Declaration

This project is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Care Practice. It is entirely my own work and has not been submitted to any other university or higher education institute, or for any other academic award in this institute. Where use has been made of the work of others, it has been acknowledged and referenced.

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Abstract

This project explores the prevalence and effects of alcohol consumption among 2nd year social care students in Athlone Institute of Technology. It also attempts to investigate the effects of alcohol consumption on students’ educational and social lives.

Aims and objectives are proposed, relevant literature examined and methodology introduced. A questionnaire is used as the data gathering instrument.

The study finds high levels of underage drinking, promoting college absenteeism and excessive spending on alcohol. However few students reported financial worries but did report many adverse consequences as a result of alcohol consumption.

Recommendations regarding the college bar, grants allocation and measures for dealing with absenteeism were made.
Section 1: Introduction

Despite decades of prevention efforts and public health policies, heavy and hazardous drinking among college students remains a formidable and vexing public health concern. (Dimeff, A.L. et al. 1999).

This project aims to explore the prevalence and effects of alcohol consumption among 2nd year social care students, to identify the levels of alcohol consumption and to investigate the effect it may have on the educational and social lives of students.

Specifically the aim and objectives are:

Aim: To explore the effects and prevalence of alcohol consumption among 2nd year students in AIT.

Objectives: To identify the level of alcohol consumption among 2nd year students.

To investigate the effects alcohol consumption may have on the educational and social aspects of college life.

In order to fulfil the aforementioned, the author conducted a literature review in Section One of all relevant literature in the area of alcohol consumption. In Section Two, the methodology section, the author used a quantitative research method in the form of a questionnaire. That was then analysed in Section Three and followed by a discussion of key findings in Section Four. Finally the author presented an overall conclusion and made recommendations with regards to policies in the college bar, the allocation of grants and disciplinary measures for absenteeism.
Section 2: Literature Review

According to the Euromonitor International report “Consumer Lifestyles in Ireland”, which examines national lifestyle habits including health and living standards, income and earning patterns and home ownership trends, Irish people drink far more than their European counterparts. This translates to more problems per drinker. (www.euromonitor.com).

Other Irish research in 2002 found that over two thirds (71.3%) of the 1426 adolescents sampled had consumed alcohol and this had changed little compared to similar research in 1997 (72.5%) (Lalor, De Roiste, Devlin 2007).

This study aims to investigate the factors which influence students to drink alcohol, the factors which influence them to drink excessively or “binge drink” and the resulting consequences for these students from drinking alcohol.

2.1 Reasons why students start to drink

The teenage years are characterised by greater experimentation with alcohol and heightened high risk drinking patterns, such as drunkenness and “binge drinking” which has varying definitions including “consuming five or more drinks in a row on a single drinking session for males and four drinks for females” (Lalor et al 2007). Factors associated with the initiation of drinking, regular use of alcohol and abuse of alcohol in young adults involve complex developmental processes, environmental influences and individual differences in response to alcohol (Linda A. Dimeff et al, 1999).

To fully understand drinking behaviour it is important to fully understand young people’s attitudes towards drinking. One study with a sample of fifty seven young people (aged 15-19) drawn from inner city Dublin identified heavy seasonal outdoor drinking as a significant social activity (Mayock cited in Lalor et al; 2007, p122).
The principle reason given by young people in this sample for drinking was to get drunk, “to get a buzz”. For many young adults, college provides a first opportunity to act like an adult. Teenagers may use alcohol because they want to move away from being a “child” and see drinking as a sign of maturity (www.healthpromotion.com).

Social and cultural factors are also crucial to understanding the influences on student drinking. Much sociological attention has focused on wet and dry cultures and how cultural factors contribute to increased youth drinking. Factors identified include increased affluence, the relative decline in alcohol taxes and increased availability of alcohol. According to the Department of Health and Children’s Task Force on Alcohol (2002) these all contribute to the sharp growth in alcohol consumption in Ireland. Evidence is growing that alcohol advertising and marketing significantly influence young people’s decisions about drinking and their expectations related to its use.

The unparalleled growth in electronic media has provided new largely unregulated means to promote alcohol products to a global market. (www.nada.finders.edu). The introduction of designer drinks and alcopops makes drinking alcohol “fun” “cool” and attractive to young students thus encouraging excessive drinking rather than moderate drinking. Through drinking alcohol, a student may feel more confident, brave, sociable and relieved from stress. It may be a way to fit in with peers, to seem more attractive to the opposite sex, to fulfil expectations and to experiment with the unknown (Lalor et al, 2007).

Other factors which influence a young person’s drinking patterns include parental behaviour. Growing up in a family where a parent is drinking heavily may also put someone at risk of developing an alcohol related problem (Barry and Lane 1996). Other factors include living in a disadvantaged area, skipping school and parental separation (www.unlocked.ie).
2.2 Binge drinking among students

Binge drinking (when you drink too much too fast) is a serious problem in Ireland according to www.spunout.ie. They define the term as drinking six or more standard drinks. A standard drink (also called one standard drink) is about 10grams of pure alcohol in Ireland and one standard drink is a half pint of beer or a small glass of wine or one pub measure of spirits. (www.spunout.ie).

In the Clan survey (2002/2003), which provides a national profile of the lifestyle habits of students and was conducted among undergraduate full time students during the academic year 2002 / 2003, binge drinking was defined as drinking four pints of beer or a bottle of wine. This type of drinking was found to be common among male students (61%) and slightly less so for female students (44%). Male first year students had the highest proportions of weekly binge drinkers (64%). Among female students, second year students had the highest proportion of binge drinkers. Out of every one hundred drinking occasions, seventy six of those ended up in binge drinking for males and sixty for females. These figures indicate that high risk binge drinking is the norm among college students with more male than female binge drinkers.

In studying the drinking behaviour of students in the USA, Weshsler and Austin (1998) identified “binge drinking” to be by far the single most serious public health concern confronting American Colleges (Weshsler and Austin cited in the Oxford Journals, Vol 43, Number 4, P;492-497). The amount of binge drinking is widely acknowledged with several studies in the USA reporting that, on average, two out of five university students were binge drinkers. A recent European study on the characteristics of binge drinkers concluded that peer pressure was one of the strongest influencing factors (Kuntsahe 2004 cited in Oxford Journals).

The Clan survey 2002 / 2003 reported that money problems, unprotected sex and accidents were three times more likely to occur among student who engaged in regular binge drinking. A higher number of regular binge drinkers in comparison to other drinkers perceived that the amount of alcohol consumed didn’t matter, provided the individual did not show the effects and that when an individual was drunk they
should not be considered as responsible for their actions as when sober. Regular drinkers spent less on accommodation, spent similar amounts on food, but spent twice as much on alcohol per month (€148) in comparison to other student drinkers (€69). Heavy drinkers were more likely to engage in binge drinking and were more likely to consume more alcohol during a binge than were light to moderate drinkers (Harold. E. Doweiko 2006).

2.3 Alcohol related consequences

The Euromonitor “Consumer Lifestyles in Ireland”, research found that while the alcoholic drinks industry in Ireland was worth €6.6 billion in 2004, alcohol related problems are estimated to cost Irish society around €2.4 billion per year. Alcohol related consequences refer to a variety of negative life events that are the direct result of alcohol consumption. These consequences include social problems (e.g. physical or verbal aggression, marital difficulties, loss of important social relationships), legal problems (e.g. arrests for driving while intoxicated and public inebriation), educational / vocational problems (e.g. academic difficulties, termination of employment and failure to achieve career goals); and medical problems (e.g. physical injury, liver disease and central nervous system diseases). (www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov).

The Global Burden of Disease Study, which provided detailed global and regional estimates of premature mortality, disability and loss of health for 135 causes by age and sex, sponsored by the World Health Organisation and the World Bank, found that alcohol was the third most detrimental risk factor for European ill health and premature death. In 2002, alcohol related death and disability accounted for 9.2% of all burden of disease with only tobacco (12.2%) and high blood pressure (10.9%) causing more harm. Alcohol was a more important risk factor than high cholesterol and being overweight, three times more important than physical inactivity and five times more important than illicit drugs. (www.youthhealth.ie).

Alcohol is estimated to cause one in four of all deaths of young men aged 15 to 29 years in Europe. The majority of these deaths result from injuries (unintentional and
intentional). For young men, alcohol contributes to nearly half of all deaths from motor vehicle accidents, over one third of poisonings, drownings, homicides and falls and in one fifth of suicides. For young women aged 15 to 29 years, alcohol contributes to about one in three of all deaths from poisonings, drownings and homicide, and one in five deaths from motor vehicle accidents and falls. Other adverse health consequences include destructive behaviour, risk of assault, aggressiveness, mood swings, academic underachievement, unprotected sex and delinquency (Lalor et al 2007).

The Clan survey found a high level and range of problems and undesirable consequences were experienced by college students as a result of drinking alcohol. For example students regretted things said or done after drinking (62%), they felt the affects of alcohol while at class / work (50%), missed school / workdays (44%) and found that drinking alcohol harmed their studies / work (28%). A higher number of male students experienced these forms of harm in comparison to their female counterparts. Male students were twice as likely to be in fights, in an accident and have unprotected sex in comparison to female students. One in four male and one in five female students experienced money problems as a result of their drinking. The most often cited undesirable consequences experienced by students were verbal abuse, being a passenger with a driver who had taken alcohol, arguments with friends and family about drinking, relationship difficulties, property vandalised and being physically assaulted.

2.4 Conclusion

Alcohol use is a serious risk to children and young peoples’ physical and mental health. In the latest survey of school going children across Europe, 26% of teenagers said they had been drunk in the previous month, with girls outnumbering boys (www.alcoholireland.ie).

The author intends to explore the level of alcohol consumption 2nd year social care students take (Objective 1) and to investigate the effects alcohol consumption may have on their studies (Objective 2).
Section 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The author’s research aim was to explore the effects and prevalence of alcohol consumption among 2nd year students in AIT. The objectives of the research were to identify the level of consumption of 2nd year students and to investigate the effects alcohol consumption may have on the educational and social aspects of college life.

3.2 Research Methods

The main methodological approaches are quantitative and qualitative. “Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. “As a research strategy it is inductivist (“Uses a particular set of facts or ideas to form a general principle”), constructionist (“Construes or interprets, in a specific manner”) and interpretivist (“Emphasises the meaningful nature of people's participation in social and cultural life”) …..” (Bryman, 2004). Examples of qualitative research include interviews and focus groups. They can provide very involved data but are time consuming and difficult to analyse.

“Quantitative research is concerned with collecting and analysing data that focus on numbers and frequencies, seeking to establish cause and effect…” (Lanoe, 2002). Questionnaires are generally used as an instrument to gather data. Due to the fact that the topic of research may be a sensitive one for some participants, questionnaires were the best method to achieve the author’s objectives. They offered assurances of anonymity for the participant. Questionnaires display many other advantages such as participants could be more open and honest in relation to answering questions relating to their levels of alcohol consumption. Research summarised by Tourangeau and Smith (1996) strongly suggests that respondents tend to report more drug use and alcohol consumption and a higher number of sexual partners and of abortions in self completion questionnaires than in structured interviews (Tourangeau and Smith 1996 cited in Bryman p134, 2004).
Questionnaires also entail a mixture of open and closed ended questions. Close ended questions allow for precise comparisons to be made between the answers of the respondents, while open ended provide respondents with opportunities to state their opinion in their own words. Questionnaires also provide for interviewer effects to be limited. Questionnaires are much easier to analyse as they consist of a structure and specific information. Also they are not as time consuming as other forms of research.

Questionnaires do have disadvantages however. The author was restricted to only the questions prepared in the questionnaire. There was no opportunity to probe respondents to elaborate on answers. Respondents may tend to respond to questions with what they feel to be socially acceptable answers. Too many questions may lead to “response fatigue” (Bryman 2004). Considering the advantages and disadvantages, questionnaires were chosen as the best method to gather information required for the choice of research topic.

3.3 Participants

The questionnaire was administered to twenty 2nd year students. This sample group was chosen because as 2nd year students they will have a good understanding of the drinking culture in A.I.T.

3.4 Ethical Issues

It was clearly stated on the top of the questionnaire that the questionnaire is private and confidential and would be used only for research purposes. By doing this the respondents may be more open and honest with the information they gave. Because of the sensitivity of the topic the author felt that questionnaires were the most ethical way of getting information from the sample group.
3.5 Procedure

Before accessing the sample group a pilot study was be carried out to ensure a final satisfactory questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered in a classroom environment and the appropriate lecturer was approached when the questionnaire needed to be completed in order to get permission to hand it out during their class time. A background was given to the study and assurances were made that all information would remain confidential and used for research purposes only.

3.6 Limitations

- Due to the restrictions on the number of participants it was not a representative sample.
- Due to more females than males studying in social care it may not have given a correct cross gender view.
- Poor attendance in class could have forced the author to use a different class year to carry out the research.
Section 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

Questions 1 to 3 in the questionnaire dealt with the general profile of respondents. All further questions were linked to the overall objectives of this research. Specifically questions 4 to 8 provided valid information to achieve objective one (to identify the level of consumption of alcohol among 2nd year Social Care Students). Questions 9 to 18 dealt with objective two (to investigate the effects alcohol consumption may have on the educational and social aspects of College life).

4.2 Level of consumption of alcohol

Objective One: To identify the level of consumption of alcohol among 2nd year Social Care Students

Q 4: At what age did you first consume Alcohol?

From the research sample, one student (5%) first consumed alcohol by the time they were 13.
2 students (10%) by the time they were 14.
7 students (35%) by the time they were 15.
7 students (35%) by the time they were 16.
3 students (15%) by the time they were 17.

Figure 4.2.1
Q5: Why did you decide to start to drink?

From the research sample, 2 students (10%) started drinking due to peer pressure. 16 students (80%) started drinking for experimentation purposes. 2 students (10%) started drinking for both of the above reasons.

Figure 4.2.2

Reasons for starting to drink

- Peer pressure, 10%
- Experimentation, 80%
- Both, 10%

Q6. Which of the following motivations (if any) contribute to your drinking? (Tick all that apply)

From the research sample, 20 students (100%) stated socialising was a motivating factor for their drinking. 16 students (80%) stated enjoyment. 1 student (5%) stated peer acceptance. 2 students (10%) stated stress control. 2 students (10%) stated college pressure. 1 student (5%) stated other.

Figure 4.2.3

Motivations for current alcohol consumption

- Socialising
- Enjoyment
- College pressure
- Stress control
- Peer acceptance
- Other
Q10. In an average week, how much money would you normally spend on alcohol?

From the research sample, 11 students (55%) spend between €10 and €30
1 student (5%) spends between €31 and €50
3 students (15%) spend between €51 and €70
4 students (20%) spend between €71 and €100
1 student (5%) spends between €100 and €300

Figure 4.2.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly amount of money spent on alcohol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€10 to €30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€31 to €50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€51 to €70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€70 to €100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€100 to €300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q11. Do you have financial worries due to your alcohol consumption?

From the research sample, 19 respondents (95%) do not have worries due to their alcohol consumption and 1 respondent (5%) does.

Q12. Have you ever handed College work in late due to a night out drinking?

From the research sample, 18 respondents (90%) have never handed in work late as a result of a night out drinking alcohol and 2 respondents (10%) have.
Q7. On a weekly basis how often do you consume alcohol?

From the research sample, 7 students (35%) consume alcohol once every 3 to 4 weeks
5 students (25%) consume alcohol once a week
8 students (40%) consume alcohol 2-4 times a week
4 students (25%) consume alcohol 5-7 times a week

![Frequency of drinking](image)

Q9. On an average night out how many drinks would you normally consume?

From the research sample, 2 students (10%) consume 2-3 drinks on an average night
6 students (30%) consume 4-6 drinks
8 students (40%) consume 7-9 drinks
4 students (20%) consume 10+ drinks

![Number of alcoholic drinks consumed on average drinking night](image)
4.3 Effects of alcohol consumption on educational and social aspects of college life

Objective Two: To investigate the effects alcohol consumption may have on the educational and social aspects of College life.

Q8. In your own words how would you describe the term binge drinking?

From the research sample, 2 students (10%) defined binge drinking as “drinking more than 10 drinks”.
6 students (30%) defined it as “A lot of drink in a couple of hours”.
3 students (15%) defined it as “Drinking with the intention of getting mental drunk”.
4 students (20%) defined it as “7-8 drinks per night”.
1 student (5%) defined it as “More than 3 drinks”.
3 students (15%) defined it as “Drinking to a point of losing control”.
1 student (5%) defined it as “Not drinking in a controlled environment”.

Q13. Since commencing 3rd level at AIT, as a result of drinking, have you ever….? (Tick all that apply)

From the research sample, 15 students (75%) had been hung-over.
8 students (40%) had vomited
16 students (80%) had missed college / classes
6 students (30%) had engaged in behaviour they later regretted
1 student (5%) was involved in a fight
9 students (45%) rowed with a friend / partner / family member

Figure 4.3.1
Q14. Has your alcohol consumption ever affected your exams?

From the research sample, 2 students (10%) stated that alcohol consumption had affected their exams and 18 students (90%) stated it had not.

Q15. After a night of drinking how would you rate your concentration levels in class? (On a scale of 1 being very good concentration, 2 being good, 3 being medium, 4 being bad and 5 being very bad concentration).

From the research sample, 3 students (15%) selected 1 Very Good
6 (30%) selected No. 2 Good
4 (20%) selected No. 3 Medium
4 (20%) selected No. 4 Bad
5 (15%) selected No. 3 Very Bad

Figure 4.3.2

![Pie chart showing concentration levels](chart.png)

Q16. Would you agree that alcohol advertisements are aimed at young people i.e. those under 25?

From the research sample, 17 students (85%) agreed that alcohol advertisements were aimed at young people and 3 students (15%) did not agree.

Of 12 respondents who elaborated on the question, 1 agreed with the statement above because of the number of advertisements for Alco pops, 5 agreed because most alcohol advertisements on TV only show young people, 3 agreed because advertisements only show the “good side” of drinking and 2 students agreed because they felt that young people are more vulnerable than others to these advertisements. The respondent who did not agree with the statement felt most advertisements promote adult drinking only.
Q17. Would you agree that AIT promotes drinking within the College? (On a scale of 1 being Strongly agree and 5 being Strongly disagree).

From the research sample, 2 students (10%) strongly agreed with the above
4 students (20%) agreed
10 students (50%) were not sure
1 student (5%) disagreed
3 students (15%) strongly disagreed

Figure 4.3.3

Q18. Do you feel you would get support from A.I.T. if alcohol became a problem in your life?

From the research sample, 17 students (85%) felt that they would get support from A.I.T. if alcohol became a problem for them and 3 students (15%) felt they wouldn’t get the support.
Section 5: Discussion

5.1 General Information

In this chapter the author discusses the findings that emerged from the questionnaire. The research objectives were to identify the level of consumption of alcohol 2nd year social care students take and to investigate the effects alcohol consumption may have on the educational and social aspects of student life. Some results were in line with the findings of others, while some differed greatly.

5.2 Underage Drinking

100% of the survey participants had begun drinking before the legal age of 18 years of age. The Health Behaviour in School Children (HBSC) survey 2002 reported a decrease in the number of children under 15 years of age experimenting with and consuming alcohol. It was found that of the participants in the 12-14 years age group, 28% were currently drinking. From the current questionnaire, I found there to be a continuing decrease in the number of young people that have started to drink between the ages of 12 and 14 years. 5% of the participants first consumed alcohol by the time they were 13 years of age and 10% first consumed alcohol by the time they were 14 years old.

15% of participants had started to consume alcohol by the time they were 17 years old, but a much higher figure of 70% had begun by 16 years of age. This shows an increase of 16% on the figures reported in the 2002 HBSC survey. As Ireland’s drinking policy allows people to drink from the age of 18 years it is interesting to see that all 20 participants who carried out this survey had begun to drink before they had reached this legal age which raises serious questions as to the effectiveness of this policy.
5.3 Reason students Drinks Alcohol

According to the Clan survey (2003) the primary reasons most students consume alcohol is for sociability, enjoyment and relaxation. This was confirmed in this latest research as 100% of the participants indicated they drank to be sociable and for socialising and 80% of participants stated they also drank for enjoyment. The main reasons for starting to consume alcohol were experimentation (80%), peer pressure (10%) and a further (10%) chose both of these. Question 6 asked what motivation if any contributed to their drinking. As already identified sociability, enjoyment and relaxation were found to be the main reasons. However 10% also stated stress was a motivation for their drinking which coincides with the findings of the CLAN survey (2003) which stated that stress influenced students to drink, with contributing factors such as exams, studies in general, relationships, financial situation and work outside college. The fact that 10% of participants also stated college pressure was a motivation also reaffirms the above statement. 5% (1 student) stated a motivation for them was the fact they could purchase new cheap drinks which they had seen through advertisements on TV and around the college campus. As seen in the literature review the unparalleled growth in electronic media has provided new largely unregulated means to promote alcohol products to a global market. (www.mediafinder.edu)

5.4 Student Drinking Habits

The author found that 35% of participants consumed alcohol once every 3 to 4 weeks, 25% consumed alcohol once a week, 40% consumed alcohol 2 to 4 times per week and 25% consumed alcohol 5 to 7 times per week. These figures coincide with the strategic task force on alcohol (2004) which rated Ireland as the second highest country after Luxemburg for alcohol consumption in the European Union. The author asked in Question 9 how many drinks they would normally consume on an average night out. 10% stated they would consume 2 to 3 drinks, 30% stated 4 to 6 drinks, 40% stated 7 to 9 drinks and 20% answered that they would consume 10 or more drinks. The author was surprised by the figures provided as a total of 90% of participants partake in “Binge Drinking” on a regular basis. The CLAN survey (2003)
defined Binge drinking as four pints of a beer or a bottle of wine. It also stated that male 1st year students had the highest proportion of binge drinkers and that female 2nd year students had the highest proportion of binge drinkers. In the authors research 90% of the participants were female students who regularly partake in binge drinking which supports this claim by the CLAN survey. In Question 8 the author was concerned to find that only 5% of students actually understood what the term binge drinking means. They defined it as “more than 3 drinks”. Responses given by the rest of the respondents included “drinking with the intention of getting mental drunk” “drinking to the point of losing control” or “drinking more than 10 drinks” These responses lead the author to believe that many students are not aware of the level of their drinking habits and do not know how to distinguish between social drinking and binge drinking.

5.5 Financial Difficulties

As already stated 90% of the respondents in this research regularly took part in binge drinking sessions at least once a week. The author was surprised to find that only 5% of the respondents indicated they had financial worries as a result of this drinking. In Question 10 respondents were asked in an average week, how much money they would normally spend on alcohol. The highest number of respondents (55%) spent the lowest amount of between € 10 and € 30 per week. A possible reason for students who partake in regular binge drinking and yet spend so little money on alcohol per week, could be the constant promotion of cheap drink that occurs in college bars and bars within the vicinity of the college. This is backed up by answers given to Question 17, when asked whether they felt that AIT promotes drinking within the college. 30% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with 50% stating they were not sure. The author was surprised to find that 5% of respondents spent between €200 and €300 per week on alcohol. This spending is excessive and again only adds to the surprise that only 5% of students have financial difficulties as a result of consuming alcohol. A plausible reason for this may be the fact that students have part time jobs outside of college hours. The more sinister reason is that grants received are not being used for the purpose they are intended for by students i.e living arrangements, college materials, travel.
5.6 Experience of Adverse Consequences

High risk drinking is a pattern of drinking that is likely to increase the risk of harm for the drinker and for others (Clan Survey 2003). There was a high level and range of harm / problems experienced by students as a result of their drinking. Since commencing 3rd level education 75% of respondents stated they have been hung over after a night of drinking, 40% of respondents have vomited from drinking, 30% engaged in behaviour they later regretted, 5% of respondents were involved in a fight as a result of drinking while 45% claimed to have rowed with a friend, partner or family member. Of the 20 respondents who participated in the research 80% have missed college or classes as a result of drinking. This may explain the findings to Question 14 where 10% of respondents said that because of their alcohol consumption their exams have been affected. Even when students did attend class when asked in Question 15 to rate their concentration levels in class the morning after a night of drinking 35% stated it to be either bad or very bad. These figures are worrying and show the effects alcohol has on a student’s academic performance. Missing notes and important points in class can add to the stress and strain of college life which may be part of the reason why 10% of students claim stress to be the reason they consume alcohol in the first place. In Question 18 students were asked whether they felt they would get support from A.I.T. if alcohol became a problem, in their life. 85% of respondents said yes to this but 18% felt they wouldn’t. This is concerning to the author because as discussed above binge drinking is prevalent in the college and if the right supports and procedures for dealing with such problems are not in place the percentage of exam failures and drop outs may increase as students will constantly fall behind as a result of their drinking habits.
Section 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall the results found in this research study replicate the studies investigated by the author and highlighted in the literature review.

This project highlights students understanding of the main factors that influence drinking behaviour and shows that they have experienced many of the consequences associated with over indulgent drinking behaviour.

Adequate information needs to be provided by the college on the consequences of drinking, and the long term harm drink can cause to academic results and personal health.

40% of respondents consumed alcohol 2 to 4 times per week while 35% an astonishing 5 to 7 times per week. This evidently leaves little time for college / class work for a lot of students. The author recommends that the college examine the policies of the college bar and carry out a complete review of opening and closing times with a view to limiting opening hours during college hours.

Many students spend excessive amounts of money per week on alcohol. Other than part time work, grants, are many students only other source of income. The author would recommend that local councils and the VEC look at the allocation of grants. Rather than allocating it in block amounts of a couple of thousand Euro at a time they could pay smaller instalments on a weekly basis which may give students a better opportunity to prioritise their spending.

30% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that A.I.T. promotes drinking within the college. Rather than promoting special offers on drink and nights out the college could promote other activities which take place on campus so that students have other options for their leisure time.

80% of respondents have missed college / classes as a result of drinking. The author recommends that the college should implement strong disciplinary measures for those
who without a valid reason miss too many classes over the academic year. One suggestion would be to take a percentage of the end of year subject result for every class missed. Or in turn they could set out a bonus points system for reaching a number of classes attended where points turn to marks at the end of term.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix 1  

Questionnaire

This research is being conducted by David Molloy as part of the BA in Applied Social Care at Athlone Institute of Technology. The questionnaire is being conducted to carry out research on student alcohol consumption and its effects. This questionnaire is private and confidential and will be used only for research purposes.

Q.1 What gender are you?

Male □

Female □

Q. 2 What age are you?

_______________________

Q3. Do you consume alcohol?

Yes □

No □

Q4. At what age did you first consume alcohol?

_______________________
Q. 5 Why did you start to drink?

Peer Pressure
Parental attitudes to drink
Experimentation
Advertisements
If other please specify below

Q6. Which of the following motivations (if any) contribute to your drinking?

(Tick all that apply)
For socialising
For enjoyment
Peer Acceptance
Stress Control
Pressure of College
Other
If other please specify
Q. 7 On a weekly basis how often do you consume alcohol?

Once every 3-4 weeks

Once a week

2-4 times a week

5-7 times a week

Q8. In your own words how would you describe the term “Binge Drinking” ie how many drinks consumed constitutes binge drinking in your opinion.

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Q9. On an average night out how many drinks would you consume?

1- 3 drinks

4-6 drinks

7-9 drinks

10+ drinks

If more than 10 please specify ________________

Q10. In an average week how much money would you spend on alcohol?

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
Q11. Do you have financial worries due to your alcohol consumption?

Yes ☐
No ☐

Q12. Have you ever handed college work in late due to nights out drinking?

Yes ☐
No ☐

Q13. As a result of drinking have you ever?
(Tick all that apply) 

How Often

- Been hungover ☐ ☐
- Vomited ☐ ☐
- Missed College / Classes ☐ ☐
- Engaged in behaviour you later regretted ☐ ☐
- Been involved in a fight ☐ ☐
- Rowed with a friend / partner/ family member ☐ ☐

If Other please specify

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Q14. Have your nights out drinking affected your exams?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q15. After a night of drinking how would you rate your concentration levels in class. On a scale of 1 being very good and 5 being very bad

1 ☐  2 ☐  3 ☐  4 ☐  5 ☐

Q16. Would you agree that alcohol advertisements are aimed at young people i.e under 25?

Yes ☐

No ☐

(Please elaborate on your answer)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Q17. Would you agree that A.I.T. promotes drinking within the College. On a scale of 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

1 ☐  2 ☐  3 ☐  4 ☐  5 ☐
Q18. Do you feel you would get support from the college if alcohol became a problem in your life?

Yes   

No    