The Significance of Culture and Regulations on Alcohol Abuse Among Youths in Rombo District Council

Agnes E. Massawe, Sosthenes Ruheza, Amos A. Msambila

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at documenting the influence of culture and regulations on youths' alcohol abuse in Rombo District. Questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key-informant interviews were used for data collection. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed by Statistical Product for Social Solutions (SPSS) version 20 and thematic analysis respectively. The study revealed that culture influence alcohol abuse among youths, and most of youths learn to consume alcohol from their parents. Study further found that there are a lot of unregistered drinking places making it difficulties for enforcement of bylaws. The study findings depict that in most cases there was less bylaws enforcement with police mainly focus on fines. The study concludes that alcohol abuse among youths in Rombo District is attributed by cultural perceptions on alcohol as a status and prestige, less by law enforcement and easily availability of alcohol in the study area. The study recommends that family heads should discourage alcohol consumption; through being role models, the government should make sure that all alcohol selling points are registered, enforcement of by laws on alcohol consumption and community is provided with education on the negative effects of excessive alcohol consumption.

Keywords: Alcohol Abuse, Culture, Rombo District, Tanzania, Youth

I. INTRODUCTION

The widespread use and abuse of alcohol among youth has become a global problem particularly to adolescent (Pinsky et al., 2010); with thousands of young Tanzanians being in a great danger to alcohol abuse resulting into alcohol abuse related illness and injuries. It is estimated by Wold Health Organization (WHO) that up to 2010 Tanzania was consuming almost 7.7 billion litres of alcohol per year in which 5.7 billion litres comprise legalized brews while 2 billion litres are local brews (WHO, 2014). The report further added that, there are more than 25% of men and 15% of women who were excessively consuming alcohol.

In addressing the problem of alcohol abuse, the Government of Tanzania has undertaken a number of initiatives that include restriction of the use of alcohol filled in plastics known as 'Viroba', so as to reduce alcohol consumptions and, restriction of drinking alcohol during working hours and strict implementation of penalties. Despite several efforts, alcohol abuse in Rombo District is an increasingly social problem.

Several studies were carried out in Tanzania on alcohol consumption. For example, a study by Staton et al. (2018) which has focused on the extent and side effects of alcohol abuse in Moshi District, Mitsunaga and Larsen (2008) assessed the prevalence of and risk factors associated with alcohol abuse in Moshi District while Tesh (2013) assessed knowledge of effects on the alcohol drinking on sexual behaviour in Rombo District. Francis (2015) examined on epidemiology of alcohol use and Alcohol Use Disorders (AUD) among young people in northern Tanzania. Information on factors which determine alcohol abuse among youth in Rombo District is insufficient. It is against this background, this study therefore aims at examining factors contributing to youth alcohol abuse in Rombo District.

The significance of this study are three folds; to inform policy makers to formulate relevant policy interventions for curbing alcohol abuse in the country; to create awareness on the influences of cultural practices of an area and by laws enforcement can be a motivation factor for youth alcohol abuse among youths in Rombo District. The study findings might help communities to mobilize public opinion to address the problem of youth alcohol abuse throughout forbidden youth alcohol toleration in cultural areas.
events and activities, might help to raise the societies’ interventions to reduce accessibility of alcohol to adolescences. Furthermore, to scholars and future researchers this study will increase knowledge and could be used as reference and gap for further studies.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

A. Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Rombo District Council, which is one of the seven Districts of Kilimanjaro Region in Tanzania. According to the 2012 census, the population of the Rombo District is 260,963. The area is bordered to the North and East by Kenya, to the West by the Siha District and Hai District, and to the South by the Moshi Rural District (NBS, 2012). Rombo District was selected because Tanzania’s mass media have currently reported it as one among Districts in Tanzania with high rate of alcohol abuse and its impacts.

B. Research Design

A cross-sectional research design which allowed data to be collected at one point at a time was adopted for the study. This design is suitable for this research because of its cost-effectiveness, less time consuming and ability to collect a lot of information in a relatively convenient time. Moreover, the design was appropriate for determining the relationship between and among variables of this research.

C. Target Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

1. Target population

From 24 wards of Rombo District, the target population for this study was drawn from three (2) wards; that include Kirongo-samanga and Mashati-kisale. The reasons for selection of these wards are the availability of both local and industrial alcohols, and the number of young alcoholics who were located in those areas.

2. Sample size and techniques

The sample size for this study was 100 respondents. Multistage sampling technique was adopted in this study. Two (2) Wards out of 24 were randomly selected in which two villages were also selected randomly from each ward to obtain four villages. A snow-ball sampling technique was adopted to obtain 25 respondents form each village. Four (4) Village Executive Officers (WEO) and Twenty (20) household heads were selected as key-informants.

3. Data collection methods and instruments

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Quantitative data were collected by using questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions, whereas qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interview and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The questionnaires that consisted of both close and open-ended questions were used to collect data from youth who are alcohol abusers. Semi-structured interview method was used to obtain data from WEOs while two (2) FGDs were used to get views of the households’ heads with youth(s) who abuse alcohols in the study area. The researchers served as moderators of (FGDs). FGD involved 7-12 discussants. The data was recorded on a note book or a tape-recorder.

4. Data analysis and interpretation

A Statistical Product for Social Solutions (SPSS Version.20) was used to analyze quantitative data. The descriptive analysis involved calculation of percentages, means and frequencies. Findings were presented using tables in which frequencies and percentages were utilized whereas content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data in accordance to the study objectives.

5. Validity and reliability of research instruments

a) Validation of instruments

To ensure validity of this study, the internal validity approach was established, through ensuring trust between a researchers and respondents, giving respondents awareness of the research topic and by initiating interview, questionnaire and (FGDs) through the specified themes of the research topic.

b) Reliability of data

In order to control the reliability of this research, pre-testing of interview guide, questionnaire and FGDs questions were done in order to check if they were comprehensive enough to collect the required data. After the pre-testing, modifications and improvements of research instruments were made.
c) Ethical considerations

In this study, the researcher adhered to all ethical issues by obtaining necessary permissions first from the University of Iringa and subsequently from Local Authorities in Rombo District. Furthermore, the researcher explained to the respondents about the research aim, and that the study was for academic purposes only. Ethical consideration was also addressed by showing commitment to respondents and ensuring a high level of confidentiality and anonymity with no names collected and disclosed. Also, the norms and cultures of participants were respected and an individual’s participation in the study was voluntary.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Results (Table I) show that most (62.0%) of respondents were male. This finding shows that often alcohol consumption among youth is more dominant among males as compared to females. This was also confirmed in FGDs whereby it was stated that males were more open to drinking alcohol as compared to females and that even the negative impacts of alcohol abuse were more evident to males than females. Alcohol consumption among males is commonly culturally constructed and that men interaction is commonly in bars, alcohol shops and even homes. The findings correspond with the Global Status Report: Alcohol and Young People, which states that men in Africa are more likely to drink than women, and alcohol use increases with age (Jernigan, 2001).

A long a similar finding, citing WHO (2001), Mitsunaga and Larsen (2008) revealed that as men use of alcohol in developing countries is more accepted than for women, more likely for men to consume alcohol than women. A study in Mwanza by Rijken et al. (1988) on alcohol among rural population also revealed that 55% of men consumed alcohol at least once in the past year compared to 33% of the women, with men being having higher frequency and quantity compared to women. In a survey of almost 2000 young people in northern Tanzania, the prevalence of reported alcohol use was higher among males (20-45% for current use) than females (12-47% for current use) (Francis et al., 2015).

Results further show that majority (45%) of respondents were between the age 26-30 years followed by 34% who were between 21-25 years of age. This finding might have been caused by the fact that children learn from their parents and that they also learn alcohol consumption behaviours. Young age alcohol use and abuse among younger age is a behaviour that was also found by Nyandindi (2008) who conducted a survey among secondary school students in the Dar es Salaam Region, found that 5% used alcohol, 10.8% had taken an alcoholic drink before the age of 14, and 26.2% had a parent who abused alcohol.

Further, Jacob (2007) affirms that today’s Tanzanians and other adolescents and youth worldwide fit in this statement as stimulants, tranquillizers, sedatives and alcohol abusers are in the pace of their lives. According to the same report, children as young as 10 years are not only consuming alcohol, but are also suffering the school attendant consequences.

The study further found that most (63%) of the respondents were single. This is partly caused by the younger age of the respondents (21-30 years). While it generally perceived that youth does not have family responsibilities, a fact that exposes them to high rate of alcohol abuse due to peer influences, a study by in Moshi District by Casten et al. (2012) revealed that most of family responsibilities are taken care of by wife, as one of the interviewee illustrated that “my wife tended to the house, the field, and the animals. When I was home, I had nothing to occupy my time. I had retired from my job as a primary school teacher after providing my family with a nice house, solar power, and a yard with banana trees. What more needed to be done?” This implies that although family responsibilities might be restricting men’s alcohol abuse, but not always the case, as in some culture, all family responsibilities relies on women.

| TABLE I: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=100) |
|-----------------|-------|-------|
| **Sex** | Frequency | Percent (%) |
| Male | 62 | 62 |
| Female | 38 | 38 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| **Age group (in years)** | | |
| 15 - 20 | 14 | 14 |
| 21 - 25 | 34 | 34 |
| 26 - 30 | 45 | 45 |
| 31 - 35 | 6 | 6 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| **Marital Status** | | |
| Single | 63 | 63 |
| Married | 37 | 37 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
B. Cultural Practices and Alcohol Consumption among Youth in Rombo District

Results (Table II) show that all (100%) of the respondents identified the use of alcohol in self-help events as the most contributing factor for the use of alcohol. Self-help events in the study area are clan events that aimed to help each family in a revolving manner (kiarano). This was culturally monitored, and was normally done on monthly basis, whereby whoever was on duty has to prepare the event and has to compulsorily prepare alcohol. These events contributed to alcohol use because it taught the young on the usage of alcohol.

In a discussion with the youths, one respondent was quoted as saying:

“Huu utamaduni wa kiarano na pombe za wanandugu sana ulevi kwa sababu ikifika zamu ya kuandaa, familia nzima anaweza kufanya maandalizi hadi watoto wadogo. Kwa hali hiyo unawalaumije vijana kuwa walevi wake na kilo kwenye ulevi?”

This implies that, alcohol use in the study area is culturally found in the ceremonies that families conducted.

One of the respondents in study in Moshi by Casten et al. (2012) claimed that “alcohol has been present in my life since I was three years old. My grandfather would give me Mbege, a traditional drink brewed from bananas, to help me sleep and to make me grow up to be a strong man. Growing up with my father meant drinking all of the time. For me, drinking like I do is normal”. The authors concluded that alcohol consumption is very much a part of tradition for many Kilimanjaro dwellers. In their study Francis et al. (2015) also reported alcohol use was higher in Kilimanjaro than in Mwanza Region, possibly due to local cultural beliefs in Kilimanjaro that encourage alcohol use (Kuntsche et al., 2006 & Davis et al., 2010 cited by Francis et al., 2015).

Another factor that was identified as a cultural aspect that contributed to the use of alcohol was the use of alcohol during rituals and festivals. This was noted by 97% of respondents. Alcohol (Mbege) was identified as the “drink of rituals”, meaning that any ritual that has to be done must use Mbege. In FGDs, one respondent said that, “The problem is that in every ritual Mbege is used; and normally mbege starts but when a person is not satisfied with, it then he goes to buy a stronger type such as gongo”.

On the part of festivals, it was revealed that any cultural festival was normally associated with the use of alcohol such that “there is no festival without alcohol” is a statement that was used by one of the respondents. Both traditional and commercialized forms of alcohol were consumed with no formal restrictions at nearly all ceremonies and celebrations. Jernigan (2001) concludes in his study that in the eyes of the youth and adults, alcohol consumption is a symbol of status and prestige, and it has become synonymous with good times, relaxation, and positive experiences.

Another factor that was mentioned was weaning practices that were identified by 67% of the respondents. It was revealed that the way children were raised in some families induced them to be the future alcohol users, as some parents give an alcohol to their children at home or when kids were crying. This was due to ignorance of parents on the negative effects of alcohol to children or drunkenness'. Generally speaking, cultural environment of the study area contributed a lot to youth to use alcohol and ultimately, alcohol abuse.

| Factors                        | Yes | No |
|-------------------------------|-----|----|
| Use of alcohol in rituals      | 97  | 3  |
| Compulsory use of alcohol ceremonies | 97  | 3  |
| Use of alcohol in self-help events | 100 | 100 |
| Weaning practices              | 67  | 33 |
| Use of alcohol in burial services | 80  | 20 |
| Festival induce alcohol use    | 97  | 3  |

C. Law Enforcement and Youth Alcohol Abuse

All the respondents admitted that there were laws guiding access and use of alcohol. They all also admitted that there were fines in place for those who failed to comply with these by laws. It was revealed that each village had similar by laws that included alcohol selling time, prohibited types, behaviour during drinking and specific fines. However, it was observed that people were not obeying the restriction of drinking alcohol during working hours, as some people started drinking from early in the morning. Today I sat down at the bar with a friend of mine and reminded him of the importance of his children. One of the respondents in a study by Casten et al. (2012) claimed to have drunk three Serengetis (beers) into my day at around 9:00 am.

It was further reported that the police and other village leaders were mostly concerned with fines/corruption rather than enforcement of by law, through taking further actions to people who were selling and drinking alcohol during working hours, a claim that was not confirmed. Similarly, a study by
Castens et al. (2012) in Moshi District found that although gongo was illegal, it was widely available, with no formal restrictions. This suggests that alcohol drinking whether legal or illegal has been less adhered to the available by law, probably because drinking of alcohol is strongly bounded with people’s culture and/or due to corruptions. Moreover, cultural practices such as Kiarano that alcohol is compulsory, is done during working hours, implies less bylaws enforcement.

The study findings as presented in Table 2, reveal that there were laws regulating the age of alcohol use; that is, the age one was allowed to consume alcohol. These laws are known to the locals but are at times deliberately disregarded as youths below the allowed age were also engaged in alcohol consumption. This was the view of most of respondents (56%) strongly agreed and (23%) of respondents agreed with the statement as well. On the same note, (12%) of respondents were undecided whereas (4%) disagreed and (5%) strongly disagreed, respectively. A study by Castenes et al. (2012) found that although legal drinking age in Tanzania is 18 years, there has been less enforcement of the law, as businessman were interested with the profit.

Still on law enforcement, all drinking places were regulated by law under which they were supposed to be registered. As such, the responses suggest otherwise since majority of respondents (42%) disagreed with the statement that alcohol was only accessible in licensed places. On the same note however, (22%) agreed that alcohol was only accessed in licensed places, but still (15%) of respondents strongly disagreed with such assertion whereas (13%) strongly agreed and (8%) were undecided. This indicates that there were unlicensed places where people go and drink alcohol as most of the respondents (56%) agreed that alcohol was available in unlicensed places. These findings reflect the suggestion by Anderson (2009) that licensing system is also important on reducing youth alcoholism. However, the author added that despite evidence for effectiveness of other availability policies, such as restriction of outlet density, sales prohibitions at specific events, and regulation on days and hours of sales, these measures are not effectively enforced in most of developing countries.

### TABLE III: HOW LAW ENFORCEMENT INFLUENCE ALCOHOL ABUSE

| Response          | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 56        | 56          |
| Agree             | 23        | 23          |
| Not Decided       | 12        | 12          |
| Disagree          | 4         | 4           |
| Strongly Disagree | 5         | 5           |
| Total             | 100       | 100         |

| Alcohol is only Accessible From Licensed Premises | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree                                    | 13        | 13          |
| Agree                                             | 22        | 22          |
| Not Decided                                      | 8         | 8           |
| Disagree                                          | 42        | 42          |
| Strongly Disagree                                 | 15        | 15          |
| Total                                             | 100       | 100         |

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusion

Based on the study findings, the study concludes that cultural practices have positive influence to youth alcohol abuse. This is seen in form of rituals, initiation rites and other community gatherings where alcohol is used as a unifying symbol. This renders the effort of fighting against alcohol abuse fruitless. During these events, people see alcohol consumption as a symbol of peace and unity which is deeply rooted in their cultural beliefs. Moreover, alcohol accessibility is positively linked to alcohol abuse as there are many bars and all kinds of alcohol most of which are locally made. People who sell alcohol take advantage of the lapse in government enforcement of bylaws. This has created an impression that the laws are not in place or are not sufficient enough to curb alcohol abuse by the youths.

B. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the study recommends that:

**First,** organizations dealing with empowering youths and fighting against alcohol abuse should use these findings to sensitize the public on the dangers of alcohol abuse.

**Second,** the government should hold everyone responsible for selling alcohol to under-age youths and, alcohol drinking during working hours.

**Third,** family heads and or elders should be the role model in instilling discipline and fear in the younger generation by not supporting their drinking behaviour.

**Fourth,** cultural events that incorporate alcohol should have clear regulations regarding alcohol consumption to youth, and alcohol has to be served to elders only. There should be an alternative drink
prepared for the youths in such events.

**Fifth,** the government should make sure that alcohol are sold at licensed places only, as selling alcohols at unlicensed places not only inhibit enforcement of bylaws but also make it difficult to deal with illegal alcohols.

**Sixth,** as it is difficult to estimate someone age, individual identity that indicate someone age has to be used when serving alcohol to customers, and bylaw enforcing institutions have to be checking people identity to verify their ages.

**Seventh,** the issues of corruption has to be dealt with, as it might be restricting bylaws enforcement

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Despite having by laws that govern the consumption of alcohol, enforcement of those by laws has been a challenge, and in most cases, corruption has been associated by such a failure. Therefore, there has been other means of motivating those who are responsible for the enforcement.

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**AUTHORS’ CONTRIBUTIONS**

Agnes E. Massawe, Sosthenes Ruheza and Amos A. Msambila conceptualized the research idea. Both authors analysed the data and wrote the draft of the manuscript. The final manuscript was read, edited and approved by both authors.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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