

Alcohol Addiction among Nigerian Youths: A Pointer to Increased Incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases

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Abstract

Alcohol addiction is on the rise across the globe and youths are not exempted from this life threatening lifestyle. In Nigeria, very little study have been conducted to explore alcohol addiction among youths as a major contributory factor to Non-communicable disease (NCD) Incidences in the country. This study therefore investigates the level of dangerous alcohol consumption among Nigerian youths, whether or not they abuse the substance, the reasons for consuming alcohol and how far addicted to alcohol they have become; in order to proffer possible solutions to curbing the devastating toll it could take on the health and socio-economic status of the country. A standardised questionnaire was distributed to youths aged 15 - 24 years in South West Nigeria and results indicate that 54.4% of respondents are current drinkers. This research revealed that 100% of current drinkers had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days. When asked the reasons for consuming alcohol, 37.3% agreed to being addicted to alcohol While 86.6% of current drinkers got initiated into drinking between age 11 years to 20 years. Results also show that respondents abuse alcohol as 40.6% consume more than 4 bottles daily, 58.9% consumed alcohol before breakfast, 45.5% before lunch and 72.2% before dinner. Conclusively, it was discovered that addiction to alcohol is becoming alarmingly prevalent among Nigerian youths.

Keywords: Disease; Health; Noncommunicable Disease; Alcohol Addiction; Youths

Abbreviations

NCD: Noncommunicable Disease; PRB: Public Reference Bureau; UN: United Nations; WEF: World Economic Forum; WHO: World Health Organization

Introduction

Health dictates the value of any individual's life including the social and economic development of individuals in society. Good health promotes growth in both social and economic aspects [1]. A healthy lifestyle describes a way of life that reduces the risk of being ill or dying early. It is a way of life that helps enjoy more quality health throughout lifetime. Healthy living entails the creation and preservation of health [2,3]. In Africa, about 20% of the overall population are currently youths. Youths are the people who fall between the age range of 15 - 24 years. This age range is often used by the United Nations and others to for statistical purposes although youth, as a concept differs from culture to culture and from society to society [4]. Therefore, all attempts must be made to contribute to the health of youth in a society. Disease on the other hand is a universal phenomenon which affects the internal setting of the body, weakens the body system and disrupts its normal functioning, causing harm to the body [5,6]. Disease presents itself as either communicable or non-communicable. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are diseases that are not transmissible directly or indirectly from one person to the other [7]. These diseases are the leading cause of death globally, killing more people each year than all other causes combined. Although non-communicable

ble diseases and deaths from NCDs may present themselves in adulthood; exposure to risk factors begins in early life. The World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that 41million people die each year from NCDs such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers and diabetes [8]. About 14 million of these deaths occur between the ages of 30 and 70, of which 85% are in developing countries [9]. These deaths are largely preventable if healthy lifestyles can be promoted specifically in the youths. For instance, when positive health behaviours such as healthy eating and regular exercise are established at a young age, they are more likely to be carried through to adulthood. Thus, working with young people to mitigate risks and establish positive health behaviours early in life can foster a healthier adult population, and substantially decrease the burden of NCDs [10]. These risk factors for NCDs include tobacco use, excessive alcohol use, physical inactivity, and unhealthy diet-patterns. These mentioned risks are typically initiated during adolescence or young adulthood and set the stage for unhealthy behaviours and diseases later in life [10]. For the purpose of this study, harmful alcohol consumption is examined.

Alcohol is a psychoactive substance, stimulant and intoxicant with dependence-producing properties [9]. Harmful use of alcohol includes high-level drinking every day, as well as single or repeated occurrences of drinking to intoxication [9]. When alcohol gets into the human system, it becomes transformed into a poisonous chemical known as acetaldehyde which has now been confirmed with evidence to cause cancer by destroying the DNA and preventing the body cells from repairing and replacing the damaged ones [11]. The World Health Organization's report on harmful use of alcohol reveals that it poses major health, social and economic burden on society at large [8]. Today, the exposure of young people to excessive alcohol consumption leads to the development of alcohol related chronic diseases, poor health conditions and increasing mortality [12,13]. Globally, an estimated 16% of drinkers aged 15 years or older get involved in heavy drinking. Young people who start drinking alcohol in their early teen years are more likely to become reliant on alcohol within 10 years than those who begin drinking in their late teen years and early 20s [9,14,15].

The burden of NCDs is on the rise in Nigeria due to various forces of globalization, even though most of its predisposing factors can be curtailed by behavioural modification [16]. Currently, NCDs are said to account for 29% of total annual deaths in Nigeria [8]. Review of literature has shown that the incidence of NCD in adolescence and young adulthood represent a period of experimentation and identity formation, and also a time when lifelong behaviour patterns are typically initiated or established. Thus, interventions that encourage positive health behaviours, and discourage negative ones in young people can significantly shift the projected trajectory of NCDs. In the absence of urgent action, NCDs will add great pressure to already overstretched health systems [10] hence, the need for this research. This study therefore investigates the level of dangerous alcohol consumption among Nigerian youths, whether or not they abuse the substance, the reasons for consuming alcohol and how far addicted to alcohol they have become; in order to proffer possible solutions to curbing the devastating toll it could take on the health of the people.

Methods

The researcher adopted descriptive, cross-sectional, mixed method design in this study. Samples (384 youths) were drawn from selected tertiary institutions in South west Nigeria via a combination of simple random sampling, cluster sampling and purposive selection. Data that can be analysed statistically was collected using both close-ended and open-ended questions from the standardised questionnaire distributed to youths aged 15 - 24 years in South West Nigeria. In this study, the protection of the rights of individual participant were not taken for granted. The ethical principles were strictly adhered to and addressed. Data was analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistical software program version 22.

Results and Discussion

This research sought to establish lifestyle practices of youth in the area of alcohol consumption. Table 1 shows that, 54.4% (209/384) of respondents are current alcohol drinkers. This result is similar to the 2012 report on the prevalence of alcohol consumption among youths in Canada; where 70% of Canadian youths admitted to drinking alcohol in that year [17]. This figure calls for immediate attention as it suggests the fact that the younger generation may experience increased incidences of non-communicable diseases in the near future if control measures are not put in place to reduce harmful consumption of alcohol [9,14].

SN	Response	Male		Female		Both Sexes	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1	Yes	115	59.9	94	49.0	209	54.4
	No	77	40.1	98	51.0	175	45.6
	Total	192	100	192	100	384	100

Table 1: Respondents (Youths aged 15 to 24 years) who currently consume alcohol. N = 384; n = 384.

This study established whether the respondents had consumed any alcoholic drink during the past 30 days. The result as shown in table 2 reveals that all (100%) of the respondents, had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days. The implication of these findings is that the pattern of alcohol consumption among youths in South-West Nigeria is very dangerous and this may indicate that youths' dependence on alcohol is very high. However, how youths consume alcohol underpins the rates of harm it could cause [18].

SN	Response	Male		Female		Both Sexes	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Q2	Yes	115	100.0	94	100.0	209	100.0
	No	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	115	100	94	100	209	100

Table 2: Respondents (Youths aged 15 to 24 years) who have consumed an alcoholic drink within the past 30 days. N = 209; n = 209.

SN	Response	Male		Female		Both Sexes	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Q3	Yes	84	73.0	39	41.5	123	58.9
	No	31	27.0	55	58.5	86	41.1
	Total	115	100	94	100	209	100

Table 3a: Drinking before breakfast.

SN	Response	Male		Female		Both Sexes	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Q4	Yes	66	57.4	29	30.9	95	45.5
	No	49	42.6	65	69.1	114	54.5
	Total	115	100	94	100	209	100

Table 3b: Drinking before lunch.

SN	Response	Male		Female		Both Sexes	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Q5	Yes	94	81.7	57	60.6	151	72.2
	No	21	18.3	37	39.4	58	27.8
	Total	115	100	94	100	209	100

Table 3c: Drinking before dinner.

Table 3: Respondents (Youths aged 15 to 24 years) who consumed an alcoholic drink before breakfast, Lunch and dinner within the past 30 days. N = 209; n = 209.

In table 3a, out of the 209/384 respondents who are current alcohol drinkers, a frightening proportion of 204/209 (71.6%) admitted to drinking alcohol before breakfast within the past 30 days. The distribution by gender shows that all (100%) male respondents and about all (94.7%) female respondents drank alcohol before breakfast within the past 30 days.

Respondents who have consumed alcohol before lunch in the past 30days are 45.5% (95/209). The table also shows that 57.4% (66/115) of male respondents and 30.9% (29/94) of female respondents have consumed alcohol before lunch, while a total 54.5% (114/209) of the respondents have not consumed alcohol before lunch in the past 30 days.

Table 3c shows that a high percentage (72.2%) of the total number of respondents who are current drinkers and have consumed alcohol before dinner within the past 30 days while 27.8% (58/209) of respondents have not consumed alcohol before dinner in the past 30 days. 71.6%, 45.5% and 72.2% of current daily drinkers admitted to drinking alcohol before breakfast, lunch and dinner respectively within the past 30 days. This research clearly shows that majority of current drinkers, both males and females drink before eating breakfast than drinking before lunch or dinner. This finding may indicate a very disturbing rate of alcohol addiction among youths in South West Nigeria which calls for urgent attention and intervention in order to avert the costly impact of harmful alcohol consumption. Therefore, there is need for urgent public health preventive intervention on our campuses. More educational campaigns on the negative consequences of alcohol and substance use are advocated. The use of alcohol and other substances poses a grave challenge to the future of our future generations [19].

SN	Category	Male		Female		Both Sexes	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Q6	Below 10 years	11	9.6	2	2.1	13	6.2
	11 - 15 years	44	38.3	29	30.9	73	34.9
	16 - 20 years	51	44.3	57	60.6	108	51.7
	Above 20 years	9	7.8	6	6.4	15	7.2
	Total	115	100	94	100	209	100

Table 4: Age at first Initiation into alcohol consumption among respondents (Youths aged 15 to 24 years). N = 209; n = 209.

From the table 4 above, this study established that 6.2% (13/209) of the respondents got initiated into drinking when they were 10 years and below, 34.9% (73/209) started drinking at the age of 11 - 15 years, 51.7% (108/209) started drinking at the age of 16 - 20 years, while 7.2% (15/209) of respondents didn't start drinking until they were above 20years. This result therefore reveals that, most of the respondents started drinking in secondary schools and some were initiated into drinking when they got admission into the Universities. These findings are similar to the findings of a study on pattern of alcohol consumption and associated factors among young people in an inner city in brazil reporting that young people first got initiated into into drinking when they were 10 to 13 years old (52.4%), 14 to 17 years old (39.8%), and younger than 10 years old (7.8%) [20]. Similarly, a study carried out by George, Mugai., *et al.* [21] revealed that young people start taking alcohol when they are as young as between 8 to 12years. The average age for drinking alcohol for the first time as documented by Steketee and Jonk is 12 years old [22]. The earlier a young person starts to consume alcohol, the more likely it is to develop alcohol dependence [17].

SN	Category	Male		Female		Both Sexes	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Q7	1	54	47.0	19	20.2	73	35.0
	2 - 3	17	14.8	34	36.2	51	24.4
	4 - 5	26	22.6	12	12.8	38	18.2
	6+	18	15.6	29	30.8	47	22.4
	Total	115	100	94	100	209	100

Table 5: Number of standard bottles of alcohol consumed daily by current drinkers N = 209; n = 209.

The table 5 above shows that a total of 73/209 (35.0%) respondents admitted to drinking just one bottle of alcohol per day, 24.4% (51/209) of respondents admitted to drinking 2 - 3 bottles of alcohol daily, 18.2% (38/209) of respondents consume 4 - 5 bottles of alcohol daily while 22.4% (47/209) of respondents drink about 6 bottles of alcohol and more on a daily basis. This is similar to the report of the Canadian centre on substance abuse where 30% of youths were reported to consume five or more drinks on one occasion [17].

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statements as Motivation	Freq.	%
Alcohol Consumption	(8) Reasons for drinking. N = 209; n = 209	Personal worries	11	5.3
		To increase appetite	6	2.9
		Anxiety	8	3.8
		Stress	7	3.4
		To satisfy curiosity	12	5.7
		Old habit	13	6.2
		Social life	11	5.2
		Boredom	4	2.0
		Depression	13	6.2
		Addiction	78	37.3
		Ecstasy	9	4.3
		Peer pressure	37	17.7
	Total		209	100

Table 6: Motivation for alcohol consumption.

In the table 6 above, when asked the reasons for consuming alcohol, respondents gave different reasons ranging from Personal worries (5.3%), to Low appetite (2.9%), to Anxiety (3.8%), to Stress (3.4%), to Curiosity (5.7%), to old habit (6.2%), to Low Social life (5.2%), to Boredom (2.0%), to depression (6.2%), to Addiction (37.3%), to ecstasy (4.3%), and peer pressure (17.7%). Similarly, a study on alcohol use among young people in the US indicated fun/pleasurable, ability to make you feel good or high, ability to relax or relieve tension, curiosity, coping/escaping personal problems and boredom are reasons given by young people for consuming alcohol [23]. Other reasons for drinking alcohol as found in literatures include: to forget about things, to feel more confident, and to relax cope with stress, to try something new, anxiety, loneliness, sadness and peer influence [19,20,24-26].

Conclusion

This study discovered that addiction to alcohol is becoming alarmingly prevalent among Nigerian youths. This puts them at the risk of developing alcohol related non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, cancer; poor health conditions and increasing mortality. Urgent and appropriate actions for the prevention and control of these health challenges become highly important. Thus, interventions that promote and encourage positive health behaviours, and discourage negative ones in young people must be swiftly put in place. Early promotion of positive health behaviours (safe consumption of alcohol) to be established during the youth period is more likely to be carried through to adulthood via prioritizing policies to implement behavioral-based interventions. Preventing and acting in response to NCDs must therefore incorporate a focus on young people by mapping out certain national youth programmes.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest whatsoever.

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