

# Norms, refusal skills and alcohol drinking among early adolescents

Anna Janovská<sup>1</sup>, Oľga Orosová<sup>1</sup>, Jozef Benka<sup>1</sup>, Marcela Štefaňáková<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Psychology and Health Psychology, <sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic



## Background:

In early adolescence, alcohol drinking can be initiated and escalate, often as a result of significant advances in one's psychological and social development. This study explored how alcohol drinking is related to self-esteem, self-control, refusal skills and personal, injunctive and descriptive norms.

## Sample:

Data from a representative sample of 572 elementary school pupils (gender: 50.1% male; age: M=13.49 years, SD=0.59 years) were collected within a project aimed at universal school-based prevention programme.

## Methods:

The respondents completed:

The Self-Control Scale (Finkenauer, Engels, & Baumeister, 2005) consisted of 11 items and respondents could answer on a five-point scale (1 = never, 5 = always). A higher score indicated a higher level of self-control. The Cronbach alpha was 0.573.

Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1979) consisted of 10 items. Respondents could answer on a four-point scale. The higher score represented a higher level of self-esteem. The Cronbach alpha was 0.712.

The Refusal Skills Scale ( $\alpha=0.899$ ) according to Macaulay, Griffin and Botvin (2002). The higher score represented a higher level of refusal skills concerning alcohol.

They were asked about their personal, social injunctive, personal injunctive and descriptive norms of alcohol drinking (Elek, Miller-Day, & Hecht, 2006). Higher score in injunctive norms represented a stronger belief that drinking in adolescent age is not as appropriate and their friends and parents would not approve it. Higher score in descriptive norms represented a belief about higher alcohol consumption of schoolmates.

## Statistical analysis:

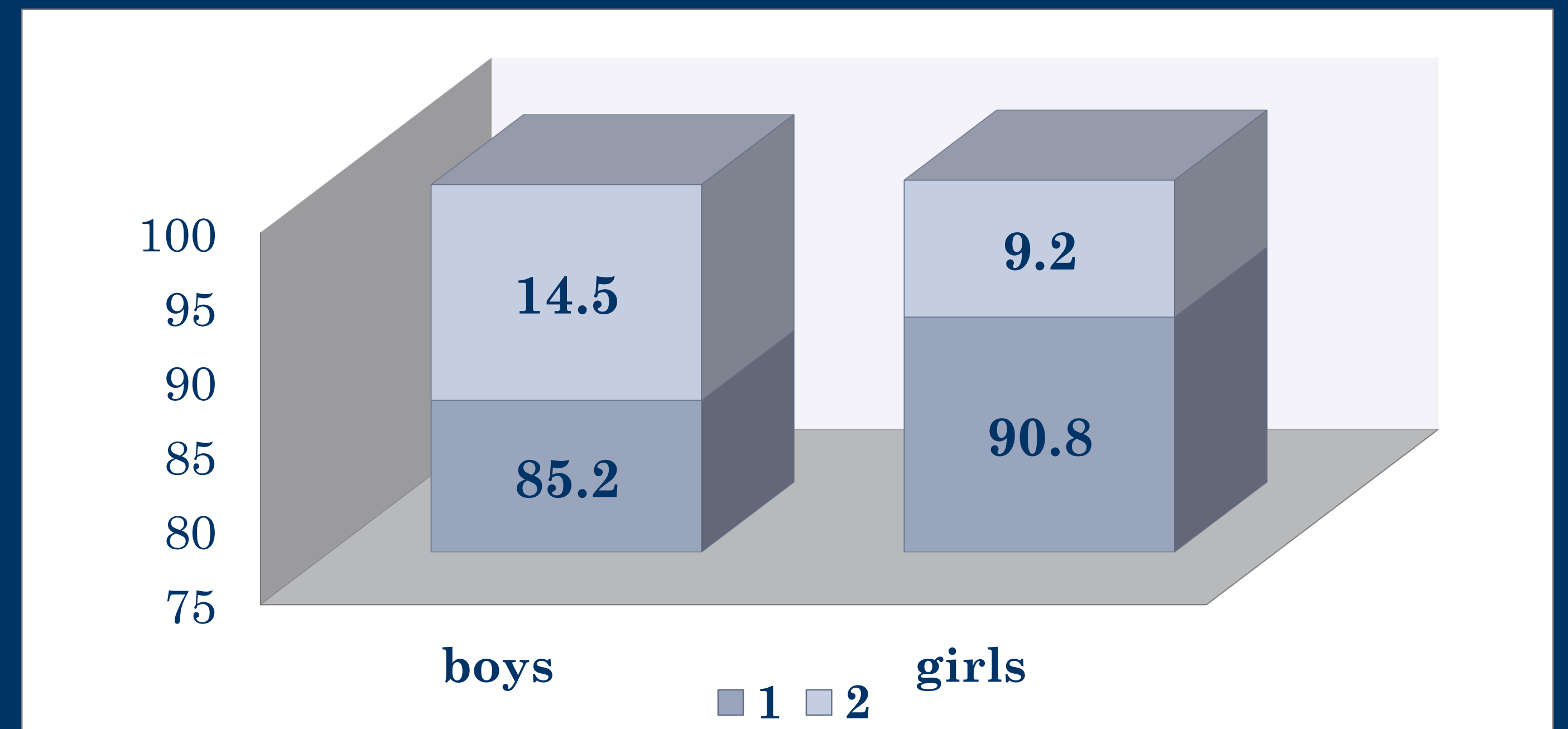
Binary logistic regression was used to explain their self-reported alcohol consumption, dependent variable was dichotomized (they ever have not drunk alcohol yet or have tried once; they have drunk alcohol multiple times). The model consisted of nine independent variables (gender, self-control, self-esteem, personal norms, social injunctive norms - parents, social injunctive norms - friends, personal injunctive norms, descriptive norms and refusal skills).

## References:

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## Findings:

Approximately 14% of boys and 9% of girls reported, that they have drunk alcohol multiple times (Figure 1).



1 - have not drunk alcohol yet or have tried once; 2 - have drunk alcohol multiple times

Figure 1 Percentage of self-reported alcohol consumption among Slovak adolescents

Alcohol drinking of adolescents was found to be positively associated to personal norms ( $p=0.001$ ,  $OR=0.458$ ), social injunctive norms (parents:  $p=0.012$ ,  $OR=0.540$ ; personal:  $p=0.025$ ,  $OR=0.650$ ) and refusal skills ( $p=0.003$ ,  $OR=0.896$ ) as well as positively linked to descriptive norms concerning drinking of their peers ( $p=0.001$ ,  $OR=2.122$ ). The associations between alcohol drinking and self-esteem, self-control and social injunctive norms concerning friends were not statistically significant. Our data support the existence of gender differences ( $p=0.041$ ,  $OR=2.120$ ), i.e. boys tended to drink more often than girls (Table 1).

Table 1 Regression model for alcohol consumption among Slovak adolescents

	B	Sig.	OR	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Cox & Snell $R^2 = .205$ Nagelkerke $R^2 = .386$					
Gender	.752	.041	2.120	1.032	4.355
Self-esteem	-.036	.481	.965	.873	1.066
Self-control	-.011	.710	.989	.931	1.050
PN	-.780	.001	.458	.286	.735
SIN parents	-.616	.012	.540	.334	.872
SIN friends	-.153	.461	.858	.571	1.289
PIN	-.430	.025	.650	.447	.947
DN	.752	.001	2.122	1.362	3.306
Refusal skills	-.109	.003	.896	.833	.965
Constant	6.236	<.001	510.676		

PN – Personal norms; SIN – Social injunctive norms; PIN – Personal injunctive norms; DN – Descriptive norms

## Conclusion:

The study confirmed the importance of prevention programmes that influence the formation of norms concerning alcohol drinking and develop adolescents' refusal skills.

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## Address for correspondence:

Anna Janovská, PhD.,  
Department of Educational Psychology and Health Psychology, Faculty of Arts, PJ Safarik University, Moyzesova 9, 040 01 Kosice, Slovak Republic  
email: anna.janovska@upjs.sk