



## Research Article

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# Alcohol Consumption Habits and Perceptions among Students

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## Abstract

*For a long period of time, alcohol consumption has been considered a shortcut to relieve stress and modify behavior in order to have a better time and provide a pleasant company in the eyes of other fellow companions. This is peculiarly valid for young ages who occupy a more active social life. The habit of alcohol consumption has been repeatedly evaluated and each time a different factor has appeared to play a role in its development. Alcohol beverages are consumed by students at different rates in different countries. High-income countries seem to have a wider range of consumption among students, even though their rules in alcohol consumption seem to be stricter. Meanwhile, fewer evaluations have been provided in this aspect in low-income countries. What seems to be interesting is that different circumstances that accompany living in low-income countries may obtain a valuable set of results that would provide a solid comparison between alcohol consumption habits between students in low-income countries and high-income countries. The use of such data may facilitate the implementation of alcohol policies and regulations accordingly.*

**Keywords:** alcohol beverages; low-income countries; social life

## 1. Introduction

Alcoholic beverages have been part of the gastronomic delight in the European population for a long period of time, even though providing an accurate time when people first started to consume alcohol as a beverage has always been an enigma. Nevertheless, ever since humans started consuming alcohol, they have had difficulties in maintaining a balanced relationship with the quantity of consumption. That might be the reason that in its history, alcohol consumption values have been described as complicated and contradictory, varying in time and place related to class, ethnicity, gender, power, and age in which it is consumed (Phillips, R., 2014). Over time, the middle and high classes of society saw alcohol consumption as a way to promote social status (Hands T., 2018). Being

part of a social group carried its price. But in time, the social component that urged people to consume alcohol was substituted with the need to have a drink in order to have a good time and achieve physical and emotional relaxation. Nowadays, alcohol consumption is a combination of these two reasons. These individuals are at higher risk for abusing alcohol when suitable environment circumstances arise (Abbey, A., Smith, M. J., & Scott, R. O., 1993). Young ages are predisposed to drink larger quantities of alcohol (Kuntsche E, Rehm J, Gmel G., 2004). That is true, especially for college students. Factors related to that could be independent living, reduced parental control, alcohol-related social activities (Read JP, Merrill JE, Bytschkow K, 2010), and stress coping mechanism (Merrill, J. E., & Thomas, S. E., 2013).

According to World Health Organization (WHO), the heaviest-drinking region is the European Union, with over one-fifth of the population aged 15 years and above reporting heavy episodic drinking (five or more drinks on an occasion or 60 g alcohol) at least once a week. That is true especially for college students, as alcohol consumption peaks at this age because that is the period when they start making their own choices about how they behave without supervision. (Brandão YST, Correia DS et al, 2011). Different studies have reported differences in alcohol consumption in the aspect of ethnicity as well (Li HZ, Rosenblood L., 1994; Webb E, Ashton CH et al., 1996; Luczak SE, Wall TL et al., 2001). Also, the cultural aspect was considered to be important, and it was reported to be higher among students in Europe and North America compared to Asia and Africa (Kim JH, Chan KW et al., 2009). However, the role of culture in alcohol consumption might be emphasized in smaller countries where people are more affected by tradition and its pursuit. Another aspect that needs to be evaluated when it comes to alcohol consumption is religion as well. Some studies stated that people who experienced alcohol problems might reduce religious commitment if religion did not help them through their problems or increased their commitment if it did (Luczak, S. E., Prescott et al., 2013).

All aspects mentioned above have been studied in high-income countries but weren't evaluated in low-income countries, where alcohol consumption rates may give different results. For example, in a low-income country like Kosovo, alcohol consumption among college students is not a common habit compared to other developed countries. We were interested to know the rate of alcohol consumption among them, the occasions when they drink alcohol the most, whether they choose a particular brand to drink, if they prefer local or foreign products, if the price affects the beverage they are going to drink and how much they are ready to spend in their beverage.

This paper aims to examine the attitudes and behavior of college students- alcohol consumers in Kosovo in terms of the alcohol purchase (both foreign and domestic brands). Also, we wanted to evaluate the differences in alcohol consumption between the students from the colleges in different cities of Kosovo. We analyzed and compared the frequency of alcohol consumption among students and their preferences corresponding to age-groups, gender, nationality, marital status, smoking habits, and living arrangement.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *2.1 Research design, participants and data collection*

This is a cross-sectional descriptive study, conducted from February to May 2020 on a sample of 414 students aged from 18 to 36 years, who are studying in public universities and private colleges in Kosovo. In this study participated 372 students from three public universities in Kosovo of which 133 were students of University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj (Faculty of Tourism and Environment; Faculty of Industrial Management), 185 were students of University of Prishtina (Faculty of Economics and Management; Faculty of Bank, Finance and Accounting; Faculty of English Language; Faculty of Philosophy; Faculty of Justice) and 54 were students of University of Gjakova (Faculty of Midwifery; Faculty of nursing). Additionally, in this study participated 42 students from two private colleges of which 32 were students of Heimerer College (Laboratory Technician) and 10 were students

of Rezonanca College (Department of Pharmacy). All participants were full-time students in the respective universities and colleges.

Data were collected via a self-administered anonymous questionnaire from 414 students from public universities and private colleges in Kosovo. Data collection was conducted during a regular class period with permission given by the class professor, and the questionnaire took 10 to 15 minutes to be completed. The students were informed about the purpose of the study, and those willing to participate anonymously completed the self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire included 17 questions divided into two sections. The first section contained demographic information such as age, gender, nationality, marital status, living arrangement, and place of residency.

The second section of the questionnaire contained questions about the favorite place where students preferred to consume alcohol, the quality, the price, and the brand of the beverages they usually order. A drink was defined as a glass of any alcoholic beverages such as wine, beer, or other, assuming that one standardizes glass of beer or wine contains a similar quantity of alcohol (from 10 to 13 g). Furthermore, the students were asked to use a score range between “strongly agree” or “disagree” on the importance of the drink brand in their choice of the alcoholic beverage they consume. In this way, we were able to make comparisons between different perspectives. Before proceeding with statistical analysis, we excluded religion as a possible variable to be evaluated, because the most of the students didn't want to announce their religious beliefs and didn't respond to the question.

## 2.2 Statistical analysis

For statistical analysis, we used INSTAT 2 and 3 to calculate the arithmetic mean, median, standard deviation, confidence interval (CI), the two-tailed p-value with t-test of analyzed parameters like age-group, gender, and quality of alcoholic beverages.

We divided participants by age groups, gender, nationality, marital status, smoking habits, and living arrangements in order to analyze and compare the percentage of alcohol consumption among these groups. Also, we analyzed alcohol consumption in restaurants, hotels and cafeteria, and the impact of the price and quality of the beverage between students by comparing them according to gender, place of residency and place of study (public university and private college).

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Characteristics of respondents

A total of 414 students answered the questionnaire. Of all the respondents, 45.2% were male students and 54.8% were female students, 62.8% of them lived in the city and 37.2 % of them lived in the suburb. From the total sample, 89.9% of respondents were students of public universities and 10.1% were students of private colleges. Most of the participants belonged to the age group of 18-26 years old (93.96%), followed by the age group of 27-36 years old (6.04%). The demographic data of the participants are shown in table 1.

**Table 1:** Demographic data of students

Variables and characteristics		Participants	
		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	187	45.2
	Female	227	54.8
<b>Age group</b>	18-26 years	389	93.96
	27-36 years	25	6.04
<b>Age group -Males</b>	18-26 years	222	97.8
	27-36 years	5	2.2

Variables and characteristics	Participants	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age group -Females</b>	18-26 years	167 89.3
	27-36 years	20 10.7
<b>Nationality</b>	Kosovars	410 99.03
	Egyptian	4 0.97
<b>Residence</b>	City	260 62.8
	Suburb	154 37.2
<b>Living arrangement</b>	Alone	8 1.9
	With family	352 85.0
	Room mate	52 12.6
	With partner	2 0.5
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	28 6.8
	Single	386 93.2
<b>Smoking</b>	Yes	77 18.6
	No	302 72.9
	Sometime	35 8.5
<b>Private College</b>	Heimerer	32 7.7
	Rezonanca	10 2.4
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>42</b> <b>10.1</b>
<b>Public University</b>	Gjakova	54 13.0
	Prishtina	185 44.7
	Ferizaj	133 32.1
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>372</b> <b>89.9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.2 Empirical results of analyzed data

The students mean age was 21.3 years with a significant difference between female respondents and male respondents for p-value of  $p < 0.0001$ . (Table 2)

**Table 2:** Parameters of students mean age according to gender

Parameters of age	Total No	Females	Males
Mean	21.319	20.705	22.064
No of participants	414	227	187
Std deviation	3.285	2.056	4.219
Std error	0.1614	0.1365	0.3085
Minimum	18.000	18.000	19.000
Maximum	36.000	34.000	36.000
Median	20.000	20.000	21.000
Lower 95% CI	21.002	20.437	21.459
Upper 95% CI	21.635	20.972	22.669

Do the means of Female age and Male age differ significantly? The two-tailed P value is  $< 0.0001$ , considered extremely significant. The  $t = 4.277$  with 412 degrees of freedom.

Out of 414 students, 34.5% of them consumed alcohol of which 13.8% were female and 20.8% were male. Alcohol consumption was higher in students who lived in cities (24.2%) than in students who lived in suburbs (10.4%). Also, alcohol consumption was higher among students of public universities (28.3%) compared to students of private colleges (6.3%). (Figure 1)

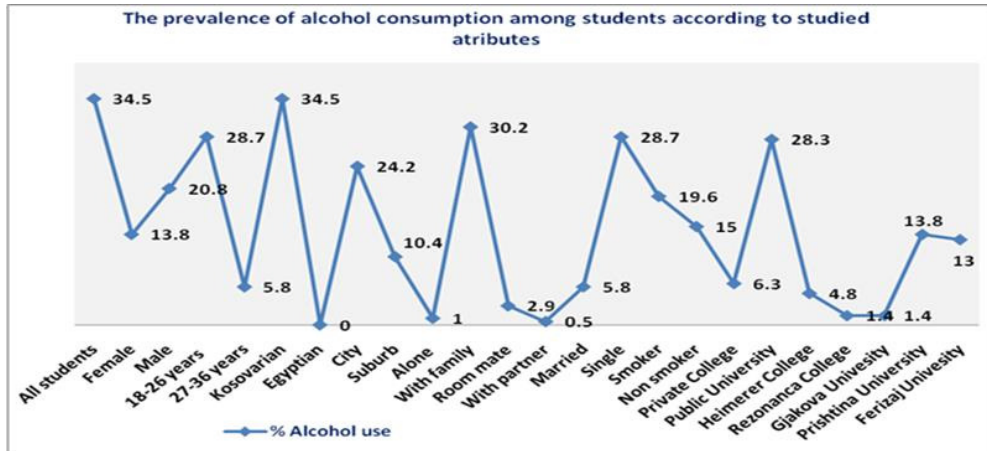


Figure 1: The prevalence of alcohol consumption among students according to studied attributes.

Among all alcohol consumers, 50.3% of them preferred to drink alcohol at home, 35% of them at discos, 32% at restaurants, 30.1% at cafeterias, 21.7% at taverns, and 7.7% in hotels. There was a significant statistical difference among men and women in the choice of the preferred place to drink alcohol. Men preferred to drink alcohol in a hotel more than women (90.9% compared to 9.1%), at taverns (90.3% compared to 9.7%), at discos (84% compared to 16%), at restaurants (60.9% compared to 39.1%) and at cafeterias (55.8% compared to 44.2%). Students who are from cities prefer to consume alcohol at taverns (100%), hotels (90.9%) and cafeterias (88.4%) while students who are from suburbs prefer to consume alcohol at discos (52.2%), restaurants (34.8%), and home (32.4%). Also, private college students prefer to consume alcohol in taverns and hotels while public university students prefer to consume alcohol in restaurants, discos and at home. (Table 3)

Table 3: Where do you prefer to drink alcohol beverages?

Students	a) Restaurant		b) Hotel		c) Cafeterias		d) Disco		e) Taverns		f) At home	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total No	46	32.2	11	7.7	43	30.1	50	35.0	31	21.7	72	50.3
Males	28	60.9	10	90.9	24	55.8	42	84.0	28	90.3	36	50.0
Females	18	39.1	1	9.1	19	44.2	8	16.0	3	9.7	36	50.0
City	30	65.2	10	90.9	38	88.4	22	47.8	31	100.0	50	67.6
Suburb	16	34.8	1	9.1	5	11.6	27	52.2	0	0.0	24	32.4
Private College	4	8.7	4	36.4	14	32.6	10	20.0	12	38.7	12	16.7
Public University	42	91.3	7	63.6	29	67.4	40	80.0	19	61.3	60	83.3

When the students were asked to choose the place where the quality of the consumed alcohol was higher, 57.3% of them considered restaurants to be offering more qualitative drinks followed by 28.7% of the students who considered taverns to be a better choice. The students who came from cities judged restaurants, hotels cafeterias and taverns to offer higher qualitative drinking choices than students from suburbs. Also, public university students considered the alcohol quality to be higher in restaurants (80.5%) and taverns (95.1%), while the private college students were fonder of alcohol consumed in hotels and cafeterias. (Table 4)

**Table 4:** The quality of the drinks is higher in:

Students	a) Restaurant		b) Hotel		c) Cafeterias		d) Disco		e) Taverns	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total No	82	57.3	17	11.9	4	2.8	16	11.2	41	28.7
Males	48	58.5	14	82.4	4	100	8	50.0	20	48.8
Females	34	41.5	3	17.6	0	0	8	50.0	21	51.2
City	55	67.1	11	64.7	11	100	14	60.9	43	89.6
Suburb	27	32.9	6	35.3	0	0	9	39.1	5	10.4
Private College	16	19.5	10	58.8	4	100	0	0.0	2	4.9
Public University	66	80.5	7	41.2	0	0	16	100.0	39	95.1

Our analysis about the price that students are able to pay for alcohol during one month showed that 68.5% of them would spend 1-20 €, 19.6% of them would spend 21-40 € and 11.9% of them would spend 41.80 €. Male students (92.3%) would spend up to 41-60 € per month for alcohol compared to female students (7.7%). 66.3% of students who came from cities would spend for alcohol 1-20 € per month, compared to students who came from the suburbs (33.7%). Also, 78.6% of students from cities would spend 21-40 € per month for alcohol, compared to students from suburbs (21.4%). Public university students (85.7%) spend 1-40 € per month for alcohol more than private college students (14.3%). (Table 5)

**Table 5:** What is the minimum price you are able to spend on alcoholic beverages during a month in a restaurant, hotel, or cafeteria?

Students	a)1-20 Euro		b)21-40 Euro		c)41-60 Euro		d)61-80 Euro	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total No	98	68.5	28	19.6	13	9.1	4	2.8
Males	56	57.1	14	50.0	12	92.3	4	100.0
Females	42	42.9	14	50.0	1	7.7	0	0.0
City	65	66.3	22	78.6	9	69.2	4	100.0
Suburb	33	33.7	6	21.4	4	30.8	0	0.0
Private College	14	14.3	4	14.3	4	30.8	4	100.0
Public University	84	85.7	24	85.7	9	69.2	0	0.0

When asked, if they look at the price, quality, or both of them when they open the menu, only 2.8% of the students responded that they only look the price, 53.1% of them said they look for quality and 44.1% of them looked for both. Men (76.2%) were more interested in quality as well as price, compared to women (23.8%). While comparing these choices among the students from the cities and the students from suburbs, 71.4% of students from the cities chose quality in beverages and low prices as well to be important, compared to the students from suburbs (28.6%). The Public university students (76.3%) preferred quality first, compared to private college students (23.7%). (Table 6)

**Table 6:** Did you choose drinks because of:

Students	a) Low price		b)Quality		c)Both of them	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total No	4	2.8	76	53.1	63	44.1
Males	0	0	38	50.0	48	76.2
Females	4	100	38	50.0	15	23.8
City	4	100	51	67.1	45	71.4
Suburb	0	0	25	32.9	18	28.6
Private College	0	0	18	23.7	8	12.7
Public University	4	100	58	76.3	55	87.3

87.4% of the students declared to prefer beverages that had a medium price and 8.4% of them preferred expensive beverages. When compared between genders, male students preferred low to medium price drinks, while female students preferred expensive drinks. (Figure 2)

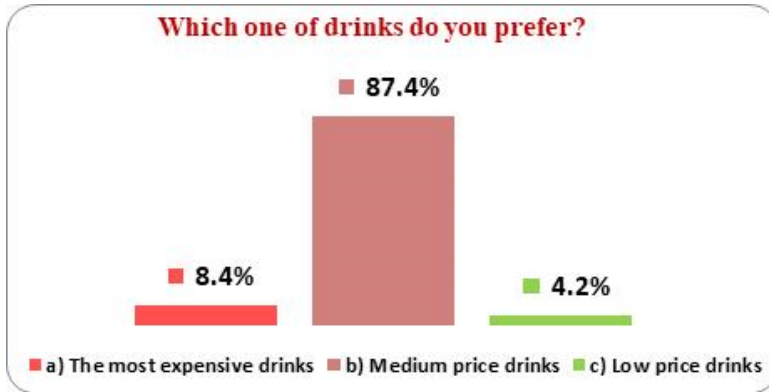


Figure 2: Students preferences for the price of the alcoholic beverages.

The students who come from cities prefer low prices (72%) to medium price drinks (66.7%) compared to students from suburbs (28%, respectively 33.3%). Public university students prefer medium price drinks (84%), compared to private college students (16%).

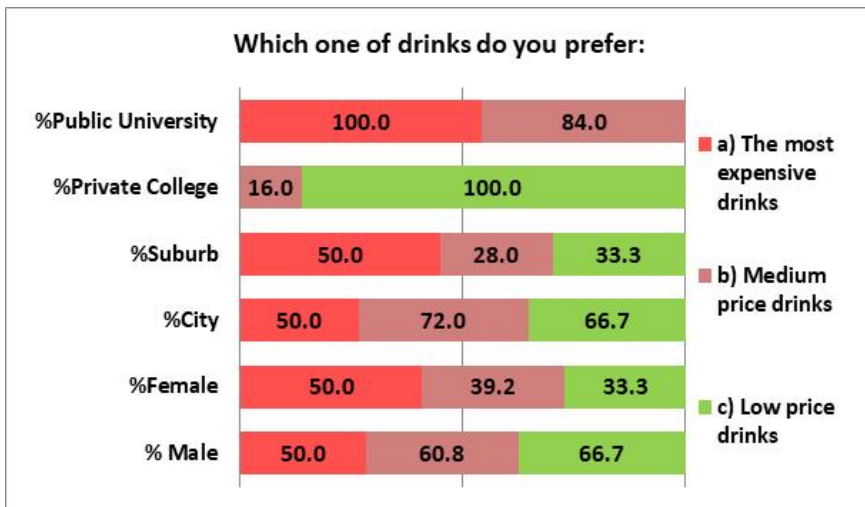


Figure 3: Students' preferences for the price of the alcoholic beverages by gender, place of residency and place of study

Most of the students (42%) strongly agreed that the drink brand is a very important factor to choose a particular alcoholic drink, followed by 36.4% of the students who agreed, 18.2% of them were neutral, and 3.5% who disagreed. (Figure 4)

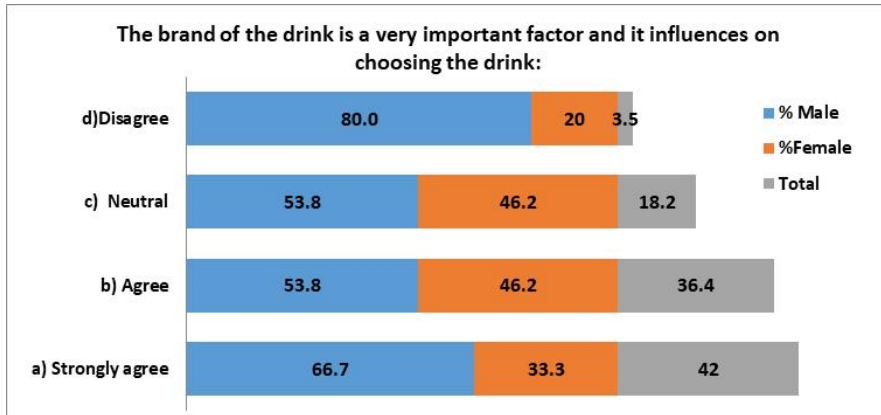


Figure 4: The percentage of the importance of brand in alcoholic beverage selection by students.

There was a significant difference in the assessment of the drink brand as a factor in choosing the alcoholic beverage between the students who lived in the cities and the students who lived in suburbs. The students from the cities strongly agreed (73.3%), respectively agreed (69.2%) that the drink brand is important, compared to students from suburbs (26.7%, respectively 30.8%). Public university students agreed that the drink brand is important (84.6%), compared to private college students, who disagreed (80%) with that statement.

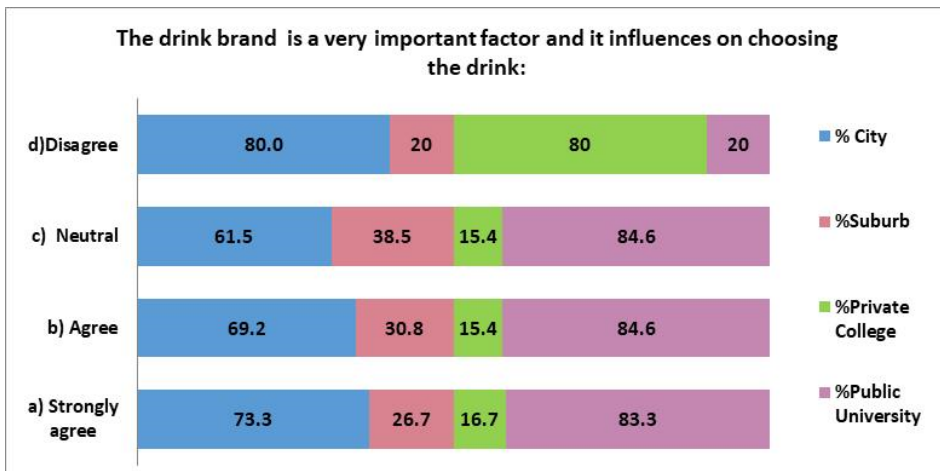


Figure 5: The percentage of the brand importance in alcoholic beverage selection from students by place of residency and place of study.

#### 4. Discussion

This study is one of few studies aiming at the evaluation of alcohol consumption among students in a low-income country of Europe. Our results showed that alcohol consumption among the students in Kosovo is not a very popular practice. The number of students who did consume alcohol, had differences when they were compared among genders, public universities and private colleges, and



place of residency. Most of the students lived with their families, which might be one of the reasons why alcohol consumption is not very popular among them. Under these circumstances, they might not be free of making their own choices without constant supervision by their families. Also, the majority of the students preferred to consume alcohol at home. This preference might be because many families produce homemade alcohol which is very popular in Kosovo, especially in suburban areas. This phenomenon might not be a custom in certain high-income countries where the production of alcohol for home use is illegal. Moreover, drinking behavior varied with gender (Kim, J.; Park, S., 2015, Pedersen, D.E., 2013), and male students consumed more alcohol compared to female students (Wagoner, K.G., 2012). However, most of the students were ready to pay a minimal price for the alcoholic beverage they would consume. Another finding was that students, who studied at a public university, were willing to spend a larger amount of money on alcoholic beverages than the students who studied in private colleges. One of the reasons for this attitude might be because the education in a private college costs more than in a public university, which leaves less space to spare more money in entertainment.

Earlier studies observed that alcohol consumption in an abusive way declines after the age of 25 (Edwards G, Marshall EJ et al., 2003), while adolescents view alcohol consumption as a route to transition into adulthood (Golpe S, Isorna M et al. 2017). Our results concurred that students who were at an academic level of education had more common sense because they had already passed the transition point and were able to make better decisions. Alcohol consumption as a habit is a complex field, where several factors impact its presence. Certain policies about alcohol consumption in different countries might influence the decision of the majority of people to restrict their use. Applying such policies in low-income countries as well, might give a different effect, compared to middle and high-income countries.

This study has strength because it evaluates alcohol consumption habits among students of a low-income country in a way that gives a different set of reasons that accompany alcohol consumption habits. Our limitation was that we could not evaluate alcohol consumption in the aspect of religion.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of this study show that the amount of alcohol consumption among the students of a low-income country like Kosovo is not at high rates. There is a significant difference between male student and female students in the amount of alcohol consumption, the drink choice and the amount of money they were willing to spend in alcoholic beverages. Future research should be conducted with the students in other low-income countries in order to have a clearer picture of the effect of income, and application of particular policies in alcohol consumption from one country to another.

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