Cultural and health factors associated with early sexual initiation

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Early sexual initiation

- Sexual activity begins between 15 and 19 years for most young people
  - Ireland - median age is 17 years

- Early sexual initiation associated with:
  - Intercourse with high risk partners
  - Multiple sexual partners
  - STI transmission
  - Sexual and physical violence.

- Studies among Irish adults have associated early sexual initiation with:
  - ⬇ having used contraception
  - ⬇ having planned intercourse
  - ⬆ regretting the timing

(McBride et al, 2012; Layte et al, 2006).

Aims

- To gain a more detailed understanding of the cultural and health factors influencing early sexual initiation among adolescents in Ireland is required

- To contribute to the knowledge base on adolescent sexual behaviour in Ireland and to inform future sexual health promotion policy and initiatives.

Defining early sexual initiation

- Physical maturity

- Cognitive development

- Social norms

- Data available

- Number of different cut-offs employed

HBSC Ireland 2014

94 post-primary schools recruited (RR 59%)

4,036 participants aged 15-17 years

879 sexually active

436 Boys

443 Girls

Analysis

- **SPSS 23 software package**

- Identify suitable cultural and health variables

- Multiple imputation   *– missing values*

- Exploratory factor analysis   *– explore dimension reduction*

- Create variable scales   *– reduce number of variables*

- Multiple linear regression   *– explore predictors*

Measures

Independent variable

- Age at first sexual intercourse

Confounding variables

- Social class

- Gender

- 11 years old or younger
- 12 years old
- 13 years old
- 14 years old
- 15 years old
- 16 years old
- 17 years old or older

Themes

- Based on previously associated factors and factors amenable to intervention
  - ◆ Risk behaviours
  - ◆ Environment
  - ◆ School
  - ◆ Health behaviours
  - ◆ Peers
  - ◆ Life-perception
  - ◆ Family
  - ◆ Health status

Exploratory factor analysis

Risk Behaviour

how often do you smoke tobacco at present
how frequently smoked cigarettes last 30 days
smoked cigarettes (lifetime)
cannabis use (lifetime)
cannabis use (last 30 days)
age when first took cannabis
drunk drunkeness (last 30 days)
drunk alcohol (last 30 days)
drunkeness (lifetime)
alcohol (lifetime)
age when first got drunk
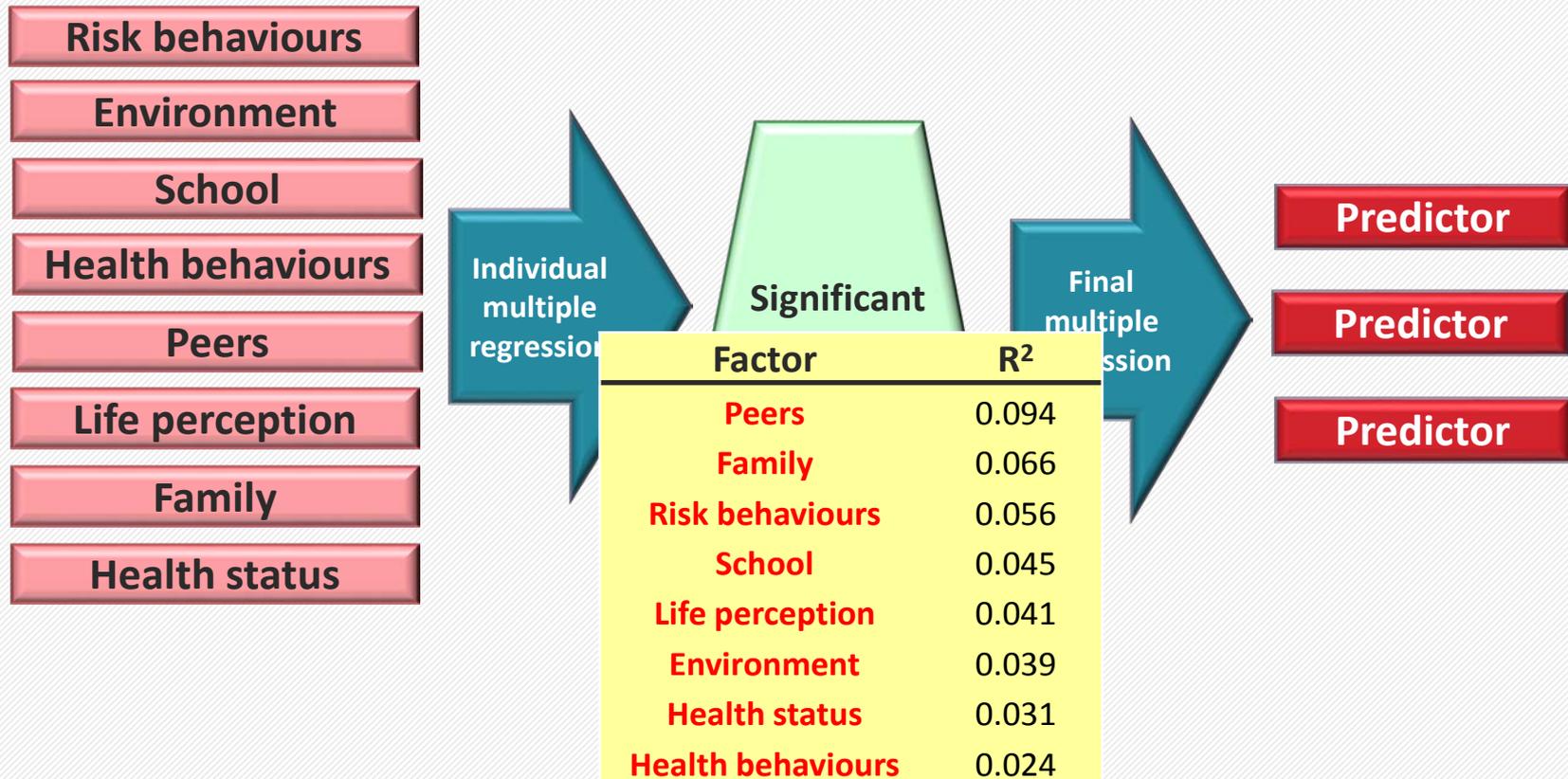age when first drink alcohol
age when first smoke a cigarette

Factor Analysis

Factor 1
(Tobacco or cannabis use)

Factor 2
(Alcohol use or drunkeness)

Factor 3
(Risk behaviours initiation)

Multiple linear regression

Risk behaviours

Environment

School

Health behaviours

Peers

Life perception

Family

Health status

Individual multiple regression

Significant

Final multiple regression

Predictor

Predictor

Predictor

Factor	R^2
Peers	0.094
Family	0.066
Risk behaviours	0.056
School	0.045
Life perception	0.041
Environment	0.039
Health status	0.031
Health behaviours	0.024

Results - boys

Hierarchical multiple regression

Step	Themes	R	R^2	ΔR^2	Adj.R^2	F
1	Social class	0.146	0.022	0.022	0.019	9.52**
2	Peers	0.255	0.065	0.044	0.059	10.05***
3	Family	0.288	0.083	0.018	0.074	9.74***
4	Risk behaviours	0.320	0.103	0.02	0.092	9.84***
5	School	0.325	0.106	0.003	0.093	8.46***
6	Life perception	0.328	0.107	0.002	0.093	7.35***
7	Environment	0.330	0.109	0.002	0.093	6.53***

* $p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$

Results - boys

Significant predictors

- Number of close male friends (β=.165, p=.011)

  → Boys with fewer close male friends are more likely to first have sex younger than those with more close male friends

- Family support (β=.135, p=.027)

  → Boys who have a supportive family are less likely to have had sex at younger ages

- Risk behaviour initiation (β=-.129, p=.017)

  → Boys who were younger when they start risk behaviours (smoking/cannabis/alcohol/drunk) are more likely to have had sex earlier

Results - girls

Hierarchical multiple regression

Step	Themes	R	R^2	ΔR^2	Adj.R^2	F
1	Social class	0.052	0.003	0.003	0.001	1.23
2	Risk behaviours	0.445	0.198	0.195	0.192	36.08***
3	School	0.456	0.208	0.010	0.200	28.69***
4	Health behaviours	0.469	0.219	0.012	0.211	24.61***
5	Health status	0.473	0.224	0.004	0.213	20.94***
6	Peers	0.477	0.227	0.004	0.213	15.97***
7	Family	0.477	0.228	0.000	0.211	14.17***
8	Environment	0.477	0.228	0.000	0.210	12.75***
9	Life perception	0.482	0.232	0.004	0.213	11.85***

* p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001

Results - girls

Significant predictors

- Alcohol use or drunkeness (β=.241 , p<.001)

  → Girls who had sex early are less likely to drink alcohol frequently now

- Risk behaviour initiation (β=-.372, p<.001)

  → Girls who were younger when they start risk behaviours (smoking/cannabis/alcohol/drunk) are more likely to have had sex earlier

- Unhealthy food consumption (β=-.086, p=.031)

  → Girls who had sex early are more likely to consume unhealthy food frequently now

Conclusion

- Difference in factors predicting early sexual initiation for boys and girls

- Factors measured were a stronger predictor of age of sexual initiation among girls

- Highlights environments and other behaviours to target for interventions around early sexual initiation

  - Risk behaviours

  - Health behaviours

  - School, home and peer environments.

Acknowledgements

References

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- McBride, O., Morgan, K., & McGee, H. (2012). *Irish Contraception and Crisis Pregnancy Study 2010 (ICCP-2010) A Survey of the General Population*.