

Alcoholic Drinks Consumption among College Students

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Abstract

Alcohol is the psychoactive substance most consumed worldwide, young people are the age group with the highest consumption rate in the country and the entrance to the university is considered a risk factor for the intake of alcohol. About 92.7% of the interviewees use the substance. The objective of this study is to assess the frequency of alcohol consumption of students at the University Center. Questionnaires were distributed to students of Agronomy, Law, Civil Engineering and Veterinary Medicine. The results showed that the consumption of this substance in the past month was observed in 80.0% of the sample, 70.0% of students drink on weekends and 27.0% on weekday. The standard "Episodic Heavy Drinking" was presented by 52.0% of the students and 5.0% of the students did not meet a commitment in the last year because of drink. Thus, it is necessary to conduct interventions to enlighten students about the harmful effects of alcohol abuse.

Keywords: Alcohol; Alcoholic beverages; University; Students

Introduction

The consumption of alcoholic beverages can be considered a cultural practice in several countries since it is rooted in values, representations, organizations and customs specific to each society [1]. The annual drug survey, Global Drug Survey [2] interviewed 101,331 people in more than 50 countries and rated alcohol as the most widely used drug worldwide. About 92.69% of the interviewees use the substance, being the most prevalent among 28 licit and illicit drugs.

In the city of São José do Rio Preto-SP, it was verified that alcohol was pointed out as the second psychoactive substance most consumed by those attending the street (32.36%), preceded only by crack, 33.51% of users [3].

In Brazil, the distribution of this product is regulated by Decree 2.018/96, which considers its marketing to be lawful (despite establishing some restrictions for sale, consumption, and advertising). Thus, alcohol is found in supermarkets, restaurants, convenience stores, bars, nightclubs and other places with easy access to the population [4]. Ingestion of alcohol in the country is common on many occasions, such as at parties, family gatherings, happy hours, events, celebrations (birthdays, weddings, graduations), among others.

In these spaces, the consumption of alcoholic beverages often facilitates the interaction between the individual and the group, the establishment of bonds and the obtaining of social recognition. Thus, the act of drinking has several meanings, of which stand out the sensation of pleasure, fun, freedom, and popularity; the feelings of power and affirmation of masculinity; and the desire to attract friends or relationships [5-7].

This habit is commonly encouraged in the family environment, where many children are exposed to drink experimentation from childhood, in the circles of friendships and through the media [8,9]. According to Horta et al. [10], "family and culture transmit belief

systems and expectations about the social roles, the way of life of men and women, the relations between human beings and also about customs and customs, and in relation to psychoactive substances". These authors verified that in addition to the protective effect of the presence of parents in the adolescent and child's life, the smoking of the parents implies an increase in the probability of the adolescents smoking, which in turn increases the chance of consumption of other drugs such as marijuana or cocaine.

Pinsky et al. [11] found that advertising exerts great persuasion on individuals as it associates the consumption of their product with pleasant images that foster the creation of positive affective memories that function as "anchors" and influence the individual in making decisions, so that alcohol becomes part of one's own self-image, to constitute a style, a way of being, reinforcing even more positively the choice for the product. Pinsky et al. [11] found that advertising exerts great persuasion on individuals as it associates the consumption of their product with pleasant images that foster the creation of positive affective memories that function as "anchors" and influence the individual in making decisions, so that alcohol becomes part of one's own self-image, to constitute a style, a way of being, reinforcing even more positively the choice for the product.

Despite being a licit drug, deliberately consumed and propagated by the media, there is a tenuous limit between the acceptable consumption of alcohol and the numerous harmful effects that this can cause the life of the individual.

The II National Survey of Alcohol and Drugs [12] estimated that 11.7 million people are dependent on alcohol in Brazil that 27.3% of drivers who drink, drive after drinking alcohol and that in half of the cases of domestic violence in the last year the abuser had drunk.

Consumption of this substance can affect the central and peripheral nervous system, gastrointestinal and cardiovascular, causing diseases such as cirrhosis, gastritis, stomach or duodenal ulcers, pancreatitis, stomach or esophagus cancer, hypertension, cognitive deficits, degenerative changes in cerebellum and memory [9,13].

In some rare cases, it may cause Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome, in which the ability to code new memories becomes severely impaired. Alcohol abuse is also responsible for many psychiatric hospitalizations, behavioral problems, anxiety and depression [13,14].

In addition to the damages caused to the user's health, alcohol can cause traffic accidents or deaths, violence (including fights and domestic violence), homicides, antisocial behavior, marital separation, family disagreements, desertion of work and school [7].

Due to the significant alcohol consumption by university students and considering the numerous harmful effects that this can cause to the individual, the present study had as objective to verify the prevalence of alcohol use in students of the University Center of North Paulista-UNORP.

Methods

This descriptive study was carried out through a transversal and quantitative research. Questionnaires produced by the authors were used, the research objective was explained to all students present at the

application date and the terms of free and informed consent were distributed. The questionnaires were applied in the academic year 2015 to students of the 5th year of the courses of Agronomy, Civil Engineering and Veterinary Medicine and the third year of the law course, at night. We sought a sample that could be composed of agrarian courses, exact and human. Issues addressed issues including sociodemographic data, health, work, and learning. In the present article, the issues related to age, sex, work, and alcohol use were analyzed.

Results

A total of 106 questionnaires from the University of North Paulista-UNORP courses were analyzed. The mean age of all students was 27.6 years and, in relation to gender, a percentage of 65.0% of male students and 35.0% of female students were identified. It was also possible to observe that 90.8% of university student's work in a different period of studies, the monthly family income is on average 2 to 4 minimum wages per student. The differences between courses are presented below (Table 1).

Course	Year	Number of Students	Average Age	Male	Female	Salary	Working students
Agronomy	5	23	27.52	19	4	4-6	86.9%
Law	3	20	28.45	10	10	2-4	95%
Civil Engineer	5	46	29.28	29	17	2-4	93.4%
Veterinary Medicine	5	17	25.47	11	6	2-4	88.2%

Table 1: Socio-demographic data of students at night.

Alcohol consumption during the last month was indicated by 80.0% of university students, of whom 19.0% said they had only drunk during

this period, 32.0% up to 4 times, 24.0% up to 12 times and 5.0%, 16 times or more (Table 2).

Frequency Data in Percentage (%)					
Courses	Never 1 time/month or less	1 time /month or less	2 to 4 times/month or less	2 to 3 times/month or less	4 times/month or less
All	18	19	32	24	5
Agronomy	13	14	32	27	14
Law	42	26	11	21	0
civil Engineering	15	24	33	24	4
Veterinary Medicine	6	6	59	29	0

Table 2: Frequency of alcohol use by students at night.

The law course presents a higher rate of students who say they never drink, among those who drink the frequency with the highest percentage is one time per month or less, students who drink 2 to 3 times a week or 4 or more times in the week, are in lower percentage in the course of law when compared to all other courses.

In Figure 1, the lowest proportion of students who say they never drink is observed in the course of Veterinary Medicine, also presents the lowest percentage of those who drink 1 time a month or less, most are in the range that drinks 2 to 4 times a month, followed by those who consume drinks 2 to 3 times a week.

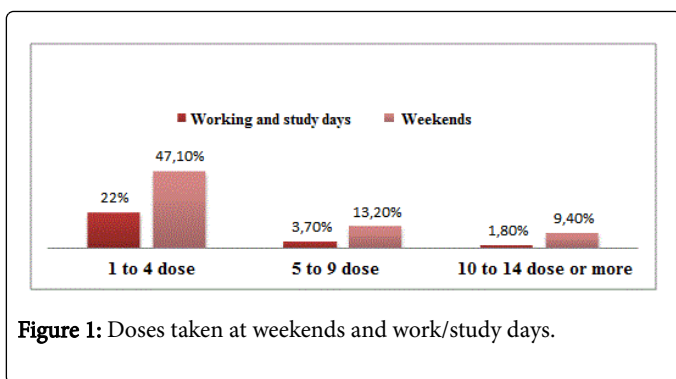


Figure 1: Doses taken at weekends and work/study days.

The course that shows the highest frequency of alcohol consumption during the week is the agronomy course (4 times or more/week). Despite having the largest number of students who drink, the veterinary course along with the right course has the lowest rate of students who drink 4 times or more/week.

On weekdays and work 27.0% of students use alcoholic beverages, and at weekends the proportion of sample consuming alcohol increases to 70.0%, as well as the number of doses ingested. In relation to drinking 6 doses or more on a single occasion 30.0% of the students reported doing it at least once a month, 18.0% from 2 to 4 times a month and 4.0% from 2 to 4 times or more in the week. The consumption of alcohol was also detrimental to the social and professional lives of students, seen in the last year 5.0% of students failed to meet some commitment because of drinking.

Discussion

Corroborating data in the literature, this study showed that 80% of the students reported having used alcohol at least once in the last month. A study carried out with students from the Federal University of São Paulo (USP) identified alcohol as the substance most consumed by students and about 82.3% of the students interviewed reported having used alcohol in the 12 months prior to the survey (In addition, the results of this study are presented in Table 1.

The Global Report on Alcohol and Health released by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2014 showed that harmful use of alcohol can be related to about 3.3 million deaths worldwide each year.

The American Association of Psychiatry (APA) in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders describes Alcohol-Related Disorders, these are characterized by the problematic pattern of their use, leading to clinically significant physical and behavioral impairment or suffering.

According to a household survey commissioned by the Government of the State of São Paulo to Ibope and held in the state itself, in 2011 the age group that presented greater dependence on alcohol is between 18 and 24 years, followed by that of 25 to 34 years. According to the research, the high rate of dependence at this age can occur because in this period young people go to nightclubs, parties and enter college. Also, the National Survey on the Use of Alcohol, Tobacco and other drugs among University Students of the 27 Brazilian Capitals, 2010, showed that 90.0% of students make constant use of the substance.

Given the data presented, it is possible to conclude that young people, especially those who enter a university, constitute a population vulnerable to the use of alcoholic beverages.

This is because although the university provides intellectual growth, professional training, and achievements, it also brings about many changes. Some young people are not prepared to deal with the stress of such transformations, new responsibilities, a new circle of contacts and friendships, in some cases a change of hometown or parent's home. It is also important to observe that alcohol is very common in college parties, being a means of socializing or entering a group of friends [15-17].

Pillon et al. [15] through the application of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), in the first year of graduation from the University of São Paulo-Ribeirão Preto, concluded that 86.5% of university students have used alcohol during their lifetime. Further, 75% of the students in the sample were already intoxicated [15].

At the University of Guayaquil, Ecuador, the use of alcoholic beverages was also monitored through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which showed that 72% of the evaluated group had already used alcohol and 39% had already reached a state of intoxication [15]. Another study on the use of psychotropic drugs at the Federal University of Amazonas found that 87.7% of the students used alcohol in their lives and 47.8% ingested alcoholic beverages until their intoxication at some point in life [18].

Oliveira et al. [19] applied a Questionnaire on Drinking Habits and the Inventory of Expectations and Personal Beliefs about Alcohol (IECPA) and observed that 73.6% of the students already lived an episode of acute intoxication once in their lifetime.

At the Federal University of Espírito Santo, Pereira et al. [20] investigated the prevalence of alcohol and other drug use among medical students through the adaptation of the questionnaire on drug use proposed by the WHO. Alcohol consumption in life reached 86.9% of the students and 17.8% of the interviewees became drunk 1 to 5 times in the last month [20].

In this research the highest incidence of students who never drink was presented by the 3rd year of the Law course, followed by the 5th year of Civil Engineering, Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine. Fachini [21] identified that alcohol consumption increases during academic training and that this is one of the aspects of academic life related to alcohol use.

In order to identify the differences in health behaviors among undergraduate and graduate students, Franca et al. [22] applied the National College Health Risk Behavior Survey to students of public universities in the state of Pernambuco of which identified that alcohol consumption at the beginning of graduation is 68.8% while in the end, it reaches 83.3%, which is a significant increase [22].

Some authors concluded that this increase in the consumption pattern of beverages may be related to the increase in requirements, responsibilities, and activities that the last years of graduation cause to the individual [23].

According to the WHO document "*Self-help strategies for cutting down or stopping substance use: a guide*" there is no safe level for alcohol consumption. However, consumption considered moderate for men is 4 doses in one day and no more than 14 doses per week and for women 3 doses in one day and no more than 7 doses per week.

According to the "*drinking standards*" considered by the WHO (World Health Organization), exceeding 3 doses per day or 5 doses per occasion at least once a week characterizes "*heavy drinking*". In this study, 22% of the sample admitted to drinking more than 6 doses per

occasion at least once a week, which shows that this percentage of college students can be included in this pattern.

"Severe episodic drinking" occurs due to the ingestion of 5 to 6 doses of pure alcohol in a single occasion, for women to exceed 4 doses and for men to exceed 5 doses, in this study 52% of the students reported ingesting more than 6 doses in one only one occasion, 30% drink six or more doses once a month, 18% drink 2 to 4 times a month, 3% drink 2 to 3 times a week, and 1.0% drink 4 times a week or more.

Problematic drinking is related to problems that drinking can cause, whether individual or collective, health or social. This concept is also related to alcoholism as an early or less severe stage. Thus, problematic drinking can be observed in 5.0% of the participants in this study who reported not being able to fulfil some commitment because of the drink in the last year.

At the Federal University of Santa Maria, a survey in 1994 indicated that 10.0% of the subjects presented positive prevalence in an interview that measures the problematic consumption of alcohol and is usually associated with the "heavy drinking" pattern [24]. In a study carried out with university students in the Rio Grande do Sul, there was a predominance of the episodic heavy drinking pattern in 68.0% participants [25]. These drinking patterns are associated with health and safety hazards, such as intoxication, accidents, injuries, and long-term organ damage and social harm (National Secretary of Public Policy on Drugs).

On these occasions, large amounts of drinks are ingested by setting the standard "Heavy Drinking Episodic" which presents increased risks for a variety of consequences. A significant portion of the sample also consumes alcohol during the week in the middle of work and study since most of the students work in a period different from that of the college. Some of these individuals have not been able to fulfil their drinking commitments in the past year, and are at an early stage of alcoholism.

Conclusion

The results of this research show a very expressive use of alcohol by university students analyzed with a general instrument for student profile. Although the sample of this population is composed of randomly selected courses, it was possible to identify that the presented alcohol use pattern poses a risk to the physical and mental health of these students. The highest frequency of alcohol use is found in male college students in the last year of graduation and occurs on weekends. Thus, this study can act as a guide for the next steps in the continuation of this project, with more accurate research using specific instruments to measure alcohol consumption and intervention to clarify students about the harmful effects of alcohol abuse.

Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest between authors.

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