



Parental Limit Setting Moderates Adolescent Paid Work and Alcohol Use

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Abstract

Because paid work has been found to be a risk factor for alcohol use, but not for all adolescents, it is important to examine variables that moderate the relationship between working and adolescent alcohol use. This study extends prior research indicating that parental limit setting may protect adolescents from the development of problem behaviors by exploring whether parental limit setting moderates the relationship between adolescent paid work and alcohol use. The participants consisted of 1,001 adolescents who completed a packet of questionnaires. In addition to several significant main effects, significant interactions were found between paid work and parental limit setting. For frequency of alcohol use, a significant interaction was found for girls. For quantity of alcohol consumption, a significant interaction was found for boys and girls. In all of the interactions, the results indicated that adolescents who spent less time in paid work and had more parental limits drank the least (frequently and in quantity), whereas adolescents who spent more time in paid work and had less parental limits drank the most (frequently and in quantity). These results suggest that parental limit setting may protect working adolescents from alcohol use involvement.

Sample

- 1,001 adolescent boys (47%) and girls (53%)
- Diverse sample – 59% Caucasian; 22% African-American; 12% Hispanic; 2% Asian; 5% 'Other'
- Age range = 15-17 years old; Mean age = 16.09 (SD=.68)
- All adolescents were 10th (58%) or 11th (42%) grade students attending public high schools in Delaware, Maryland, or Pennsylvania

Procedures

The adolescents in this study participated in a larger research project (The University of Delaware's Adolescent Adjustment Project).

Adolescents were given a packet of questionnaires in school by trained research staff during the spring of 2007. The survey took approximately 40 minutes to complete. Upon completion of the packet, adolescents received a free movie pass for participating in the study.

	Girls		Boys		Possible Range
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Frequency of Alcohol Use	1.78	2.79	1.65	2.83	0 – 21
Quantity of Alcohol Consumption	1.59	3.35	1.88	4.05	0 – 22

Measures

Parental Limit-Setting. The Parental-Limit Setting Measure (PLSM; Turner et al., 1991) was given to adolescents in order to assess parental discipline style and monitoring. This measure is a self-report measure which asks respondents to indicate whether or not parents/guardians allow them to do specific activities. Some of the activities included in this measure are: 'stay out with friends until midnight,' 'sleep over a friend's house,' and 'ride in a car with your friends.' The items from the PLSM are summed to create a total score. In the present sample, the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the PLSM was .78.

Alcohol Use. Adolescents were asked to complete an alcohol use survey using a standard quantity-frequency index. Adolescents were asked to respond to items relating to their consumption of beer, wine, and hard liquor during the past 30 days.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities. A measure assessing extracurricular activities was given to the adolescents. This measure included 11 items that reflect the frequency of participation in extracurricular activities, such as sports, paid work, and hanging out with friends. Adolescent were asked to rate their frequency of participation using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *no involvement* to 6 = *every day*.

Analyses

A series of ANOVAs was conducted to examine the potential moderating effect of parental limit setting on the relationship between paid work and alcohol use. Separate models were run for frequency of alcohol use and the average quantity of alcohol consumed, by gender.

Results

Frequency of Alcohol Use

For frequency of alcohol use, significant main effects were found for paid work $\{F(3, 379) = 8.23, p < .001\}$ and parental limit setting $\{F(1, 379) = 10.32, p < .001\}$ for boys, indicating that boys who worked more drank more frequently and boys who had less parental limits drank more frequently. The interaction between paid work and parental limit setting was not significant for boys.

For girls, the main effect for paid work was not significant; however, a significant main effect for parental limit setting was observed $\{F(1, 458) = 7.01, p < .01\}$, indicating that girls who had more parental limits drank less frequently. In addition, a significant interaction was found between paid work and parental limit setting for girls $\{F(3, 379) = 3.66, p < .05\}$, indicating that girls who spent less time in paid work and had more parental limits drank the least frequently, whereas girls who spent more time in paid work and had less parental limits drank the most frequently (see Figure 1).

Quantity of Alcohol Consumption

For quantity of alcohol consumption, there were significant main effects found for paid work $\{F(3, 364) = 9.36, p < .001\}$ and parental limit setting $\{F(1, 364) = 8.24, p < .01\}$ for boys, indicating that boys who worked more drank more in quantity and boys who had less parental limits drank more in quantity. In addition, there was a significant interaction between paid work and parental limit setting for boys $\{F(3, 364) = 2.65, p < .05\}$, indicating that boys who worked more and had less parental limits drank the most, whereas boys who worked less and had more parental limits drank the least (see Figure 2).

For girls, the main effect for paid work was not significant; however, there was a significant main effect for parental limit setting $\{F(1, 423) = 8.57, p < .01\}$, indicating that girls who had more parental limits drank less in quantity. In addition, there was a significant interaction between paid work and parental limit setting for girls $\{F(3, 423) = 4.88, p < .01\}$. As with the boys, this significant interaction suggested that girls who worked more and had less parental limits drank the most, while girls who worked less and had more parental limits drank the least (see Figure 3).

Conclusions

Results from this study revealed significant main effects for both paid work and parental limit setting. For paid work, it appears that boys who work more are more likely to use alcohol more frequently and consume a higher quantity of alcohol. These results were not found for girls, which suggests that paid work may not influence girls' alcohol use in the same manner as it does for boys. For parental limit setting, it appears that both boys and girls may be influenced similarly in that adolescents who have more parental limits tend to drink less in regard to both frequency and quantity than adolescents who have less parental limits. Results also revealed a moderating effect of paid work and parental limit setting on adolescent alcohol use. For girls, those who spent less time in paid work and had more parental limits drank the least frequently, whereas girls who spent more time in paid work and had less parental limits drank the most frequently. However, girls who spent the most time in paid work and had more parental limits drank the least in quantity. Adolescent paid work has been shown to be a risk factor for alcohol use; however, a high level of parental limit setting appeared to protect these adolescents from consuming high levels of alcohol. Taken together, these results suggest that parental limit setting may protect working adolescents from alcohol use involvement.

