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The Functions of Stereotypes about Alcohol and Alcohol Addiction. The Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism

**Funkcje stereotypów o alkoholu oraz uzależnieniu od niego.
Perspektywa symbolicznego interakcjonizmu**

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Abstract

Aim. The article presents the results of a search for justifications for the presence of stereotypes in everyday practices related to the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Based on the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism, the study analysed two functions of the use of stereotypes as socially negotiated definitions of alcohol consumption situations and the identity of consumers: 1) justifications for the need to drink alcohol – stereotypes create meanings attributed to alcohol, expressing beliefs about its nature and the specifics of its consumption, and defining the framework for situations involving alcohol consumption; 2) protecting drinkers from the premises for self-identification as addicted or falling into addiction, and from the threat of the social label of alcoholism – stereotypes define the rules and boundaries of “safe behaviour.” The analysis allows to realize the impact of stereotypes on the functioning of families with alcohol problems.

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Methods and materials. The survey was conducted among adults, covering, among other things, issues related to beliefs about alcohol and its consumption. A set of stereotypical statements about alcohol and alcohol addiction was selected and then used to construct questions, which respondents answered using a Likert scale.

Results and conclusion. Stereotypes that serve as a justification for drinking are more widely accepted than those that are intended to protect drinkers from the threat of addiction and the label of alcoholism. Attitudes towards stereotypes are independent of age, but are often related to gender and education. Analysis of consumption levels reveals a stereotype-anchored image of a “weekend drinking” culture.

Keywords: alcohol, addiction, family, alcohol consumption, stereotypes, alcoholism, symbolic interactionism, sociology of family

Abstrakt

Cel. Artykuł przedstawia wyniki badania nad znaczeniem fałszywych przekonań na temat alkoholu i uzależnienia od niego obecnych w przestrzeni społecznej. Jest on efektem poszukiwań uzasadnień obecności stereotypów w codziennych praktykach związanych ze spożyciem napojów alkoholowych. Na podstawie teoretycznej perspektywy symbolicznego interakcjonizmu w badaniu przeanalizowano dwie funkcje używania stereotypów jako treści społecznie negocjowanych definicji sytuacji spożywania alkoholu oraz tożsamości spożywających: 1) uzasadnień dla potrzeby picia alkoholu – stereotypy tworzą znaczenia przypisywane alkoholowi wyrażające przekonania o jego naturze i specyfice jego spożywania oraz ramy definicyjne sytuacji picia alkoholu; 2) zabezpieczania pijących przed przesłankami dla autoidentyfikacji jako uzależnieni lub popadający w uzależnienie oraz przed groźbą społecznej etykiety alkoholizmu – stereotypy określają zasady i granice „bezpiecznego postępowania”. Wyniki analizy pozwalają uzmysłowić sobie wpływ stereotypów na funkcjonowanie rodzin z problemem alkoholowym.

Metody i materiały. Badanie zrealizowane wśród dorosłych osób obejmowało między innymi problematykę przekonań dotyczących alkoholu i jego spożywania. Na etapie prac wstępnych, obejmujących warsztaty ze specjalistami w zakresie profilaktyki uzależnień, wyłoniono zestaw stereotypowych sformułowań dotyczących alkoholu oraz uzależnienia od niego, wykorzystanych następnie do konstrukcji pytania kwestionariuszowego, na które respondenci odpowiadali przy pomocy kafeterii odpowiedzi opartej na skali Likerta.

Wyniki i wnioski. Analizie poddano stosunek respondentów do stereotypów, ich związku ze zmiennymi społeczno-demograficznymi oraz poziomem spożycia. Stereotypy pełniące funkcję uzasadnienia dla sięgania po alkohol są częściej akceptowane niż te, które mają zabezpieczać pijących przed groźbą uzależnienia i etykietą alkoholizmu. Stosunek do stereotypów jest niezależny od wieku, natomiast często pozostaje w związku z płcią

i wykształceniem. Analiza z poziomu spożycia odsłania, zakotwiczony przez stereotypy, obraz kultury „picia weekendowego”.

Słowa kluczowe: alkohol, rodzina, uzależnienia, alkoholizm, spożycie alkoholu, socjologia rodziny, interakcjonizm symboliczny, stereotypy

Introduction

Activities related to the prevention and resolution of alcohol-related problems are among the statutory tasks of local governments (Obwieszczenie [Announcement], 2021). Although the Act does not explicitly stipulate the obligation to diagnose alcohol-related problems in a specific area, it indicates that it is the task of local authorities to develop and implement programmes to solve them. The programmes designed should take into account the current state of problems in the communities covered by them (Łukowska, 2018). A good practice here is to diagnose alcohol-related issues, which often involves conducting surveys on the knowledge and beliefs (and sometimes also stereotypes) about alcohol, addiction and other related risks (Łukowska, 2018; Wysokińska & Kołota, 2022). Such research usually focuses on: 1) beliefs about the availability of specific types of alcoholic beverages and their assessment (Bożewicz, 2019; Miłoś, 2023); 2) attitudes towards broadly understood alcohol policy (Rowicka *et al.*, 2021); 3) knowledge about the alcohol content of specific beverages (Tkaczyk, 2016); 4) perception of the risks associated with alcohol consumption (Krakowiak *et al.*, 2019), both those related to being under the influence of alcohol (Bujalski & Sierosławski, 2018; Żołnierczuk-Kieliszek *et al.*, 2013), and the possible long-term health consequences (Ferrer & Klein, 2015; IPC, 2019; Surma *et al.*, 2017); relatively often, a distinction is made between knowledge about the physical and mental effects of consuming alcoholic beverages (Ferreira Alves *et al.*, 2021); 5) knowledge and beliefs about the effects of ethanol on pregnancy and breastfeeding (Banach & Konieczna, 2010; Kajak & Olejniczak, 2012); 6) perceptions of the benefits of alcohol consumption (Hall *et al.*, 1992).

Such studies are conducted in various communities: national and regional societies (Sierosławski & Jabłoński, 2005; Zagdańska *et al.*, 2015), local communities (Nowe Horyzonty, 2020; OGS, 2019), population categories, *e.g.*, young people (Sierosławski, 2020; Żołnierczuk-Kieliszek *et al.*, 2013), and in the workplace or specific occupational categories (Fudała & Dąbrowska, 2013; Searby *et al.*, 2022).

There are also studies investigating the impact of false knowledge contained in stereotypes on alcohol consumption (Dillard *et al.*, 2018; Teunissen *et al.*, 2017). As Hen-

drykowski writes: “[...] stereotypes do not serve to present reality as it is, but rather represent the reality, constituting its substitute in communication” (Hendrykowski, 2020, p. 5)¹.

An interesting perspective is presented in the 2020 PARPA report on alcohol consumption patterns, which addresses the issue of stereotypes limited to the impact of ethanol on health. These issues are addressed through the presentation of empirical distributions of attitudes towards the aforementioned stereotypical statements, taking into account the gender and age of the study participants (*cf.* Rowicka *et al.*, 2021).

The issue of stereotypes about alcohol and its consumption is also one of the frequent topics of websites created by organisations focused on solving social problems. However, here too, it is usually limited to listing and, possibly, providing the percentage of agreement with stereotypical statements. This is intended to show the extent of false awareness about alcohol and, by implication, the magnitude of the problem.

Current literature on the subject does not tend to undertake in-depth analyses aimed, on the one hand, at identifying the factors behind false perceptions of alcohol and, on the other, at seeking links between attitudes to stereotypes and patterns as well as levels of consumption.

Stereotypes are classic concepts that have been studied in various dimensions for a long time (Gaitano *et al.*, 2022; Jarosz, 1991; W. Nowak, 1999; Ossowski, 2014; Schaff, 1981; Tritt, 2009; Wojciechowski, 2006). Stereotypes are most often studied in the context of intergroup relations (Korczyński, 2017; Orłowska, 2019), and analyses of the perception of nations and ethnic groups are frequently conducted (Korczyński, 2017; Mazur, 2023). There is growing interest in gender stereotypes (Sullivan *et al.*, 2022). In the social sciences, stereotypes are usually analysed in terms of their cognitive functions, their origins, and their persistence or susceptibility to change. In this understanding, a stereotype is:

1) a system of simplified beliefs (ideas, expectations); 2) with clear emotional and evaluative connotations; 3) shared by members of a group or community; 4) expressed in symbolic, verbal and non-verbal communication; 5) derived from secondary social messages rather than based on direct experience; 6) concerning objects that are sufficiently important to that community; 7) understood globally; 8) characterised by rigidity and resistance to change despite information that does not confirm them; 9) performing important adaptive functions of a sociobiological and psychological nature.² (Mudyń, 2002, p. 119)

The issue of addiction is also an important context here. Among the factors contributing to alcohol addiction, in addition to biological and psychological factors, there are

¹ Authors' own translation.

² Authors' own translation.

also social and environmental factors, which include norms of alcohol use and acceptance, the influence of the social environment, neighbourhood and family (Kowalewski, 2016). The problem of addiction, like the substance itself, is accompanied by stereotypical beliefs that are present in social communication. Therefore, if beliefs about alcohol and alcohol addiction are burdened with stereotypes, the question of what purpose they serve becomes particularly important. Going further, what functions do stereotypes perform in terms of attitudes towards alcohol and behaviours related to its consumption, as well as the possibility of falling into addiction?

Various functions of stereotypes can be found in the literature on the subject. For example, from a psychological perspective, three types of functions can be distinguished: 1) orientational: organising – simplifying the image of reality, shaping – stereotypes as a source of supplementation in reasoning about a situation in conditions of information scarcity, the function of reducing cognitive dissonance; 2) psychological: providing a sense of predictability of events, guaranteeing a sense of security, integrating – building a sense of connection with a specific community of beliefs, communicative, and compensatory – regulating self-esteem and channelling aggression; 3) social: manipulative – providing justifications for behaviour, unifying – allowing groups that are stereotyped to be perceived as more homogeneous than one's own (Pospiszyl, 2023).

From a sociological perspective, understanding stereotypes is based primarily on their social origins. Basically, the specific beliefs are identified as stereotypes only when they are the result of a collective interpretation of people's actions, events, situations, or more general phenomena (*cf.* Lippmann, 1997; Piwnicki & Klein, 2010; Schaff, 1981).

The functions of stereotypes in this approach can be considered from two fundamentally different theoretical perspectives, created by the normative paradigm—within which this issue finds its greatest scope for interpretation in functional theory—and the interpretative paradigm—with symbolic interactionism, within which stereotypes are an element of the functioning of common knowledge, created, transmitted and perpetuated in social interactions.

The analysis contained in this study is based on the interpretative paradigm, which views phenomena from the perspective of their social creation in interaction between partners—not so much “reacting” to the properties of the system or subject to the controlling influence of structures responsible for performing a social role, in accordance with the scenario existing in the system—but rather negotiating its meaning, context, and scope (*cf.* Konecki, 2000).

The procedural nature of constructing the meaning of a situation and its constituent elements is understood by interactionists as a specific dynamic of relations between socially generated symbols functioning in culture and interaction partners who use these symbols in the process of social communication. Their subjectivity is of integral importance in this context, as it allows interaction participants to: 1) adopt a specific attitude towards each other and take action towards each other; 2) create new perspec-

tives in different situations, which means that they can adopt many different perspectives in interaction, and this constitutes the process of so-called situational adaptation; 3) individual perspectives always have a social origin, deriving in essence from a multitude of social situations, the definitions of which the individual can internalise; 4) the conditions for an individual's action in interaction are the perspectives and definitions of situations adopted by them (*cf.* Konecki, 2000). The subjectivity of the individuals, understood in this way, generates their concept of self, including the concept of identity. As Turowski writes, referring to the findings of Bokszański, identity is a system of self-definition of the individual as a social actor, and, according to Hałas, it is interpersonal, negotiated and unstable, boiling down to the variability of ways of defining oneself, one's reference group and one's system of roles (*cf.* Turowski, 2001).

The creation of reality in social interaction, consisting in the exchange and agreement of symbols, as well as the social identities of partners, is significantly related to the phenomenon of labelling in the so-called *social reaction perspective* (*cf.* Siemaszko, 1993). It is a specific social attribution of meanings to certain behaviours, resulting from the partners' attitudes towards these behaviours, based on group rules (*cf.* Becker, 2009).

From this theoretical perspective, stereotypes about alcohol and alcohol addiction can be considered in the research concept: 1) in terms of the symbolism associated with alcohol; 2) the contexts of its consumption; 3) behaviours associated with drinking alcohol, including addiction. The first and second aspects constitute the content of social meaning-making and situation definition. The third aspect, on the other hand, generates the labelling process. In this approach, the social functions of the stereotypes in question are dictated not by the structures of the social system, but by the meaning, in social interaction, of behaviours associated with drinking.

To summarise the above, it should be assumed that, in the theoretical perspective presented, the study of the reasons for the presence of stereotypes about alcohol and alcohol addiction in the social space may be focused on two basic functions, which are the result of, but also the subject of, social agreements in the process of interaction: 1) justifications for the need to drink alcohol—stereotypes would include meanings attributed to alcohol, expressing beliefs about its nature and the specifics of its consumption, as well as the definitional framework of drinking situations³; 2) protecting alcohol consumers from being identified as addicted or falling into addiction, and from the threat of social labelling as alcoholics – stereotypes would define the rules and boundaries of “safe behaviour.”

³ In other studies (in preparation for publication), the authors of this study found that certain stereotypes relating to domestic violence serve to “justify inaction, a lack of intervention in situations of violence.” For example, this happens when it is considered that “a slap is an act of discipline, not violence.” Often, there is no need to react when a parent slaps a child because the situation is “interpreted” as an act of discipline.

The described arrangements form the basis of a research project carried out as part of the diagnosis of phenomena related to addiction in one of the municipalities of Western Pomerania. Its main objective was to characterise beliefs and behaviours related to the risk of addiction to psychoactive substances (including alcohol) and behavioural addictions. An important aspect of the research activities carried out was the issue of knowledge and stereotypes about the behaviours included in the study.

The requirements of the diagnosis allowed for undertaking an aspect of the function of stereotypes related to alcohol consumption: Is stereotypical thinking about alcohol accompanied by increased consumption? It was assumed that if people under the influence of stereotypical beliefs consume more alcohol than those who are not under their influence, then this situation reveals a functional relationship between the stereotype and alcohol consumption. Other aspects of the function of stereotypes are the subject of further research projects, which will include, among other things, a qualitative overview of interactive situations.

The aim of this study is to present: 1) the specificity of stereotypical beliefs about alcohol and alcohol dependence in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the municipality's residents; 2) the results of the analysis of the relationship between these beliefs and the level of alcohol consumption.

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the diagnosis, the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism was recognised—in consultation with the *Gminna Komisja Przeciwdziałania Problemom Alkoholowym* [Communal Commission for Counteracting Alcohol-Related Problems]—as the most cognitively valuable in the study. The formulations expressing stereotypical thinking in the discussed issue included two dimensions characterised earlier: 1) meanings attributed to alcohol and drinking, and the definitional framework of situations; 2) rules and limits of “safe behaviour.” In workshop sessions, members of the Commission (therapists, psychologists, educators, and sociologists) compiled a set of stereotypical content found in publications and websites of organisations dealing with alcohol problems (Abramowicz *et al.*, 2018; *Mity na temat alkoholizmu...*, 2022; *Mity na temat alkoholu*, 2017; *Stereotypy związane z alkoholizmem*, 2019; Vitalibera, 2022; Zagdańska *et al.*, 2015). During a focused group interview—serving as a “research reconnaissance” (*cf.* S. Nowak, 1985)—moderated by the authors of this study, all the content indicated by the participants was discussed (54 statements expressing stereotypical perceptions of alcohol, its consumption, the behaviour of people under the influence of alcohol and the specific nature of behaviours leading to addiction and alcoholism), from which nine stereotypes were identified in a team discussion.

The meanings attributed to alcohol and its consumption, as well as the definitional framework of alcohol consumption situations justifying the need to drink, included the following statements: 1) “Alcohol in beer is less harmful than that in vodka.” 2) “Having a ‘strong head’ (in meaning being able to hold one’s drink) protects against alcoholism.” 3) “Educated people are less prone to addiction.” 4) “Only weak people become addicted.” 5) “Sometimes drinking alcohol helps in difficult life situations.”

In terms of rules and limits on alcohol consumption, the function of protecting against the threat of addiction and the social stigma of alcoholism: 1) “Driving after consuming a small amount of alcohol is safe.” 2) “Pregnant women can drink small amounts of alcohol without harm.” 3) “If someone drinks heavily only on weekends and drinks small amounts of alcohol on other days of the week, that person is not at risk of addiction.” 4) “If someone does not need to drink every day, that person is not yet an alcoholic.”

Respondents were asked in the questionnaire to give their opinion on the above statements (listed without division into distinct dimensions), choosing one of five options – from strong disagreement to strong agreement. The survey was conducted in 2022 on a sample of 402 randomly selected adult residents of the municipality. The structure of the research sample is presented in the table below.

Table 1

Distribution of socio-demographic characteristics in the research sample

	frequency	percentages
Gender		
Women	212	52.7
Men	190	47.3
Age		
20–29	55	13.7
30–39	73	18.2
40–49	75	18.7
50–59	60	14.9
60–69	90	22.4
70 and more	49	12.2
Education		
Primary	20	5.0
Basic vocational	58	14.4
Secondary	187	46.5
Higher	137	34.1
Type of place of residence		
Countryside	159	39.6
Town	243	60.4
Total	402 = 100.0%	

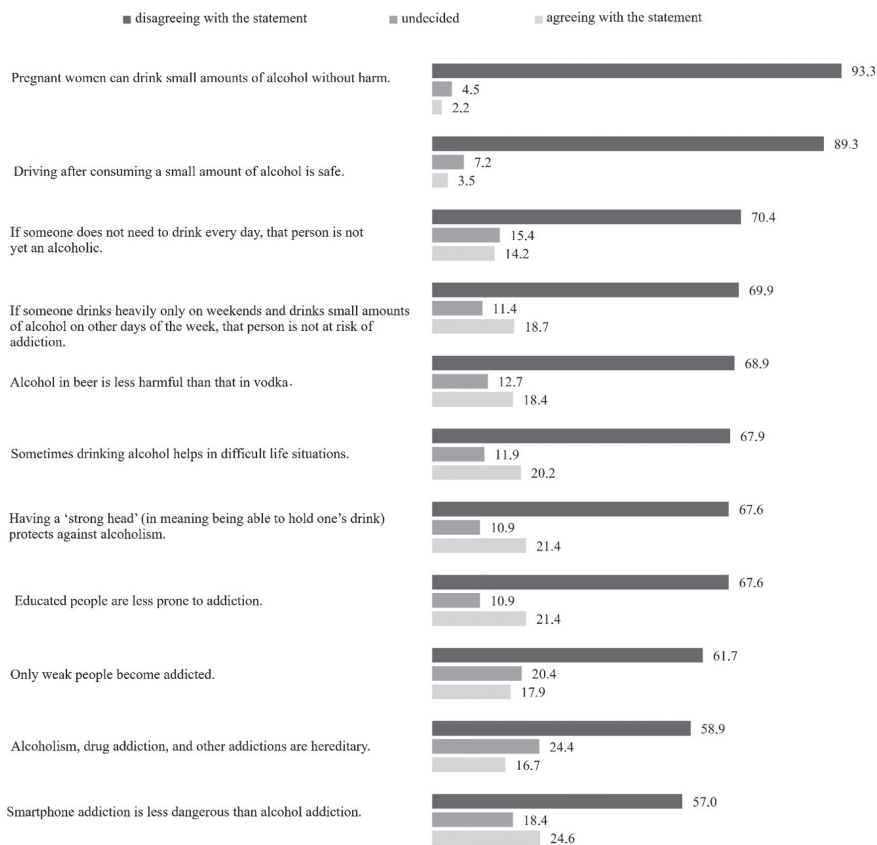
Results

The data obtained provide a picture of respondents' beliefs about alcohol, its consumption, and the dangers associated with it, through distributions of attitudes towards statements expressing stereotypes on this subject. Another aspect of the analysis is the characterisation of beliefs related to alcohol from the perspective of the socio-demographic variables of the study participants. Finally, the functionality of stereotypes in everyday practices related to alcohol consumption is analysed by examining the relationship between attitudes towards the statements and the level of alcohol consumption.

The figure below shows the distribution of opinions on the statements used in the study. For clarity, the distributions of responses have been aggregated into three categories.

Figure 1

Distribution of opinions on statements expressing stereotypes about alcohol and addiction



Note. Data expressed as percentages [$n = 402$, 402 persons = 100%].

A characteristic feature of the picture of the issues analysed is the greater importance of thinking within the dimension of meanings attributed to alcohol and its consumption, as well as the definitional framework of alcohol consumption situations justifying the need to drink it, than content protecting against the threat of addiction and the label of alcoholism. Three of the five statements in this category have the highest percentage of agreement ($> 20\%$); none of them has a share of less than 17%. This seems understandable, as the level of alcohol consumption in the entire sample cannot be extremely high, and therefore stereotypes justifying the use of alcohol may be needed more often than stereotypes protecting against the label of addiction; which may be more appropriate for people who drink particularly often, as well as for those who drink large amounts of alcohol – risky alcohol users.

The attitude towards two statements falling within both analysed dimensions proves to be significant and most controversial: “Only weak people become addicted,” and “if someone does not need to drink every day, that person is not yet an alcoholic,” which are characterised by the highest levels of indecision. Furthermore, the combination of agreement and indecision in their case gives 38.3% in the case of the first statement and 29.6% in the case of the second statement of opinions that are not opposed to them.

In turn, the lowest levels of acceptance for the two stereotypical statements, which downplay small amounts of alcohol consumed during pregnancy and while driving, may indicate that alcohol consumption in these situations is understood as highly stigmatising. However, this issue requires further qualitative research, conducted in the ethnomethodological tradition, which may focus on the practice of applying stereotypes (*cf.* Garfinkel, 2007).

Table 2

Measures of the relationship between attitudes towards stereotypes about alcohol and alcohol dependence and socio-demographic variables

Stereotypes: [1] Alcohol in beer is less harmful than that in vodka; [2] Having a “strong head” protects against alcoholism; [3] Educated people are less prone to addiction; [4] Only weak people become addicted; [5] Sometimes drinking alcohol helps in difficult life situations; [6] Driving after consuming a small amount of alcohol is safe; [7] Pregnant women can drink small amounts of alcohol without harm; [8] If someone drinks heavily only on weekends and drinks small amounts of alcohol on other days of the week, that person is not at risk of addiction; [9] If someone does not need to drink every day, that person is not yet an alcoholic.

Gender	Age	Education	Type of place of residence
[1]	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 3.656$; ni;	$\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 13.447$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p=0.009$; $C_{Kor} = 0.236$	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 6.983$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p=0.030$; $C_{Kor} = 0.185$
		Attitude distributions towards the stereotype: primary and vocational: no – 61.5%, nc – 9.0%, yes – 29.5% secondary: no – 65.8%, nc – 15.0%, yes – 19.3% higher: no – 77.4%, nc – 11.7%, yes – 10.9%	Attitude distributions towards the stereotype: countryside: no – 61.6%, nc – 14.5%, yes – 23.9% town: no – 73.7%, nc – 11.5%, yes – 14.8%
[2]	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 20.841$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p<0.001$; $C_{Kor} = 0.314$ Attitude distributions towards the stereotype: women: no – 76.8%, nc – 11.6%, yes – 11.6% men: no – 59.4%, nc – 10.4%, yes – 30.2%	$\chi^2 (10, n=402) = 8.349$; ni;	$\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 7.689$; ni;
		$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 39.319$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p<0.001$; $C_{Kor} = 0.422$	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 3.458$; ni;
[3]	women: no – 78.4%, nc – 13.7%, yes – 7.9% men: no – 58.0%, nc – 8.5%, yes – 33.5%	$\chi^2 (10, n=402) = 3.621$; ni;	$\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 14.766$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p=0.005$; $C_{Kor} = 0.247$
		$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 10.002$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p=0.007$; $C_{Kor} = 0.220$	primary and voc.: no – 65.4%, nc – 15.4%, yes – 19.2% secondary: no – 73.8%, nc – 11.2%, yes – 15.0% higher: no – 60.6%, nc – 8.0%, yes – 31.4%
[4]	women: no – 66.8%, nc – 13.7%, yes – 19.5% men: no – 57.1%, nc – 26.4%, yes – 16.5%	$\chi^2 (10, n=402) = 8.493$; ni;	$\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 10.914$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p=0.0028$; $C_{Kor} = 0.213$
		$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 10.002$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p=0.007$; $C_{Kor} = 0.220$	primary and voc.: no – 50.0%, nc – 25.6%, yes – 24.4% secondary: no – 69.0%, nc – 15.0%, yes – 16.0% higher: no – 58.4%, nc – 24.8%, yes – 16.8%
[5]	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 4.286$; ni;	$\chi^2 (10, n=402) = 15.821$; ni;	$\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 9.110$; ni;
			$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 2.787$; ni;

	Gender	Age	Education	Type of place of residence
[6]	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 2.035$; ni;	$\chi^2 (10, n=402) = 15.000$; ni;	$\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 5.800$; ni;	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 0.388$; ni;
[7]	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 1.467$; ni;	$\chi^2 (10, n=402) = 9.999$; ni;	$\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 2.367$; ni;	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 1.165$; ni;
[8]	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 8.631$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p=0.013$; $C_{kor} = 0.205$ women: no – 75.3%, nc – 12.1%, yes – 12.6% men: no – 65.1%, nc – 10.8%, yes – 24.1%	$\chi^2 (10, n=402) = 9.361$; ni;	$\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 10.927$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p=0.027$; $C_{kor} = 0.213$ primary and voc.: no – 73.1%, nc – 10.3%, yes – 16.7% secondary: no – 75.4%, nc – 11.2%, yes – 13.4% higher: no – 60.6%, nc – 12.4%, yes – 27.0% $\chi^2 (4, n=402) = 22.212$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p<0.001$; $C_{kor} = 0.300$	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 0.890$; ni;
[9]	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 21.311$; Ist. as. 2-str.: $p<0.001$; $C_{kor} = 0.317$ women: no – 64.2%, nc – 13.2%, yes – 22.6% men: no – 75.9%, nc – 17.5%, yes – 6.6%	$\chi^2 (10, n=402) = 12.380$; ni	primary and voc.: no – 55.1%, nc – 17.9%, yes – 26.9% secondary: no – 71.7%, nc – 12.8%, yes – 15.5% higher: no – 77.4%, nc – 17.5%, yes – 5.1%	$\chi^2 (2, n=402) = 1.284$; ni;

Note. In brackets: number of degrees of freedom; n – sample size. Outside brackets: Chi-square test (value); then Ist. as. 2-str. $p = \dots$ (asymptotic significance level of the test for a two-tailed critical area) and C_{kor} – adjusted Pearson's C contingency coefficient; *ni* – statistically insignificant test result. Distributions of attitudes towards the stereotype in terms of: *no* – non-accepting; *nc* – undecided; *yes* – accepting.

The characteristics of stereotypical perceptions of alcohol-related issues, analysed from the perspective of socio-demographic variables, are not related to age. Representatives of all age groups similarly perceive the issues in question. The relationships with other variables reveal several important issues.

The dimension of meanings attributed to alcohol and its consumption, and the definitional framework of situations of alcohol consumption: 1) Residents of rural areas are more likely than city dwellers to be influenced by the stereotype that alcohol in beer is less harmful than alcohol in vodka. 2) Acceptance of the statement: “Having a ‘strong head’ protects against alcoholism” is more common among men than among women,

in contrast to the statement that “only weak people become addicted,” which women accept more often, while men express indecision. 3) In the case of the statement expressing the most obvious cognitive falsehood, “alcohol in beer is less harmful than that in vodka,” the higher the level of education, the greater the proportion of people who do not accept the stereotype and the smaller the proportion who do accept it. 4) The highest level of acceptance of the statement that “educated people are less prone to addiction” is expressed by people with higher education. 5) The perception of the statement that “sometimes drinking alcohol helps in difficult life situations,” characterised by a relatively high level of agreement (20.2%), is highly undifferentiated, as it is not related to any socio-demographic characteristic.

The dimension of rules and limits of conduct when drinking alcohol: 1) Attitudes towards the statements: “Driving after consuming a small amount of alcohol is safe” and “pregnant women can drink small amounts of alcohol without harm” do not vary according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants. These statements have the lowest acceptance rates. 2) Attitudes towards the two statements with the greatest impact on protecting against the threat of addiction and social stigma: “If someone drinks heavily only on weekends and drinks small amounts of alcohol on other days of the week, that person is not at risk of addiction,” and “if someone does not need to drink every day, that person is not yet an alcoholic,” differ according to gender and education. 15.3% of men and 3.3% of women drink beer several times a week or every day, which suggests that for men, the stereotype of weekend drinking is “more convenient” because they more often cross the line of “safe behaviour.” In the case of the second independent variable, the higher the level of education, the higher the percentage of non-acceptance and the lower the percentage of agreement with the second statement. However, the data on the first statement reveal an area for further research related to drinking patterns and the use of this stereotype. Remarkably that the highest percentage of acceptance of this statement is among people with higher education, and the highest percentage of disagreement is among people with secondary education.

Another issue concerns the relationship between attitudes towards specific statements and alcohol consumption levels. In the survey, respondents were asked to declare the frequency and level of consumption of selected alcoholic beverages. The results of the significance tests are presented below.

Table 3

Kruskal-Wallis tests for the relationship between attitudes towards statements expressing stereotypical thinking about alcohol and alcohol dependence, and the level of alcohol consumption in declared amounts of vodka, usually drunk on one occasion, indicating that a standard serving is a glass (30 ml)

Stereotypes	Statistics
Alcohol in beer is less harmful than that in vodka.	$H(2, N = 402) = 1.633; p = 0.442 - ni$
Having a “strong head” protects against alcoholism.	$H(2, N = 402) = 88.637; p < 0.001$ 1) disagreeing with the statement ($n = 272$, mean rank: 168.56) ^{2,3} 2) undecided ($n = 44$, mean rank: 218.92) ^{1,3} 3) agreeing with the statement ($n = 86$, mean rank: 296.77) ^{1,2} $H(2, N = 402) = 91.092; p < 0.001$
Educated people are less prone to addiction.	1) disagreeing with the statement ($n = 272$, mean rank: 169.85) ³ 2) undecided ($n = 44$, mean rank: 203.24) ³ 3) agreeing with the statement ($n = 86$, mean rank: 300.72) ^{1,2} $H(2, N = 402) = 31.749; p < 0.001$
Only weak people become addicted.	1) disagreeing with the statement ($n = 248$, mean rank: 176.98) ^{2,3} 2) undecided ($n = 82$, mean rank: 243.31) ¹ 3) agreeing with the statement ($n = 72$, mean rank: 238.33) ¹ $H(2, N = 402) = 15.706; p < 0.001$
Sometimes drinking alcohol helps in difficult life situations.	1) disagreeing with the statement ($n = 273$, mean rank: 190.47) ³ 2) undecided ($n = 48$, mean rank: 190.64) ³ 3) agreeing with the statement ($n = 81$, mean rank: 245.12) ^{1,2} $H(2, N = 402) = 7.959; p = 0.019$
Driving after consuming a small amount of alcohol is safe.	1) disagreeing with the statement ($n = 359$, mean rank: 196.10) ² 2) undecided ($n = 29$, mean rank: 247.57) ¹ 3) agreeing with the statement ($n = 14$, mean rank: 244.43) $H(2, N = 402) = 9.735; p = 0.008$
Pregnant women can drink small amounts of alcohol without harm.	1) disagreeing with the statement ($n = 375$, mean rank: 198.30) ³ 2) undecided ($n = 18$, mean rank: 212.00) 3) agreeing with the statement ($n = 9$, mean rank: 313.94) ¹
If someone drinks heavily only on weekends and drinks small amounts of alcohol on other days of the week, that person is not at risk of addiction.	$H(2, n = 402) = 100.098; p < 0.001$ 1) disagreeing with the statement ($n = 281$, mean rank: 171.74) ³ 2) undecided ($n = 46$, mean rank: 196.93) ³ 3) agreeing with the statement ($n = 75$, mean rank: 315.81) ^{1,2}
If someone does not need to drink every day, that person is not yet an alcoholic.	$H(2, n = 402) = 4.777; p = 0.092 - ni$

Note. In brackets: the number of degrees of freedom; n – sample size. Outside brackets: Kruskal-Wallis H test value; then $p =$ or $p < \dots$ (asymptotic significance level of the test for a two-tailed critical region); ni – statistically insignificant Kruskal-Wallis H test result. Frequencies of attitudes towards stereotypes in the following categories: disagreeing with the statement, undecided, and agreeing with the statement, and mean ranks

(M.R.) of alcohol consumption.

Notation: *I) disagree with the statement* ($n = 273$, mean rank: 190.47)³, means: the difference in alcohol consumption levels between category 1 and category 3 is statistically significant; notation: *I) disagree with the statement* ($n = 248$, mean rank: 176.98)^{2 and 3}, means: the difference in alcohol consumption levels between category 1 and categories 2 and 3 is statistically significant.

According to the analysis, respondents' attitudes towards the statements: "Alcohol in beer is less harmful than that in vodka" and "if someone does not need to drink every day..." are not related to the level of alcohol consumption. It can therefore be assumed that these stereotypes do not have any functional significance for alcohol consumption or for protection against the threat of addiction or the label of alcoholism.

Four of the five statements belonging to the first dimension are characterised by the highest levels of alcohol consumption among those who accept stereotypes. However, only in the case of the statement "only weak people become addicted" is the difference between those who are undecided and those who agree statistically insignificant, *i.e.*, they are similar in terms of consumption levels. On the other hand, they remain fundamentally different from those who do not accept this stereotype, who drink significantly less. The situation is different when it comes to the significance of differences in alcohol consumption depending on the attitude towards the statements "educated people..." and "sometimes drinking alcohol helps in difficult life situations." In the case of both statements, the differences between those who disagree and those who are undecided are statistically insignificant, *i.e.*, those belonging to both categories consume significantly less than those who accept these stereotypes. An advanced analysis revealed significant correlations between the level of education and the level of consumption among people who agree with the statement concerning educated people – $H(2, n = 86) = 21.229$; $p < 0.001$, basic education and vocational training ($n = 15$, average rank – 23.5), secondary education ($n = 28$, average rank – 37.18), and higher education ($n = 43$, average rank – 54.59)^{1,2}. However, there was no correlation between education and consumption levels among undecided individuals – $H(2, n = 44) = 0.129$; $p = 0.938 - ni$, and disagreeing individuals – $H(2, n = 272) = 4.471$; $p = 0.107 - ni$. It can therefore be concluded that this is a stereotype typical of people with higher education. Using it to justify the need to drink alcohol is, in this category of education, fully logical. On the other hand, the statement "sometimes drinking alcohol helps..." expresses a stereotype that is so specific that, while it is one of the three most commonly accepted (20.2%), it has no statistical correlation with any of the socio-demographic variables, *i.e.*, one in five people—regardless of gender, age, education, and place of residence—who agree with it drink significantly more than everyone else. One

might be tempted to conclude that this is a stereotype whose presence in the interactive space is one of the most functionally justifiable reasons for drinking.

In the case of the statement about having a “strong head,” the differences in consumption between all categories of the ratio are statistically significant. This means that all those who respond to this stereotype differ significantly in terms of consumption, with those who agree with the statement drinking the most and those who disagree drinking the least.

To conclude, it can be assumed that the stereotypes of the dimension of meanings and definitional frameworks, with one exception, exhibit statistical regularities that allow concluding that they fulfil the analysed function of justifying alcohol consumption.

Two of the four statements belonging to the second dimension are characterised by the highest levels of alcohol consumption among those who accept them. In the case of the statement concerning driving a car, the most alcohol is consumed by those who are undecided, which does not differ significantly from those who agree, but at the same time differs significantly from those who disagree. This is a stereotype which, like the statement about pregnant women, is characterised by the greatest disproportion between non-acceptance and the other categories of attitudes towards them. They can be classified as borderline stereotypes, *i.e.*, those with the highest labelling potential. Downplaying small amounts of alcohol in situations covered by these stereotypes is characterised by such low levels of support that they can only be used in interactive spaces in exceptional cases.

Particularly noteworthy is the statement: “If someone drinks heavily only on weekends and drinks small amounts of alcohol on other days of the week, that person is not at risk of addiction.” The differences between those who disagree and those who are undecided are statistically insignificant, which means that people in both categories consume significantly less alcohol than those who agree with this statement. It is worth noting that the average level of alcohol consumption on a single occasion among those who disagree was 32.07 ml, among those who are undecided, 46.2 ml, and among those who agree, 113 ml. Such a significant disparity in consumption between those who agree with the statement and the others allows us to conclude that, as in the case of the statement that “sometimes drinking alcohol helps in difficult life situations,” its presence in the interactive space is one of the most functionally justifiable reasons for drinking. This fact highlights the possibility of justifying a specific culture of weekend drinking.

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