

## **Alcohol Use Related Consequences among Students in Selected Universities in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Alcohol use and abuse among the youths, particularly the university students, is an issue of public health concern. Alcohol abuse is associated with numerous negative consequences, which include being the primary cause of death among the youths in the world. As a result, it was imperative to document the extent of the consequences experienced by university students in Kenya in order to inform on the policies and other interventions. The purpose of this study was to establish the consequences of alcohol use among students in selected universities in Kenya. The objectives of the study were to establish consequences of alcohol use and alcohol harm to others (AHTO). The study was carried out in 2014, in four purposively selected universities including 2 private faith-based universities and 2 public universities. The accessible population was 19,177 students from the main campuses of the four universities. The sample size was 380 students. About 374 students responded to a structured self-administered questionnaire. Effects of alcohol were measured by a set of 15 questions, while AHTO was measured by a set of 9 questions. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. Adverse effects mostly reported were running broke (54.7%), feeling sad/depressed (49.6%), absconding classes (48.9%), getting poor grades (48.9%) and engaging in unplanned sexual activity (29.1%). AHTO experienced included disturbed sleep (57.7%), distraction from studies (41.7%), “baby sitting” drunk students (27.5%), strained relationships (34.8%), and sexual harassment (10.5%). This study concluded that consequences of alcohol use are many and harmful. Secondly, other students who are not necessarily users are affected by alcohol use by their colleagues. Therefore, this study recommended that university managements and all the stake holders implement various measures to control consumption of alcohol among students in Kenyan universities and to protect others from experiencing AHTO.

**Keywords:** *Consequences, students, universities, alcohol use, Kenya*

*IJPP 10(1); 29-40*

## 1.0 Introduction

Alcohol consumption is considered as a threat to population health (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse [NIAAA], 2021a). The harmful use of alcohol in particular, has been documented as one of the prominent risk factors for health of the population worldwide (Griswold et al., 2018). Globally, 2.3 billion people are currently consuming alcohol (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). This report further documented that in 2016, 3 million people died (5.3% of all deaths) worldwide as a result of harmful use of alcohol. Of all these deaths, 28.7% came about due to injuries, 21.3% were as a result of digestive diseases, 19% due to cardiovascular diseases, 12.9% were as a result of infectious diseases and 12.6% were cancers related.

Mortality rate attributable to alcohol consumption is far much greater than HIV/AIDS (1.8%), high blood pressure (1.8%), diabetes (2.8%), road accidents (2.5%), digestive diseases (4.5%) and violence (0.8%) (WHO, 2018).

*“Alcohol consumption among university students was linked to low grades, and generally resulted in a weakened quality of life.”*

Similarly, alcohol use among the youths and consequently university students has been associated with myriad of consequences. In

the USA for instance, National Survey on Drug Use and Health [NSDUH], (2019)

documented that about 95,000 youths (approximately 68,000 males and 27,000 females) died in the USA as a result of causes attributable to alcohol use. Hence, alcohol is the third-leading preventable cause of death among the youths in the United States (NSDUH, 2019; NIAAA, 2021a). NIAAA, (2021b) further documents that annually, about 1,519 college/university students between the ages of 18-24 years die as a result of injuries, including motor vehicle related accidents in the US. Other consequences reported include sexual assaults, alcohol use disorder, health concerns, suicide attempts, unsafe sexual behavior, destruction of properties, as well as getting involved with the police. This scenario is not any different in Europe. According to a 2016 study on alcohol consumption in European countries, it was established, that 23.3% of all deaths among 20–24 years olds were attributable to alcohol (Ferreira-Borges et al., 2019).

Alarmingly, university students continue with alcohol consumption despite the negative consequences they experience (Martinez et al., 2014). Martinez et al. observed that college students experienced potent consequences such as black outs, regretted sexual encounters, driving while intoxicated, getting hurt among others which further predicted subsequent drinking. López-Moreno et al., (2021) further observed that alcohol consumption among university students was linked to low grades, and

generally resulted in a weakened quality of life. In addition, alcohol use among university students in Spain was associated with memory loss and not being able to stop drinking once one began the drinking habit. (Tejedor-Cabrera & Cauli, 2019).

Further, alcohol consumption does not only result to adverse effects to the users but also leads to harm on others, commonly known as secondhand effects or alcohol's harm to others[AHTO] (Nayak et al., 2019). AHTO is not only reported among the adult population but also among young adults in the universities. Trangenstein et al., (2019) reiterated that AHTO is prevalent among college and university students, and it ranges from 59% to 84%. In the USA for instance, secondhand effects are substantial and vary across various demographics (Nayak et al., 2019). A study done by Cabalatangan and McCarthy (2015) among US college and university students reported some common secondhand effects including being insulted or embarrassed, "babysitting" an intoxicated student, sleep/ study interruptions, disagreements or quarrels and unwanted sexual encounters.

Similarly, Rani et al.(2019) documented that harm from others' drinking was highly prevalent as reported by 68.7% of the university students sampled in India. The students sampled who reported physical and psychological harm were 15.2% and 65.7% respectively. Damage to property was reported by 5.0% and monetary related issues were experienced by 20.9%. Correspondingly, in Vietnam, the occurrence of AHTO among students in the universities

is also high. About 77.5% experienced non-bodily related harms and 34.2% experienced bodily related effects. More than 37% of the sample reported 3-4 non-bodily related harms and more than 12% reported 2-3 bodily related effects due to AHTO (Diep et al., 2015).

In the African continent, alcohol consumption is attributable to the highest age-adjusted burden of disease and injury across all ages (WHO, 2018). Specifically, prevalence of consumption of alcohol among students in the university is high, raising a health concern (Ajayi et al., 2019; Govender et al., 2017). In Nigeria for instance, 34.1% of youths in universities aged 18-22 are current drinkers while 20.8% are involved in heavy episodic drinking. Additionally, about 7.5% deaths attributable to alcohol consumption among 20-24year olds (WHO, 2018 ; Adekeye et al., 2015). Govender et al., (2017) had also earlier documented that alcohol consumption among students across all years in a South African university, experienced adverse social and academic effects. Similarly, in Ghana, university students who abused alcohol reported diverse negative consequences. These effects included losing valued items (60.6%), excessive vomiting (53.9%), stomach problems (46.1%), motor vehicle crashes (40.0%), unsafe sexual encounters(35.1%), diarrhoea (24.2%), likelihood of infections to the liver (16.4%), feeling sad or depressed (27.3%), borrowing money (15.2%), and stealing (22.4%) (Aboagye et al., 2021)

In Kenya, National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse

[NACADA] (2004) conducted a first ever national wide survey on drug abuse among the young people between age 10 and 24 years. The study found out that alcohol is the most popular substance of choice consumed by the youths in Kenya. About 27% of the participants reported having used alcohol at least once in their lifetime (commonly referred to as lifetime use). Three years later, NACADA (2007) conducted another survey that established that alcohol consumption among the youths aged 18-24 years, was prevalent with 34.6% reporting lifetime use and 11.7% had used alcohol a month prior to the study (also referred to as current users). On the contrary, NACADA (2012) observed a lower prevalence of current users (10.2%) of alcohol use in the same age bracket. A recent study shows a notable decline of current use among 15-24 years olds to 5.6 % (Kamenderi et al., 2020).

While this is remarkable, Kiiru, (2017) had earlier observed that alcohol misuse in the Kenyan context has far reaching effects ranging from psychological consequences, health effects and socio-economic effects. This study was conceptualized much earlier and conducted in 2014 to establish the effects of alcohol use among university students in Kenya. The study established that alcohol consumption among students in universities leads to many adverse consequences to the users and to those around them. Other studies done later corroborate the findings of this study. For instance, Kendagor et al., (2018) established that heavy episodic drinking is rather prevalent among the Kenyan population. Such a pattern of use tends to aggravate the consequences not only

in the general population but also among university students.

Mahugu et al., (2016) also observed that alcohol misuse resulted in alcohol dependence among 34% of the university students. This pattern is associated with many health and socio-economic outcomes. This study was based on Outcome Expectancy Theory by Albert Bandura (Dunne & Katz, 2015; Jones et al., 2001). The purpose of this study was to establish alcohol use related consequences experienced by students in universities in Kenya. The objectives of the study were: (i) to establish the alcohol related effects on Kenyan university students who had consumed alcohol in the past year and (ii) to establish alcohol's harm to others (AHTO) among universities students in Kenya.

## **2.0 Materials and Methods**

This study adopted the causal comparative research design. This is a type of research that aims at establishing the relationship between independent and dependent variables way after the events have occurred (Frey, 2018). Through this design, the researchers aimed at establishing the consequences that exist among students as a result of alcohol use without manipulating the independent variables. Since this study focused on consequences of alcohol consumption among university students, which had occurred within the past year before the study was conducted, then causal comparative design was considered most appropriate.

The study was carried out in four universities in Kenya. Purposive sampling was used to select two private faith-based universities (A

and B) and two public universities (C and D). Universities B and C are located in urban areas in Nairobi and Kiambu Counties, while A and D are in rural settings in Meru and Nakuru counties respectively (Names withheld to uphold confidentiality requested by the respective universities). The target population consisted of 31,869 full-time students from the four sampled universities. The accessible population of 19,177 was drawn from the main campuses of the four universities. This consisted of, 1,731 from University A (University A records, 2011); 985 from B (University B Students Records, 2011); 10,044 from C (University C Students Records, 2011); and 6,417 from D (University D Students Records, 2011).

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a sample of 377 subjects is adequate for a population totaling to 19,177. To take care of any form of attrition, three subjects were added resulting to a sample size of 380. In order to get a good representation of private universities, a hundred subjects were purposively drawn from private universities while the remaining 280 were drawn from the two public universities. With the assistance of the Dean of Students and Student counselors, the subjects were accessed during common courses classes.

Data was collected from students by use of a structured self-administered questionnaire. This questionnaire contained items focusing on student demographic details, patterns of use and scales on effects and AHTO. The tool was piloted in May, 2014 with 30 full-time students in Meru University and Nazarene University (Meru Campus). Some

adjustments were made on the tool based on the observations made from the pilot test. This study was conducted between June and September 2014. Prevalence of alcohol use was assessed from responses to questions on lifetime use (that is ever use of alcohol in one's lifetime), past year use (that is alcohol use in the past year prior to the study) and current use (alcohol use in the past month prior to the study). To assess effects of alcohol use experienced by alcohol users, participants who met the criteria of past year use were asked to check against 15 questions on effects associated with alcohol consumption. On the other hand, to determine the secondhand effects (AHTO), all the respondents including users and abstainers checked against a set of 9 questions on harm experienced as a result of others' alcohol use.

### **3.0 Results and Discussions**

Out of 380 questionnaires distributed, 374 were duly filled and completed; six (6) were discarded because of incompleteness. Majority (73.3 %) of the respondents were drawn from public universities, while 26.7% of the respondents were drawn from private faith-based universities. Data collected was cleaned, coded and entered in SPSS version 21.0 for analysis. Since the purpose of the study was mainly to establish the effects experienced, statistics used were therefore descriptive in nature and they included tables, frequencies and percentages.

#### ***Prevalence of Alcohol Consumption***

Out of 374 students surveyed, 52.4 % had used alcohol use at least once in one's lifetime, while 39.0% had consumed alcohol



in the past year. About 30.5% were current users. Private faith based universities reported higher prevalence, with 60.0%, 44.0% and 43.0% reporting lifetime, past year and current use of alcohol respectively.

Public universities on the other hand reported 49.6%, 37.2% and 25.2% of lifetime, past year and current use respectively (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Prevalence of Alcohol Use among Respondents*

	Life time use		Past year Use		Current use	
	Frequency(f)	%	Frequency(f)	%	Frequency(f)	%
Yes	196	52.4	146	39.0	114	30.5
No	178	47.6	228	61.0	260	69.5
Total	374	100	374	100.0	374	100.0

***Consequences of alcohol consumption among the past year users***

To establish the consequences of alcohol consumption among the respondents, past year users who were 39.0 % (146) of the total respondents, were asked to check against a set of 15 alcohol-related effects. About 137 had experienced at least one consequence

related to alcohol use. Out of these, a total of 79 participants were drawn from public universities, and 58 from private faith-based universities. All the respondents who did not meet the criteria of past year use were asked to skip this question. Table 2 presents these findings.

**Table 2**  
*Consequences of Alcohol Consumption*

Consequences	University Type					
	Total		Private Based		Faith Public	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Sadness, anxiety or depressive feelings	68	49.6	31	53.4	37	46.8
Felt bad about oneself	65	47.4	37	63.7	28	35.4
appetite or sleeping problem	62	45.3	17	29.3	45	57.0
Involvement in unplanned sex	40	29.1	21	36.2	19	20.4
Engaged in sex without protection	26	18.9	8	13.7	18	22.7
Missing classes	67	48.9	32	55.1	35	45.3

Destroyed property/involved in in unlawful activities	33	24.1	13	22.0	20	25.0
Late submission of assignment/ failed to sit for a CAT/Exam.	20	14.5	12	20.6	8	10.1
Scored Low grades	67	48.9	32	55.1	35	44.3
Got into trouble with the administration	11	8.0	3	5.0	8	10.0
Poor relationships	45	33.0	34	58.6	11	13.9
Became financially broke	75	54.7	31	53.4	44	55.6
Alcohol related injuries	31	22.6	8	13.7	23	29.1
Fought while drank	26	18.9	1	1.7	25	31.6
Alcohol related sickness	67	48.9	18	31.0	49	62.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows that 137 respondents experienced at least one negative effect related to alcohol use. A majority (54, 7%) ran out of money because of alcohol use. Feeling nervous, depressed or sad followed at 49.6%. Others experienced academic related effects such as missing classes because of hangover at 49.6%, failing to sit for examinations or CATs or submitting assignment late at 14.5%, and scoring low grades at 48.9%. Further, a significant number engaged in risky sexual behaviors while under the influence of alcohol. These included, engaging in unplanned sexual activity (29.1%) and engaging in sex without protection (18.9%). Other bodily related harm that were alcohol related included sickness at 48.9%, injuries 22.6% and fighting while under the influence of alcohol at 18.9%.

Five years after this study, NSUDH (2019) confirmed that alcohol consumption among the youths and college students was associated with various harms. Additionally,

White and Hingson, (2013) had earlier documented that excessive alcohol consumption among college students in the USA was associated with missing classes and poor academic performance, injuries, sexual assaults, overdoses, blackouts, brain functioning changes, death among others. Other studies done later after the current study have also confirmed the findings. For instance, alcohol consumption is related to both poor academic performance as well as diminished quality of life (López-Moreno et al., 2021). In Spain, alcohol use was associated with memory loss and not being able to stop drinking once an individual has started (Tejedor-Cabrera & Cauli, 2019).

#### ***Alcohol Harm to Others***

Alcohol harm to others (AHTO) also referred to as second-hand effects are consequences experienced by other students as a result of drinking behaviours of their fellow students. All the respondents were asked to tick against a set of 9 questions on AHTO. Table 3 shows the results.

**Table 1**  
***Alcohol Harm to Others***

	University Type					
	Total		Private Faith-Based		Public	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
AHTO						
Sleep disturbance	216	57.7	43	43.0	173	63.1
Distracted from studies	156	41.7	24	24.0	132	48.2
Engaged in a fight/quarrel	77	20.5	14	14.0	63	23.0
Sexually harassed	39	10.4	5	5.0	34	12.4
Property damaged	77	20.5	16	16.0	61	22.3
Property stolen by a student who engage in drinking	45	12.0	2	2.0	43	15.7
Baby-sitting an intoxicated student	103	27.5	24	24.0	79	28.8
Relationship got strained	130	34.8	50	50.0	80	29.2
Injured by a drank student	34	9.0	4	4.0	30	10.9

Table 3 shows that disturbed sleep was the leading AHTO at 57.7%, followed by interruptions while studying at 41.78% and strained relationships at 34.8%. About 27.5% were distracted from the normal schedule to “baby sit” an intoxicated student, while 20.5% had their property damaged by a drunk student. Sexual harassment was also reported by 10.4% of the respondents. These results are consistent with findings by Nelson et al., (2009) who documented that students in 18 US colleges/ universities experienced alcohol related harm (AHTO) as a result of drinking behaviors of their colleagues.

These harms included embarrassment (27.4%), quarrels (16.5%), assaults (9.4%), damage of property (14.4%), baby-sitting

drunk students (56.4%), interruptions of sleep or studies (63.9%), sexual advances (16.3%) and rape or sexual assault at 1.3%. Similarly, a study by Cabalatangan and McCarthy (2015) among US college and university students reported similar secondhand effects including “babysitting” a drunk student, sleep interruptions or distractions while studying, being insulted or embarrassed, engaging in a conflict or quarrel or having experienced an unwanted sexual advance.

Similarly, Diep et al., (2015) reported almost similar trend among university students in Vietnam. They documented the following second hand effects: sleep disturbances (59.2%), interruptions while studying at



59.3%, damage of property at 22.7%, insults or quarrels at 48.3%, physical fights at 21.0%, sexual advances at 8.4% and involvement in an accident involving a drunk students at 20.0%. Correspondingly, Rani et al., (2019) found out that harm from others' drinking was reported by 68.7% of the university students sampled in India. These harms included psychological related effects (65.7%), physical (15.2%), financial related (20.9%) and vandalism (5.0%).

These studies indicate a serious concern that alcohol use does not only affect the user, but other students as well. Therefore, policy makers in universities implement various measures on making university environment a comfortable place for all the students including the non-users. Interestingly, students in private faith based universities reported lower prevalence levels of AHTO as shown in Table 3. This could indicate that although the prevalence of alcohol use was higher, their policies were able to mitigate against AHTO better compared to public universities. This observation was also made by Correia et al. (2012), who observed that students studying in universities that prohibit alcohol use, like the private faith-based

universities in sampled in this study, are less likely to experience AHTO from their colleagues who drink alcohol. However, the reported harms should not be ignored.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The alcohol related effects mostly experienced by past year users were running broke, falling sick, falling behind in academics and feeling depressed. The major AHTO experienced by the respondents included sleep disturbance, distractions while studying, quarrels/ fights with a drank student, destruction of personal property and baby-sitting a drank student

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

University managements and all the stakeholders should implement interventions to control alcohol consumption among students because the effects associated with alcohol use are numerous and harmful. University managements should also devise measures to protect other students from AHTO. Sensitizations campaigns on harm associated to alcohol use should be conducted frequently among the university students.

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