



Adolescent drinking in Spain: Family relationship quality, rules, communication, and behaviors[☆]



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ABSTRACT

This study examined associations between adolescent alcohol use in Spain and family relationship quality, parental rules, sources of information about substances, and family behaviors. A sample of 565 students in Alicante, Spain completed measures of these constructs. After controlling for age and type of school, family relationship quality explained 3.7% of the variance in adolescents' alcohol use, family rules explained 7.0%, sources of information 2.8%, and parental behaviors 2.6%. A comprehensive model with all unique predictors from these four models explained 10.6% of the variance in adolescents' alcohol use. Within this final model, higher family relationship quality and parents knowing with whom one goes out at night were uniquely and negatively associated with adolescents' alcohol use, but mothers permitting alcohol consumption and fathers' drinking behaviors were positively associated. These findings suggest that the family unit may be ideal for intervening to reduce alcohol use in adolescents in Spain.

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1. Introduction

Alcohol-related fatalities are increasingly common among young people in Europe, such that among 15–29 year olds, alcohol caused 12.8% of male European deaths and 8.3% of female European deaths (Rehm, Gmel, Room, & Frick, 2001). Traffic crashes and self-inflicted injuries are the most common alcohol-related causes of death in Europe for adolescents (Ahlström & Österberg, 2004). In addition to alcohol-related death, adolescents are susceptible to social issues stemming from alcohol consumption, which may include relationship problems, sexual assault, missing school, emotional distress, and other risk behaviors (Ahlström & Österberg, 2004; Windle, 2000). Similar consequences exist for other regions, including the United States, Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Jernigan, 2001). Culture is frequently utilized as a lens to examine adolescent drinking behaviors, as unhealthy patterns of adolescent alcohol consumption throughout Europe and other regions are increasing (Room & Mäkelä, 2000). The highest rates of alcohol consumption have been found in Europe, followed by the Americas (World Health Organization, 2014). The World Health Organization (2014) classifies alcohol consumption in the Western Pacific region and Africa as intermediate, while it notes that the lowest levels of

alcohol use are found in the Southeast Asian region and the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Adolescent drinking is becoming a particularly large health concern in Spain, where easy access to alcohol and its social acceptability could be contributing to increased alcohol consumption among Spanish adolescents (Inglés et al., 2007). Spaniards consume alcoholic beverages (typically wine and beer) during family meal times, which has been associated with lower intoxication rates (Hibell et al., 2004; Rehm et al., 2003). However, research has suggested that Spanish adolescents consume alcohol outside of meal times and often drink to intoxication (Ahlström & Österberg, 2004; Gilligan, Kuntsche, & Gmel, 2012). The Spanish Drug Observatory (Ministerio del Interior, 2001) reports that 40% of adolescents ages 14 to 18 years consume alcohol in public parks and squares on the weekends, with nearly 20% becoming involved in disputes while consuming alcohol, 23.2% riding in cars driven by intoxicated drivers, 7.6% operating vehicles under the influence of alcohol, and 7.1% requiring medical attention for alcohol-related traffic accidents. Spanish adolescents on average begin consuming alcoholic beverages at age 13.9 years (ESTUDES, 2012), and only 25% of 15- and 16-year-old Spanish adolescents in one study had abstained from consuming alcohol in the previous 12 months, indicating that the majority of Spanish adolescents consume alcohol (Hibell et al., 2004). Further, March Cerdá et al. (2014) found that Spanish parents in urban areas do not consider adolescent alcohol consumption to be a problem when consumption is moderate, suggesting that parental and family variables, including family relationship quality, parental rules, communication, and the behavior of family members may be associated with

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adolescents' drinking behavior in Spain, and as a result, the current study will generally focus on these variables as predictors of adolescent alcohol use.

1.1. Family relationship quality

Many public health programs and research studies have begun to focus on parents and their role in influencing adolescent drinking behaviors (Sigfúsdóttir, Thorlindsson, Kristjánsson, Roe, & Allegrante, 2009). Indicators of family relationship quality, such as warmth, supportive parental relationships involving supervision and control (Roche, Ahmed, & Blum, 2008; Ryan, Jorm, & Lubman, 2010), positive family dynamics, and bonding (DeVore & Ginsburg, 2005) have all been associated with reduced adolescent alcohol consumption. Similarly, low family conflict, particularly in adolescent girls (Kelly et al., 2011), and lack of serious arguments between parents (Kristjánsson, Sigfusdottir, Allegrante, & Helgason, 2009) have been associated with lower adolescent alcohol consumption. On the other hand, overprotection by parents restricting the independent growth of adolescents has been linked to increased alcohol use (Visser, de Winter, Vollebergh, Verhulst, & Reijneveld, 2013; Creemers et al., 2011).

1.2. Parental rules

Another family variable shown to be associated with adolescent drinking behavior is parents' rules regarding alcohol consumption, both inside and outside the home. In a study in the Netherlands, alcohol-specific parental rules were the strongest predictor of adolescent alcohol consumption among various parenting practices (De Looze et al., 2012), and another study found that adolescents with parents who permitted drinking in the home were more likely to consume alcohol (Jackson, Henriksen, & Dickinson, 1999). The effects of concrete parental rules regarding alcohol consumption during adolescence have even been found to have lasting associations with less alcohol consumption in early adulthood (Guo, Hawkins, Hill, & Abbott, 2001; Van der Vorst, Engels, Meeus, Dekovic, & Van Leeuwe, 2005). However, it is important to note that parental influence decreases as adolescents age and they become more autonomous (Kuntsche, Rehm, & Gmel, 2004; Visser et al., 2013). Parents may know less about their adolescents' activities, friends, and whereabouts when not being directly observed as they age, demonstrating decreased parental influence (DeVore & Ginsberg, 2005). Van der Vorst et al. (2005) noted that parents also become less strict regarding alcohol consumption as their children get older, which could contribute to increased alcohol consumption in late adolescence. This has been corroborated by De Looze et al. (2014), who found that 16-year-olds in the Netherlands drank significantly more alcohol than Dutch adolescents younger than 16 years of age. Research has demonstrated this also holds true for at-risk adolescent populations, including adolescents of low socioeconomic status (Spijkerman, Van den Eijnden, & Huijberts, 2008), adolescents in a special education curriculum (Van Zundert, Van Der Vorst, Vermulst, & Engels, 2006), and those with genetic vulnerabilities (Van der Zwaluw et al., 2010).

1.3. Parental communication

A number of studies on parent–child communication have been conducted to investigate whether alcohol-specific communications are associated with decreased alcohol consumption in adolescents in both North America and Europe (Smit, Verdurmen, Monshouwer, & Smit, 2008; Mares, van der Vorst, Engels, & Lichtwarck-Aschoff, 2011). Mothers of adolescents are more likely to have conversations with their adolescents about alcohol consumption than fathers (Van der Vorst, Burk, & Engels, 2010), which could be due in part to the finding that adolescents prefer to speak with their mothers about risky topics, such as alcohol consumption (Miller-Day, 2002), despite the fact that

fathers of adolescents tend to be more lenient about adolescent drinking (Pettersson, Linden-Bostrom, & Eriksson, 2009). Yet, when fathers engage in alcohol-specific communication with older adolescents, adolescent drinking behavior is lower (Ennett, Bauman, Foshee, Pemberton, & Hicks, 2001).

Because the amount of direct parental supervision of adolescents decreases as they age, communication between both parties ensures that parents are knowledgeable about adolescents' activities (Jacobson & Crockett, 2000; Jiménez-Iglesias, Moreno, Rivera, & García-Moya, 2013). Parental solicitation and adolescent disclosure of information about their lives are associated with reduced adolescent alcohol consumption (Jiménez-Iglesias, Moreno, Granado-Alcón, & López, 2012; Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, & Meeus, 2010; Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, & Bosdet, 2005). This close parent–child relationship may make parents psychologically present to adolescents when they are tempted to engage in alcohol consumption (Jiménez-Iglesias et al., 2012).

1.4. Family behaviors

Family alcohol consumption behaviors help define what alcohol-related behaviors are normal to children (DeVore & Ginsberg, 2005). Parental drinking in the home has been associated with increased alcohol consumption by adolescent children in Spain (Ruiz-Juan & Ruiz-Risueño, 2011), and parental consumption of alcohol has been negatively associated with alcohol-specific parenting (Van Zundert et al., 2006). Paternal alcohol use in particular has been associated with excessive alcohol consumption in adolescents (Ennett et al., 2001), as well as increased adolescent alcohol consumption over time (Van der Vorst et al., 2005; Mares et al., 2011; Seljamo et al., 2006). However, as noted by Poelen, Scholte, Willemsen, Boomsma, and Engels (2007), because fathers and mothers often have similar alcohol consumption patterns, it is possible that the drinking behaviors of both parents are equally important.

1.5. Current study

To date, the majority of studies on adolescent alcohol consumption have been conducted in North America (Kuntsche et al., 2004; Link, 2008) and of those that have studied European nations, few have examined Spain, and as a result, it is uncertain whether the previous findings from other global regions hold in Spain. Because cultural factors (e.g., drinking age, political changes, family variables) may influence drinking behaviors in adolescents, it is important to investigate adolescent drinking beyond North America and Europe generally, as results from these studies may not generalize well to Spanish culture (Link, 2008; Kuntsche et al., 2004). In particular, adolescents in Spain have easy access to alcohol (Inglés et al., 2007), begin consuming alcohol at a young age (Delegación del Gobierno para Plan Nacional sobre Drogas, 2007), and rarely completely abstain from consuming alcohol (Hibell et al., 2004). Because of this unique environment in Spain and the dearth of research investigating these topics there, the purpose of the current study is to examine the associations between adolescent alcohol consumption in Spain and family relationship quality, parental rules, parental communication, and family behaviors, as these connections have not previously been comprehensively examined in Spain. It is hypothesized that better family relationship quality and more parental rules will be associated with decreased alcohol use, while receiving information about drugs and alcohol from parents and parental use of alcohol will both predict increased use.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Participants

A total of 640 students from 25 secondary schools (selected using an enumeration procedure from 40 schools total) in Alicante, Spain initially

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