

Alcohol consumption in 12 to 21 year old students in Beja District

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Introduction: Alcohol is the most consumed controlled substance by young people. According to the ESPAD (2011) report, 87% of students had already consumed alcohol during their life span, and 81% of students consider being easy or even very easy to obtain alcoholic beverages, mainly consuming beer and distilled beverages. Nearly half of the young people drank to inebriation having a tendency to binge drink.

Methods: This is a quantitative study. The objective is to categorize some alcohol drinking habits of students between ages 12 and 21 years old, from the District of Beja (Portugal). Information was gathered via a questionnaire created for that purpose and validated by external experts and pilot testing. 501 questionnaires were validated from 8 schools. Data analysis in SPSS includes central tendency, dispersion and association methods.

Results: Issues were analyzed in two dimensions: socio-economic and consumer habits. About 93% of students have already consumed alcohol having initiated that consumption between ages 12 and 13. Most students consumed their last drink in the previous week being their preference beer and white spirits. Although most of the students never been inebriated, that number decreases from 9th to 12th grades. From those who got inebriated, most of them did so less than 12 times a year, becoming joyful, euphoric, disinhibited and excited. Most young people do not binge drink. Cigarettes and cannabis are other controlled substances consumed while drinking.

Conclusions: The prevalence of alcohol consumption, of inebriation and other controlled substances abuses increases with age and is more frequent in boys, the gender difference being dissipated with increasing age. Girls prefer to consume spirits and boys beer.

Keywords: alcohol consumption; teenagers, behaviors