

Research Article

Media Exposure and Community Perception of Alcoholism among Female Adolescents in South-West Nigeria

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How to cite this article:

Edet R, Babajide J. Media Exposure and Community Perception of Alcoholism among Female Adolescents in South-West Nigeria. *J Adv Res Humani Social Sci* 2019; 6(2): 11-18.

Date of Submission: 2019-09-20

Date of Acceptance: 2019-09-27

A B S T R A C T

Purpose - The purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence of alcohol adverts on female adolescents as well as the perception of the community on alcohol consumption among female adolescents. The authors analysed respondents' opinions towards media portrayal of alcoholic beverages.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach - The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey. The methodology based upon semi-structured questionnaire among 500 female adolescents and a qualitative methodology using in-depth interviews with parents and alcoholic beverage sellers.

Findings - The study reveals that television was the major source of information on alcoholic beverages among female adolescents in both rural (36.4%) and urban areas (57.2%), followed by radio which stood at 30% and 16% in both rural and urban areas respectively. The mass media was identified as having a very powerful effect on alcohol consumption among female adolescents through movies they watch and that the community and society is relaxed about alcohol consumption among female adolescents.

Originality/ Value - This paper, thus, contributes to the literature of alcohol abuse among female adolescents by focusing on the effect of alcohol advertisement on a female adolescent decision to drink and the attitude of the community towards alcohol misuse among adolescent females.

Keywords: Alcohol Consumption, Advertisement, Female Adolescents, Out-of-school, Community

Introduction

The influence of alcohol marketing and advertising on the drinking behavior of young people is a public health issue. Today, young people, especially females, are exposed to various alcoholic advertisements through the media. In fact, the emergence of various social media platforms has

even made it easier for alcohol to become easily accessible to young people. (Faulkner *et al.*, 2017; White and Bariola, 2012; Jones and Magee, 2011; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2012).

The depiction of alcoholic beverages in the media has contributed to increased consumption levels among young females over the years. A report by Davoren and

Sinclair (2012) noted the changes in the drinks industry, observing that executives of several companies saw the increasing affluence of women as an opportunity to develop a marketing strategy aimed at attracting more women to spend their disposable income on alcoholic beverages. In a country like Nigeria, for instance, alcoholic drinks like Smiroff Ice is regarded as female drinks due to its lower alcoholic content, that is why there are more females consuming them than males. According to a study by Jones et al. (2010), female celebrities, which many look up to, are often endorsed by alcoholic companies to advertise their products both on mass and social media platforms.

Marketing and promotion of alcoholic beverages has largely been unrestrained in Nigeria. The emergence of democracy and the liberalization program of the government have both attracted a flow of capital into different sectors of the economy, as well as opening the Nigerian market to all types of imported alcoholic beverages. The removal of excise duty in 1998 helped the sector to cut prices, increase turnover and enhance profit. Alcohol brewers have also become more aggressive in their advertising, making use of the radio, television, billboards and print media (Mart, 2011).

The common theme in these advertisements is that drinking is a fun, modern and enlightening activity; it brings friends together; it is for the successful and comes with prestige. Usually the scenes depict young and upwardly mobile men pictured alongside women having fun. The impact of this form of advertisement is seen in the image of drinking as a substitute for other forms of recreation (Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Management Committee, 2014). Adverts have also tried to capture the distinct nature and/or “good quality” of the particular alcoholic beverages (Henriksen et al., 2008; Stoolmiller et al., 2012).

In the recent past, the brewing industry has adopted marketing and promotion strategies that target particular sections of the Nigerian populace. Some of the strategies adopted include sponsoring of essay competitions at all levels, fashion shows, sports events, musical segments, end of year carnivals, radio call-in shows, lottery type free drinks and discounted drinks, in-bar promotion and “fun fare” where alcoholic beverages are offered free. In this way the alcohol industry aims to worm its way into the lives of people in the society (Stoolmiller et al., 2012). Jones and Magee (2011) examined the alcohol related content of youth oriented magazines. Not only were alcohol advertisements focused on youths magazines but the glamorous portrayal of alcohol was presented without editorial comment on the health consequences of excessive drinking. While the alcohol industry claims that alcohol advertising is aimed solely at brand switching and that it is not aimed at promoting additional consumption especially drinking amongst adolescents, evidence suggests that

advertising does indeed increase consumption (Jones et al., 2014). The association of role models used in the adverts such as sports people, celebrities, attractive people, people who enjoy life, people with “superior” taste encourage drinking behavior among young girls because they have the belief that emulating this behavior makes one more like these “models” (Anderson et al., 2009).

Ledden and Vickers (2011) found that accessibility and the lack of barriers to purchasing alcohol was the second most important factor affecting its use within young women. Alcohol could be accessed by the young women through various ways, the most common being through others of an older age purchasing it on their behalf, such as parents, older members of the social group and members of the public that pass by the local off licenses or supermarkets. In many cases the young women were easily able to purchase this alcohol themselves, often using fake identity. They can purchase alcohol from both off licenses and supermarkets however the young women felt that it was more difficult to gain alcohol through supermarkets. Money was not seen as a real barrier to accessing alcohol that arose for the young women; they enable themselves to have enough money to purchase alcohol when it is needed and in many cases would prefer to buy alcohol instead of items such as snack food, clothing, make-up or other items they would normally spend their money on. In three instances parents had left money for the young women on the understanding they would purchase their own meals when out with their friends, yet the young women felt they would rather spend their money on alcohol than eat. This is because alcohol is seen as a necessity for some young females.

Studies suggest that alcohol advertisements make use of techniques which specifically target and appeal to teenage girls. The appeal of alcohol advertising has been revealed through qualitative studies with youth. Research shows that young people find many aspects of alcohol advertising attractive (Hovland, 2015; Campbell, 2013; Ceyland-Isik et al., 2010). Through focus groups with youth (ages 9-15), Gordon (2011) found that alcohol advertising commonly includes components which females find highly appealing including animals, humor, music, innovative technical effects/ aspects and bar/ party settings. Others have found similar characteristics of alcohol advertising (e.g., celebrity endorsements, comedy, animation, popular music, etc.) to appeal to children and adolescents (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). According to Cohen et al. (2011), girls also find depictions of fun, friends and camaraderie attractive and often identify the main message of alcohol commercials to be encouragement to purchase/ drink the product, description of the product’s quality or superiority over its competition and the relationship between the product and sexual attractiveness, social success or popularity. Further,

female adolescents often believe that the advertisements suggest that drinkers will: find love, success, happiness and a sexual partner; become physically active, appear attractive; and lose personal control/ inhibitions. Overall, youth indicate that alcohol commercials imply that attractive young adults drink alcohol to personally rewarding ends.

Alcohol advertising shapes female adolescent's attitudes, perceptions and particularly expectancies around alcohol use in turn influence their decisions to drink (Jeong *et al.*, 2012). As such, females' interactions with alcohol progress from the liking of alcohol advertisements to positive expectations about alcohol by internalizing messages about alcohol to intentions to drink or actual drinking behavior (Jernigan, 2012). Similar trends and findings have been reported elsewhere in that exposure to alcohol during very early adolescence predicts both intention to drink and initiation of consumption (Houben *et al.*, 2012; Ihse *et al.*, 2011; Mart, 2011). Exposure to multiple sources of alcohol advertisement in magazines, in-store beer displays, radio advertisements and promotional merchandise is strongly predictive of intention and onset of drinking one year later (Doyle, 2012; Goodall *et al.*, 2010). There is evidence that even passive advertising has an effect on initiation and consumption. For example, the ownership of or willingness to use an alcohol promotional item such as owning and wearing an alcohol branded t-shirt was associated with an increased likelihood of alcohol initiation (Mart, 2011). Others such as Petit *et al.* (2012) have found a rate of alcohol advertising to be 25 advertisements per square kilometer, representing the single most advertised food beverage product within a 250 meter radius of primary schools in the study.

Advertising of alcoholic beverages influences alcohol consumption and studies reveal that it increases intention to drink among young females (Hovland, 2015; Buijzen *et al.*, 2010; Anderson *et al.*, 2009; Palmieri, 2012; Thomas, 2013). Further studies reveal that alcohol marketing increases consumption patterns (Williams and Ribis, 2012; Smith, 2012; World Health Organization, 2010; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).

It is therefore germane to investigate the influence of the media on alcohol consumption among female adolescents as well as the perception of the community of females' intention to drink.

Materials and Method

The study utilized a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The research used Ibadan Southwestern Nigeria as its study area. Particular research contexts were Ibadan north LGA (urban) and Egbeda LGA (rural). Areas within the local governments were purposively selected because they are occupied by lower and higher economic groups as well semi-literate rural inhabitants. Our data and findings may

thus be particularly more relevant to understanding source of information and community perception of alcoholism among female adolescents in rural and urban areas. Ibadan is the capital of Oyo state and one of the most populous urban centers in Africa. Ibadan is fast modernizing to suit the rate of development in modern times. The study population were mainly female adolescents and alcohol beverage sellers because they are the primary focus of the study. A probabilistic sampling method was used in selecting the study populations. We identified respondents/ interviewees who were relevant to the study.

Quantitative methods, which involved administration of semi-structured questionnaire among adolescent females and qualitative method, which involved conducting in-depth interviews among parents and alcoholic beverage sellers, were used in the study. A total of five hundred respondents (female adolescents) were selected as well as twelve interviewees. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique to select respondents. Research assistants were trained data collection skills, questionnaire contents, role play of the field procedure and pretesting of instrument and procedures in another community different from the study areas.

The involvement of respondents/ interviewees was of their free will. The qualitative data collected were translated into numerical codes for effective analysis using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The qualitative data were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim, analyzed through content analysis and interpreted and presented as ethnographic summaries and narratives. Important attention was paid to ethical issues to ensure objectivity and integrity of the researcher, research participants, the research and the process. The principles of non-maleficence, informed consent, anonymity, right of withdrawal and confidentiality were adhered to. All respondents/ interviewees were sufficiently briefed about the purpose of the study.

Result

This section presents the results of the study. Firstly, descriptive statistics of demographic characteristics of the respondents were presented. Discussions based on the findings of the study were also presented.

Socio-demographic Characteristics

Table 1, indicates that about 23% of the respondents fell between 16-18 years of age, while majority (76.6%) of the respondents were between 19 and 20 years. More than half (54.4%) of the respondents had Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), about 18% had primary education, 15% had Polytechnic education, 4.4% had university education, 2.4% were school dropouts, while 5.2% had Islamic education or vocational studies. It was further reported that a large majority (89.4%) were single while 9% of the

respondents were married. Information on respondents' ethnic affiliation reveals that majority (74.4%) were Yoruba, Igbo accounted for 15%, while very few (1.2%) were Hausa. Concerning respondents' religious affiliation, the study shows that 84.8% were Christians while only 14.4% were Muslims. As for respondents' occupation, 27.8% were into business, 22.2% were apprentices, teachers accounted for 14.6%, while 13% were made up on artisans.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Socio-demographic Characteristics

Variables	Socio-Demographic Data	
	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents' Age (Years)		
16 - 18	117	23.4%
19 – 20	383	76.6%
Educational level		
Primary	91	18.2%
Secondary	272	54.4%
Polytechnic	75	15%
University	22	4.4%
Arabic/ Vocational	26	5.2%
Dropout	12	2.4%
Marital Status		
Single	447	89.4%
Married	45	9%
Cohabiting	8	1.6%
Ethnic group		
Igbo	78	15.6%
Yoruba	372	74.4%
Hausa	6	1.2%
Others (Efik, Tiv and Ishang)	44	8.8%
Religion		
Christianity	424	84.8%
Islam	72	14.4%
Traditional	4	0.8%
Occupation		
Civil servant	37	7.4%
Apprentice	111	22.2%
Artisan	65	13%
Teacher	73	14.6%
Trader/ business	139	27.8%
Private sector	39	7.8%
Unemployed	16	3.2%

Influence of Alcohol Advertisement on Alcohol Consumption

Concerning the sources of information about alcoholic beverages, in the rural area, slightly majority (36.4%) of the respondents reported that they got information about alcoholic beverages through television, 30% got information about alcoholic beverages through radio, about 5% got information about alcohol beverages through billboards and other means like posters respectively while 4.4% indicated that they got information about alcoholic beverages through newspapers, magazines and internet respectively. Meanwhile, in the urban area, slightly above average (57.2%) of the respondents derived information about alcoholic beverages through television, followed by 16% who got theirs through radio, 6.8% got their information about alcoholic beverages through internet, 6% got their information about alcoholic beverages through magazines, 4.8% got their information about alcoholic beverages through billboards, while 2.4% got their sources of information about alcohol through other means.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by Source of Information on Alcoholic Beverages

Source of Information	Rural		Urban	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Television	91	36.4%	143	57.2%
Radio	75	30%	40	16%
Newspaper	11	4.4%	8	3.2%
Magazines	11	4.4%	15	6%
Internet	11	4.4%	17	6.8%
Billboards	13	5.2%	12	4.8%
Others	13	10%	6	2.4%

The findings in Table 3 reveals that in the rural area, majority (54.3%) of the respondents preferred watching alcohol adverts on television, 13.3% preferred radio, 10% preferred magazines, 7.6% preferred billboards, 7.1% preferred other forms of advertising alcohol, 4.8% preferred internet while 2.9% preferred newspapers.

Interviews with parents identified the mass media has having a powerful effect on alcohol consumption among female adolescents which is seen through the movies they watch. During the interview session, a parent in the urban area reported thus:

The films these young girls watch can either influence them for good or for bad. Adolescents, especially the females, easily get carried away by actors and actresses and their lifestyles. In the movies, alcohol is used and when these girls watch their favorite actors or actress they tend to model their lives after them. They watch these actresses drinking alcohol, wearing tight dresses, getting drunk,

going to parties and they want to be like them forgetting that these people do not actually act out what they do in real life situations. Our female children cannot differentiate between what happens in the movies and real life situations. That is why in our home, I make sure I watch a particular movie before allowing my girls to watch and if the movie is suitable for them to watch I caution them about some scenes in the movie which they should not copy because such scenes are not real (IDI/ IBADAN NORTH/ 41yrs/ Female)

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by Preferred Medium of Alcohol Advertisement

Preferred Medium of Alcohol Advert	Rural		Urban	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Television	136	53.4%	142	56.9%
Radio	33	13.3%	13	5.2%
Newspaper	7	2.9%	2	0.9%
Magazines	25	10%	25	10%
Internet	12	4.8%	21	8.2%
Billboards	18	7.2%	31	12.5%
Others	18	7.1%	17	6.9%

(64.4%) did not believe so, 10% believed so while 25.6% were undecided. On drinking because it is not prohibited in their community, 39.6% disagreed with it, 34.4% agreed with it while 26% were undecided. 34.8% opined that their community creates awareness about the dangers of taking alcohol among young girls, a slight majority (39.6%) did not believe so while 25.6% were undecided. 29.6% of the respondents reported that young females who get drunk were made to feel ashamed in their neighborhood, 41.2% disagreed with it while 29.2% were undecided. A little above average (54.4%) of the respondents opined that there were local joints in their community where people gathered to drink alcohol, 21.6% did not believe so while 24% were undecided. Majority (62.4%) of the respondents reported that people usually consumed alcohol in their community during parties, events or celebrations, 16% disagreed with the statement while 21.6% were undecided as shown in Table 4.

It was further reported that in the urban area, 14.8% opined that they took alcohol because they could get it easily in their community, majority (62%) of the respondents did not believe so while 23.2% were undecided. 8.4% reported that they took alcohol because it is cheap to buy, 68% disagreed with this while 23.6% were undecided. On drinking because it is not prohibited in their neighborhood, 38.8% believed

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by Community Perception of Drinking among Female Adolescents

Variables	Rural			Urban		
	SA/A	U	SD/D	SA/A	U	SD/D
Alcohol is easily accessible	41(16.4%)	68(27.2%)	141(56.4%)	37(14.8%)	58(23.2%)	155(62%)
Alcohol is cheap to buy	25(10%)	64(25.6%)	161(64.4%)	21(8.4%)	59(23.6%)	170(68%)
Drinking is not prohibited	86(34.4%)	65(26%)	99(39.6%)	97(38.8%)	66(26.4%)	87(34.8%)
Awareness is created about drinking problems	87(34.8%)	64(25.6%)	99(39.6%)	96(38.4%)	77(30.8%)	77(30.8%)
Drunk females are disgraced	74(29.6%)	73(29.2%)	103(41.2%)	62(24.8%)	84(33.6%)	104(41.6%)
There are local drinking spots	136(54.4%)	60(24%)	54(21.6%)	159(63.6%)	46(18.4%)	45(18%)
Alcohol is consumed during events	156(62.4%)	54(21.6%)	40(16%)	179(71.6%)	44(17.6%)	27(10.8%)

SA=Strongly Agreed, A=Agreed, U=Undecided, SD=Strongly Disagreed, D=Disagreed

Community Attitudes and Perceptions towards Alcohol Consumption among Female Adolescents

The findings of the study reveal that in the rural area, slightly above average (56.4%) of the respondents reported that they did not drink because they could get it easily in their community, 16.4% stated that it was because they could get it easily in their community while 27.2% were undecided. On drinking because it is cheap, majority

so, 34.8% did not believe so while 26.4% were undecided. 38.8% reported that their community creates awareness about the dangers of taking alcohol, 30.8% did not believe so while 30.8% were undecided. 24.8% opined that young females who got drunk were made to feel ashamed in their neighborhood, 41.6% did not share that opinion while 33.6% were undecided. Majority (63.6%) of the respondents indicated that there were local joints in their

community where people gathered to drink alcohol, 185 did not believe so while 18.4% were undecided. 71.6% of the respondents reported that people usually consume alcohol in their community during parties, events or celebrations, 10.8% disagreed with this while 17.6% were undecided.

It was further revealed in the interview session that the community's perception towards drinking among young ladies had changed.

It is a common thing during parties for young girls to take alcohol. It has become a kind of custom for them to drink. Society used to frown at it but now it appears society is relaxed about it. It is now normal for ladies to take alcoholic drinks like stout and other intoxicating liquor (*IDI/ IBADAN NORTH/ 40yrs/ Male*).

Another respondent in the rural area had a different view about this:

In the village here, drinking among young ladies is something that the community takes very seriously. When a woman is about to get married, both her family and the family of her husband to be will carry out some rituals on her behalf. This involves washing her legs with alcohol which signifies that she must abstain from any form of alcohol consumption and if she disobeys she will not find life easy at all. (*IDI/ EGBEDA/ 61yrs/ Female*).

Discussion

The study examine how media portrayal of alcohol beverages influenced alcohol consumption among female adolescents in Southwest Nigeria. The study revealed that more than half of the respondents were out-of-school adolescents that is they had completed secondary school. The mean age of respondents was 18 years while most of them (89.4%) were single. It was revealed that despite parental control, more of the respondents indulged in delinquent acts, including alcohol misuse. This corroborates Mares et al. (2012) that family disorganization can influence substance abuse situations among adolescents.

The study revealed that television is the medium through which majority of the respondents in both the rural (36.4%) and urban area (57.2%) got information about alcoholic beverages. This is inconsistent with the findings of Cohen et al. (2011) who reported that young females viewed alcohol advertising more on magazines. In this study, very few indicated magazines but preferred television. Also, the study revealed that there is a weak relationship between alcohol advertisement and alcohol consumption among female adolescents. This does not corroborate with studies which suggested that advertising had an effect on intention to drink, actual drinking as well as drinking patterns (Anderson et al., 2009; Ledden & Vickers, 2011). In fact, most of the respondents derived information about alcoholic beverages through their friends and family members. The influence of

friends on alcohol consumption was further revealed when majority of the respondents in both the rural and urban areas reported that it was their friends that usually bought alcoholic beverage for them. This affirms the differential association theory which states that criminal behavior is learned through interactions with other persons in a process of communication (Sutherland 1947). Majority of the respondents in the rural and urban area did not believe alcohol advertisement influenced alcohol consumption among female adolescents.

It was also revealed that majority of the respondents had never been punished for taking alcohol but this was higher in the urban area than the rural area. There is really no relationship between involvement in societal activities and alcohol consumption among female adolescents. The community in which the respondents lived was not strongly concerned about alcohol consumption among female adolescents as majority of the respondents in both rural and urban area opined that there were local joint where people gathered to drink alcohol and that people usually consumed alcohol during parties, events or celebrations. This that shows there were no strict rules on alcohol consumption among female adolescents.

Conclusion

Alcohol consumption among out-of-school female adolescents is a major social problem in Ibadan. This study shows the various means by which female adolescents derive information regarding alcoholic beverages as well as the involvement of the community in the decision to consume alcohol. Thus, in reducing alcohol consumption or alcohol misuse among out-of-school female adolescents, counseling interventions such as self-monitoring, peer pressure management, self-regulation, values clarification and thought stopping could help female adolescents to withstand parental, neighbourhood and peer pressure all of which are implicated in this study as causative factors in female adolescent drinking. The primary focus of intervention has to be the female adolescents because of the dangers they are likely to face due to alcohol misuse, since it might not be possible to extend such intervention to those agents that predispose such adolescents to alcohol drinking. Finally, the community should be fully involved in trying to educate females on the dangers and negative effects of alcohol misuse, thus, community rehabilitation counseling centres would need to be established where they do not exist and further equipped and empowered where they are available.

Acknowledgement

The authors show appreciation to participants in this study for sharing their time to participate in the study from where this manuscript was derived.

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