

# Habits, motivations and consequences of alcohol consumption among young Portuguese students

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## ABSTRACT

In the youth population, alcohol consumption is a common behavior, presenting high indicators in Portugal. The present study seeks to describe the behaviors and developmental trajectories of alcohol consumption in Portuguese young people, explore the factors associated with this behavior, and ascertain the perceived and concrete consequences that result from consumption behaviors.

Participants were 40 young people, 20 females and 20 males, aged between 14 and 24 years. A qualitative methodology was used with the use of semi-structured interviews for data collection.

The results showed that the type of alcoholic drinks most consumed by young people are white drinks, and the quantity and frequency of consumption are very high. The most prevalent factors for alcohol consumption of young people are fundamentally personal determinants (in detail the flavor they feel when consuming alcoholic drinks and coping strategies), the microsystemic influences (in particular, friends and family), the exo and macrosystemic influences (more specifically, the social models, the group integration, the fun, and the feeling of freedom). The negative consequences of alcohol consumption reported by young people relate to physical consequences, risky sexual behavior, road traffic accidents, decreased school performance and/or decreased productivity, consequences psychophysiological, psychological problems, emotional lability, behavioral alteration, and risk of addiction. In addition to these negative consequences, the ingestion of alcoholic drinks is also perceived as provoking positive consequences, in this sense, behavioral disinhibition, fun, and increased self-esteem were mentioned.

The research developed contributed to increasing the knowledge on this subject, allowing a better understanding of the experiences of young people regarding the consumption of alcohol and access, in a deeper way, to the perspectives, consequences, and meanings that they attribute to this behavior.

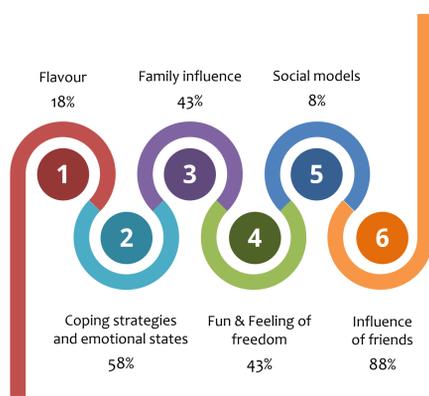
## MAIN OBJECTIVE



To describe the alcohol consumption behaviors of Portuguese young people. Seek to understand the main motivations that young people have for the consumption and recurrent use of alcohol, as well as the consequences associated with this behavior.

## RESULTS

- ❖ Consumption occurs at parties, namely birthday parties and festivals (68%) and at night out, particularly in bars and clubs (65%). 20% of young people mention drinking 2 to 3 glasses of alcoholic beverages; 13% 6 to 7 glasses, the same percentage refers to drinking 5 glasses a night and 8% of the participants 1 to 2 bottles of alcoholic beverages.
- ❖ 23% of young people report drinking alcohol every week, 13% 3-4 times a month and 8% every day.
- ❖ 35% of young people find it difficult to control the use of alcoholic beverages, after starting consumption.
- ❖ 43% report that it is difficult, for themselves and their friends, to control alcohol consumption.
- ❖ All young people mention that it is easy to have access to alcoholic beverages, namely in bars, clubs and supermarkets.
- ❖ Factors for young people's alcohol consumption:
  - ❖ Type of alcoholic beverages most consumed by young people: white drinks - 83% (vodka - 48%, whiskey - 20%, gins - 8%, baileys -5%, liqueur beirão - 5%, bacardi -3%, malibu -3% and martini - 3%); beer - 73%; wine - 25%.
  - ❖ 63% of young people consider that the consumption of alcoholic beverages does not bring benefits.
- ❖ Positive consequences: Behavioral Disinhibition - 68%; Fun - 15%; Social acceptance and self-esteem - 3%.
- ❖ Negative consequences: Physical consequences - 43%; Decreased school performance and/or Decreased productivity - 5%; Psychophysiological consequences - 20%; Risky sexual behavior - 8%; Psychological problems - 8%; Behavioral change - 38%; Behavioral comorbidity - 78%; Road accidents - 25%; Addiction risk - 23%.



## METHOD

### Participants

40 young people; 20 female and 20 male; Ages between 14 and 24 years ( $M = 19.65$  and  $DP = 3.08$ ); Residents in the north of Portugal.

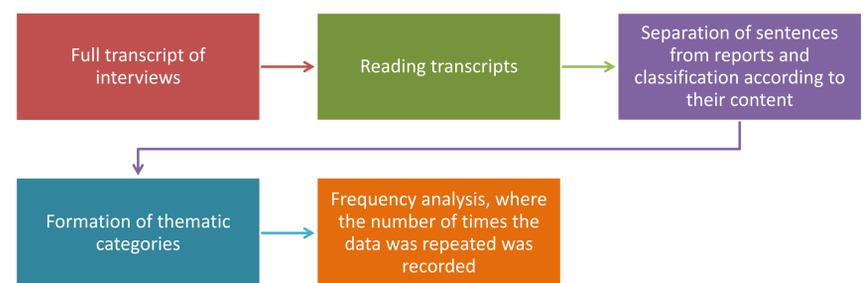
### Instruments, data collection and data analysis procedure

A qualitative methodology was chosen, seeking to access the experiences subjectively lived by the participants, related to alcohol consumption.

The search for participants was carried out through the researcher's network of informal contacts. The criteria for participating in the study were being aged between 14 and 24 years and having no known alcohol dependence or any associated pathology.

The consent of all participants was assured, and informed consent was also given to the parents of minors. Privacy and confidentiality were also guaranteed.

A voice recording device was used, with the due and prior authorization of the participants. The interviews had an average duration of 15 minutes.



## CONCLUSION

Considering the high consumption of alcohol among young Portuguese, the behavior of "drinking" in this age group was analyzed, as well as the factors that facilitate and constrain the consumption of alcoholic beverages in youth and their consequences.

The results showed that the type of alcoholic beverages most consumed by young people are white drinks, and the quantity and frequency of consumption are quite high. In fact, there are several factors for that behavior. Among them, personal determinants (in particular, taste and coping strategies to restore emotional states) and the influence of friends and family stand out. In addition, exosystemic and macrosystemic influences were verified, namely, social models, the desire for group integration, fun and the feeling of freedom.

As for the consequences associated with alcohol consumption, young people reported negative and positive consequences. Regarding the negative consequences, the most reported were physical consequences (such as liver disease), risky sexual behavior, road accidents, decreased school performance and/or decreased productivity, psychophysiological consequences, psychological problems, behavioral changes, the risk of addiction and dependence to alcohol in adulthood and behavioral comorbidity related to tobacco and illicit drugs. On the other hand, the positive consequences mentioned were behavioral disinhibition, increased fun and improved self-esteem.

Based on this work, it is essential to deepen knowledge in this field. Mainly because many participants found it difficult to identify the risks and negative consequences of alcohol consumption in youth.

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