Reviewer’s report

Title: Socio-demographic correlates of six indicators of alcohol consumption: Survey findings of students across seven universities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Version: 1 Date: 27 June 2013

Reviewer: Susanna Geidne

Reviewer’s report:

General comments

In general I think this is an interesting subject with an interesting target group. University students/young adults are a risk group regarding alcohol consumption and more studies and interventions should be directed at this group. The paper is overall well written and with adequate international comparisons although there are some lack of national comparisons. Some of the comments I specify below has to do with the variable age, which I miss both in the analysis and the interpretations of the findings.

Specific comments

Major compulsory revisions

1. The concepts university, college and undergraduate is used side by side, to a foreign reader unfamiliar with the British school system it is hard to know if it is the same type of school or if the students in them are of the same age. A clarifying sentence on the differences or if it is the same and what ages the students are in when they go to university in Great Britain would be good.

2. Do the universities in this study have a specific type of educational programs that have a high proportion of women? It also seems like the majority of the students have low educated parents, does it have to do with the type of education or the geographical locations of the universities. If so, can this fact affect the students’ alcohol consumption? This should be clarified either in the section about the sample or discussed later.

3. In your sample of students the age variable has quite high standard deviations and it looks like the samples sometimes include students under the age of 18. If that is the case, it should be emphasized because if the students are under 18 they are not allowed to buy/drink alcohol? Or what is the law in Great Britain?

4. Have you tried to include the age variable in the analysis in table 2 and 3? What age the students are when they start university could affect their alcohol consumption. This variable should be considered in the analysis and in the interpretations.

Minor essential revisions
5. On p. 8, first paragraph you have a question from the survey about ‘alcoholic drinks’. Are ‘alcoholic drinks’ defined in any way in the questionnaire (type of alcohol or size)?

6. On p. 11, second paragraph, line 13, on p. 13, fourth paragraph, line 3 and on p. 13, paragraph 5, line 4 you refer to the females but that result is not shown in the tables are they?

7. On p.11, second paragraph, line 4, it says Gloustershire and Swansea students. In table 3 it says that Chester and Swansea students were more likely to engage in long durations of drinking.

8. On p.12, first paragraph, last sentence the perceived income insufficiency was significantly associated to all of the indicators according to table 3, but there are just 3 mentioned here.

9. On p.12, second paragraph, first line. ‘With respect to educational variables’ could be interpreted as if there were some other educational variables besides the ones you have. But that could be due to my not so perfect English.

10. On p.13, paragraph 4, line 5 you write ‘young university students’, how old are they then, relating to my question in paragraph 1.

11. In the Discussion, second paragraph you write that 59 % of the students report heavy episodic drinking and it is also said in table 1. Although in table 2 the numbers for females are 64,6 % and for males 76,4 %. How can this be explained?

Assessment of the work according to the journal’s points

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined? The research questions are well defined and the conclusions are clear. If the results are new is hard to say due to lack of national comparisons in the study.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work? Ok.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled? The sample can be described better (see paragraph 2).

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Ok.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? I miss the variable age in the analysis and the interpretations, otherwise ok.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Ok.

7. Is the writing acceptable? Ok.
**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests