

SELF-ESTEEM AND SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS AS CORRELATES OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES

Ekeke Macdonald Ibubeleye¹, Orluwene Goodness W.², Isukwem Gideon Chidozie³

Department of Educational Psychology, University of Port Harcourt Rivers State,
NIGERIA.

¹ib4will@yahoo.com, ²davegide94@gmail.com, ³orluwene@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of self-esteem and sociological factors as correlates of alcohol consumption among university undergraduates. The study employed Ex-post-facto research design. Four hypotheses were formulated and tested, using a sample of 422 students of the Faculty of Education University of Port Harcourt, with a total of 202 male students and 220 female students. Three instruments (Adolescent Alcohol Involvement Scale (AAIS), Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale (RSES), and Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) were used to collect data for the study. Hypotheses one was tested using multiple regression analysis, while hypotheses two to four were tested with t-test statistics. Findings revealed that, self-esteem and peer pressure influenced alcohol consumption among university undergraduates while, gender did not. Based on the findings; the researcher recommended that students should be sensitized against the dangers of alcohol consumption and the factors that could predispose them to it.

Keywords; Self-Esteem, Sociological factors (gender, and peer pressure)
Alcohol consumption

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol is the most widely used and abused drug in the world today mostly, among undergraduates (Folawiyo, 2000). Many people do not regard it as a drug, which it actually is because, it creates vastly more social, economic and moral problems than several illegal drugs combined, (Folawiyo, 2000). Alcohol otherwise known as ethanol is a beverage obtained through the process of fermentation and distillation of fruits, like grapes, grains, corn, barley and it could also be obtained from milk, honey and molasses (Alan, 2005). The active ingredient in alcohol is ethanol; larger beer contains 4.5% alcohol, wine about 7- 15% per liter volume while, whiskey vodka gin and local gin contains 40 – 50% ethanol (Oakley 2002).

Alcohol can be obtained as beverage through the process of fermentation (Oakley 2002). Alcohol can be regarded as a drug, as against some other people's view, looking at the definitions of drug and functions of alcohol. According to Louise (2002), drugs are chemicals, which have effects on an organism mentally and physically. Charles (2003) stated that, drugs have the potential to alter mood, perception and consciousness, while Donald (2011), defined it as various chemical substances, which alter one's experience in one way or the other. Such drugs are called psychoactive drugs that is, they have the ability to influence both cognitive and affective abilities of individuals. A drug is a substance that, when taken into the body of living organisms, may modify one or more of its functions (World Health Organization, 2004). In addition, alcohol has some appealing effects that tend to make it popular (Winger, Woods, & Hofman, 2004). It should be recalled that, alcohol has many negative effects, for instance, the acute health effects of high levels of alcohol use is

responsible for nausea, insomnia, hangovers, and accidental injuries (Maistro, Galizio, & Connors, 2004). Heavy alcohol use, even on a single occasion, can result to harm for another individual other than the individual consuming it, for example, through foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) a mother can harm the unborn child by just a single occasion of alcohol use (Autti-Rämö, 2000) and in the case of violent or abusive behaviour an intoxicated individual, can harm another person through acts like rape, fight, armed robbery, to mention a few (Maistro, Galizio, & Connors, 2004). The effects of chronic high use of alcohol includes damage to the mouth, esophagus, digestive organs, liver, pancreas, heart, kidney, and brain (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2001), as well as sexual dysfunction, depression (Doweiko, 2006), and inability to work (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2001). Alcohol related problems are common, especially in adults (Fleming, Mihic, & Harris, 2001). An estimated 10% of adults who drink have serious alcohol related problems (Gold & Miller, 1997).

For many students, going away to the university is the point in life when they begin the experience of making their own decisions about their life on a day-to-day basis. There are fewer constraints on choices and without parents nearby to enforce rules on some behaviour and actions. It is not surprising that the university becomes a place of personal experimentation in many areas of behaviour. Students drink to socialize, celebrate and relax. Virtually all university students experience the effects of alcohol use on campus – whether they drink or not. The problem with undergraduate alcohol use is not necessarily the consumption itself, but the negative consequences that result from alcohol consumption. About four out of five university students drink alcohol, and about half of the undergraduates who consume alcohol do so through binge drinking (heavy drinking). Each year, alcohol affects students as well as communities, families and the schools. The consequences of drinking include; assault, sexual abuse, suicide attempts, death, academic and health problems.

Self-esteem is conceptualized as a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs (for example, "I am competent," "I am worthy") and emotions such as triumph, despair, pride and shame (Hewitt, 2009). Branden (1969) defined self-esteem as "the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness. He further opined that self-esteem is the sum of self-confidence (a feeling of personal capacity) and self-respect (a feeling of personal worth) (Branden 1987).

Self-esteem has long been believed to play an important role in the use of alcohol. Some researchers have argued that low self-esteem poses high risk for alcohol consumption in some populations, including university students. A number of studies have indicated that those who refrain from drinking alcohol have higher self-esteem than those who drink (Butler, 1983). Low self-esteem, high anxiety, depression, lack of assertiveness and success in the attainment of life goals have been positively correlated with alcohol consumption (Huber, 1985; Kaplan, 1979). One possible explanation for the association between alcohol consumption and low self-esteem is the correlation between depression and low self-esteem (DeSimone & Murray, 1994) and between depression and alcohol involvement. Depression prone individuals can descend into patterns of thinking and behaviour that are repetitive, ruminative, and self-perpetuating. If negative moods get established, then old patterns of automatic thoughts and behaviour will run along well-worn ruts leading to the perpetuation of negativity and distress, which increases the probability of alcohol consumption. Baumeister (1997) explored variables related to the explanation of alcohol consumption and noted "threatened egotism has been shown to be one clear cause of alcohol consumption.

It has been observed that peers are consistently associated with alcohol consumption, and it often occurs during undergraduate life and adolescence years (Lo & Globetti, 1993). Peers often influence the decisions, attitudes and behaviours of others in several ways. Peer pressure is commonly associated with episodes of adolescent risk taking such as delinquency, drug abuse, sexual behaviours, reckless driving and alcohol consumption (Laurence, 2007). Affiliation with friends who engage in risk behaviours has been shown to be a strong predictor of an individual's own behaviour (Spear & Kulbok, 2001). Research have shown that nondrinking students at parties are repeatedly offered drinks and often exposed to teasing from friends as such they experience feelings of inferiority and eventually give in to the pressure of taking alcohol whereas, students that are more socially secure can resist overt peer offerings of alcohol by peers (Shore, Rivers, & Berman, 1983),

Studies have also reported a higher percentage of alcohol consumption among males than among female undergraduates. A study at a Michigan university by Rapaport (1984) revealed that more males reported damaging property, preparing less for exams, attending class less frequently, and experiencing black-outs due to alcohol. The study also revealed that more males engage in alcohol consumption with the specific intent of becoming drunk, drinking while driving, driving while drunk, drinking before class, and drinking alone. Compared with males studies indicated that women generally consume less alcohol, engage in high-risk/heavy episodic drinking episodes less frequently and experience fewer negative consequences than men in institutions of higher education (Engs and Hanson, 1985; Presley, 1993, 1995, 1996; Wechsler, 1994),

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to find out the influence of self-esteem and sociological factors as correlates of alcohol consumption among university undergraduates. In specific terms, the study intends to find out;

1. The extent to which self-esteem and sociological factors (gender and peer pressure) jointly and independently influence alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.
2. The extent to which low/high self-esteem influence alcohol consumption among university undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt?
3. The extent to which peer pressure (low/high) influence alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.
4. The extent to which gender (male/female) influence alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were postulated to guide this study. The tenability of the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 Alpha level of significance

1. Self-Esteem and sociological factors (Peer Pressure and Gender) do not jointly and independently influence Alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt
2. There is no significant difference between the influence of low self-esteem and high self-esteem on alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

3. There is no significant difference between the influence of low and high peer pressure on alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.
4. There is no significant difference between male and female gender on alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This is a study of 422 students of the Faculty of Education University of Port Harcourt, with a total of 202 male students and 220 female students. The study used the purposive sampling technique, this means that the sample was drawn from the number of students consuming alcohol. Three instruments were used to collect data for the student. They include; Adolescent Alcohol Involvement Scale (AAIS), Rosenberg’s Self Esteem Scale (RSES), and Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI). The researcher administered the questionnaire personally and retrieved them on completion.

Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using multi-regression and t-test statistics.

Hypothesis1: Self-Esteem and sociological factors (Peer Pressure and Gender) do not jointly and independently influence Alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

Table 1. Beta and t-values showing the relative contribution of Self-Esteem, Peer Pressure, and Gender on Alcohol Consumption among Undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficient | | Stand. Coefficient | T | Sig. |
|---------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------------|--------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta Contribution | | |
| (Constant) | 55.683 | 5.678 | | 9.807 | .000 |
| Self-esteem | -.353 | .104 | -.160 | -3.40 | .001 |
| Peer Pressure | -.111 | .026 | -.200 | -4.328 | .000 |
| Gender | .702 | .867 | .039 | .810 | .418 |

The table reveals the relative contribution of the three independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights, viz: Self-Esteem ($\beta = -.160$), Peer Pressure ($\beta = -.200$), and Gender ($\beta = -.039$) respectively. The results showed that while Self-Esteem and Peer Pressure significantly contributed to alcohol consumption, and independently predict alcohol consumption, gender did not. A further look at the table, proved that the t-value obtained from the three variables independently are -3.40, -4.328, and .810, and respectively for self-esteem, peer pressure, and gender.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the influence of low self-esteem and high self-esteem on alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

Table 2: Showing significant difference between low self-esteem and high self-esteem as influence of alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

| Alcohol consumption | N | Mean | SD | Crit-t | Cal-t | DF | P |
|---------------------|-----|-------|------|--------|-------|-----|------|
| Low self-esteem | 142 | 30.35 | 9.36 | 1.96 | .071 | 420 | .944 |
| High self-esteem | 280 | 30.28 | 9.00 | | | | |

(P > .05)

The result of the data analyzed showed that, Low Self-esteem had a \bar{X} =30.35, SD=9.36, High Self-esteem \bar{X} =30.28, SD=9.00, with a Critical-t = 1.96, Calculated t = .071, df =420, P >.05 level of significance). Since the calculated t is less than the critical t, it therefore means that the hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted. This means that both respondents with low self-esteem and high self-esteem do not differ in their alcohol consumption.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the influence of low peer pressure and high peer pressure on alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

Table 3: Showing the extent to which low/high peer pressure influence alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

| <i>Alcohol consumption</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Crit-t</i> | <i>Cal-t</i> | <i>DF</i> | <i>P</i> |
|----------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Low peer pressure | 192 | 32.48 | 98.93 | | | | |
| | | | | 1.96 | 4.603 | 420 | .000 |
| High peer pressure | 230 | 28.48 | 8.88 | | | | |

The result of the data analyzed showed that, Low peer pressure had a \bar{X} =32.48, SD=98.93, High peer pressure \bar{X} =28.48, SD=8.88, with a Critical-t = 1.96, Calculated t = 4.603, df =420, P >.05 level of significance). Since the calculated t is higher than the critical t. it means that the hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected. Therefore, there is/exist a significant difference between respondents with low peer pressure and those with high peer pressure. Hence, Peer pressure had influenced alcohol consumption among Undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between male and female influencing alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

Table 4: Showing the extent to which gender influence alcohol consumption among undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt.

| <i>Alcohol consumption</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Crit-t</i> | <i>Cal-t</i> | <i>DF</i> | <i>P</i> |
|----------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Male | 201 | 29.94 | 8.41 | | | | |
| | | | | 1.96 | .786 | 420 | .433 |
| Female | 221 | 30.63 | 972 | | | | |

The data analyzed showed that, Male had a \bar{X} =29.94, SD=8.41, Female \bar{X} =30.63, SD=972, with a Critical-t = 1.96, Calculated t = .786, df =420, P >.05 level of significance). Since the calculated t is less than the critical t. it means that, there is no significant difference in the alcohol consumption of male and female undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt. Hence, gender does not influence alcohol consumption among University of Port Harcourt Undergraduates in the study. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study showed that there was no significant difference in the Alcohol consumption of Students of University of Port Harcourt with low Self-Esteem and those with High Self-Esteem. This means that self-esteem does not necessarily influence alcohol consumption. The result of this study is in agreement with an earlier study by Lapp, (1984) and Luhtanen and Crocker (2005) who are of the view that there is no correlation between

self-esteem and alcohol consumption. However, the findings of this study does not agree with a research carried out by Beckman (1980), Beckman and Bardsley (1981) and Anderson (1981) who found out in their studies on female alcoholics that, low self-esteem influenced alcohol consumption.

The result of this study showed that peer pressure influences alcohol consumption among undergraduates. However, it appears that high Peer Pressure influences alcohol consumption more. This therefore implies that, the more the pressure from peers the likelihood there is to engage in alcohol consumption. The findings of this study is in agreement with an earlier study by Shore, Rivers, & Berman (1983) who are of the view that, nondrinking students at parties are repeatedly offered drinks and often exposed to teasing from friends and report feelings of inferiority. They further said that students that are more socially secure can resist overt peer offerings of alcohol by peers. Conversely, new students attempting to develop friendships with peers and adapt to university life may be more likely to accept offers of alcohol. The findings imply that ability to resist overt offers of alcohol may be, in part, a skills-based behaviour. In another research, findings by Wood, Read, Palfai, & Stevenson, (2001) revealed that, adolescents and young adults are stared on by their peers to start drinking as well as to maintain the habit of consuming alcohol.

The findings of the study further revealed that there is no gender difference in Alcohol consumption of undergraduates of University of Port Harcourt. It therefore means that, male and female participants do not differ in alcohol consumption. Hence, gender is not a determining factor in alcohol consumption. In other words, gender does not predispose or preclude anyone to/from alcohol consumption. This result however, does not agree with the findings of Wechsler (1995) which suggests that, males consume more alcoholic drink than their female peers. In another study by the University of Michigan (2014) and National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2013) the findings reveals that males have a higher percentage of alcohol consumption than female undergraduates.

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