

Peer influence on children's water consumption: A longitudinal study on the moderating roles of self-control and self-monitoring

Introduction. Promoting water consumption among children as a replacement of sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) consumption through the influence of peers, has shown to be a promising intervention strategy to increase healthy food and beverage consumption among children. However, it is unknown if individual characteristics, which make children more susceptible to peer influence are similar across SSB and water consumption. This knowledge would provide evidence for the effectiveness of peer-led health interventions, aimed at children most susceptible to unhealthy consumption behaviour.

Method. In this study, the influence of two groups of influential peers, namely friends and influence agents, on children's SSB and water consumption and the moderating roles of self-control and self-monitoring were examined. A longitudinal study was conducted in which 138 children (56.5% boys) between 9 and 12 years of age ($M = 10.97$; $SD = 0.75$) completed two questionnaires at baseline and eight weeks later, assessing background characteristics, SSB and water consumption, self-control, self-monitoring and peers they perceived as friends and influence agents.

Results. Results showed children's SSB consumption but not water consumption was predicted marginally significantly by SSB consumption by friends. Furthermore, the interaction between self-control and friends' influence on SSB consumption was significant. Post-hoc analyses revealed that children with high self-control were more susceptible to the influence of friends on their SSB consumption, while children low in self-control were not.

Conclusion. Further research should reveal why children, especially those high in self-control, were influenced by SSB consumption and not by the water consumption of their friends.

Keywords: peer-influence, self-control, self-monitoring, health