

Smoking in Korean–Chinese Middle School Students: Prevalence and Risk Factors

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ABSTRACT

Background: Cigarette smoking is rising among Chinese adolescents, and adolescent smoking is a crucial public health issue. Despite the number of studies that have explored the prevalence and various aspects of adolescent smoking in China, we know of no data currently available on smoking behavior among Korean–Chinese adolescents.

Purpose: This article studies the prevalence of smoking and factors affecting smoking behavior among Korean–Chinese adolescents.

Methods: Data were collected from six Korean–Chinese middle schools in the Yanbian region of Jilin, China. The differences in data from three groups (never-smokers, ever-smokers, and current smokers) were analyzed using χ^2 tests and analysis of variance. Logistic regression was used to analyze the factors affecting smoking behavior.

Results: Among the 2,116 participants, 7.3% of the boys and 3.7% of the girls were ever-smokers, and 7.2% of the boys and 0.8% of the girls were current smokers. Differences among groups in terms of gender, number of friends currently smoking, parental smoking behavior, academic performance, alcohol consumption, and intention not to smoke were all significant ($p < .001, .05$). Compared with never-smoking and ever-smoking students, currently smoking students perceived a significantly less antismoking environment ($p = .000$). The smoking rate was 2.24 times higher in boys than girls and was 11.57 times higher in students who had three smoking friends compared with those who had no smoking friends.

Conclusion: The findings may help develop more effective intervention approaches to prevent adolescent smoking. Preventive programs should involve smoking parents by increasing the value they place on their children's nonsmoking behavior and equipping them to help deter adolescent smoking.

KEY WORDS:

smoking, adolescent, Korean–Chinese, middle school student, risk factor.

world. Prevalence of smoking among men is high (66.9%) in China, with more than 300 million men identified as current smokers (Levy, 2006; Strong, Mathers, Leeder, & Beaglehole, 2005). Among Chinese adolescents (grades 7 to 9), prevalence of experimental smoking and regular smoking is estimated at 15.4% and 5.1%, respectively. The effect of gender on smoking behaviors is significant, with 22.1% of boys and 7.8% of girls having tried smoking and 8.4% of boys and 1.1% of girls being current regular smokers (Wen et al., 2007). Among Korean middle school students, approximately 4.1% of boys and 2.6% of girls are current smokers (Lee, Yun, Ko, Chang, & Nam, 2009). Adolescent smoking prevention is an important public health priority because adolescents who start smoking as teenagers are more likely to become adult smokers and develop smoking-related health problems later in life (Rodriguez, Tercyak, & Audrain-McGovern, 2008). Preventing the initiation of adolescent smoking is important to reduce the public health burden of smoking-related morbidity and mortality. Early adolescence is the crucial life stage to prevent tobacco use because smoking prevalence increases significantly between the ages of 13 and 15 years (Paaavola, Vartiainen, & Haukkala, 2004).

Factors Related to Adolescent Smoking

A range of factors has been related to the onset and maintenance of adolescent smoking. Studies in China have found that having friends, teachers, or parents who smoked strongly influenced adolescent smoking behavior (Shakib et al., 2005; Wen et al., 2007). Adolescents' cigarette smoking has also been associated with poor school performance, lower parental socioeconomic status (SES; Grenard et al., 2006; Hesketh, Lu, Jun, & Mei, 2007), and increased alcohol use (Engels, Scholite, van Lieshout, de Kemp, & Overbeek, 2006). Other factors such as intention to smoke, self-efficacy (De Vries, Backbier, Kok, & Dijkstra, 1995), and perceived smoking

Accepted for publication: October 23, 2012

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doi:10.1097/jnr.0b013e3182921f35

Introduction

Smoking is a serious public health problem in China. China produces and consumes about 42% of all cigarettes in the