

YOUTH AND ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES: DRINKING PATTERNS AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CENTRAL THAILAND

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Abstract. The objective of this study was to determine the drinking patterns of high school students in central Thailand. Eleven thousand three hundred sixty high school students from central Thailand were divided into 2 groups (drinkers and nondrinkers) according to their alcohol consumption. Information was obtained by an anonymous self-reporting questionnaire which consisted of 2 parts: general characteristics, and characteristics of alcohol drinking behavior. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics by a computerized statistical package. The socio-demographic factors related to the student's alcohol consumption during the previous 12 months were: age > 15 years old, male sex, grades 9 and 11 education level, living in a private dormitory, staying with a relative or a friend, having a grade point average <2.0 or >3.0, having a job earning money and having family members with alcohol/drug problems ($p < 0.05$). Drinking patterns were classified into 5 categories: life time drinking, drinking during the previous year, drinking during the previous 30 days, binge drinking during the previous 30 days and drinking until intoxication during the previous 30 days. A higher proportion of drinking was reported by boys than girls. The prevalence of drinking increased in proportion to the educational level. The 3 main drinking places were parties (48.5%), at home or in the dormitory (37.5%) and in shops around the school (12.4%). Boys drank alcohol on average 1-2 times per month in 59.8% and 1-2 standard drinks per time in 38.6%. Eighty point one percent of girls drank alcohol 1-2 times per month and 1-2 standard drinks per time in 55.6%. Drinking alcohol among high school students should be controlled by limiting access to alcoholic beverages in order to reduce accidents, injuries, violence and alcohol-related health problems among young people.

Key words: drinking patterns, high school students, central Thailand

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