2005

Wen hua ding wei yu gao zhong sheng yin jiu xing wei zhi jian de guan xi [Cultural Orientation and Chinese Adolescent Drinking]

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Cultural Orientation and Chinese Adolescent Drinking

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Abstract: Objective To explore a relationship between culture and alcohol drinking
Methods Questionnaires on western cultural influence and drinking practices were administered to 1,091 tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students in five senior high schools in Beijing in January 2002. Results The mean cultural orientation scores for the three drinking groups were statistically different, $F = 30.64, p=.03$. A post hoc test indicated that significant differences in cultural orientation existed between non-drinkers ($X=2.98, SD=.28, N=388$) and occasional drinkers ($X=3.08, SD=.27, N=418$) and between non-drinkers and regular drinkers ($X=3.13, SD=.26, N=149$) Conclusions The more western-oriented the students were the more likely to be drinkers and the more Chinese-oriented the students were the less likely to be drinkers. Western cultural influence was a causal factor affecting Chinese adolescent drinking.

Key Words: Cultural orientation, Adolescent drinking, Factor analysis.

There are many suggested variables affecting alcohol drinking patterns[1]. Cultural context is one of them. It assumes that individual drinking patterns are affected by changes in the cultural environment[2-4].

This study explores the influence of culture on alcohol use by measuring individual cultural orientation and drinking patterns. Cultural orientation as described here refers to an individual’s position in two or more cultures. When a person own society is absorbing different and new values and attitudes introduced from abroad their traditional cultural orientation is challenged.

This paper describes cultural orientation and its relationship to alcohol use by Chinese young people. If indeed such a relationship exists then policymakers, program planners, administrators and community level health workers need to be involved in developing programs to minimize such effects or to prevent their occurrence in the first place.

Subjects and Methods

1. Subjects: A convenient sample of 1,091 tenth-twelfth students (463 male, 614 female, and 14 unknown) in five senior high schools: two key schools, two general schools, and one occupational school in downtown and suburban Beijing, completed the questionnaire in January 2002. Students completed the questionnaire in their classes supervised by post graduate students trained in questionnaire administration. Teachers and school staff were not present in classrooms during the survey. Students were told not to write their names or identification numbers on the questionnaire and were assured that no teachers and staff in their schools would see the completed questionnaire.
2. Methods. The questionnaire included four parts: 10 demographic questions, 11 questions about alcohol use, 77 cultural orientation questions, and 14 questions that asked students about their own personal cultural orientation. (1) The development of cultural orientation. Scale development involved a review of Chinese and English literature on this topic, individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with adolescents and a pilot test and item analysis of the draft questionnaire. Seventeen interviews and 5 FGDs with young people aged 16 to 18 years were conducted in Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming, and Hohhot. From these discussions, six factors (preference to clothing style, being proud of being a Chinese, being interested in western culture, preference to consume style, attitude toward dating, and preference to be music or sport fans) were identified. To these were added four factors (respect for elders, submission to authorities, filial piety, and femininity/masculinity) taken from Yang's research and one factor (self-centeredness) taken from Hui’s research. A pilot study helped improve the questionnaire and refine the meaning of some of the items. The final version of the questionnaire contained 77 cultural orientation items. The cultural orientation questions were answered using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a more western-orientation (A single cultural orientation score was created by taking an average of the nine factor scores). (2).

Self-described cultural orientation scale: The 14 self-described cultural orientation questions were designed to establish a degree of validity for the factors proposed as components of cultural orientation. These questions asked students to report their perceptions of how western or how Chinese they thought they were for each of the proposed factors represented in the cultural orientation questions. These questions were answered on a 6-point Likert scale with 1 being very traditional (Chinese), and 6 being very western.

3. Data analysis. (1) Drinking classification: Two questions were used to identify drinkers: “how many times did you drink alcohol in the last month”? and “how many times did you drink in the last year”? Students were classified into three groups: non drinkers, occasional drinkers and regular drinkers (Table 1). (2) Data analysis. Questionnaires were excluded from the analysis if they were inconsistent in two or more questions or had missing values across more than 4 factors of the cultural orientation scale. In total, 122 questionnaires were dropped from the analysis resulting in a sample size of 969 (88.8%). SPSS 11.0 was used to screen and analyze the data. Factor analysis, an internal consistency test, and simple correlation were used to examine the reliability and validity of the cultural orientation scale. A 2X3 ANOVA was used to explore the relationship of cultural orientation with Chinese adolescent drinking.

The students were classified into three groups according to their drinking experience in the last month and in the last year. As seen in Table 2, the students were classified as non-drinkers if they did not drink in the last month and in the last year. Students were classified as occasional drinkers if students drank less than 6 days in the last month and less than 10 days in the last year and/or if they drank less than 5 days in the last month and less than 20 days in the last year. If students drank more than 2 days in the last month and more than 9 days in the last year and if they drank less than 3 days in the last month but more than 19 days in the last year they were classified as regular drinkers.
Results

1. The cultural orientation. A conceptually meaningful nine factor solution was obtained by conducting a principle component analysis with Varimax. The nine factor solution accounted for 41.5% of the total variance. The Eigenvalues ranged from 7.34 to 1.27. The communalities ranged from 0.237 to 0.657. Of the original 77 items, 18 items were deleted because of inconclusive factor loadings leaving 59 items in the final solution and used to measure cultural orientation (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Cronbach α’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1: Preference to clothing style (15)</td>
<td>0.383-0.659</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: I think it is cool to wear cloth different from others’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2: Femininity-masculinity (8)</td>
<td>0.410-0.794</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: I think male should play a leading role in my society.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Factor 3: Being interested in western culture (8)</td>
<td>0.418-0.671</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Compared with Chinese holidays, I would rather celebrate western holidays.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 4: Obedience (7)</td>
<td>0.474-0.612</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: I will stick to my idea even if my parents oppose it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Factor 5: Filial piety (5)</td>
<td>0.447-0.673</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: I study mainly for the purpose of “earning face” for my parent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Factor 6: Respect for elders (6)</td>
<td>0.423-0.569</td>
<td>0.52</td>
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<td>Example: The “senior first” rule at the doorway is already outdated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Factor 7: Preference to consume style (3)</td>
<td>0.413-0.658</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: I can’t accept the concept of unplanned consumption (spending in advance).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Factor 8: Being proud of being a Chinese (4)</td>
<td>0.355-0.601</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: I believe that the west should learn many things from China.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 9: Self-centeredness (3)</td>
<td>0.363-0.597</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: I would rather think alone than discuss with my close friends.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Cronbach α’s are reported in Table 2. Each of the factors with alpha values below .50 had 4 or fewer questions. Because alpha is influenced by the number of items,
the obtained estimates are likely lower than the true reliability of the scale. Future research needs to identify additional questions for these factors.

The correlations between cultural orientation factor scores and the corresponding self-described cultural orientation factors ranged from 0.20 to 0.38. Correlations above 0.09 were significant at 0.01 level. The majority of correlations between the cultural orientation factors and the self-described orientation that did not correspond to the factors were below 0.10. Taken together, these findings suggest evidence of convergent and divergent validity.

2. Cultural orientation and adolescent drinking. A 2x3 ANOVA with gender and drinking status as the independent variables and cultural orientation as the dependent variable was completed. The results showed no statistically significant interaction between gender and drinking status, F (2, 949) = .903, p=.41. The mean cultural orientation score for males (X̄=3.00, SD=.28, N=412) was statistically significant different from that for females (X̄=3.08, SD=.28, N=543), F (1, 949) = 24.99, p=.02. The mean cultural orientation scores for the three drinking groups were statistically different, F (2, 949) = 30.64, p=.03.

A post hoc test indicated that significant differences in cultural orientation existed between non-drinkers (X̄=2.98, SD=.28, N=388) and occasional drinkers (X̄=3.08, SD=.27, N=418) and between non-drinkers and regular drinkers (X̄=3.13, SD=.26, N=149), but not between occasional drinkers (X̄=3.08) and regular drinkers (X̄=3.13) (p>.05).

The results suggested that alcohol use by adolescents was related to cultural orientation. Students with higher Chinese orientation scores were less likely to be drinkers than students with higher western cultural orientation scores.

Discussion

This is the first known attempt to develop and validate a cultural orientation scale to use specifically with Chinese adolescents and then to use that scale to study adolescent alcohol use. The results extend our understanding of cultural orientation. Yang described cultural orientation in terms of psychological components such as femininity/masculinity, submission to authorities, etc. Eide’s description of cultural orientation involved preference for western culture reflected in choices from western material culture, such as choices in music to listen to and literature to read. Our research suggested that some psychological components in Yang’s scale are important but so are variables that may be to Chinese adolescent such as preference in clothing style and consumer style. The measures used in Eide’s scale were not found useful in our research.

The value of understanding cultural orientation is in the recognition that it represents an individual perspective rather than the perspective of a group. We were able to show that it is possible to measure in an individual personal cultural orientation. Given the increasing exposure to Western values and the associated challenges to traditional Chinese values the measurement of cultural orientation opens the opportunity for research about the consequences of westernization. As such it provides a useful tool for planning educational programs targeted at high risk groups. Experience has shown that
carefully targeted educational programs directed towards people with similar perspectives are more effective than educational programs focused on unspecified groups.

Reporting reliability and validity measures in health-related surveys described in Chinese journals is not common. This study involved an attempt to establish a measure of reliability and construct validity for this instrument by using exploratory factory analysis, consistency tests, and correlations.

The results of this study supported our hypothesis that western cultural orientation is related to Chinese adolescents’ drinking behavior among both males and females. How much of the reported increase in alcohol consumption in China is associated with westernization is unknown but any increase in consumption can be expected to be associated with increased health and social problems. The role cultural orientation plays in this process can now be explored further. The effects of western cultural influences on other behaviors can also be explored.

[References]


Authors: