

**ALCOHOLIC HABITS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS****Mrs. Ramya. G.V\* | Dr. Santhi Appavu\*\****\* Ph.D. Scholar, Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India.**\*\*Research Supervisor, Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India.***ABSTRACT:**

*Drinking at college has become a ritual that students often see as an integral part of their higher education experience. Some students come to college with established drinking habits, and the college environment can lead to a problem. According to a national survey, almost 53 percent of full-time college students aged 18 to 22 drank alcohol in the past month and about 33 percent engaged in binge drinking during that same time frame. For the purposes of this survey, binge drinking was defined as consuming 5 drinks or more on one occasion for males and 4 drinks or more for females. However, some college students drink at least twice that amount, a behaviour that is often called high-intensity drinking.*

*To avoid binge drinking and its consequences, college students (and all people who drink) are advised to track the number of drinks they consume over a given period of time. That is why it is important to know exactly what counts as a drink.*

**Key Words:** Alcohol, habits, college and students.

**ABOUT AUTHORS:**

Author, Mrs. Ramya. G.V. is a Ph.D. Scholar at Himalayan University, Itanagar, and Arunachal Pradesh, India. She has attended various National and International conferences, seminars and workshops.



Author, Dr. Santhi Appavu is research guide, Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India. She has presented papers in various national and international conferences.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Harmful and underage college drinking are significant public health problems, and they exact an enormous toll on the lives of students on campuses across the world.

Drinking at college has become a ritual that students often see as an integral part of their higher education experience. Some students come to college with established drinking habits, and the college environment can lead to a problem. According to a national survey, almost 53 percent of full-time college students aged 18 to 22 drank alcohol in the past month and about 33 percent engaged in binge drinking during that same time frame. For the purposes of this survey, binge drinking was defined as consuming 5 drinks or more on one occasion for males and 4 drinks or more for females. However, some college students drink at least twice that amount, a behaviour that is often called high-intensity drinking.

To avoid binge drinking and its consequences, college students (and all people who drink) are advised to track the number of drinks they consume over a given period of time. That is why it is important to know exactly what counts as a drink.

A standard drink (or one alcoholic drink-equivalent) is one that contains 0.6 fl oz or 14 grams of pure alcohol (also known as an alcoholic drink-equivalent), which is found in the following:

- 12.0 oz of beer with about 5 percent alcohol content
- 5.0 oz of wine with about 12 percent alcohol content
- 1.5 oz of distilled spirits (e.g., gin, rum, tequila, vodka, and whiskey) with about 40 percent alcohol content

Unfortunately, although the standard drink (or alcoholic drink-equivalent) amounts are helpful for following health guidelines, they may not reflect customary serving sizes. A large cup of beer, an over poured glass of wine, or a single mixed drink could contain much more alcohol than a standard drink. In addition, the percentage of pure alcohol varies within and across beverage types (e.g. beer, wine and distilled spirits).

**ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Although some students come to college already having some experience with alcohol, certain aspects of college life—such as unstructured time, widespread availability of alcohol, inconsistent enforcement of underage drinking laws and limited interactions with parents and other adults—can lead to the problem. In fact, college students have higher binge-drinking rates and a higher incidence of driving under the influence of alcohol than their non-college peers.

The first 6 weeks of freshman year are a vulnerable time for heavy drinking and alcohol-related consequences because of student expectations and social pressures at the start of the academic year.

Factors related to specific college environments also are significant. Students attending schools with strong Greek systems or prominent athletic programs tend to drink more than students at other types of schools. In terms of living arrangements, alcohol consumption is highest among students living in fraternities and sororities and lowest among commuting students who live with their families.

Thousands of college students are transported to the emergency room each year for alcohol overdose, which occurs when there is so much alcohol in the bloodstream that areas of the brain controlling basic life-support functions—such as breathing, heart rate, and temperature control—begin to shut down. Signs of this dangerous condition can include the following:

- Mental confusion
- Difficulty remaining conscious or inability to wake up
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute)
- Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Slow heart rate
- Clammy skin
- Dulled responses, such as no gag reflex (which prevents choking)
- Extremely low body temperature, bluish skin colour, or paleness

Alcohol overdose can lead to permanent brain damage or death, so a person showing any of these signs requires immediate medical attention.

Student alcohol use is implicated in a multitude of undesirable and harmful events on university campuses throughout the world. During the past 30 years, numerous studies have been conducted to determine the levels of student use, the underlying motivations for alcohol use, and the relationship between use and negative outcomes, and to develop prevention. The literatures indicate that 80–95% of college students drink at least some alcohol and that 45% engage in what Wechsler *et al.* (Wechsler *et al.*, 1994, 1998) have referred

to as 'binge drinking' (five or more drinks in a row for men; four or more in a row for women). Studies have also documented the relationship between the use of alcohol by college students and a number of harmful events (Perkins and Berkowitz, 1986; Kraft, 1988; Wechsler *et al.*, 1994, 1998).

In response to these problems, colleges and universities offer an array of alcohol education programs and services to students. Typically, campus alcohol programs focus on ways to decrease student alcohol use. Many universities use 'top-down' approaches in which university policy makers mandate guidelines for alcohol (non-) use on campus. Other environmental approaches involve reducing the supply of alcohol to underage students, increasing enforcement of drinking laws and promoting on-campus, no-alcohol social activities (Zimmerman, 1997).

Mandates from university officials that attempt to curtail student freedom tend to be very unpopular with the undergraduate student population. Students appear to know the 'facts' about the dangers of alcohol, yet they consume alcohol anyway (Marlatt *et al.*, 1993). It is illegal for underage students to buy, possess or consume alcohol, yet the very high levels of student drinking indicate that the typical underage student is ready, able and willing to engage in all three of these activities (Marlatt *et al.*, 1993).

'Bottom-up' approaches to alcohol education reflect a different viewpoint and offer an alternative to 'top-down' approaches. A 'bottom-up' approach involves listening to and involving students or focusing on individual students in finding solutions to problems of the student population [e.g. (Larimer and Cronce, 2002)]. A normative education program at Northern Illinois University was shown to be effective in reducing binge-drinking levels at that campus (Haines and Spear, 1996). Other alcohol programs have concentrated directly on the prevention of the harmful effects of alcohol use rather than drinking behaviour itself (Marlatt *et al.*, 1993, 1998). Harm-prevention programs that transcend judgments about drinking behaviour, and focus on promotion of realistic intervention and avoidance strategies may ultimately provide better results.

The consequences of binge drinking on college campuses are pretty serious. More than 1800 college students die every year from binge drinking or alcohol-related accidents, including car accidents. Another 6,00,000 students are injured every year because of alcohol. There are nearly 7,00,000 assaults and nearly 1,00,000 sexual assaults every year related to alcohol. Binge drinking hurts grades and it may lead to developing alcohol use disorder. For these reasons and more, colleges are looking for ways to reduce binge drinking among their students.

Although many college students drink, few understand the risks. There is some evidence that suggests colleges can moderate student drinking by making alcohol education mandatory. This might take several different forms, such as a class during new student orientation or a required online class that students can take whenever it's convenient. It might include some of the startling statistics mentioned above as well the health risks of binge drinking.

Most people, especially college students, aren't aware, for example, that alcohol increases your risk for certain cancers, especially breast cancer. Students may also be surprised to learn just how slowly alcohol is processed by the liver. It takes an average of an hour for the liver to process the alcohol in a pint of beer. These classes should not be intended to scare students off drinking, but rather give them accurate information so they can make better decisions.

Although binge drinking is extremely common on college campuses, many students imagine it is even more common than it actually is. In certain circles, it may be easy for students to get the idea that nearly everyone binge drinks. Younger people are often influenced by social pressure and what they believe is normal. So if they believe everyone in college binge drinks on the weekends, they are more likely to binge drink as well. In colleges where this distorted perception is common, giving students a more accurate picture of binge drinking on campus may help reduce drinking.

If students believe that, say, 90 percent of students binge drink, but the real number is closer to 50 percent, making this fact known to students can significantly alter their expectations and behaviour. There are a number of ways to do this, such as including it in the mandatory alcohol education or a marketing campaign that includes public service announcements, perhaps over email, or posters around campus.

Students often have a lot of flexibility in designing their class schedules. They often prefer to design their schedules so they don't have classes on Fridays, or at least not on Friday mornings. As a result, many students' weekends begin on Thursday night. This essentially makes the weekend 50 percent longer and increases their exposure to binge drinking. Some colleges have tried to keep the weekend the normal length by requiring classes on Friday mornings. If you have to be in class on Friday morning, you are less likely to binge drink on Thursday night.

To be honest, expecting college students not to drink at all is unrealistic. Many colleges aim instead for harm reduction. While alcohol certainly can cause damage on its own, it is more often the accidents, fights, and rapes that cause the worst problems for students. Harm reduction policies can aim to reduce both the

intensity of drinking and the problematic behaviours associated with it. For example, colleges may offer incentives for designated drivers or extend campus transportation services to reduce drunk driving. Colleges may also consider letting students who are of legal drinking age host parties on campus so students won't have to drive and administrators can exercise some oversight.

While many students binge drink mainly because their friends do it, others drink to deal with stress or emotional pain. College can be incredibly stressful, especially for first-year students. Having better support systems in place can reduce drinking in general and reduce the likelihood that students develop substance use disorders. These services may specifically include access to psychotherapy and counselling, but other forms of support may be helpful too. These might include tutoring for students who struggle academically, easy access to fitness facilities, and special efforts to get students involved in campus organizations so they feel less isolated, especially on large campuses.

Of all the strategies on this list, this one may be both the most effective and least popular. Excessive drinking at sporting events is a major cause of fights and accidents, but it's also extremely popular and makes a lot of money. Nevertheless, not selling alcohol at sporting events would significantly reduce drinking and help create an expectation of moderation on campus.

#### REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/college-drinking> (accessed on 16.2.21.)
2. <https://www.affordablecollegesonline.org/college-resource-center/how-to-prevent-college-binge-drinking-and-duis/> (accessed on 16.2.21.)
3. <https://academic.oup.com/her/article/19/1/71/603149> (accessed on 16.2.21.)
4. <https://www.fortbehavioral.com/addiction-recovery-blog/7-ways-colleges-can-reduce-binge-drinking/> (accessed on 16.2.21.)
5. Monday morning report. (2000). Hooray for Hollywood. *Monday Morning Report*, 24 (12).
6. Mumenthaler, M.S., Taylor, J.L., O'Hara, R., & Yesavage, J.A. (1999). Gender differences in moderate Drinking effects. *Alcohol, Research and Health*, 23(1), 55–64.
7. Musto, D.F. (1997). Alcohol control in historical perspective. In M. Plant, E. Single, & T. Stockwell (Eds.), *Alcohol: Minimizing the Harm, What Works?* (Pp.10–25). London: Free Association
8. National Institute on Drug Abuse. (1995). *Drug use among racial/ethnic minorities* (DHHS Publication No. 95-3888). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
9. NCAA. (1996). *NCAA CHAMPS/Life skills program*. [Brochure]. Overland Park, KS: Rapid Press.
10. NCADI. (2000). *selling drinks: Rules of the game*. In NCADI: Last call for high-risk bar Promotions that target college students [On-line]. Available: <http://www.health.org/pubs/lastcall/chapter4.htm>.
11. NIAAA. (1976). *the whole college catalogue about drinking: A guide to alcohol abuse prevention*.
12. Rockville, MD: U.S. Government Printing Office.
13. Nuwer, H. (1999). *Wrongs of passage: Fraternities, sororities, hazing, and binge drinking*.