



THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHAL CONSUMPTION ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Alcohol abuse among college students has become a major public health concern. Individual, environmental, and demographic factors have each been associated with alcohol abuse in that population. In response to the enormous physical, emotional, and legal consequences that occur as a result of the abuse, colleges and universities are developing strategies for prevention and intervention.

Keywords: Alcohol Abuse; College Students; Intervention Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol and drug use in college can interfere with your academic performance, decrease the chances of obtaining post-college employment, and cause many additional consequences. Continue reading to learn more about substance abuse in the college student population, and what you can do to seek help if you or someone you know is struggling with drug use in college.

Alcohol is a drug. It is classified as a Central Nervous System (CNS) depressant, which means that drinking alcohol slows down brain functioning, neural activity, and further reduces the functioning of various vital functions in the body. Alcohol overdose causes even more severe depressant effects (inability to feel pain, toxicity where the body vomits the poison, and finally unconsciousness or, worse, coma or death from severe toxic overdose). These reactions depend on how much is consumed and how quickly.

There are different kinds of alcohol. Ethyl alcohol (ethanol), the only alcohol used in beverages, is produced by the fermentation of grains and fruits. Fermenting is a chemical process whereby yeast acts upon certain ingredients in the food, creating alcohol.

College students make up one of the largest populations of drug abusers and are at a heightened risk of addiction. The rate of substance abuse (both drugs and alcohol) among college students has risen steadily in recent years. A [recent study](#) found that 37% of college students regularly used an illegal drug or abused alcohol.

Stats on alcohol use among college students

There is a high prevalence of drinking among college students. According to the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#), 54.9% of full-time college students between the ages of 18 and 22 drank alcohol in the past month, which is over 10% higher than non-college students of the same age. Risky behaviors associated with alcohol use can lead to adverse outcomes, including:

- **Physical injury and death** – 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes.
- **Physical assault** – 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.

- **Sexual assault** – 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report experiencing alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.
- **Poor academic performance** – Approximately 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.

A [study by the Journal of the American Medical Association](#) shows that alcohol and substance abuse are closely linked with anxiety and depression. Additionally, 37% of alcohol abusers and 53% of drug abusers also have at least one serious mental illness.

While substance abuse and mental health disorders are not directly caused by one another, drugs and alcohol are often used to self-medicate and ease the symptoms of undiagnosed mental health issues. Symptoms related to mental health problems can also be worsened or trigger new symptoms with the use of drugs and alcohol. And when combined with medications like anti-anxiety pills, antidepressants, and mood stabilizers, drug and alcohol use can make symptoms more difficult to manage.

Binge drinking on college campuses:

Alcohol abuse can take different forms on college campuses, such as [binge drinking](#). Binge drinking is classified as alcohol consumption in a short period to get drunk. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found [two out of every five students](#) binge drink and that heavy drinking is most common in the first six weeks of freshman year. Combining a new permissive environment with potential mental health, stress, or relationship issues can contribute to binge drinking and consistently drinking too much. Students who binge drink three times a week or more [are six times more likely](#) to perform poorly on tests and projects than their peers. Young people who binge drink frequently are also more likely to [develop alcohol use disorder](#).

Unfortunately, thousands of college students are sent to the hospital each year due to alcohol overdose. When alcohol is consumed excessively, there is a high risk of [alcohol poisoning or overdose](#). This can occur when there is too much alcohol in the bloodstream, and essential functions such as breathing, heart rate, and body temperature begin to shut down. Alcohol overdose can cause brain damage or death and is one of the main risk factors of binge drinking.

IF you or someone you know struggles with binge drinking, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has a [behavioral health treatment services locator](#) that you can use to find support resources. It can help you find treatment centers, treatment programs, and support groups near you.

Common drugs abused on college campuses:

According to a USA Today study, about [half of the nation's 5.4 million college students](#) admit to binge drinking or taking drugs at least once per month. Additionally, the National Institute

on Drug Abuse found that although marijuana use is high, prescription drugs and illicit drugs are becoming more popular

College students face many pressures on campus, both socially and academically, that could lead to substance abuse. To succeed academically, some students may begin abusing prescription stimulants used to treat ADHD, such as Adderall or Ritalin, to stay up all night studying or to improve focus. Illegal drugs, prescription drugs, and marijuana also have a high rate of use among college students.

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 are the [main group that uses hallucinogens](#) such as ecstasy and MDMA. Hallucinogens are used as a party drug during concerts, raves, and music festivals to heighten their experience. However, there are many [negative side effects](#) to taking the drug, including severe depression and developing other mental illnesses.

The prevalence of young people [abusing prescription painkillers or opioids](#) is also increasing. These are often misused as a way to alleviate pain and to get high. Addiction to painkillers can lead to trying illegal drugs like fentanyl or heroin to achieve the same feeling but can result in death.

Although it may start as innocent fun, repeated substance abuse can lead to addiction and cause [harmful side effects on physical and mental health](#). Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help for an addiction. [Many resources provide support](#) for addiction recovery and addiction treatment.

Causes of substance abuse in college students

Substance abuse is prevalent among college students and usually results in academic, physical, mental, or social problems. According to the 2019 Monitoring the Future survey, [college students have the highest](#) marijuana and illicit drug use, such as amphetamines, cocaine, hallucinogens, and MDMA.

Common causes for substance abuse among college students include

1. Peer pressure

College is a time to try new things, meet new people, and make new memories. But, that also means there's a [higher chance of giving in to peer pressure](#). With the prevalence of party culture on many campuses, students are constantly surrounded by people using drugs and drinking alcohol. A student may choose to do what everyone else is doing to find a sense of belonging.

2. Social anxiety

Socializing in a new environment can be [anxiety-inducing for many students](#), especially for introverts. Drug and alcohol use can be seen as a way to calm nerves and loosen up but can lead to substance abuse. According to [research](#) published by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), individuals with anxiety are at an increased risk of developing a substance use disorder.

Greek life

Many college students join Greek life to meet new people and find a place where they belong. However, alcohol and drug abuse can be a significant aspect of fitting into the culture of Greek life on college campuses. A recent study found that men and women living in fraternity and sorority houses have higher [binge drinking and marijuana use](#) rates. Former Greek life members were also more likely to develop alcohol-use disorder by the age of 35.

4. Curiosity

Curiosity is a common reason why college students experiment with drugs and alcohol. With the newfound freedom that many college students experience living away from home for the first time, students are more likely to try new things. Combined with peer pressure, this can lead many students to try drugs and alcohol to see what it's like or experience something new.

5. Academic success

With the increased pressure placed on academic performance, college can be an incredibly stressful time. There's also the stress of making new friends and balancing an active social life. Stimulants such as Adderall and Ritalin are known as "study drugs" commonly used by students. Although a doctor prescribes these medications for ADHD, some students abuse them to stay up all night to study.

6. Coping with mental health issues

According to [data](#) from the Texas Medical Association, young adults with mental illness are at an increased risk of stimulants, non-prescription medication, and marijuana abuse. Mental illnesses don't cause substance abuse, but some students use substances to cope with symptoms. These substances may help relieve symptoms in the short term but can also ultimately make symptoms worse.

If you're struggling, seek help from a mental health professional to create a healthy [mental health plan](#).

Signs of drug and/or alcohol abuse

THE FOLLOWING SIGNS MAY INDICATE DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE:

If you suspect someone may be abusing drugs or alcohol, steps can be taken to provide support. [SAMHSA](#) offers resources for peers, parents, and educators to support individuals struggling with drug and alcohol abuse.

The SAMHSA National Helpline is a free and confidential [24/7/365 hotline](#) that provides treatment referrals and information. Support groups and inpatient or outpatient programs can also aid in addiction recovery, help identify triggers, and develop treatment plans.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health

According to the 2017 NSDHU, nearly 1 and 10 college students meet the criteria to be diagnosed with Alcohol Use Disorder.²⁸ Furthermore, nearly 8 % of college aged individuals

between the ages of 18-25 meet the diagnostic criteria for illicit drug use disorder, defined as dependence or abuse of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, prescription drugs, and other drugs. ²⁸Both alcohol and illicit drug use disorder, are associated with anxiety, depression, loneliness, and self-destructive behavior. With suicide being associated with all of these feelings, it is clear that suicide is closely related to alcohol and drug use. According to the CDC, suicide is the second leading cause of death among college aged individuals ranking only behind unintentional injury.

Academic Failure/Graduation Rates :Nearly 1 and 4 students in the United States report academic consequences such as poor grades, missing class, doing bad on exams, and falling behind as a result of alcohol every year. Furthermore, illicit drug use disorder is associated with lower grades and poor performance in school. ²⁸

Legal Implications

Nearly 700,000 college students are violently assaulted every year by another student who was drinking. Furthermore, nearly 97,000 college students report alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape involving illegal substances every year.²² Troubling, is that nearly 65% of people incarcerated in prisons today have been diagnosed with substance use disorder. It is clear that substance use is closely associated with incarceration. ³⁰

Costs to Society

In 2010, alcohol misuse cost the United States nearly 250 billion dollars with three-quarters of this cost being related to binge drinking.²⁷ According to the 2015 NSDUH, nearly 38% of college students report binge drinking in the past month from data collection compared to 32% of college aged individuals. ²¹ With statistics showing that nearly 40% of college students report engaging in binge drinking regularly, college students make up some of these costs to society.

2) RESULT & DISCUSSION

This section contains a summary of the works of literature examined in this study, which focus on the effects of alcohol consumption on student academic performance. The objective, the summary of the results, and the findings that are interpreted for future recommendations are all included in the overview

1. **Objectives of the Study** The objectives used in the table above represent how it is like this study. The specific objective describes will be investigated during the study, whereas e general goal is a comprehensive statement about the overall aim of the study. The objectives that are mentioned above are (1) Investigating outcomes that may affect academic achievement regarding alcohol intake of academic schoolers, and (2) Determining the level of alcohol use and awareness of its harmful impacts on student health.

Table 1, objectives of the study

Objectives	Authors
Investigating outcomes that may affect academic achievement regarding alcohol intake	M, 2020); (Balsa, Giuliano, & French, 2011); (Bolin, Pate, & McClintock, 2017); (Sung, So, & Jeong, 2016); (Onyebuchukwu, Sholarin, & Chico, 2015); (Meda, et al., 2017); (Meier, Hill, Small, & Luthar, 2015); (Tembo, Burns, & Kalembo, 2017); (Welwel, et al., 2022)
Assessing the level of alcohol consumption and understanding the detrimental effects it has on human health.	(Ansari, Stock, & Mills, 2013); (Ukwayi, Lucy, Chibuzo, & Undelikwo, 2013); (Tembo, Burns, & Kalembo, 2017); (Dlamini, Rugbeer, Naidoo, Metso, & Moodley, 2012)

Outcomes in the first objective that is shown in the table above are that alcohol consumption is having a detrimental effect on some students and families, leading to a potential increase in dropouts and poor academic performance [20]. It is very important to examine the level of alcohol consumption or intake and to understand its harmful effects on human health as mentioned in Table 1. The consumption of alcohol harms human health throughout one's life. Previous studies have linked alcohol consumption to numerous diseases including cancer, pancreatitis, liver cirrhosis, tuberculosis, pneumonia, diabetes mellitus, alcohol use disorder, cancers, psychiatric conditions, and injury [21]. The negative effects of drinking alcohol during childhood and adolescence far outweigh the few positive impacts. It's likely that postponing the start of alcohol consumption and reducing the amount consumed by young individuals will improve their health and overall well-being (Birch, et al., 2009). These objectives explore areas that affect the factor of alcoholism.

(3) Recommendations of Related Studies

Table 2 , showed the recommendations of related studies that came from their results and findings. Therefore, the frequent consumption of alcohol during adolescence can be viewed as a potential risk factor or warning sign of future health and social issues.

Table 2. Recommendations of Related Studies:

AUTHOR (S)	RECOMMEDATIONS
(Balsa, Giuliano, & French, 2011)	The results suggest that alcohol consumption has a slightly detrimental impact on the grade point average of male students and that this effect is notably influenced by elevated school absenteeism and difficulties with academic responsibilities
(Ansari, Stock, & Mills, 2013)	Future studies should incorporate well-designed methodologies and both objective and subjective evaluations of academic performance.
Bolin, Pate, & McClintock, 2017)	The findings suggest that prevention efforts provide a focus

	on marijuana use concerning alcohol use
(Balsa, Gandelman, & Roldán, 2018)	The outcomes of this research may help explain the reasons behind the lack of parental involvement in areas with low human capital development
(Sung, So, & Jeong, 2016)	We suggest implementing interventions to decrease alcohol consumption among teenagers as a means of enhancing academic success.
(Ukwayi, Lucy, Chibuzo, & Undelikwo, 2013)	The result recommends daily consultation to reduce damaging results and improve students' academic success, as well as consulting students to drink alcohol in moderation.
(Onyebuchukwu, Sholarin, & Chico, 2015)	A sustained educational program on the impact of alcohol use on academic achievement will be implemented for students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol companies' promotional sales will be prohibited. • Prohibiting drinking establishments and bars from operating within or near school grounds. • Self-training will be conducted regularly to ensure that students should understand that it is not a self-esteem booster. • To deter others, universities will conduct alcohol level screenings regularly.
(Ansari, Salam, & Suominen, 2020)	Universities should evaluate students' problematic drinking and alcohol use disorders to facilitate more efficient and effective interventions.
(Welwel, et al., 2022)	1. Universities should develop techniques and strategies to educate students who have not previously been addicted. Counseling should be used to help students overcome their alcoholism. 2. There must be strategies, methods, and techniques in place to assist all addicted students in overcoming their alcohol dependency. Guidance and counseling treatment programs for those who have become addicted, so that they can begin to control their drinking or become alcohol dependent.
(Evans-Whipp, Plenty, Catalano, Herrenkohl, & Toumbourou, 2013)	It suggests that reducing harm messages and advising approaches may also lower damaging drinking habits, as suggested by harm reduction advocates

(Patte, Qian, & Leatherdale, 2017)	According to the findings, students who begin drinking, have low academic motivation. and effectiveness, which could also obstruct their future academic aspirations.
(Andacao & Lad, 2021)	Each school organization should implement a functional and sustainable moral recovery program that includes threat assessment, substance abuse, and alcohol education.

This highlights the importance of making a concerted effort to find effective prevention and intervention strategies to address this issue [32]. Studies by Sung et al. [9], Ukwai et al. [33], Onyebuchukwu et al. [11], Welwel et al. (2022) and Andacao and Lad [34] suggested that providing consultation and recovery programs for students for them to do better on their academic performances that affected by alcohol drinking. Investigating the impact of alcohol consumption on the academic performance of college students will result in proposals for reducing alcohol consumption among [35] student drinkers. The table above that contains different recommendations from other studies that are related to this study implying that drinking alcohol has a greater

impact mainly on the health of people and the academic performance of learners. These results align more with the notion that peers influence individuals' preferences rather than limiting their options [36]. These studies also suggest that it affects and increased academic absence, and the probability of difficulty at school. These results lay the foundation for a future research project that aims to determine if certain factors, such as support from a healthy parent, self-control abilities, and other individual assets, can distinguish between a compensating and decompensating response [37]. Prevention strategies are also mentioned in the recommendations above to control drinking that harms learners' health and performance. These recommendations help other ongoing studies to set measures that can be taken. By providing specific and feasible suggestions, these recommendations can facilitate the practical application of findings and promote positive change. The extent of excessive drinking among students, as well as their comprehension of its effects on their bodies, is a major public health concern around the world. It can lead to poor academic performance, absenteeism, and a greater risk of dropping out. It may also cause physical and mental health issues, as well as social and relationship problems. It is critical for educators and school administrators to recognize the signs of alcoholism and to provide resources and support to students who are suffering from the disease. Furthermore, students should be educated about the risks and dangers of alcohol abuse, as well as the resources available to them if they or someone they know is struggling with alcoholism. For example, the results show that alcohol consumption on workdays affects students' final grades, whereas alcohol consumption on weekends has no effect [3]. According to the findings of the Balsa et al. [38] study, the primary assessment of academic achievement is the student's GPA which is extracted from official school transcripts. Increasing alcohol intake, in contrast, is linked to self-reported academic stress in females. According to Sholarin et al. [39], universities are no longer governed by their parents and are free to pursue their interests. This is evident as some undergraduates go insane during their academic journey and some individuals experience memory impairment, hindering their ability to graduate due to consistently poor academic performance [40]

Conclusions

The research that I have found on substance use in college students has been eye-opening to me because it seems as if many of the consequences associated with substance use are subtle and rooted in upstream facets like 'law' and 'costs to society'. The implications of substance use found in these facets are reflected in statistics and not seen in everyday life. Population social norms and perspectives are also "hidden in heads" and are often only found via self-reporting. The fact that subjective social norms and perspectives are closely associated with substance use in college students demonstrates that prevention before use is a reality, this being because perceptions and norms can be changed and are adaptable.

When gathering research on this paper, I found that many universities recognize that current social norms many college students have about substance use are based on false ideas and misperceptions. Therefore,

universities are actively working to change social norms by reporting facts, thereby intervening at the interpersonal level of the social-ecological model. As a communications intern at the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE), an organization which exists to educate public health professionals and populations on public health issues, I think it is imperative that SOPHE joins universities in reporting facts related to college student substance

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