



Short Communication

Do offenders and victims drink for different reasons? Testing mediation of drinking motives in the link between bullying subgroups and alcohol use in adolescence

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Drinking motives were used as mediators between bullying subgroups and alcohol use.
- Enhancement and social motives were differently linked with offenders and victims.
- Different levels of alcohol use in subgroups are due to distinct drinking motives.

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Previous studies have reported inconsistent evidence on associations between adolescents involved in different bullying subgroups (victims, offenders and offender-victims) and alcohol use. In addition, little is known about the underlying mechanisms between these bullying subgroups and alcohol use. The aim of this study was to clarify the association between the different bullying subgroups and alcohol use by investigating whether it is mediated by drinking motives.

Methods: Structural equation models were estimated based on a nationally representative sample of 2548 alcohol-experienced 12 to 17-year-olds who participated in the 2010 Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children survey in Switzerland.

Results: Consistent for both alcohol outcomes (drunkenness and drinking volume), male and female offenders presented higher levels of alcohol use than those not involved in bullying, not only per se (direct link) but also due to higher levels of enhancement and social drinking motives (indirect link). Victims, meanwhile, presented lower levels of alcohol use through an indirect link, with lower levels of enhancement (boys and girls) and social motives (boys). The higher levels of alcohol use among offender-victims were mediated by all four drinking motives among girls, and in particular by coping motives among boys.

Conclusions: In most cases, different levels of alcohol use in the bullying subgroups are due to differences in drinking motives. For prevention, it is important to take account of the differences in drinking motives and problems of offenders, victims and offender-victims.

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1. Introduction

In most studies investigating the alcohol consumption of distinct groups involved in bullying, higher levels of alcohol use were found among offenders, followed by offender-victims (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000; Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001; Peleg-Oren, Cardenas, Comerford, & Galea, 2012; Vieno, Gini, & Santinello, 2011). Concerning victims, some studies identified a negative association between bullying victimization and

alcohol use (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000; Kuntsche & Gmel, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001), while in others, a positive association (Vieno et al., 2011) or no association (Nansel et al., 2004) was found.

A possible mediating mechanism and explanation could be drinking motives, which represent both positive and negative reinforcement of drinking according to internal and external sources of effects and are proximal predictors of drinking (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2006a). Studies have shown that internal motives (coping and enhancement) are related to risky drinking and that drinking to cope was additionally associated with a higher risk of alcohol-related problems (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2005).

To date, only two studies have investigated drinking motives among either bullying offenders (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Engels, & Gmel, 2007) or

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among victims of bullying (Topper, Castellanos-Ryan, Mackie, & Conrod, 2011), the results of which show that conformity and coping motives are particularly important. This may indicate that different motivations underlie alcohol use among bullying subgroups: while offenders drink to conform with their peer-group in which alcohol consumption may be the norm, victims drink to cope with their victimization. In addition, this may imply that differences in alcohol use among offenders, victims and offender-victims do not exist because of their bullying status per se but can be explained by differences in their motivations to engage in drinking. Therefore, the distinct bullying subgroups may benefit from distinct preventive approaches. This study investigates whether drinking motives mediate the link between being member of a specific bullying subgroup and alcohol use.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

Data came from the 2010 Swiss participation in the international 'Health Behaviour in School-aged Children' survey (www.hbsc.org). A cluster sampling design was used to randomly select classes from a list of all state schools in Switzerland (88% response rate). Participants answered a self-administered paper-and-pencil questionnaire during one school period (45 min).

2.2. Sample

The original sample consisted of 4565 8th and 9th graders. Students were excluded when they were non-drinkers ($N = 1751$, 38.4%) or had missing values (1) on age, gender or any of the alcohol use items ($N = 111$, 2.4%); (2) on one or two items of the drinking motive dimensions ($N = 124$, 2.7%) and (3) on either one or both of the bullying dimensions ($N = 31$; 0.7%). The analyzed data consisted of 2548 12 to 17-year-olds (of which 49.7% were boys).

2.3. Measures

A short explanatory paragraph was given to introduce the two bullying questions (Currie et al., 2012). The children indicated how often they had been bullied at school in the past couple of months and how often they had been involved in bullying other students. Following the recommendations of previous research (Nansel et al., 2004; Solberg & Olweus, 2003; Vieno et al., 2011), we used a cut-off point of more than twice to classify students into mutually exclusive categories of non-involved, victims only, offenders only and offender-victims.

The 12-item Drinking Motive Questionnaire Revised Short Form (DMQ-R SF; Kuntsche & Kuntsche, 2009) was used to assess drinking for enhancement, social, conformity, and coping motives in the prior 12-month period. Participants had to rate each of the 3 items per dimension (internal consistencies: $\alpha_{\text{enhancement}} = .81$, $\alpha_{\text{social}} = .83$, $\alpha_{\text{coping}} = 0.87$, $\alpha_{\text{conformity}} = .84$) on a relative frequency scale ranging from "Never/almost never" (coded 1) to "Almost always/always" (coded 5).

Drinking volume was assessed using a quantity and frequency ($Q \times F$) composite score. Drinking quantity was measured by the number of alcoholic drinks consumed in a typical situation. Answer categories ranged from: "Less than 1 drink" (coded as 0.5), to "5 or more alcoholic drinks" (coded as 5.5). Drinking frequency was assessed by the number of drinking occasions in the last 30 days. Answer categories ranged from "0" to "40 or more". Midpoints of categories were used, with 45.25 occasions for the upper category (40 times plus half range to midpoint of adjacent category).

The life-time frequency of drunkenness was measured by four answer categories, ranging from "No, never" (0) to "more than 10 times" (coded as 11.5).

2.4. Statistical analyses

Given the considerable gender difference in bullying, drinking motives and drunkenness (e.g. Alsaker & Brunner, 1999; Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2006b; Kuntsche & Kuntsche, 2009; Kuntsche, Rehm, & Gmel, 2004; Kuntsche et al., 2007; Nansel, Overpeck, Haynie, Ruan, & Scheidt, 2003; Olweus, 1999; Solberg & Olweus, 2003), the models were estimated separately for boys and girls. For descriptive analyses, gender differences were tested with *adjusted Wald-test and corrected design-based F-value* in Stata 12.

To evaluate the effect of group membership (i.e. offenders, victims, offender-victims) on both drinking volume and drunkenness, the outcomes were separately regressed on the bullying subgroups with the subgroup 'non-involved' as the reference category (Model 1). Secondly, we tested whether drinking motives mediate the link between bullying subgroups (with the subgroup 'non-involved' as the reference category) and alcohol use by including the direct and indirect effects of drinking motives on this relationship (Model 2). The size and significance of the product of the path coefficients a) between bullying subgroups and motives and (b) between motives and alcohol outcomes directly provided in Mplus, provide evidence of mediation (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). All models were adjusted for cluster sampling and age effects and for non-normality of distributions. Moreover, both alcohol use variables were logarithmized to minimize the effects of extreme values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The models were also re-estimated using bootstrap resampling with 500 random draws (MacKinnon et al., 2007).

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive results

Compared to girls, a higher proportion of boys were only offenders and offender-victims while there was no gender difference in the victim subgroup (Table 1). With the exception of coping, boys reported a higher frequency of drinking motives than girls, as well as higher drinking volume and frequency of drunkenness.

3.2. Effects of bullying group membership on alcohol use

Both male and female offenders and offender-victims drink higher volumes and are more frequently drunk than non-involved adolescents (reference group, Table 2, Model 1). Concerning the victim subgroup, lower levels of drunkenness and lower drinking volume than non-involved adolescents were found for boys only.

Table 1

Description of bullying groups, drinking motives, drunkenness frequency and drinking volume by gender.

	Boys	Girls	F _(1,260)
Bullying			
Offenders only	25.4%	12.4%	67.09***
Victims only	6.3%	6.5%	0.03
Offender-victims	4.9%	3.3%	4.07*
Drinking motives ^a			
Social	2.67 (1.18)	2.46 (1.10)	17.52***
Enhancement	2.39 (1.15)	2.17 (1.05)	21.95***
Coping	1.51 (.86)	1.64 (.93)	11.91***
Conformity	1.21 (.57)	1.13 (.42)	18.93***
Alcohol outcome ^a			
Drunkenness	2.30 (3.52)	1.57 (2.88)	26.56***
Drinking volume	15.23 (34.73)	8.43 (19.87)	31.23***

^a Means (standard deviations in brackets).

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