Cross-cultural variation in the association between socio-economic family background and adolescents’ alcohol use
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Background
- Low socio-economic status (SES) is generally associated with lower drinking frequency, lower average consumption but higher risk for hazardous use (Casswell et al., 2003).
- Effects have not been found consistently and might vary between countries (Grittner et al., 2012).

Research Questions
- Does the association between family SES and adolescent alcohol use vary between countries?
- Which country level characteristics may affect this relationship?

Methods
- 2011 ESPAD study (European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs; Hibell et al., 2012).
- Participants: n = 103,336 students aged 15-16 years from 34 European countries.
- Outcome: Alcohol use (lifetime prevalence, 30-day prevalence of episodic heavy drinking).
- Individual level predictors: Family SES (father's education, mother's education, affluence).
- Country level predictors: economy (GDP, Gini coefficient), alcohol consumption per capita.
- Statistical analysis: Multilevel modelling, gender-stratified.

Results

Random coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifetime use</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Var. (SD)</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education father</td>
<td>.002 (.048)</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education mother</td>
<td>.015 (.121)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family affluence</td>
<td>.007 (.086)</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- All SES effects on lifetime use vary between countries, with the exception of the father’s education among girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episodic heavy drinking</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Var. (SD)</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education father</td>
<td>.003 (.053)</td>
<td>.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education mother</td>
<td>.004 (.067)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family affluence</td>
<td>.004 (.059)</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Most SES effects on EHD vary between countries, with the exception of the parents’ education among boys.

Cross-level interactions

Conclusions
- Association between individual SES and adolescent alcohol use largely varied between countries.
- Lifetime alcohol use: SES effects partly moderated by economic country characteristics.
  - Protective effect of affluence leveled off in economically best-posed countries.
- EHD: SES effects partly moderated by average alcohol consumption on country level.
  - Protective effect of father’s education strongest in countries with low consumption (girls).

References
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