, and its role was more significant in the female population [35].

Fang Xiaoyi's research in our country also found that there are significant differences in personality traits between adolescents who drink and those who do not. Adolescents who drink are more rebellious, more inclined to seek excitement and adventure, more impulsive, more externally controlled, and have poorer moral sense. This indicates that the formation and development of adolescent drinking behavior are not only related to the external environment they are in but are also closely related to their own personality traits [36].

8. Life events

Life events are also an important factor affecting adolescent drinking behavior. For people of all age groups, life events are considered significant stressors for drinking behavior. In the study of adolescent risky behaviors, life events have been proven to be a risk factor affecting adolescent risky behavior issues [37]. Foreign research indicates that among adolescents, a high level of stressful life events often triggers psychological problems in adolescents (such as depression, headaches, and somatic symptoms of insomnia), and also increases the risk of adolescents engaging in dangerous behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, and drug abuse [38]. Research among adolescents in Wuhan confirmed that stressful life events encountered by adolescents can lead to smoking, drinking, and mental health problems [39]. Griffiths and others' research among freshmen at the University of Hong Kong also showed that among those who have engaged in binge drinking, 15% use drinking as a way to cope with the stress of life events, and this phenomenon is more pronounced in males than in females [40].

9. Social environment

The social environment also has a profound impact on adolescent drinking. Social morals, cultural traditions, laws and regulations, religious beliefs, and other factors subtly or mandatorily influence people's behavior patterns in various countries and regions. For example, in areas where Islam is practiced, both adults and adolescents are prohibited from drinking, resulting in lower rates of adolescent drinking in these countries and regions. In contrast, in developed countries like those in Europe and America, alcohol and alcoholic beverages are quite prevalent among adolescents [41]. In our country, although social norms oppose and condemn adolescent drinking, with the globalization of the market and more convenient transportation, various alcoholic beverages have become more accessible. In addition, due to the widespread and open nature of mass media, alcohol producers consciously target adolescents with advertising and marketing policies for alcohol or alcoholic beverages. The formulation of laws and regulations on adolescent drinking in our country is not yet complete, and the implementation of existing regulations is far from effective. These factors all contribute to the high availability of alcohol or alcoholic beverages to adolescents in our country.

10. Conclusion

By reviewing domestic and foreign literature, it is found that the factors influencing adolescent drinking behavior can mainly be explored from the social environment, parental and family factors, peer influence, and adolescents' personal traits and cognition [42]. Due to the cultural development of different countries, traditional customs and culture also have a subtle influence on drinking behavior. In terms of parental and family environmental factors, parents' attitudes and actions often serve as role models and examples for adolescents' cognition. Regardless of the parents' own drinking behavior, as long as they do not oppose their children drinking, their children are very likely to become drinkers. In terms of the school atmosphere, adolescents who do not excel academically are more likely to seek a sense of superiority in other areas and are more prone to drinking. If the adolescents they interact with are drinking, they are likely to become drinkers due to pressure. In terms of age differences, due to different development conditions in various regions, the age at which adolescents start drinking varies from place to place. However, overall, as age increases, the rate of drinking also increases. The celebrity advertising effect also has a certain impact on adolescent drinking, making it easier for adolescents to drink. Through the above analysis, it can be known that adolescent drinking behavior is the result of the interaction between the individual and the surrounding environment. However, existing domestic and foreign research either focuses solely on the individual or the environment, and there is little research that comprehensively analyzes from both the individual and environmental perspectives, failing to reflect the systemic concept of the occurrence of adolescent behavior. Therefore, follow-up research should explore the influencing factors of adolescent drinking behavior from different levels and perspectives, and draw more systematic conclusions through longitudinal research methods to provide a basis for intervention measures for adolescent drinking behavior.

11. References

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