

## THE LIFESTYLE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION ISSUES

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**Key words:** adolescents, young people, students, alcohol consumption, psychoactive substances, prevention.

### Summary

**Introduction.** Alcohol consumption has a negative impact on the health of children, adolescents and young people, including students. Students' alcohol consumption studies could help prevent the use of harmful psychoactive substances.

**Materials and Methods.** 319 university students participated in the written survey. SPSS (version 24.0) programme has been used for statistical data analysis. The criterion  $\chi^2$  has been applied and the data was considered to be statistically significant when  $p \leq 0.05$ .

**Results.** The study involved 143 (44.8%) boys and 176 (55.2%) girls. The majority of students (90.3%) have consumed alcohol in the period of the last 12 months. Half of the respondents (47%) indicated that they consume beer several times a month. 58% of the respondents consume wine, and low-alcohol beverages (Cider, Mix, Fizz, alcoholic cocktails) several times a month are consumed by 42% of students. 55% of the respondents do not consume above mentioned low-alcohol beverages at all. Vodka and other strong alcoholic drinks are not consumed by 54% of the respondents at all, while 43% of the respondents consume these beverages several times a month. Half of the respondents (48%) have for several times been under the influence of alcohol after having drunk large amounts of alcohol, and 33% of the respondents have been under the influence of alcohol more

than ten times. Both girls and boys consume vodka and other strong alcoholic beverages equally often. However, girls rather than boys consume wine significantly more often.

Half of the respondents (50%) have noted that friends make major impact on the consumption of alcohol by young people, while 22% of the respondents believe that it is the lack of employment and busyness. In the students' opinion the key role in the prevention of smoking and alcohol drinking lies with parents (37%), friends (27.9%) and the media (25.1%). 75.9% of the respondents said that they had enough knowledge about a healthy lifestyle, and 19.7% of the respondents said that they have doubts as regards their knowledge on healthy lifestyle.

**Conclusions.** Over the last year and during the last month alcohol has been consumed by the majority of students that participated in the survey. Both girls and boys consume alcohol equally often. The key causes of alcohol consumption by students are the influence of friends and the lack of employment and busyness. The study has revealed that most students believe that they have enough knowledge about healthy lifestyles. However, it is recommended to pay more attention to prevention of alcohol consumption by adolescents and young people. Reducing alcohol consumption should be a priority in health policy formulation at local and national levels.

### Introduction

The years of studies are a period of intense learning, high mental and physical capacity, new challenges and experi-

ences, as well as the development of lifestyle habits and a social environment. Studies at a higher education institution are associated with a change in the living environment and the development of new lifestyle habits [1]. These factors have influence on the consumption of alcohol by students.

In the last decade, the total consumption of alcohol has increased [2]. Alcohol has a negative impact on all systems of the human body: cardiovascular system, musculoskeletal system (bones), mental health, etc. [3-11]. Its consumption has extremely negative consequences on the health and well-being of young people [2, 12].

In recent years, great attention has been paid to the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances by schoolchildren, and the preventive measures have been established. Legislation identifies the responsibilities and actions of school authorities in the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances; it also defines the measures to be taken in case of the use of psychoactive substances. There are children's welfare commissions at schools that implement preventive projects against the use of the above-mentioned harmful substances; they submit proposals to school authorities for the appointment of a child's minimum or moderate care [13-15].

Research conducted within the adolescent group has shown that a better understanding of the harmful effects that alcohol poses on the development of adolescents, the implementation of the appropriate preventive measures, changes in social norms and conditions, and the provision of social welfare can have positive effects in reducing alcohol consumption by adolescents [16, 17]. At present little attention is being paid to solving the problem of alcohol consumption by young people in Lithuania. This issue is particularly relevant when we speak about students. Therefore, the analysis of this issue could help to develop, implement and apply preventive measures and programmes aimed at reducing students' alcohol consumption.

**The aim of the study** was to analyse the situation of alcohol consumption by students at Klaipeda University.

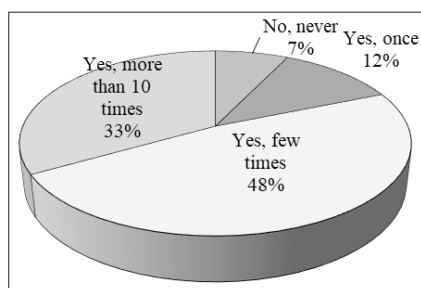
### Methodology

To conduct the research a written survey has been accomplished. 319 Klaipeda University students participated in the survey. The study has used a questionnaire designed with reference to the lifestyle of young people project carried out by the Faculty of Health Sciences at Klaipeda University and Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania. SPSS (version 24.0) programme has been used for statistical data analysis. The criterion  $\chi^2$  has been applied to analyse the data. The data was considered to be statistically significant when  $p \leq 0.05$ . The authorization of the Bio-

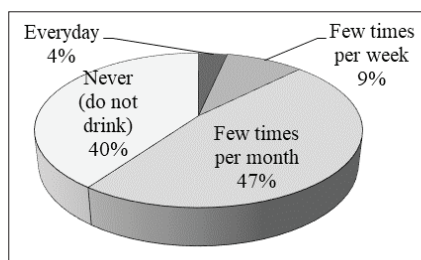
ethics Committee has been obtained to carry out the study.

### Results

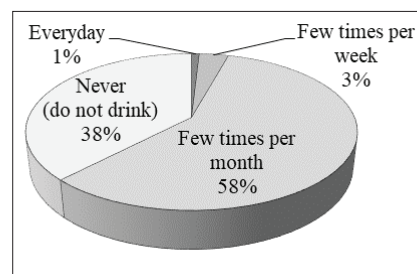
319 respondents participated in the survey on student lifestyle and problems of the use of psychoactive substances. The study involved 143 (44.8%) boys and 176 (55.2%) girls. The survey has revealed that majority of students (90.3%) have consumed alcoholic beverages in the period of the last twelve months. When asked if students have consumed any alcohol beverage in the period of the



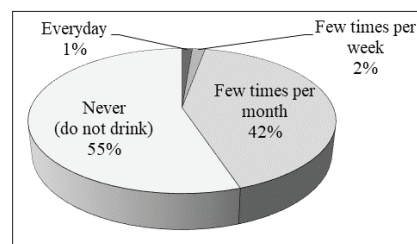
**Figure 1.** Have you ever consumed such amounts of alcohol beverages, which made you feel drunk?



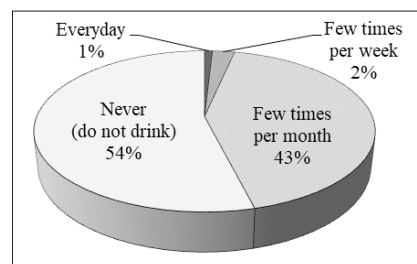
a) Consumption of beer



b) Consumption of wine



c) Consumption of low-alcohol beverages, such as Cider, Mix, Fizz, alcoholic cocktails



d) Consumption of vodka and strong alcoholic drinks

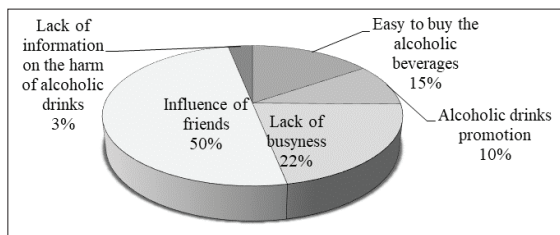
**Figure 2.** Consumption of various alcoholic drinks: a), b), c), d).

last 30 days, 80 % of the respondents said “yes”. The survey has disclosed that nearly half of the respondents (48 %) have drunk large amounts of alcohol for several times, and 33 % of the respondents have consumed large amounts of alcohol more than ten times (Figure 1).

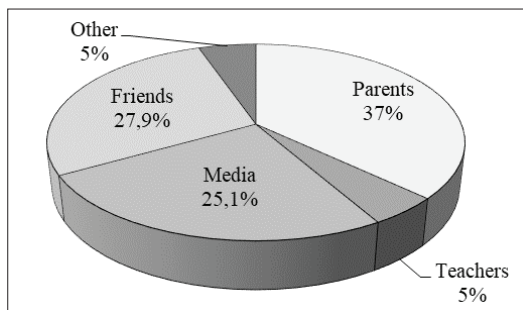
Nearly half of the respondents (47%) said that they drink beer several times a month. 58% of the respondents’ drink wine several times a month. Low-alcohol beverages (Cider, Mix, Fizz, alcoholic cocktails) are consumed several times a month by 42% of students. 55 % of the respondents do not consume the above mentioned low-alcohol beverages at all. 54 % of the students do not consume vodka and other strong alcohol beverages at all, and 43% of the respondents consume these alcohol beverages several times a month (Figure 2). Both girls and boys consume strong alcohol beverages and beer equally often ( $p>0.5$ ). Girls consume wine significantly more often ( $p<0.05$ ) than boys.

Half of the respondents believe that their friends play the key role in consumption of alcoholic drinks by young people. 22% of the respondents indicate that it is the lack of employment and busyness that makes young people to consume alcoholic drinks.

The study has revealed that in students’ opinion 92% of young people have enough knowledge about the harm produced by consumption of alcoholic drinks. 75.9 % of the respondents indicated that they had enough knowledge about a healthy lifestyle in general, and 19.7 % of the respondents



**Figure 3.** What plays the key role in the consumption of alcoholic drinks by young people?



**Figure 4.** Who plays the key role in prevention of alcohol consumption?

said that they have doubts whether their knowledge on this issue is sufficient and correct.

The study has revealed that parents (37%), friends (27.9%) and the media (25.1%) play the key role in the prevention of alcohol consumption by young people (Figure 4).

### Discussion

In Lithuania, the supply of different out-of-school activities for schoolchildren is versatile: schoolchildren can attend different non-formal education clubs, and various programmes for schoolchildren are being implemented. However, insufficient attention is paid to the productive, health-enhancing leisure activities for high school or university students. An important measure for prevention of students’ alcohol consumption is the increase of the supply of their free-time activities: establishing conditions for promotion of different sports activities, volunteering opportunities, self-realization activities, or activities related to future professional work. In this context, the promotion of physical activity of students is of primary importance as it is of great significance because it enhances human health and reduces health risk factors [18]. Various physical activities (physical exercises, morning exercise, sports activities, sports games, jogging, swimming, dancing, aerobics, yoga, etc.) are recommended for the prevention of alcohol consumption [19].

Researchers who investigated students’ alcohol consumption stated that the key attention in the prevention of alcohol consumption should be focused on formation of expectations [19]. It can be expected that the development of the negative alcohol consumption and consequence expectations in young people could stimulate them to consume alcohol beverages less frequently and in smaller amounts. Therefore, the study programmes at higher educational institution should offer for students more various selective study subjects that focus on health education, health promotion, psychology, etc.; that could help students to obtain knowledge, and to develop positive attitudes and approaches on healthy lifestyle.

Good conditions for the implementation of a short-term intervention in schools have been established in Lithuania, as schools adjust a well-developed practice of cooperation among different specialists [20]. However, higher education institutions in Lithuania do not sufficiently apply the positive possibilities of a short-term intervention. Systemic studies conducted by US researchers have proved that the effectiveness of a short-term intervention can be affected by the location where it is provided. It was identified that results that are more effective were obtained in trials where a short-term intervention was provided at teaching/academic institutions compared to short-term intervention provided at community institutions [21]. Interventions at an individual

level, the measures of alcohol control policy, and reduction of the accessibility to alcoholic beverages could reduce the consumption of alcohol by students and young people.

### Conclusions

The majority of the respondents that participated in the survey have consumed alcoholic drinks in the period of the last twelve months and during the last month. Both girls and boys consume alcohol equally often. Girls rather than boys prefer wine to other alcohol drinks. The key causes of alcohol consumption by students are the influence of their friends and the lack of employment and busyness. The study has revealed that most students believe that they have enough knowledge about healthy lifestyles. However, it is recommended to pay more attention to prevention of alcohol consumption by adolescents and young people. Reducing alcohol consumption should be a priority in health policy formulation both at local and national levels.

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#### UNIVERSITETO STUDENTŲ GYVENSENA: ALKOHOLIO VARTOJIMO ASPEKTAI

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Raktažodžiai: paaugliai, jaunimas, studentai, alkoholio vartojimas, psichoaktyviosios medžiagos, prevencija.

Santrauka

Įvadas. Alkoholio vartojimas daro neigiamą poveikį vaikų, paauglių, jaunų žmonių, taip pat ir studentų sveikatai. Studentų alkoholio vartojimo ypatumų tyrimai galėtų padėti vykdyti žalingų psichoaktyviųjų medžiagų vartojimo prevenciją.

Metodika. Apklausoje raštu dalyvavo 319 Klaipėdos universiteto studentų. Statistinei duomenų analizei naudota SPSS (24.0 versija) programa. Taikytas  $\chi^2$  kriterijus, duomenys statistiškai reikšmingi, kai  $p \leq 0,05$ .

Rezultatai. Tyrime dalyvavo 143 (44,8 proc.) vaikinai ir 176 (55,2 proc.) merginos. Pastarųjų 12 mėnesių laikotarpiu alkoholį vartojo dauguma (90,3 proc.) studentų. Pusė respondentų alų geria kelis kartus per mėnesį (47 proc.). Kelis kartus per mėnesį vyną geria 58 proc. respondentų, o silpnus alkoholinius gėrimus (sidrą, Mix, Fizz, alkoholinius kokteilius) - 42 proc. studentų. 55 proc. respondentų minėtų silpnų alkoholinių gėrimų nevartoja. Degtinės ir kitų stipriųjų gėrimų nevartoja 54 proc. respondentų, o kelis kartus per mėnesį išgeria 43 proc. respondentų. Nuo didelio kiekio išgerto

alkoholio keletą kartų apsvaigę buvo pusė (48 proc.) apklaustųjų, o daugiau nei 10 kartų apsvaigę buvo 33 proc. respondentų. Degtinė ir kitus stipriuosius gėrimus bei alų merginos ir vaikinai vartoja vienodai dažnai. Vyną reikšmingai dažniau vartoja merginos.

Pusė (50 proc.) respondentų mano, kad pagrindinę įtaką jaunimo alkoholio vartojimui daro draugai, o 22 proc. - užimtumo stoka. Pagrindinis vaidmuo rūkymo ir alkoholio prevencijai, studentų nuomone, tenka tėvams (37 proc.), draugams (27,9 proc.) ir žiniasklaidai (25,1 proc.). 75,9 proc. respondentų atsakė, kad turi pakankamai žinių apie sveiką gyvenseną, o savo žiniomis abejoja 19,7 proc. apklaustųjų.

Išvados. Pastarųjų metų laikotarpiu ir pastarojo mėnesio laikotarpiu alkoholį vartojo dauguma tirtų studentų. Merginos ir vaikinai beveik visus alkoholinius gėrimus vartoja vienodai dažnai. Pagrindinės studentų alkoholio vartojimo priežastys yra draugų įtaka ir tinkamo užimtumo stoka. Nors tyrimas atskleidė, kad dauguma studentų mano, kad jie turi pakankamai žinių apie sveiką gyvenseną, visgi rekomenduotina paauglių ir jaunimo alkoholio vartojimo prevencijai skirti daugiau dėmesio. Alkoholio vartojimo mažinimas turėtų būti prioritetas uždavinys formuojant sveikatos politiką vietiniu ir nacionaliniu lygmenimis.

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