

REVIEW ARTICLE

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN MODERN UKRAINE

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Larysa D. Klymanska¹, Maryna B. Klimanska², Halyna Z. Herasym¹, Viktor Ye. Savka¹, Stanislav K. Andreichuk¹, Romana R. Myshok¹

¹NATIONAL UNIVERSITY "LVIVSKA POLITEKHNIKA", LVIV, UKRAINE

²IVAN FRANKO NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LVIV, LVIV, UKRAINE

ABSTRACT

The aim: To identify and to describe the historical and current factors that determine the patterns of alcohol consumption in modern Ukraine.

Materials and methods: A review and analysis of existing literature focused on historical and contemporary contexts of alcohol use in modern Ukraine. Epidemiological data from general population adolescents survey (N=2038; 2020) and adults survey (N=1200; 2019) conducted in the Lviv region are analyzed from the sociological perspective.

Conclusions: Studies results demonstrate the existence of special mechanism that conserves and strengthens the predisposition of positive attitude towards alcohol since early childhood. This information will help to shift the focus of anti-alcohol policy towards a more diverse set of strategies (including administrative intervention and harm reduction strategy).

KEY WORDS: alcohol consumption, positive attitude to alcohol, motivation for alcohol consumption

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INTRODUCTION

The patterns of alcohol consumption are determined by many circumstances. The answer to the question to drink or not to drink is rooted in a particular social environment, and has its own characteristics in each country. Excessive alcohol consumption is a "classic" social problem for many countries, including Ukraine. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that Ukraine is one of the five countries with the highest level of alcohol consumption per capita in terms of alcohol consumption, and in fact currently ranks fifth in the world in terms of alcohol consumption. According to various estimates, there are 13.8 liters to 15 liters of pure alcohol per person per year in the country [1]. More than 700,000 people in Ukraine suffer from alcoholism. Ukraine is in the top category of the WHO in the so-called "years of lost life" due to alcohol consumption: in terms of alcohol mortality, it ranks fifth row among men and fourth row among women in the world [1]. Ukraine is a record holder in Europe in terms of absolute consumption of the shadow alcohol market: five liters of pure alcohol per person per year [2].

THE AIM

The aim of this article is to identify and to describe the historical and current factors that determine the patterns of alcohol consumption in modern Ukraine.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A review and analysis of existing literature focused on historical and contemporary contexts of alcohol use in modern Ukraine. Epidemiological data from general population adolescents survey (N=2038; 2020) and adults survey (N=1200; 2019) conducted in the Lviv region are analyzed from the sociological perspective.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Alcohol use patterns are determined by several factors.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The tradition of alcohol consumption has been and continues to be an essential component of the historical background.

Alcohol consumption on Ukrainian territory has a thousand-year history. Not drinking in an alcohol-tolerant society is not easy. When the tradition of consumption becomes part of the culture, those who do not drink are considered sociopaths.

Information about extreme drunkenness and the tradition of drunkenness among the Slavic peoples is contradictory. On the one hand, in the epics of the Kiev cycle of Prince Vladimir in the descriptions of the prince's feast describe feasts on special holidays, which lasted three

days [3]. The image of Ilya Muromets as the best warrior and hero reflects the ideals of heroic behavior. And his strength as a hero was measured in the amount of alcohol he drank [3,p.16].

On the other hand, the historian and ethnographer N.I Kostomarov (1817-1885) refuted the myth of this ancient tradition of the Slavic peoples. He proved that in ancient Rus people drank little. Alcohol abuse was restrained at that time by a number of factors:

- use of alcoholic beverages in Rus was ritual in nature and episodic;
- alcoholic beverages were low-grade drinks;
- majority of the population did not have significant food surpluses for alcohol production;
- alcohol was usually not consumed on an empty stomach: honey, beer or wine were drunk either at a banquet or in an inn, where a hearty meal was always served.

According to historians, alcohol consumption by Ukrainian Cossacks was widespread. Adherence to vodka was a fundamental feature of the Cossack-sloth - this national ideal of the Ukrainian, who, according to the song, "earns a week, drinks a day." In fact, in all his portraits Kozak Mamai differs from the Tatar only by the presence of a bottle and a glass. However, the Cossack community was quite strict about drunkenness. Drinking alcohol during a military campaign was punishable by death. Any drunken Cossack was immediately thrown overboard by the Kosh Ataman.

On the eve of the revolutions of 1917, the alcohol situation in the country was determined by the complex interaction of several opposing factors. On the one hand, the spread of drunkenness was restrained by the employment of the vast majority of the population in agrarian labor, the action of "dry law". On the other hand, an extremely unfavorable style of alcohol consumption, the growth of home brewing, and the urgent need to replenish the state treasury with "drunk" money have finally taken shape.

Positive attitude towards hard drinks was intensified in Soviet times in Ukraine. Any information on alcohol consumption in Ukraine is impossible without taking into account the social context of the USSR and its further disintegration in 1991. Statistics on the incidence and prevalence of alcohol dependence in Ukraine from 1955 are logically correlated with the most important socio-economic and political changes in Ukraine [4]. From 1955 to 1971, the level of alcohol dependence increased and there was an active development of narcological services, which were officially established by law of the Ministry of Health in 1959.

Ukrainians born between 1950 and 1970 grew in relative stability, they studied, worked, received housing from the state, and did not pay for it, but all this happened in the so-called deficit regime, which launched social exchange networks known as blat [5]. Popular in the USSR was the saying «Don't want a hundred rubles, better have a hundred friends», which reflects this Soviet phenomenon, so called - «exchange of access services» in conditions of scarcity. Social connections «by acquaintance», «under protection» gave the opportunity in the USSR to make different things

- to find a job, to stay in the capital, to get scarce goods and to get scarce quality services. It is during these years that the term «buy» was replaced by the term «get». Blat became the central part of the daily life of the Soviet people, the practical application of their social capital, which was completely incomprehensible to the Western man, for whom money was a universal limiter of opportunities. In return blat can be considered as one of the mechanism for the preservation and even development of alcohol dependence, as blat assumed that one should pay for protection, mainly through a "gentleman's kit", which usually included expensive alcohol.

Between 1972 and 1986, there was an exponential increase in the incidence and prevalence of alcohol dependence, according to official statistics. The «era of stagnation» in the former Soviet Union was associated with many negative trends - economic decline, deterioration of the quality of life, demoralization. All of these factors have contributed to the spread of alcoholism and crime.

Addiction services have introduced new, socially grounded methods of preventing binge drinking and alcoholism. During this period, the cooperation of narcological services with state, party, public and institutional structures was introduced. Special commissions for the prevention of alcoholism and binge drinking are being set up at enterprises and administrative institutions to help coordinate the efforts of state and public institutions in the fight against alcoholism and drunkenness. The legal framework for involuntary treatment and "professional correction" is being created, and the fight against alcoholism itself is becoming an important national task [6].

Between 1986 and 1989, there was a significant reduction in the prevalence of alcohol dependence and alcohol psychosis due to Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign, which, despite all the criticism, proved its effectiveness. Attempts to conduct anti-alcohol campaigns were repeatedly made in the USSR (1929, 1958, 1972, 1985), but the last of them (of 1985) was mostly remembered. Thanks to the implementation of the tasks set within the framework of this campaign, namely promotion of a «sober lifestyle», non-alcoholic weddings and parties, limited sale of alcohol only from 14:00 to 18:00; increasing responsibility for appearing in a drunken state in public places, and many others, Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign in 1985-1987 [7] successfully reduced consumption, but was followed by a sharp increase in alcohol mortality in the early 1990s, fueled by the sudden availability of cheap alcohol following market deregulation.

The campaign itself was declared unpopular. During 1990-96, it was discontinued not only because of its unpopularity, but also because of the inability of the bureaucratic machine of the Soviet Union to continue to run it. [6].

During the unstable post-Soviet period of the 1990s, Ukrainians experienced a series of profound social, political and economic changes, characterized by rising income inequality, rising crime and a chaotic struggle for survival. At the same time, the capacity of the network of narcological services was sharply reduced, the organization of the

fight against addictions was radically changing - the role of involuntary treatment was decreasing, and anonymous forms of treatment and counseling were becoming much more popular [6].

Official statistics show a gradual decline in alcohol dependence and alcohol psychosis since 1997. However, experts believe that the official data is misleading, and the level of alcohol dependence is actually growing. They base their views on rising alcohol morbidity and mortality rates, negative demographic trends and high demand for addiction treatment since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Financial and social instability, disorganized and contradictory regulation of drug services, lack of drugs and equipment - all this did not allow collecting reliable statistical information [6].

The study in Lviv region was conducted three times: in 2016 on a sample of adolescents of 9-th grade schools in Lviv, Drohobych and villages of Drohobych district, in 2019 - on a sample of adults in Lviv and the region, and in 2020 - again on a sample of 9-th grade adolescents. The study found a ratio of those who practice abstinence and those who consume alcohol - as 15.3 to 84.7%. The age of the respondent correlates with abstinence practices (the lowest number of abstainers was in the youngest age group, i.e. up to 29 years (9.3%), and the highest number of abstainers among the oldest respondents, i.e. age and older (26.3%); partly family environment (the highest prevalence of abstinence is observed among widows, widowers and divorced persons), professional inactivity (significantly higher percentage of non-drinkers among professionally inactive people than among employees), financial status (among respondents from the lowest income group (22.6%) - the largest share of abstainers, the share of abstainers decreases when income increases to 10,000 hryvnias per person in the household (10.6%), in the group with the highest income the share of abstainers increases to 15.0%). As a rule, we observe higher percentage of abstainers in groups with less "social activity", among the oldest, economically inactive and low-income.

Almost half of alcohol consumers (45%) consume relatively small amounts of alcohol, not exceeding 1.2 liters of pure alcohol per year. Significant amounts in excess of 12 liters of 100% alcohol per year are consumed by 11% of respondents. %) [8, p.97].

Average alcohol consumption varies due to socio-demographic characteristics: men drink four times more (9.13 liters) than women (2.11 liters); the average alcohol consumption is highest in the age group of 40-49 years (6.67 liters), for the youngest age group 18-29 years - is 6.10 liters, but among people over the age of 60 the average consumption is 3.11 liters.

Occupational activity is also statistically related to average alcohol consumption. Professionally active (working) people consume an average of 6.39 liters of pure alcohol, and inactive (non-working) - 3.82 liters.

In Lviv, the average alcohol consumption is the lowest - 4.18 liters / person. Slightly higher average consumption is observed in other cities of the region (4.66 liters / person).

However, they obviously drink more in rural areas, where the average consumption is 6.85 liters / person.

Neither the level of income, nor living with minors in the same household statistically affect the average alcohol consumption

Attitudes towards religion are the most significant reason influencing the level of average alcohol consumption. Non-believers drink the most (8.45 liters / person). Believers, but not practitioners, drink slightly less (7.56 liters / person), and believers and practitioners drink much lower alcohol consumption - 3.88 liters / person. %) [8, p.98].

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF MODERN UKRAINE

Motivation for alcohol consumption of modern Ukrainians is mainly social - «improving events and celebrations», «adapting to a group», «avoiding feelings of alienation».

By the logic of Skog's theory of collective consumption [9, p.83-99] everyone seeks to adapt their alcohol consumption to other people's behaviors in the same culture. Therefore, it can be expected that adolescents' alcohol consumption will reflect the pattern and culture of alcohol consumption in their country. And this is relevant for modern Ukraine. Studies of risky behavior conducted in Lviv regions in 2016 and 2020 on alcohol consumption among adolescents in 9th grade confirm this general trend.

In the context of alcohol use, a person must adapt his behavior to collective behavior in the microsystem (home, work and school environment), which, in turn, adapts to the norms and rules of the larger community, influenced by macro-level factors such as advertising, and anti-alcohol policy at the state level.

Some of the strongest influences on a person's drinking behavior are those with whom he/she spends most of his/her time: family and friends. Studies have shown that higher levels of alcohol use among parents and peers are associated with increased alcohol use among adolescents and young adults.

In the process of development, the social context of the environment changes from the family center in childhood to peers and friends in schools in adolescence. Given this, parental alcohol consumption appears to have a greater impact up to the age of 15 and decreases over time [10]. Higher levels of familism (values that put family needs above individuals) and living in a nuclear family are protective factors for adolescents. Peer norms play an important role at this stage of life [11].

But less has been written about alcohol consumption in the context of the workplace. The predominant trajectory of alcohol consumption among men in Ukraine is excessive alcohol consumption at a young or middle age, often associated with certain jobs or a group of work colleagues. Periods of alcohol abuse at a young age are correlated with certain jobs or groups (for example, the army), specifics of professional activity (aeronautical engineer, "rotation" in remote areas of oil production). Some workplaces provided greater access to alcohol at work because "technical"

alcohol was used to clean equipment and could be used for drinking, and in other cases alcohol was offered as partial or full payment for work. Sometimes excessive alcohol consumption is justified as physical protection against harsh working conditions (alcohol has a warming effect).

Since Soviet times, there has been an almost a forced form of alcohol use (“Do you respect me?”) in the labor collective. Ritualized alcohol consumption after work was typical on the way home (“driving a goat”), especially on Friday nights, especially during the celebrations of numerous birthdays. Resisting the collective, skipping social events meant weakening social relations and influences, reducing the chances of career growth.

Over time, employers’ policies to combat alcohol have become stricter and have directly restricted alcohol consumption in the workplace. The management more closely controlled the use of alcohol, for appearing at work intoxicated they could simply be fired, but the everyday memory of alcoholic feasts was preserved and passed on to descendants.

At the level of macro-factors, advertising, marketing and anti-alcohol policy of the state play an important role in alcohol consumption models.

Empirical studies show that targeted alcohol marketing leads people to develop positive beliefs about alcohol consumption, as well as create and expand an environment where alcohol consumption is socially acceptable and encouraged [12]. There is a direct relationship between alcohol advertising, including at the point of sale, and attempts by adolescents to consume alcohol. In a study cited in an article by Yu. Solokha, a public health expert at the Center for Democracy and the Rule of Law [13], 12-year-olds with the highest propensity to watch alcohol advertisements presence a year after the survey began to drink alcohol 50% more often than those adolescents who did not notice alcohol advertising.

Cultural norms are the factor in the meso-level of influence on alcohol consumption. The literature on community influence on alcohol consumption focuses primarily on environmental aspects, such as community characteristics and opportunities to purchase and consume alcohol. In addition to these characteristics of the community, an important factor for the formation of models of alcohol consumption is the so-called “culture of consumption” of the immediate community at the community level.

A structural part of the daily life of many Ukrainians has become the so-called “healthy” culture of consumption, which consisted in enjoying a drink together, without abuse or drunkenness [14]. In those areas of Ukraine where households themselves grow grapes and produce their own wine; family meals are accompanied by a glass of wine for all. The ability to make good wine is a kind of ritual for men, in which they compete and it is part of family and cultural holidays. Wine is consumed during the day as water; agricultural workers sip from a small plastic bottle, a few sips of wine does not matter.

Historically, it was considered impolite to offer guests a drink with water, because you could not be sure of its

quality. Alcohol was preferred because it was perceived as “pure”. Beer is perceived as a thirst-quenching drink and is served at train stations on hot days. Beer is also considered a drink for young people, women and “weak” people. The strongest type of alcoholic beverage is vodka (or analogues of local production, such as palinka), which is perceived as a drink for men and people “cool” and “strong”. Drinking is seen as a sign of masculinity in Kiev,”says Daria Meshcheryakova. “People don’t understand how a grown man could be sober in the evenings or on holiday - they would wonder what was wrong with them” [15].

The largest percentage of respondents consume wine (64.2%), a smaller percentage of alcoholic beverages (55.2%) and beer (52.4%). The difference between the percentage of consumers of wine and alcoholic beverages is greater (11%) than when we compare the percentage of consumers of beer and alcoholic beverages (9.9%). [8, p.84].

Different types of beverages perform different functions for Ukrainians, which are performed by certain types of beverages. Wine has more symbolic functions. Vodka remains in its traditional role as the main alcoholic beverage, for many it has alcoholic functions. Drinking beer is more everyday, it seems that sometimes it replaces refreshing drinks [8, p.87].

In order to complete the picture of alcohol consumption in modern Ukraine, two more points should be added.

FIRST

COVID situation and ongoing war with Russia.

Two events have taken place in recent years that are likely to have a significant impact on the situation of excessive alcohol consumption in Ukraine.

The world (and Ukraine) has been hit by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), which has led to hitherto unknown conditions in people’s lives. In this context, tough measures were established, which were reflected in public life. These measures were related to restrictions, quarantine and isolation aimed at overcoming the coronavirus pandemic 2019 (COVID-19). People faced threats such as unknown disease, job loss, educational and opportunity constraints, and economic recession, all of which could lead to risky behaviors.

It is important to realize that alcohol is already a long-term problem of society, which is a burden from the point of view of health, economy and social point of view, as mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic is another serious threat excessive alcohol consumption. Monitoring alcohol consumption among the population of Ukraine is important, but it is also very important to take effective measures and compare results. Alcohol issues should be integrated into general health policies, strategies and activities. It is health policy that can influence the consumption of alcohol by the population.

The second event that may affect the situation with alcohol consumption is the transition to an acute stage of the Russian-Ukrainian military confrontation. In late 2013 and early 2014 Ukraine entered a period of rapid escalation

and widespread political discontent, as a result of the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution (also known as the Euromaidan Revolution) and the protracted conflict in the eastern regions of the country. More than 10,000 people have been killed and more than 25,000 injured since the conflict began, including many veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and the Ukrainian government's military attempt to defeat pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine [16].

The conflict has seriously disrupted social and economic life in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Donbas). More than 1.7 million Ukrainians - 4% of the total population - were internally displaced [17]. Many of them suffer from substance use disorders and have a growing need for social services and drug treatment programs. Conflicts and wars increase the burden of behavioral health problems among people of all generations who have been injured, as well as among those living in or near conflict zones. [18]. These are the numbers before the beginning of the acute phase of the conflict, which began on February 24, 2022. We can assume that the numbers of consequences of the actual military action will be much higher.

Conflict-affected populations are at increased risk and burden of alcohol and other drug abuse. Substance and post-conflict substance abuse can exacerbate the concomitant medical and social consequences of conflict and slow down the recovery process. Mechanisms through which conflict is believed to increase the risk of substance abuse include the use of substances, including alcohol, as a means of overcoming increased psychosocial suffering and distress after a humanitarian emergency; changes in access to and availability of alcohol and other drugs; bias; and evolving social norms [19].

There is a need to promote the provision of psychoactive substance prevention and treatment services to conflict-affected populations to government, humanitarian organizations and policy makers responsible for allocating resources and prioritizing health care systems after conflict or other emergencies. The availability and access to services for the treatment of substance use disorders is limited for the population affected by the conflict.

The combined impact of the conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable populations is an important area of research, as knowledge in this area will enable us to prepare for future scenarios where conflict and external stressors intersect.

SECOND

A wide range of alcohol-related problems in modern society, determined by socio-economic and cultural factors, requires a comprehensive program of prevention. The set of measures aimed at reducing the level of alcohol-related problems is now called alcohol policy. Anti-alcohol policy in Ukraine also inherits from the former Soviet Union. Since its inception, the Soviet government has made several attempts to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol abuse on public health and productivity. Despite the short-lived effect, Mikhail Gorbachev's campaign was the most impressive achievement.

Differences in alcohol control policies in countries, such as minimum age of purchase and restrictions on availability and advertising, are another potential explanation for differences in alcohol consumption. There are significant differences in alcohol control policies in different countries. To obtain a more complete assessment of alcohol control policy, Brand et al. [20] developed the Alcohol Policy Index (API) with five areas of regulation: (i) alcohol availability, (ii) alcohol use context (e.g., community mobilization programs), (iii) alcohol prices, (iv) advertising, and (v) activity of vehicles (eg blood alcohol level, random breath test).

Empirically, the so-called "best buys" of the WHO, which include rising prices for alcoholic beverages through taxation or other pricing policies, reduced availability of alcoholic beverages and a ban on advertising and marketing, be the most effective and cost-effective policy for alcohol consumption to reduce the burden on health [21]. It is obvious that the three "best buys", if they are implemented at a sufficiently high level (for example, raising taxes, which significantly reduces the availability of alcoholic beverages), would meet the threshold of best practice. It might be useful to analyze Ukrainian anti-alcohol policy on these parameters.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of theoretical research on the historical and contemporary socio-cultural context of alcohol consumption in Ukraine, as well as information obtained from research studies results demonstrate the existence of special mechanism that conserves and strengthens the predisposition of positive attitude towards alcohol since early childhood. This information will help to shift the focus of anti-alcohol policy towards a more diverse set of strategies (including administrative intervention and harm reduction strategy).

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ORCID and contributionship:

Larysa D. Klymanska: 0000-0002-3693-7503 ^{A, D, E, F}
 Maryna B. Klimanska: 0000-0002-3047-2346 ^{B, D, F}
 Halyna Z. Herasym: 0000-0003-3254-438X ^{B, E}
 Victor E. Savka: 0000-0002-1751-7562 ^{E, F}
 Stanislav K. Andreichuk: 0000-0003-3226-7300 ^{D, E}
 Romana R. Myshok: 0000-0003-2150-0920 ^{B, E}

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Larysa D. Klymanska

Lviv Polytechnic National University
 12 Bandera St., 79013 Lviv Ukraine
 tel: +38068-5004696
 e-mail: larysa_kl@ukr.net

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