**Alcohol and Youth in Muslim majority countries: Attitude of University Students in Iraq**

**Background**

Anecdotal evidence indicates that alcohol is a growing public health concern in Iraq. Internal and external factors such as political instability, war and resulting trauma, and global alcohol marketing are possible influences on attitudes towards alcohol among young people in Iraq. However, like many other Muslim Majority countries, there is scarce data about alcohol in the country.

**Method**

This research involved four components. The first is an overview of the historical sociocultural background of alcohol in Iraq. Then a systematic scoping review identified available data in local and international peer-reviewed journals about alcohol and young people. This informed mixed-method research, which included an online survey and semi-structured interviews of university students. The survey included AUDIT-C and PC-PTSD screening tools, and items on attitudes towards alcohol and motivations for use.

**Results**

There have been diverse cultural, historical, and religious influences on attitudes towards alcohol in Iraq. Data on alcohol and young people is scarce in this context and mostly in non-alcohol specific studies. The quantitative survey found a low prevalence of drinking (5.3%; 1.6% females, 10% males). However, two fifths (40%) of male drinking was risky (AUDIT-C score of 4+). Two fifths of the sample had been exposed to direct conflict and one third tested positive on the PC-PTSD. Alcohol was said to be easily accessible by both survey and interview participants. Student interviewees shared a variety of perceived motives for drinking. They also reported on stories of alcohol harms among drinkers.

**Discussion**

Although prevalence of drinking is low, alcohol misuse among drinkers is high. Better health, legal and financial infrastructure in Iraq and ongoing research are needed to help design and implement tailored, evidence-based approaches. These should aim to maintain or reduce low prevalence of drinking while ensuring help is available for those with risky drinking.