Friday, 3 March 2017 | MYT 6:12 AM

Smarter teens are more likely to drink alcohol than smoke?

BY AGENCY

A study, published in the [*BMJ*](http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/7/2), has found that the smartest teenagers are less likely to smoke than their less gifted classmates, but are more likely to drink alcohol and use cannabis, with these patterns persisting into adulthood.

As they enter their teens, the brightest students are less likely to smoke cigarettes but more likely to drink alcohol and use cannabis than less academically clever kids, reveals a British study of 6,000 children, whose behaviour was tracked from age 11 to 19 years-old.

Participants’ levels of academic intelligence were evaluated using national test scores for English, Maths and Science, taken at age 11. The children’s consumption of cigarettes, alcohol and cannabis were monitored through questionnaires. Alcohol use was also quantified by the number of times participants had got drunk, with more than 52 times a year considered hazardous behaviour.

The smartest pupils aged 13 to 17 were more likely to say they used cannabis. However, those with average academic abilities were 25% more likely to use cannabis occasionally and 53% more likely to use it persistently than those who were not as academically proficient.

Between the ages of 18 and 20, the cleverest kids were more than twice as likely to drink alcohol regularly and persistently than those with lower academic abilities. Comparing the teens with average ability to those with lower ability followed a similar, though less pronounced pattern. However, high-level academic achievement was linked to a lower risk of hazardous drinking (to the point of drunkenness).

As for cannabis use, the brightest pupils were 50% more likely partake occasionally and nearly twice as likely to use the substance persistently than less academically gifted pupils.

The researchers also found that these patterns persisted into adulthood.

The link between academic prowess and alcohol use could, in part, be explained by a greater inclination to try new experiences and a family background where alcohol might be easier to get hold of, for example. – AFP Relaxnews