

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Youth and Socialization Spaces: A Field Study on Prediction of Risky Alcohol Use by Need for Social Approval and Drinking Motives in Alcohol-Using University Students

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Main Points

- The main issue is drinking habits and the integration of binge drinking into socialization among youth.
- University students who need social approval use alcohol to adapt to their friend group.
- Drinking alcohol during the week caused a 16.6 times increase in RAU.
- The presence of alcohol addiction among friends and partners led to an increase in individual RAU by 2.97 times.

Abstract

University students' alcohol use is greatly influenced by socialization places. The aim of the study is to examine the factors leading to risky alcohol use and evaluate the role of need for social approval and drinking motives. The cross-sectional study was conducted as field research in campus cafes and "Küçükpark" in May – July 2024. 429 university students who were using alcohol were evaluated using the Addiction Profile Index Risk Screening-Alcohol, Drinking Motives Questionnaire-Revised, and Need for Social Approval Scale. Pearson chi-square, independent sample *t* test, analysis of variance, correlation test, and binary logistic regression tests were used. Risky alcohol use was explained by drinking motives, daily – weekly alcohol use, drinking alone, smoking characteristics, consumption alcohol with energy drinks, alcohol use in the family environment, and the presence of alcohol addiction in friends, partners, and family. Need for social approval was not correlated with risky alcohol use but was correlated with conformity of drinking motives. As a result, alcohol is becoming an integral component of socializing in university life. Young individuals prefer to consume alcohol by adapting to groups to be accepted and satisfy their social approval needs, but this does not reach the level of risky alcohol use.

Keywords: Drinking motives, need for social approval, risky alcohol use, socialization, university students

Introduction

University years are a time when young people experience alcohol in their social circle. The studies conducted on university students in Türkiye have shown that alcohol use is in the range of 26 – 76% (blinded reference). The main issue is drinking habits and

the integration of binge drinking into socialization. Binge drinking is defined as consuming large amounts of alcohol to become drunk (Merrill et al., 2023; Walus et al., 2015). The concept of a standard drink (8 – 13 g alcohol) is used to define high-risk alcohol. The alcohol consumption of four standard drinks a day (21 for a week) for adult men and three

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standard drinks a day (14 for a week) for adult women was determined as an upper limit (Ögel, 2023:106; Walus et al., 2015). Risky alcohol use (RAU) is a drinking pattern that does not meet the criteria for alcohol dependence but is risky in terms of frequency of use, changing behavior, and leading to adverse consequences (Tok & Özyurt, 2015). Alcohol-related harms are shaped not only by the amount or frequency of drinking but also by changes in drinking behavior and the amount of alcohol consumed over a particular period of time (Ögel, 2023:104).

Young adults over 25 years of age are considered to be a risky group due to the risk of addiction, low tolerance, alcohol-related accidents, and injuries are higher rates than adults (Güleç, 2019:225). According to the 2023 Report of the US National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 49.6% of young people aged between 18 and 25 had consumed alcohol in the past month, and 28.7% of them were binge drinkers, while 6.9% of them were heavy drinkers (SAMHSA, 2024). Epidemiologic studies have shown that 16.2% of people aged 18 – 29 years meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol use disorder (Hasin et al., 2007), and it was estimated to be 20% among university students (Blanco et al., 2008). A new study revealed that the prevalence of RAU was found to be 18.8% of male students and 8.2% of female students in Türkiye (Ay et al., 2024). Among young people, mostly male college students, mixing energy drinks with alcohol is considered one of the most dangerous ways to consume alcohol. Energy drinks are commonly consumed by males in the 15 – 25 age range, and their consumption has rapidly increased worldwide (Ghozayel et al., 2020).

Socialization spaces greatly influence youth alcohol use. “Küçükpark” is a popular point to socialize and engage in daily practices. Küçükpark, located near the campus, has cafes, coffee shops, game cafes, bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues where students socialize and consume alcohol. The proximity of most students to this location makes it an attractive space, particularly during evening hours (Yaylalı Yıldız, 2014).

During university years, many young people tend to integrate into groups to meet their need for social approval (NSA). Social approval requires that others’ expectations, judgments, and conforming behaviors in social interactions are given importance (Karaşar & Öğülmüş, 2016). Need for social approval is indicated as an implicit factor in men’s increased alcohol consumption (Lin et al., 2024). The exaggerated approach to drinking, particularly among men, leads them to drink more. If a young person wants to be accepted in a peer group, he may drink as much or as frequently as the group wants (Boyle et al., 2020). The power of friends’ influence on alcohol use is frequently emphasized.

Drinking motives (DM) are the fundamental psychological reasons or motivations behind alcohol consumption. The reason, a cognitive motivational predictor of alcohol use, is the final decision on whether to drink or not to drink. A four-factor model of DM, categorized by type of reinforcement (positive – negative) and source of reinforcement (external – internal), was proposed by Cooper (1994). The positive reinforcement side of external motives is social, while the negative side is conformity. “Social” refers to drinking to facilitate positive social interactions and make social occasions more enjoyable.

“Conformity” means drinking to adapt to the group and avoid peer rejection/social pressures. The internal or emotional alcohol-use motives include enhancement as positive reinforcement and coping as negative reinforcement. “Enhancement” refers to drinking to increase pleasant feelings and intoxication or maintain a positive mood. “Coping” means drinking to relieve or cope with negative thoughts and moods (Evren et al., 2010). Environmental factors such as drinking to meet social norms and adapt to a societal environment, and drinking to create positive emotions in a fun atmosphere can be effective in the reasons why people drink alcohol (Osmanoğlu, 2017). All of these reasons may affect the alcohol use habits of university students. University students are open to change due to factors such as their changing environment, the desire to participate in activities required by their age group, and the need for new socialization. Young people may adapt to the drinking behavior of the group to gain social approval. The reasons for the increase in alcohol use among university students can be considered as an expression of friendship and a criterion of socialization (Eryılmaz et al., 2021).

In this context, it is crucial to uncover the reasons behind the risky drinking of university students and to evaluate the relationship in a friendship setting. Our goal is to determine how university youth’s alcohol use pattern evolves into RAU in a social context. The aim of the present study is to examine the factors leading to RAU and to evaluate the role of NSA and DM among alcohol-using university students. Additionally, our objective is to evaluate the association with NSA and DM. The hypotheses of the study are: (1) DM predict RAU; (2) there is a relationship between the NSA and RAU; and (3) there is a relationship between the NSA and external DM (conformity, social).

Material and Methods

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of 57,070 students of Ege University. The sample size calculated by the prevalence of alcohol use among university students was 55.6% in Ege University (Atlam & Yüncü, 2017). When the estimated prevalence was calculated as 55% by power analysis, the sample size of 377 was found to be sufficient. Gender was a controlled variable. Being between the ages of 18 – 30 years and drinking alcohol within the last 3 months were determined as inclusion criteria. A total of 442 alcohol-using university students were reached in the area, and 429 of them were evaluated.

Procedure and Data Collection

This study was approved by Ege University Ethics Committee (decision no.: 2024-24-3.1T/48, date: March 2024).

Data were collected in May – July 2024. The researchers focused on socializing spaces in campus cafes, and Küçükpark where young people frequently go to socialize, have a nice time, and consume alcohol. The time interval of the field survey was determined to be from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. to ensure that the respondents were not under the effects of alcohol. The researchers designed an “alcohol standard drinking” poster to guide participants in calculating their alcohol use (Figure 1). An informed consent



Figure 1. Alcohol Standard Drink Poster.

form was used, and those who agreed to participate in the study were directed to the questionnaire form. Data were collected via QR code with an online questionnaire (Google survey form) to make people comfortable in a social setting. A random sampling method was used in the field, and the researchers reached the participants.

Measurement Tools

Independent variables are gender and NSA; dependent variables are RAU and DM in this research. Demographic data form, Addiction Profile Index Risk Screening Alcohol (APIRS-A), Drinking Motives Questionnaire-Revised (DMQ-R), and Need for Social Approval Scale (NSAS) were used in the study.

Demographic Data Form

It is a questionnaire including gender, age, department, grade, family characteristics, smoking, and alcohol use. There are questions about alcohol use, characteristics, and alcohol use in family and friends.

Addiction Profile Index Risk Screening-Alcohol

The form developed by Ögel et al. (2017) was created as the alcohol form based on the APIRS. The Cronbach's α coefficient of the scale is 0.7. Two factors explained 66% of the total variance. The correlation of -APIRS-A with other scales was 0.94 with APIRS, 0.92 with AUDIT, and 0.78 with CAGE. If the total score on the alcohol scale is three or above, the person should be considered at high risk.

Drinking Motives Questionnaire-Revised

The scale was developed to measure DM by Cooper (1994). A 20-item questionnaire evaluates four different DM: enhancement (1 – 5), coping (6 – 10), conformity (11 – 15), and social (16 – 20). Participants should consider how many occasions they had drunk for each given motive. The scale was revised in Turkish for male alcohol-dependent patients by Evren et al. (2010). Each item on the scale is valued based on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = never, 5 = almost always). Twenty-item structure explains 63.1% of the total variance. The Cronbach's α was found to be 0.78 for enhancement, 0.84 for coping, 0.79 for conformity, and 0.84 for social.

Need for Social Approval Scale

The scale was developed by Karaşar and Öğülmüş (2016) to measure the NSA. The scale is a 5-point Likert scale including 25 items and three subdimensions. These subdimensions include “sensitivity to others’ judgments”, “leaving positive impressions”, and “social withdrawal”. The scale items are scored between “Strongly Agree (1)” and “Strongly Disagree (5)”. Cronbach's α value of the scale is given as 0.90. The internal consistency of the scale is high and reliable. The item – total variance of the scale was found to be 45%.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25 (IBM SPSS Corp.; Armonk, NY, USA). Independent samples *t*-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compare gender, smoking status, alcohol characteristics, and the DMQ-R. Correlation tests were used to establish relationships between APIRS-A, DMQ-R, and NSAS. High-risk and non-high-risk groups were identified through a categorical assessment of APIRS-A. The binary logistic regression test (the enter method) was used to evaluate the effect of alcohol use characteristics and DMQ-R on RAU. The statistical significance level was $p < .05$.

Results

There were 210 male and 219 female students. The mean age of the students was 22.26 ± 1.97 years. The frequency table of the participants is shown in Table 1.

The frequency of alcohol use among male and female students was statistically different ($p = .004$, $\chi^2 = 12.194$). Male students reported alcohol use one to seven times a week (41%) at higher levels than females (25.1%), whereas females declared alcohol use one to three times a month more prevalent (53.4%) than males (42.4%). Addiction Profile Index Risk Screening-Alcohol scores indicating RAU were higher in males ($p < .001$, $t = 4.448$). Drinking motives scores of female and male students were similar ($p > .05$). There was a correlation between the frequency of alcohol use and “enhancement,” “coping,” and “social.” Higher scores were observed in all subscales of DMQ-R in those whose friends or partners had alcohol dependence. Among those who

Table 1.
Participants

Sex	Female	219	51
	Male	210	49
Class degree	1	56	13.1
	2	94	21.9
	3	81	18.9
	4 – 6	165	38.5
	Postgraduate	33	7.7
Field of science representing faculties	Health sciences	76	17.7
	Social sciences	179	41.7
	Science	134	31.2
	Not respondent	40	9.3
Residence	Dormitory	116	27.0
	Friends home	115	26.8
	Alone	103	24.0
	Family home	95	22.1

prefer to drink alone, the scores of “enhancement” ($p = .002$) and “coping” ($p < .0001$) were higher. The “Social” factor was higher in those who consumed alcohol with friends ($p < .0001$). Those who consumed energy drinks mixed with alcohol had higher levels of enhancement ($p = .042$), coping ($p < .0001$), and social ($p = .008$). There was a relationship between those who mostly tried a new type of alcoholic beverage with friends and “conformity” ($p = .018$). There was an inverse relationship between maternal alcohol use and conformity, and a linear relationship between paternal alcohol use and social. Those who drank alcohol in a family environment were more likely to use alcohol for coping ($p = .016$) and social ($p < .0001$). There was a correlation between alcohol dependence in family and relatives and conformity ($p = .014$) and social ($p = .005$) (Table 2).

Addiction Profile Index Risk Screening Alcohol and all sub-dimensions of DMQ-R were highly correlated ($p < .001$). There was no relationship between APIRS-A and the total score and sub-dimensions of the NSAS. The sub-dimension of “conforming” of DMQ-R was correlated with the total score of the NSAS and all sub-dimensions of NSAS (Table 3).

The categorical evaluation based on APIRS-A results found that 46.8% ($n = 207$) of the students were in the high-risk group (male 58.3%; female 35.8%). According to binary logistic regression, male students were 2.5-fold as likely to RAU than females. Risky alcohol use was increased by regular smoking (3.62 fold), number of smoking days in a week (1.22 fold), number of cigarettes in a day (1.08 fold), increased smoking when with friends (2.11 fold), drinking alcohol one to seven times a week (16.69 fold), drinking alcohol on both weekdays and weekends (2.91 fold), consumption of alcohol mixed with energy drinks (1.98 fold), drinking alone (2.66 fold), increasing alcohol use when alone (3.05 fold), friends or partners’ alcohol addiction (2.97 fold). When familial factors were analyzed, it was determined that the risk was not elevated by the consumption of alcohol by

parents but by alcohol addiction among family members and relatives (2.19 fold), and by alcohol use in the family setting (1.65 fold). Risky alcohol use was explained by all sub-dimensions of DMQ-R (Table 4).

Discussion

In this field study, Küçükpark was chosen due to its importance as a socializing place and alcohol consumption location for university students. The regional characteristics of the city where the university is located, the socialization opportunities for students, and social acceptance of drinking may influence youth alcohol use (Ay et al., 2024). The purpose of this study is to uncover the connection between RAU, social approval, and DM, and to attempt to predict RAU based on alcohol characteristics. We found that daily – weekly alcohol use, drinking alone, smoking characteristics, consumption alcohol with energy drinks, alcohol use in the family environment, and the presence of alcohol addiction in friends, partners, and family have come to prominence in increasing RAU. In addition, one of the important results of our study was that interval (enhancement, coping) and external (adaptation and social) DM were determinants in RAU. Externally motivated alcohol use for adaptation and social purposes is also supported by young people’s friendship and socialization goals. The literature points out that “social” appears to be associated with non-problematic social drinking. Adaptation is positively correlated with alcohol-related problems but has a low negative correlation with heavy drinking. Enhancement and coping come to the forefront concerning heavier drinking and alcohol-related problems (Evren et al., 2010). It is possible that if individuals have a preference for alcohol use in solving their mental problems, this may lead to RAU (Sadock et al., 2009;50).

One of the important aims of this study was to evaluate NSA regarding RAU and DM. It was indicated that NSA was not correlated with RAU. A study concluded that NSA was an important predictor of risk of alcohol problems and binge drinking among male students, but not females (Lin et al., 2024). However, students’ social approval needs to determine their reasons for drinking alcohol. Especially students who want to be socially approved tend to adapt their drinking behavior in response to peer/social pressure, belonging to a group, and avoiding peer rejection. This relationship demonstrates how peer environments can be effective in encouraging alcohol consumption. Similarly, those with NSA were found to show conformity behavior by using alcohol to “sensitivity to others’ judgments,” “social withdrawal” and “leaving to positive impression.” These findings revealed that the reasons for drinking were influenced by the friendship environment. A recent study discovered that young people’s sociability expectations and alcohol drinking behaviors were linked and that heavy drinking and alcohol-related problems occurred in those who had high sociability expectations for a prolonged period (2 weeks) (Stamates et al., 2024).

Individual drinking behavior of university students is influenced by drinking buddies. This concept is about a friendship where people regularly come together for drinking activities (Lau-Barraco et al., 2012). Our study revealed that alcohol dependence in students’ friends or partners caused a nearly three-fold

Table 2.
Correlation Between the Variables and the Drinking Motives Questionnaire (DMQ-R)

	% Mean ± SD	DMQ-R Enhancement			DMQ-R Coping			DMQ-R Conformity			DMQ-R Social		
		p	t/F	Mean ± SD	p	t/F	Mean ± SD	p	t/F	Mean ± SD	p	t/F	Mean ± SD
Gender													
Male (n = 210)	49.0	10.8 ± 6.0	.890	0.13	9.1 ± 6.8	.081	1.74	3.6 ± 4.8	.064	1.85	11.5 ± 5.8	.156	1.42
Female (n = 219)	51.0	10.7 ± 5.9			8.0 ± 6.4			2.8 ± 4.4			10.7 ± 6.0		
Field of science													
Health sciences (n = 76)	17.7	11.6 ± 5.7	.053	2.96	8.5 ± 7.0	.691	0.37	4.0 ± 5.4	.319	1.14	11.1 ± 5.6	.008	4.84
Social sciences (n = 179)	41.7	11.3 ± 6.1			8.8 ± 6.9			3.2 ± 5.1			11.9 ± 6.4		
Science (n = 134)	31.2	9.8 ± 5.9			8.1 ± 6.4			2.9 ± 3.5			9.8 ± 5.6		
Regular smoking													
Yes (n = 234)	55.5	11.5 ± 6.1	.004	-2.89	10.0 ± 6.9	<.001	-5.39	3.6 ± 5.1	.045	-2.01	11.8 ± 6.1	.003	-2.96
No (n = 195)	45.5	9.8 ± 5.6			6.7 ± 5.9			2.7 ± 3.9			10.1 ± 5.6		
Alcohol use frequency													
Several times a year (Y) (n = 82)	19.1	7.0 ± 5.6	<.001	26.34 ^a	4.9 ± 5.3	<.001	21.85 ^a	2.6 ± 4.4	.395	0.93 ^a	7.1 ± 6.0	<.001	27.39 ^a
1 – 3 times a month (M) (n = 206)	48.0	11.0 ± 5.3			8.4 ± 6.2			3.3 ± 4.4			11.4 ± 5.3		
1 – 7 times a week (W) (n = 141)	32.9	12.6 ± 6.1			10.8 ± 7.1			3.4 ± 4.9			12.8 ± 5.8		
Alcohol addiction of friends/partner													
Yes (n = 47)	11.0	12.6 ± 6.4	.026	-2.23	10.6 ± 8.0	.022	-2.29	5.0 ± 6.2	.006	-2.77	12.7 ± 6.6	.043	-2.03
No (n = 382)	89.0	10.5 ± 5.9			8.2 ± 6.4			3.0 ± 4.4			10.9 ± 5.8		
Drinking alone													
Yes (n = 96)	22.4	12.4 ± 6.6	.002	-3.07	11.5 ± 7.5	<.001	-5.20	3.0 ± 4.6	.596	0.53	11.9 ± 6.0	.110	-1.60
No (n = 333)	77.6	10.3 ± 5.7			7.6 ± 6.1			3.3 ± 4.6			10.8 ± 5.9		
Consumption of alcohol mixed with energy drinks													
Yes (n = 173)	40.3	11.5 ± 6.0	.042	-2.03	9.9 ± 6.7	<.001	-3.55	3.6 ± 4.9	.184	-1.32	12.0 ± 5.9	.008	-2.67
No (n = 256)	59.7	10.3 ± 5.9			7.6 ± 6.4			3.0 ± 4.4			10.4 ± 5.9		
Drinking new types of alcoholic beverages with friends													
Yes (n = 366)	85.3	11.0 ± 5.8	.062	-1.86	8.7 ± 6.6	.084	-1.73	3.4 ± 4.8	.018	-2.37	11.3 ± 5.8	.057	-1.90
No (n = 63)	14.7	9.5 ± 6.4			7.2 ± 7.0			1.9 ± 3.5			9.7 ± 6.8		
Maternal alcohol use													
Yes (n = 123)	28.7	11.0 ± 5.7	.633	-0.47	8.7 ± 6.5	0.811	-0.24	2.2 ± 3.3	.004	2.88	11.7 ± 5.4	.168	-1.38
No (n = 306)	71.3	10.7 ± 6.1			8.5 ± 6.7			3.6 ± 5.0			10.8 ± 6.1		

(Continued)

Table 2.
Correlation Between the Variables and the Drinking Motives Questionnaire (DMQ-R) (Continued)

	% n	DMQ-R Enhancement			DMQ-R Coping			DMQ-R Conformity			DMQ-R Social		
		Mean ± SD	p	t/F	Mean ± SD	p	t/F	Mean ± SD	p	t/F	Mean ± SD	p	t/F
Paternal alcohol use													
Yes (n = 221)	51.5	11.3 ± 6.0	.055	-1.92	8.9 ± 6.9	.167	-1.38	3.3 ± 4.8	.744	-0.32	12.1 ± 5.8	<.001	-3.61
No (n = 208)	48.5	10.2 ± 5.8			8.0 ± 6.4			3.1 ± 4.5			10.0 ± 5.9		
Drinking in a family environment													
Yes (n = 262)	61.1	11.2 ± 5.9	.058	-1.90	9.1 ± 6.7	.016	-2.42	3.0 ± 4.3	.223	1.22	11.9 ± 5.5	<.001	-3.81
No (n = 167)	38.9	10.1 ± 6.0			7.5 ± 6.4			3.5 ± 5.0			9.7 ± 6.3		
Alcohol addiction of family/relatives													
Yes (n = 63)	14.7	12.0 ± 6.0	.068	-1.83	9.6 ± 7.7	.159	-1.41	4.5 ± 6.2	.014	-2.46	13.0 ± 5.9	.005	-2.83
No (n = 366)	85.3	10.5 ± 5.9			8.3 ± 6.4			3.0 ± 4.3			10.7 ± 5.9		

Note: D = 1 - 7 times a week; DMQ-R = drinking motives questionnaire; M = 1 - 3 times a month; Y = several times a year; SD = standard deviation.

t = t test.

*F = ANOVA test value, post hoc test Bonferroni; DMQ: Y

increase in risky drinking. University students who are close to heavy drinkers in their social networks are more likely to consume alcohol (Strowger et al., 2022). Peer relationships influence binge drinking episodes, and party environments and drinking games among students are conducive to this. Young individuals enter peer environments that encourage excessive drinking and choose partners who match their drinking style and behavior (Arslan & Bal, 2019).

We found that gender plays a role in alcohol use frequency and RAU. Weekly and daily alcohol use was found to be more common in males, while monthly alcohol use was found to be more common in females. The higher prevalence of RAU among male students compared to female students was similar to a study conducted among university students (blinded reference). Men tend to have more problematic alcohol consumption and heavy drinking days than women (Lin et al., 2024). Alcohol use is an essential symbol for expressing gendered identities. Men's drinking is characterized by the violation of norms of daily life that allow for drunkenness, in accordance with traditional hegemonic masculinity norms. On the other hand, women's drinking is controlled, moderate, and follows the norms of daily life, and is limited within the social setting. These factors may be the cause of why men drink more than women (Raninen et al., 2024). The sociocultural perspective, specifically traditional masculine norms, can play a role and is strongly associated with alcohol use among men, which has been attributed to excessive consumption of alcohol (Goh et al., 2024). Similarly, when we examine the prevalence of alcohol use among the participants' mothers (28.7%) and fathers (51.1%), we observe that gender plays a significant role. Although women consume less alcohol than men in traditional gender roles, in non-traditional European societies women have similar drinking habits to men (Rahav et al., 2006). Our study concluded that gender was not a distinguishing factor in terms of reasons for drinking. The reasons for drinking were not different between genders in another study conducted among young people with alcohol use (Patrick & Terry-McElrath, 2021).

In our study, weekly and daily alcohol use was found to be the strongest variable that increased RAU 16.6 times. One's attitude toward heavy drinking was a stronger predictor of the frequency of weekly drinking and binge drinking (DiBello et al., 2018). Drinking alone was the second significant factor that determined RAU. A study revealed the differences between heavy drinking alone and in a social context: students who drank alone reported greater negative effects of drinking, early onset of regular drinking, less self-efficacy, motivation to quit drinking, and higher depression scores than heavy social drinkers (Christiansen et al., 2002). Drinking alone was a significant factor in the high level of coping and enhancement influenced by psychological and internal motives in our study. This finding proved that alcohol consumption when alone was as influential as social environments in the drinking patterns of university students. It also revealed that the reasons for drinking alone are based on internal and psychological factors.

The encouragement to drink more alcohol within a peer group determines the drinking patterns of young people. When alcohol is more prevalent in an environment, students tend to drink

Table 3.
Correlation Matrix of Cigarette Use, APIRS-A, DMQ-R, and NSAS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Number of smoking days	1										
2. Number of cigarettes per day	0.73**	1									
3. APIRS-A	0.27**	0.40**	1								
4. DMQ-R Enhancement	0.14*	0.12**	0.35**	1							
5. DMQ-R Coping	0.24**	0.24** ⁰	0.33**	0.58**	1						
6. DMQ-R Conformity	0.08	0.06	0.17**	0.24**	0.27**	1					
7. DMQ-R Social	0.13**	0.10*	0.27**	0.56**	0.49**	0.32**	1				
8. NSAS-Sensitivity to others' judgments	-0.15**	-0.83	-0.04	0.01	0.00	0.10*	0.06	1			
9. NSAS-Social withdrawal	-0.11*	-0.04	-0.02	-0.01	0.08	0.23**	-0.01	0.79**	1		
10. NSAS-Leaving positive impression	-0.14**	-0.09	-0.08	0.04	0.06	0.16**	0.03	0.85**	0.84**	1	
11. NSAS total	-0.15**	-0.08	-0.05	0.01	0.05	0.17**	0.03	0.94**	0.93**	0.95**	1

Note: APIRS-A = addiction profile index risk screening-alcohol; DMQ = drinking motives questionnaire; NSAS = need for social approval.

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

more frequently and in a riskier manner, which leads them to seek alcohol-heavy environments (Klein et al., 2024). The need to meet the expectations of a social group can also affect alcohol consumption. In social settings, people tend to consume alcohol products with specific images to gain social acceptance and maintain their status within groups (Cunningham, 2023). Our study found that those who tried new types of alcohol in the company of friends were more likely to use it for adaptation purposes. Alcohol consumption has been shown to facilitate peer group bonding for men, and men with a greater desire to fit in may be more likely to consume alcohol (Lin et al., 2024). The consumption of energy drinks is common among young men (Ghozayel et al., 2020). Our study revealed that approximately 40% of people consumed energy drinks with alcohol, leading to a two-fold increase in RAU. A study found that 30% of university students drank energy drinks with alcohol. The study highlighted the positive impact of friendship on the consumption of alcohol and energy drinks in combination (Ghozayel et al., 2020). Furthermore, we discovered that drinking alcohol with energy drinks is connected to enhancement, coping, and social reasons. This situation also reveals the role of energy drinks in increasing the pleasurable and intoxicating effects of alcohol. In addition, the positive presentation of energy drinks in social settings also supports this connection. Energy drinks (without alcohol) can lead to alcohol addiction due to their high caffeine and sugar content. When energy drinks are consumed with alcohol, the risk of cardiovascular effects, behavioral changes, injury, and sexual abuse increases (Varim et al., 2015).

Regular smoking, the number of cigarettes per day, and smoking days also increased RAU. One study indicated that 66.7% of risky alcohol drinkers were smokers (Eryilmaz et al., 2021), and prevalence of hazardous alcohol consumption was significantly higher in smokers (Ay et al., 2024).

The present study showed that paternal alcohol use was linked to RAU, while maternal alcohol use was not linked to RAU. Parents' alcohol use is a factor that influences an individual's tendency to use alcohol (Orhan et al., 2023). Our study revealed that the presence of alcoholism among family and relatives led to an increase in RAU by 2.19 times. Due to the intertwined structure of genetic and environmental factors, the transmission of alcohol dependence in families is difficult to understand. It is reported that the transmission of the risk to both boys and girls is similar; they are equally affected by 55% (Arslan & Bal, 2019). The risk can be increased by as much as 4.64 times if both parents are addicted to alcohol (Edenberg, 2024). It is believed that family relationships are effective in initiating alcohol use, while peer relationships are effective in maintaining alcohol use (Arslan & Bal, 2019).

As a result, alcohol is becoming an integral component of socializing in university life. Young individuals prefer to consume alcohol by adapting to groups to be accepted and satisfy their social approval needs, but this does not reach the level of RAU. Risky alcohol use was explained by DM, having a weekly – daily alcohol use pattern, drinking alone, using alcohol and energy drinks together, regular smoking, and having friends, partners, and family members with alcohol use problems.

Limitations and Directions/Suggestions for Future Research

In part of the field study, it was hard to reach the students due to the exam term, the end of the semester, and leaving the city. Due to seasonal conditions, the city was extremely hot in July, thus reaching the target audience during the daytime was limited. Besides, some participants declared that they could not participate due to low battery or internet connection issues. Although the internet connection was provided by the researchers, the charging problem could not be solved. All these difficulties stood out as limitations of the field study.

Table 4.
Binary Logistic Regression Between the APIRS-A, DMQ-R, and the Variables

		%	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio	95% CI	Wald
Sex	Female	49.0		1		
	Male	51.0	<.001	2.50	1.69 – 3.69	21.397
Regular smoking	No	45.5		1		
	Yes	55.5	<.001	3.62	2.42 – 5.42	39.179
Number of smoking days			<.001	1		
			<.001	1.22	1.14 – 1.29	38.777
Number of cigarettes per day			<.001	1		
			<.001	1.08	1.06 – 1.12	50.798
Increasing smoking with friends	No	38.9	<.001	1		
	Yes	61.1	<.001	2.11	1.41 – 3.14	13.476
Alcohol use frequency	Less than a week	67.1	<.001	1		
	1 – 7 times a week	32.9	<.001	16.69	9.65 – 28.87	101.423
Alcohol use days	Mostly weekend	72.0	<.001	1		
	Both weekdays and weekend	28.0	<.001	2.91	1.87 – 4.52	22.653
Drinking alone	No	77.6	<.001	1		
	Yes	22.4	<.001	2.66	1.65 – 4.28	16.410
Increasing alcohol use when alone	No	86.7	<.001	1		
	Yes	13.3	<.001	3.05	1.66 – 5.57	13.124
Alcohol addiction of friends/partner	No	89.0		1		
	Yes	11.0	.001	2.97	1.54 – 5.73	10.553
Consumption of alcohol mixed with energy drinks	No	59.7		1		
	Yes	40.3	.001	1.98	1.34 – 2.93	11.833
Drinking new types of beverages with friends	No	14.7		1		
	Yes	85.3	.318	1.31	0.76 – 2.66	0.999
Maternal alcohol use	No	71.3		1		
	Yes	28.7	.277	1.26	0.83 – 1.91	1.180
Paternal alcohol use	No	48.5		1		
	Yes	51.5	.055	1.45	0.99 – 2.12	3.690
Drinking in a family environment	No	38.9		1		
	Yes	61.1	.012	1.65	1.11 – 2.44	6.243
Alcohol addiction of family/relatives	No	85.3		1		
	Yes	14.7	.005	2.19	1.26 – 3.80	7.725
DMQ-R enhancement			<.001	1		
				1.11	1.07 – 1.14	33.438
DMQ-R coping			<.001	1		
				1.09	1.06 – 1.13	32.882
DMQ-R conformity			.004	1		
				1.06	1.02 – 1.11	8.168
DMQ-R social			<.001	1		
				1.10	1.07 – 1.14	33.411

Note: DMQ-R = drinking motives questionnaire-revised.

More social studies and field research are necessary to determine the social risks of alcohol use among university students. Conducting these studies regularly every year with larger samples and observing changes is crucial for determining prevention activities.

Ethics Committee Approval: This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Ege University (Approval no.: 2024-24-3.1T/48, Date: 21.03.2024)

Informed Consent: Written informed consent was obtained from the participants who agreed to take part in the study.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

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