



## Research Article

# Characteristics and Factors Associated with Problem Drinking in Male Workers



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## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 14 April 2014

Received in revised form

20 November 2014

Accepted 2 February 2015

## Keywords:

alcohol drinking

motivation

occupations

social support

## SUMMARY

**Purpose:** This study aimed to identify the characteristics and factors related to problem drinking in male workers.

**Methods:** This study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey and 232 male workers, who completed self-reported questionnaires addressing alcohol consumption, drinking motives, job stress, supervisor/coworker support, and family support. Multivariate analysis was used to uncover factors associated with problem drinking.

**Results:** As compared with normal alcohol users, problem drinkers were more likely to smoke and had greater family support and coping motivations, and fewer confirmatory motives. Problem drinking was found to be related to perceived health status (adjusted odds ratio [OR] = 0.78, 95% confidence interval [CI] [0.64, 0.95]), current smoking (adjusted OR = 2.79, 95% CI [1.26, 6.18]), family support (adjusted OR = 2.04, 95% CI [1.23, 3.39]), confirmatory motivation (adjusted OR = 0.60, 95% CI [0.37, 0.96]), and coping (adjusted OR = 1.79, 95% CI [1.04, 3.07]).

**Conclusions:** Our findings suggest that any interventions targeting problem drinking among male workers must address smoking cessation, control of stress, and the improvement of drinking subculture in the workplace.

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## Introduction

Problem drinking is a drinking behavior that leads to physical, psychological, social, academic, professional, legal, economical, spiritual dysfunction, and family or personal relationship problems [1]. In Korea, the proportion of drinkers aged over 20 increased from 68.4% in 2010 to 69.3% in 2012, and alcohol-related mortality per 100,000 of the population increased to 9.0 in 2011 as compared with 6.4 in 2001 [2,3]. Thus, the damage caused by excessive alcohol consumption continues to increase despite national efforts to reduce alcohol-related problems.

According to one study on the factors that influence binge and problem drinking in adults, workers tend to drink much more than other adults. It was also found that the type of occupation does not significantly affect drinking in women, but that male white-collar

employees and those engaged in service jobs are at higher risk of binge and problem drinking than those holding professional or managerial positions [4]. The Korean national survey showed office workers comprise 25.9% of employees followed by professionals or managers (28.4%) in 2011 [5]. It is important that the characteristics of male office workers at high risk of problem drinking be determined. In addition, efforts are needed to identify the organizational, environmental, psychological, and social characteristics of workplaces and individual characteristics associated with drinking behavior and alcohol problems [6].

Recent studies on problem drinking by workers in Korea indicate that individual characteristics, psychosocial working conditions, job characteristics, work-related stress, and organizational and workplace characteristics are relevant contributors [6–9]. Studies that address the relevance of problem drinking have commonly investigated the association between job stress and various assigned duties. Generally, high job stress is considered a cause of undesirable health behaviors, but results on the topic are inconsistent. According to a national study on job stress, job characteristics and their impacts on health-related behaviors [7], job

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stress is increased by inadequate social support and organizational inequality in male workers, and males are at significantly higher risk of problem drinking than females are. However, according to a national study of workers in enterprise businesses [9], no significant gender-associated differences were found with respect to relations between drinking level and job stress. Somewhat surprisingly, lack of support from coworkers increased the risk of problem drinking, but that lack of support from managers reduced the risk among veteran workers [7]. These conflicting and inconsistent results suggest that an identifying of factors associated with problem drinking is necessary to develop effective intervention strategies for workers.

Reasons for drinking alcohol are essentially psychological [10], and include social, coping, enhancement, and conformity motives [11,12], which have mediating effects on problem drinking. In addition, drinking motives directly influence drinking behavior [13]. In a study performed in an Australian college, coping, enhancement, and social motives were found to have greater weightings among those with alcohol-related problems than among “normal” drinkers [14]. Another study of young adults in Australia reported that coping, enhancement, and social motives were related to alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems [15]. In a Korean study among male office workers, social motives were found to best predict alcohol consumption [16]. However, although Korean male office workers are at high risk of problem drinking, few studies on drinking motives have been conducted in this population. We consider that the motives associated with problem drinking must be identified to reduce the prevalence of problem drinking among Korean male office workers.

Based on the studies cited above, we explored the characteristics and factors associated with problem drinking among male Korean office workers by assessing job stress, social support, and drinking motives. The first aim of this study was to identify differences in general characteristics and psychosocial factors (job stress, social support, and drinking motives) for different levels of alcohol consumption, and our second aim was to identify factors associated with problem drinking.

## Methods

### Study design

This study was conducted using a comparative descriptive design to identify differences between variables associated with normal and problem drinking and to investigate the effect of job stress, supervisor/coworker support, and drinking motives on problem drinking among male office workers.

### Setting and sample

The target population was composed of Korean male office workers, and because drinking motives can only be assessed among drinkers, nondrinkers were excluded. Participants consisted of white-collar male workers employed in three manufacturing industries and two power plants in one Korean province. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that addressed general characteristics, such as age, education, and smoking, alcohol consumption questions, drinking motives, job stress, supervisor/coworker support, and family support.

To determine the number of participants required, we calculated sample size using the G-power 3.1 program. Based on a significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of .05, a statistical power ( $1-\beta$ ) of .95, and an effect size of 0.5, a minimum sample size of 105 respondents in two study groups was calculated by chi-square test. After completing the questionnaire survey, eight respondents were excluded due to

incomplete data or lack of response. Therefore, the data of 232 workers (108 normal drinkers and 124 problem drinkers; a response rate of 96.7%) were included in the final analysis.

### Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the institutional review board of Ewha Womans University (institutional review board 2011-5-3). All workers interested in participating were provided with an explanation of the study, advised of their rights, and assured of the confidentiality of personal data. In addition, all participants provided written informed consent prior to participation.

### Measurements

#### Problem drinking

To classify problem drinking, we used the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test–Consumption (AUDIT-C) questionnaire, a scaled marker of alcohol consumption. AUDIT-C is based on questions 1–3 in AUDIT, which was developed by WHO for alcohol screening in adults [17]. AUDIT comprises 10 items that measure frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption, drinking behavior, and alcohol-related problems, and effectively identifies problem drinking. AUDIT-C has been extensively validated in a variety of populations in the US, Spain, and Taiwan [18–20]. AUDIT-C has clear advantages because of its brevity, and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80 [21]. In Korea, AUDIT-C was validated and found to have a sensitivity of 82.1% and a specificity of 75.9% for detecting problem drinking (defined as a total AUDIT-C score of  $\geq 8$  for men) [22]. AUDIT-C is currently used in Korea to screen for problem drinking. In the present study, it had an internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .78 [22].

#### Drinking motives

Drinking motives were measured using four items of the drinking motives scale (a 16-item scale) [23]. These four items were classified as enhancement, social, coping, or conformity drinking motives, and were scored using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *almost never*; 5 = *almost always*), with higher scores indicating stronger motives. Briefly, social motives reflect drinking to enhance social reward or to create a relaxed atmosphere; enhancement motives reflect the enhancement of a positive mood; conformity motives reflect drinking to avoid social rejection; and coping motives reflect drinking to cope with negative emotions. The reliability was represented as Cronbach's alpha coefficients for social, enhancement, conformity, and coping of .85, .76, .80, and .80, respectively at its development [23]. In the present study, the corresponding internal reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) of these subscales were .79, .83, .86, and .77, respectively.

#### Job stress

To measure job stress, we used the Korean Occupational Stress Scale–Short Form (KOSS-SF) questionnaire [24]. This is a valid and reliable instrument that is used to determine occupational stress [24]. It consists of 24 items, which are rated using a 4-point Likert scale (1–4 points), ranging from *very strongly disagree* to *very strongly agree*. KOSS-SF has seven subscales: high job demand (4 items), insufficient job control (4 items), inadequate social support (3 items), job insecurity (2 items), organizational injustice (4 items), lack of reward (3 items), and discomfort in the occupational climate (4 items). Total job stress scores were converted by proportionalizing to produce a 100-point system. Job stress levels of respondents were compared to standard values for Korean male workers [24]. The reliability in its development was represented as Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales of KOSS-SF of

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