

EXPERIENCES AND ALCOHOL-RELATED ATTITUDES DURING ADOLESCENCE AND THE INTENSITY OF ALCOHOL DRINKING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS. A FOLLOW-UP STUDY.

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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed at identification of distant consequences of alcohol-related experiences during adolescence. We mainly intended to check to what extent, if any, different experiences (i.e. age of alcohol initiation, frequency of drinking, amount of alcohol usually drunk at an occasion, etc), and beliefs (i.e. observed attitudes of parents and friends, opinion on health effects of alcohol, etc) during adolescence influence drinking habits later on in life.

The data were collected from 316 persons, age 23 – 28 years, who 8 – 9 years earlier participated (as high-school students) in a primary study, conducted with the use of the “YOU and HEALTH” questionnaire. In the follow-up study we used a modified version of this questionnaire – “YOU and HEALTH 2” The results showed, that different experiences and attitudes related to alcohol in the adolescence period are closely related (statistically significant correlations), and they also correlate significantly with the intensity of alcohol drinking of young adults. Only the level of parental disapproval towards alcohol drinking by the youths, observed during adolescence, had no relation to the level of drinking later on in life. It was also found,

that the intensity of drinking by young adults was determined by such factors from their adolescence period as: age of alcohol initiation, amount of alcohol usually drank at an occasion, frequency of getting drunk, and opinion on health effects of alcohol drinking. It may, therefore, be stated that a relatively early onset of drinking, a habit of drinking in large amounts, and the frequency of getting intoxicated, together with a belief that drinking has little effect upon health, constitute a specific syndrome of factors favoring a development of hazardous drinking habits also in early adulthood.

Key words: adolescence, early adulthood, alcohol drinking.