Availability and Prevalence of Alcohol Drinking Among Adults in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the availability and prevalence of alcoholic drinks and heavy drinking in the city of Yenagoa. A total of 181 respondents were interviewed in ten outdoor drinking joints. The cross tabulation statistical tools was utilized using frequencies and tables. The objective was to find out why many people drink heavily, categories of people involved, the type of drinks most abused, the socio-economic and health implications on heavy drinkers. The study found out that prevalence of heavy drinking results from availability, lack of restrictions, indiscipline by drinkers, amongst others. Heavy drinking was most common at outdoor drinking joints such as car wash/hangouts, recreational centres, and clubs. The study recommended the restriction of alcohol production, licensing requirements for liquor dealers' outlets and mounting intensive campaigns against heavy drinking.

Keywords. Alcohol consumption in Yenagoa

Introduction

Alcohol consumption is a universal phenomenon as alcoholic drinks are taken all over the world, and it is known to be the most widely abused psychoactive substance though some countries try to control usage on religious and medical grounds (Ajayi, Owolabi & Olajire, 2019). Nigeria is no exception. In Nigeria alcohol usage is very high particularly among the South-South region which is believe to lead in consumption and being the region with almost no restrictions on sale and consumption while the North-West region is believed to have the most restraint on alcoholic sale and consumption arising from the practice of Muslim Sharia law (Adebowale, 2019).

Alcohol usage is believed to account for about 370 million deaths per hour worldwide, with the younger age groups being the greatest victims (Ajayi, Owolabi & Olajire, 2019). This risk factor notwithstanding, more persons are daily getting involved in alcoholic drinks manufacture, sale and consumption. The UNODC's 2017 study of drug use and prevalence in Nigeria noted that drug use was highest from the ages of 15-64 which is estimated at 13.3million. (UNODC, 2018). It noted further that compared with the 2016 world prevalence rate of 5.6 percent, the drug consumption rate among the adult population in Nigeria was high. The same was true for psychoactive substances.

Alcohol consumption has severe implications on Nigeria's development as resources that would have been directed at development projects are wasted on alcohol. The Federal Office of Statistics

in Nigeria indicated that in 2017 alone, North East region even with the ban on alcohol consumption spent as much as N2.6 billion to assuage or discourage alcohol consumption, while the region spent a hopping N44 billion on alcohol consumption. The South West region expended 37 billion, while North Central region spent N30 billion, and the North-East lavished N19.6 billion of taxpayers' money on alcohol alone. The South-South region with hardly any restrictions on manufacture, sale and consumption of alcohol spent as much as N74.4 billion on alcoholic products. The South-East and South-South regions appear to host most of the breweries as Port Harcourt, Aba, Onitsha and Benin City are famous for drinks production (Ajayi et al, 2017).

Studies have shown that there is relationship between alcohol consumption and prevalence of high rate of health challenges amongst the populace (GBD, 2016; Ajayi, Owolabi & Olajire, 2019). The IARC (International Agency for Research in Cancer) noted that one out of every ten cancer cases in Nigeria and 4.7 percent of Nigeria's cancer cases in 2017 are related to alcohol use (Adebowale, 2019). WHO estimated that in 2014 alone Nigeria consumed an average of 23.1 litres of pure alcohol, while 50.1g of pure alcohol is consumed daily by drinkers aged 15 years and above (Adebowale, 2019). The foregoing is indicative of the prevalence of alcohol drinking behaviour among the Nigerian populace and its attendant health, economic and social implications.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Alcohol consumption is trending in Nigeria with social, economic and health implications on the nation. Alcohol consumption has the potential of exposing all organ systems at risk, and has the consequence of lowering the immune system (GBD, 2016; WHO, 2019). It is blamed for many cases of mental illness and diseases as well as fetal loss or disorder for pregnant women (Olashore, Ogunwobi, Totego & Oponda, 2018).

Scholars identified several implications of alcohol consumption and advanced reasons why its use is prevalent in society today and that social and environmental factors pushing people to continue drinking. So far no known literature exists on the social and economic implications of alcohol misuse in the city of Yenagoa with particular reference to availability, usage and prevalence. This study takes as its point of departure, finding out the reasons for a heavy drinking culture among adults in Yenagoa, people who indulge in it, arenas where people commonly drink heavy, and types of alcohol drinks commonly consumed, as well as the socioeconomic implications of drinking on families and society

1.3 Objectives

Our principal objective is to unveil the factors responsible for heavy alcohol drinking among adult residents in Yenagoa and arenas for such behavior. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out why many people drink uncontrollably in the city of Yenagoa.
2. To identify the categories of people that are often heavily drunk.
3. To identify the arenas where heavy drinking persists
4. To determine the types of alcoholic drinks heavily consumed
5. To unveil the socio-economic effects of alcohol consumption on drinkers' families
6. To find out measures that can be taken to reduce alcohol consumption in Yenagoa.

1.4. Research Questions

The following research questions have been adopted to direct the study.

1. What factors leads people to drink heavily?
2. Which category of people often drink heavily?
3. Which arenas that people often consume alcoholic drinks heavily?
4. Which types and brands of alcohol are most consumed in Yenagoa?
5. What are the socio-economic and health effects of alcohol drinking on the family?
6. What measures can be taken to reduce alcohol consumption?

Literature Review

Alcohol consumption is also associated with more 60 disease conditions and injuries, including non-communicable diseases (GBD, 2016). Harmful alcohol use could result in mental and behavioural disorders (WHO, 2019). The Global Burden of Disease Study (2016) reported that alcohol use was not only the seventh leading risk factor for disability and premature mortality but also the highest risk-attributable disease burden among 15-64 years old (GBD, 2016).

Although the developed economies are known to present highest rate of harmful alcohol use, many Third World countries, particularly Sub-Saharan African countries are increasingly partaking in the unhealthy lifestyle (Ferreira-Borges, 2017; WHO, 2014). This may be because alcohol forms part of many social gatherings in Africa, and it is central to many cultural activities (WHO, 2014; Obikezie & Obi, 2013; Gureje, et al, 2007). Production and sale of alcohol remain good business in much of Africa as the state rakes in revenues from its production, and good fortunes for dealers as such very little attention is paid to its control and possible side effects (Ferreira-Borges, 2017). The situation is further hampered by ease of access to alcohol, large of population drinkers, increase in unlicensed sales outlets, and seeming lack of control policies on alcohol advertisements (WHO, 2014; Dumbili, 2013; Lasebikan & Ola, 2016).

Scholars attributed the absence of a workable policy and control of alcohol use in Nigeria as a result of the influence of alcohol manufacturers, importation, smuggling and advertisement as the underlying factors for availability and prevalence of a high alcohol consumption rate (Dumbili, 2013; Dumbili & Williams, 2016).

In a study by Lasebikan et al (2018) on the prevalence of alcohol consumption and alcohol use disorders among outdoor drinkers in public open places in Nigeria shows an increasing alcohol availability from internal manufacture, importation, sale and consumption across all age groups. Alcohol consumption is a subculture. It forms a major part of social activities and gatherings in Nigeria, with drinkers hardly drink alone as it is believed that drinking is better enjoyed with others. Culture also encourage drinkers to provide for others, with many now shifting from indoor to outdoor space drinking. Motor parks, road sides, hangouts, which are hardly licensed are well patronized. To attract drinkers, vendors often provide big televisions sets for drinkers to watch soccer, movies as well as live musical performance by musicians and comedians.
The steady growth of these out-door drinking spots indicates that regulation is low, and that alcohol use is embedded in Nigerian subcultures. This explains the large alcohol consumption among the Yorubas of the South-West (Lasebikan & Ola, 2006), the Igbo of the South-East, and the Ijaw and the Ibibio of the South-South (Brisibe, Ordinioha & Dienye. 2012). Heavy drinking is harmful to the body, to society and injurious to family life.

Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is an influential and powerful sociological perspective based on its value in society with the principal pioneers as George Hebert Mead (1863-1933), H. Cooley (1864-1929), and W.I. Thomas (1863-1947) (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2001). The main tenets of this sociological perspective is that social action is symbolic in nature and should be regarded as a symbolic behaviour. Social interaction is a shared behaviour which has symbolic meanings which are learned and shared behaviours that are transferable. Drinking is behaviour that is learned and transferable, which people ascribe consciously or unconsciously with certain feelings, such as being happy, satisfied, enjoyment, and feeling great.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey of ten drinking parlours/hangouts famous in selling all types of alcoholic drinks to assess alcohol availability and use by adults in the city of Yenagoa. Anaekwe and Udegbe (2007) describes this design as one which permits the description of conditions as they exist in their natural settings and explains the relationships among variables. This method enabled us to find out relationship between variable ranging from availability, use, arenas, socio-economic and health implications and measures of regulation.

The research was carried out in Yenagoa, the capital city of Bayelsa State. The city shares borders with Mbiama and Okarki in Rivers State. The capital city of Yenagoa is comprised by several hitherto rural communities, which have merged together resulting from urbanization and development. Thus, Yenagoa commences from Igbogene to Famgbe communities. The major occupations include fishing, farming, weaving, and carving, lumbering and trading. However, civil service work, small scale trading and SMEs seem to dominate now. The culture of the people can be described as permissive as almost all are allowed to drink alcohol during ceremonies such as marriages, birthdays, funerals, festivals. On such occasions there are usually large number of retailers who freely display all sorts of alcoholic drinks for sale. People do not just drink alone, they also buy for the friends, visitors and others, if all that is provided by the organizers are not enough or among the brands they desire.

Bayelsa is endowed with wild raffia palm trees which produces palm wine used for the brewing of the local gin (called ogogoro or kaikai). Ogogoro is brewed in commercial quantity and distributed within and outside the state. Customarily, ogogoro is a prerequisite for all ceremonies and people would frown at if it is not provided. It is comparatively cheap and accessible to all.

The data for the study was sourced mainly through participant observation and interview schedules at famous drinking parlours/hangouts and car wash joints in Yenagoa. The simple random sampling and accidental methods were employed. The population of study involves all adult drinkers as well as operators of drinking palours/joints in Yenagoa. The sample size was limited to 181 respondents in ten drinking joints in Yenagoa.

Data Analysis

A total of 181 correctly completed questionnaires were retrieved from the fieldwork and this formed the nucleus of our analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

S/N	Variables	Freq.	%
1.	Sex		
	Male	126	69.61
	Female	55	30.39
2.	Age		
	18-25 years	32	17.68
	26-35 years	52	28.73
	36-45 years	63	34.81
	46 years +	32	17.68
3.	Education		
	No formal education	26	14.36
	Primary level education	44	24.31
	Secondary level education	69	38.12
	Tertiary level education	42	23.21
4.	Occupation		
	Unemployed	39	21.55
	Self-employed	47	25.97
	Civil/Public service	28	15.47
	Private sector workers	44	24.31
	Political class	23	12.71
5.	Years of drinking		
	1-5 years	38	20.99
	6-10 years	97	53.59
	11 years +	46	25.42

Table 1 shows that majority of our respondents were men (126 or 69.61%), while females were 55 (or 30.39%). Also, the ages of the respondents were in the following brackets: 18-25 years (32 or 17.68%), 26-35 years (52 or 28.73%), 36-45 years (63 or 34.81%) and 46 years and beyond were 32 (17.685).

On the educational attainment of respondents, 26 (14.36%) had no formal education, 44 (24.31%) had primary school education, a majority of 69 (38.12%) attained secondary level education, while 42 (23.21%) attended tertiary institutions. Similarly, 39 respondents (21.55%) claim to be unemployed, 47 (25.97%) are self-employed, 28 (15.47%) are civil or public servants, while 44 (24.31%) are business men and women. Only 23 (12.71%) claim to be politicians.

The table also indicated respondents' years of drinking alcohol. A total of 38 (20.99%) have been drinking between 1-5 years, 97 (53.59%) have been taking alcoholic drinks for 6-10 years, while 46 (25.42%) have been engaged in alcohol consumption from 11 years and beyond.

Table 2 Factors that make people to drink heavily

S/N	Variables	Freq.	%
1.	Availability of alcoholic drinks	87	48.07
2.	Absence of restrictions	65	39.91
3.	Willingness of others to provide drinks	23	12.71
4.	Status symbol	06	3.31

Table 2 sought to know the factors that make people to drinking heavily. At a glance, it is clear that majority of respondents (87 or 48.07%) indicted availability of alcoholic drinks, while a total 65 respondents (39.91%) said absence of restrictions on sale and consumption of alcoholic drinks was one of the major factors for heavy drinking amongst citizens. This was followed by 23 respondents (12.71%) which shows that many drink drunk, particularly those who cannot afford much for drinking, but since others, particularly the elite and friends who meet them at the bar are often willing to provide drinks for them they drink to stupor without control, while 6 respondents (3.31%) indicated that people drink heavily as a status symbol that they can drink a lot. This finding is in line with Adebowale (2019) findings that South-South region remain the largest consumers of alcoholic drinks due largely to lack of restrictions on sale and consumption as well as availability of assorted drinks in the area.

Table 3 Category of persons who often indulge in heavy drinking

S/N	Variables	Freq.	%
1.	Unemployed	30	16.57
2.	Self-employed	41	22.65
3.	Company workers	39	21.55
4.	Public/Civil servants	23	12.71
5.	Students	10	5.53
		38	20.99

Table 3 directed our attention to categories of people who often indulge in heaving drinking. Students at both tertiary and secondary school level are often the most heavily drunk. The table also shows the self-employed and company workers who seem to have the wherewithal to buy as much as they wish most of the times as the largest category of people who indulge in drinking to stupor, followed by the unemployed. The political class are the least drunks. This finding is in agreement with Ajayi, Owolabi and Olajire (2019) that students in tertiary schools are found to be largely involved in drinking.

Table 4 Arenas where people often drink heavy

S/N	Variables	Freq.	%
1.	Hotels/Restaurants	25	13.81
2.	Car Wash/Hangouts	59	32.60
3.	Roadside drinking joints	53	29.28
4.	Clubs/Recreational Facilities	29	16.02
5.	Personal homes	15	8.29

Table 4 try to unearth the arenas where people often indulge in heavy drinking. Alcoholic drinks are sold almost unrestrictedly in hotels, clubs hangouts and other open places. Table 4 shows that large number of people who drink to stupor often do so in car wash/hangouts. The next most patronized outlets are roadside drinking joints, where owners provide tables and chairs, and then provide television sets for entertainment as well as live musical band display for drinkers who drink while watching football or live performance. These were closely followed by clubs and other recreational facilities. Hotels and restaurants and personal homes had the least. This study is in line with Ajayi, Owolabi and Olajire (2019), noted the emergence of open space drinking joints with entertainment facilities, many drinkers seem to choose these over hotels.

Table 5 Types of alcoholic drinks often consumed heavily

S/N	Variables	Freq.	%
1.	Dry gin	33	18.23
2.	Beer	97	53.59
3.	Wine	29	16.02
4.	Ogogoro	22	12.15

Table 5 examines the type of alcoholic drinks most often heavily consumed. Here, the study try to look at the category of drinks that are available and consumed. A total of 97 respondents (53.59%) indicated that they consumed beer more than other drinks. This was followed by dry gin (33 or 18.23%), and wine (29 or 16.02%). Ogogoro was rarely sold at such outdoor joints. Further enquiries revealed that beer is the cheapest alcoholic drink as a bottle could be procured with as low as N200. On the other hand, many would not consume ogororo (locally brewed from raffia) because of the prestige factor that they are consuming foreign drinks (dry gin) even though many dry gin products has ogogoro content. Ogogoro seems to be associated with the lower class and in traditional ceremonies and/or used with herbs at home.

Table 6: Socio-economics and health implications of heavy drinking

S/N	Variables	Freq.	%
1.	Early deaths	18	9.94
2.	Mental/Psychological imbalance	33	12.23
3.	Road/Domestic accidents	34	18.78
4.	Unemployment	23	12.71
5.	Domestic Violence	34	18.78
6.	Robbery/Violent Crimes	19	10.50

7.	Others	20	11.05

Our Table 6 looks at the socio-economic and health implications of heavy drinking. A total of 18 respondents (9.94%) are of the view that alcohol consumption has relationship with early deaths due to damage to body organs and other alcohol induced ailments. Some 33 respondents (12.23%) believe that heavy drinking could lead to mental or psychological imbalances. While 34 respondents (18.78%) said heavy drinking was associated with road and domestic accidents which could lead to impairment or death. Meanwhile, 23 respondents (12.71%) said employers cannot knowingly employ drunkards, as such it is associated with unemployment. Self-employed who fail to provide services due to alcoholism may have their contracts cancelled. Another 34 respondents (18.78%) said heavy drinking is associated with domestic violence and unhappy families, 19 respondents (10.50%) sees heavy drinking could push people to commit violent crimes such as suicide, robbery, arson, etc. Finally, 20 respondents (11.05%) believe that heaving drinking could be associated with several other diseases and disabilities.

Table 7: Measure to reduce heavy alcohol drinking

S/N	Variables	Freq.	%
1.	Ban/Restriction of alcoholic drinks	29	16.02
2.	Impose heavy taxation on alcoholic drinks	36	19.89
3.	Reduction of alcoholic content in drinks	54	29.83
4.	Implement License requirement	23	12.71
5.	Aggressive campaign against alcohol drinking	39	21.55

Table 7 suggests various measures that can be taken to reduce alcoholic consumption. While 29 respondents (16.02%) suggest outright ban or restriction of alcoholic drinks sales and consumption, 36 respondents (19.89%) favour imposition of heavy taxation on alcoholic drinks production and importation, so as to reduce purchase and hence consumption. Majority of persons doubted the effectiveness of ban and restriction as well as heavy taxation as measure to control alcohol usage. They prescribe a reduction in the alcoholic content in drinks. In the 1980s it was unthinkable for anyone to sell alcohol without license, and this had the effect of reduced alcohol availability and hence consumption. Therefore, 23 respondents (12.71%) suggest the implementation of the license requirements for sale of liquor. Yet, 39 respondents (21.55%) advanced the idea that there was the need for aggressive campaign against alcohol usage in the country.

Discussion of Findings

As indicated in table 2, the absence of restrictions on production, sale and consumption of alcohol and the willingness of drinkers to buy for others while at outdoor drinking joints were some reasons responsible for the rise in alcohol consumption in Yenagoa. The unemployed, self-employed and private sector workers are largely among those who drink heavy. Also, car wash joints and hangouts and roadside or open drinking parlours are arenas where people largely drink drunk uncontrollably. This position reflects Lasebikan's (2018) findings. Beer is much more consumed than other alcoholic drinks, while early death due to damage to body system as well as reduced

immune system, mental or psychological imbalances, road or domestic accidents, domestic violence and other violent crimes are largely associated factors with heavy drinking.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Availability of alcohol drinks, willingness of drinkers to provide drinks freely for others and the absence of restrictions on production, sale and consumption are some of the reasons for the high rate of heavy drinking in Yenagoa. The unemployed, self-employed, private sector workers largely drink heavy. Beer is highly consumed and outdoor drinking joints are where many over drink. Alcoholic intake has several psychological, social and health implications on consumers. Heavy drinking results from lack of restrictions on the part of government, and lack of self-control/discipline on the part of individuals. People heavily drink because these drinks are available and can be procured at little or no cost. The study recommend aggressive campaigns against heavy drinking, reduction in alcohol content in drinks, imposition of heavy taxes, and minimizing and checking alcohol production, sale and consumption could reduce the menace of drunkenness in society.

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