

TP-TUE-286 DOES SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SCHOOLS AFFECT STUDENTS' SMOKING AND DRINKING BEHAVIORS IN JAPAN?

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Background: Although cigarette and alcohol use among Japanese adolescents has been declining during the past several years, youth smoking and drinking still remain a major public health problem in Japan. Recently, particular interests of public health are the effects of contextual-level factors on health-related behaviors. This study will focus on social capital as an important contextual-level factor, which has been associated with health-related behaviors in adult populations. Studies in adult have suggested that cognitive social capital such as generalized trust and reciprocity was more consistently associated with health-related behaviors compared to structural social capital such as social participation. However, studies in young people showed that the patterns of the association varied according to the types of health-related behaviors and indicators of social capital.

Objectives: This study examined the effect of the cognitive social capital at school level on smoking and drinking behaviors in Japanese high school students, after adjusting for individual characteristics.

Underlying values and principles: Previous studies on social capital and youth's health have been limited to social capital in family and neighborhoods. Schools, where students spend most of their daytime, may set the standards for the behavioral patterns and attitudes of the students, and thus may have shared influences on their health-related behaviors. Schools may also be the main place where students interact with their friends and teachers, and this may be important for their social support systems. Therefore, it is plausible that school may be an important source of social capital.

Knowledge base/ Evidence base: Evidence base.

Context of intervention/project/work: Context of work is school settings.

Methods: Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 3,248 students in grades 10 through 12 at 29 public high schools throughout Okinawa, Japan. Cognitive social capital studied included generalized trust and reciprocity. Using multilevel logistic regression models, the effects of individual- and contextual-level social capital on smoking and drinking were analyzed. The contextual-level social capital was measured on the basis of aggregated individual responses to the school level.

Results and Conclusions: The results of multilevel analyses after adjustment for the individual-level social capital and the covariates indicated that the contextual-level generalized trust and reciprocity showed statistically significant associations with smoking for girls only. The findings suggest evidence of the contextual effect of cognitive social capital on adolescents' smoking, however gender differences should be taken into consideration when implementing prevention interventions.

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