

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG COMMERCIAL DRIVERS IN NIGERIA: DETERMINANTS AND EFFECTS ON ROAD USERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

The danger arising from hazardous alcohol use by commercial drivers has had its negative effects on vehicle users and non-users in terms of injury sustained from motor vehicle accident accidents, damages, total loss of property and increasing mortality. This review was aimed at examining the link between hazardous alcohol consumption among commercial drivers in Nigeria, the determinants and the effects on road transportation through existing literature. The review embodies various approaches to understanding the prevalence of alcohol consumption among commercial drivers, determinants and effects of alcohol consumption on road use. The research findings can help shape the efforts of health educators, government and other stakeholders in curbing the negative hazardous alcohol consumption by commercial drivers through health education, sensitization and implementing the existing alcohol control measures.

Keywords: Alcohol; drivers; determinants; effects, prevalence

Introduction

Commercial vehicles have been the commonest, oldest and most affordable means of transportation globally (Oridota et al. 2013). Abuse of alcohol by vehicle drivers is a global problem and the associated increase in the incidence of accident and misconduct influenced by drink-driving makes it a public health issue (Iroanya, 2020). Also, the contribution of alcohol consumption to many health problems points to the claim that alcohol consumption is a major contributor to the global burden of diseases (Jurgen, 2011). Hazardous alcohol use is linked with 320 deaths every

hour globally with the impact more felt among users in younger age group (Ajayi, 2019). For a safe and an effective road transportation, the driver needs to be physically, mentally and socially healthy. Any aberration in the health of a driver could pose danger to himself, commuters and other road users. Alcohol has been identified as the most common form of substance abuse in Nigeria.

Alcohol

The chemical property in alcohol known as ethanol is depressive in nature making alcohol a depressant (Raji et al, 2017). Alcohol is usually consumed orally

as recreational substance in form of alcoholic beverages such as wine, beer, spirits, liquor or locally brewed wine and palm wine. Alcohol ranked first among the oldest consumed recreational drugs due to its ability to produce euphoria, happiness, decrease anxiety and improve sensory function but overtime and excessive use of it can result in the development of serious health problems including chronic diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure which can result into stroke, liver disease as well as digestive problem and cancer. The varying amounts of alcohol in the alcoholic substances can produce a known state of alcohol intoxication or drunkenness that may affect driving skills and its use has been linked with 60 different disorders making it one of the important risk factors for the global burden of disease (Ramanan and Singh, 2016).

Commercial Drivers

Nigeria ranked the second country with the largest road network in Africa with a population ratio of 860 per square kilometer resulting in intense pressure on the available road network (Nwadinigwe, et al, 2019) and commercial drivers. Commercial road transport being the major means of transportation in Nigeria makes commercial drivers to be important stakeholders within the transport sector. Commercial drivers are saddled with the

job of transporting passengers from one location to the other irrespective of the distance. Most times they assist with lifting of passengers' luggage and ensure proper maintenance of their vehicles. The health of commercial drivers is therefore of utmost importance to the wellbeing of road users. However, the enormous workload of drivers may predispose them to hazardous alcohol lifestyle which could be a source of dangers to themselves, commuters and pedestrians (Bello et al, 2012). Commercial drivers perceive that they are engaged in hard, stressful and risky job as they hustle to fend for themselves and their families. Studies have established that majority of commercial drivers in Nigeria are into the job because of the high rate of unemployment in country (Oridota et al, 2013). In addition, the high cost of petrol, high cost of vehicle maintenance, low receivable income, road traffic accidents associated with high level of mortality and morbidity are factors of stress of commercial drivers in Nigeria (Onyi, 2018). Likewise, engaging in irregular and long working hours most times do predispose commercial drivers to back pain, fatigue and stress (Osamika et al, 2021). Since uncontrolled stress can result into poor health which can affect job performance, the affected individual may find solace in alcohol use. The study of Olatunji et al. (2017) discovered that high

stress level associated with commercial driving negatively resulted in high alcohol consumption and tobacco smoking.

Prevalence of alcohol abuse among drivers

Common use or high prevalence of alcohol use among commercial drivers in western societies has been documented in many studies (Oluwadiya & Fatoye, 2012; Yunusa & Obembe, 2012). In the general driving population, Commercial drivers are notably high-risk drinkers with about two-thirds to over four-fifth prevalence of drivers consuming alcohol (Bello et al, 2012). Prevalence rate of alcohol use according to Abiona, Aloba & Fatoye (2006) was 67.2% with 47% being 'heavy' users; 15.3% 'moderate' users and 37.7% were occasional or 'mild' users. Likewise, in +recent study on psychoactive substance, it was revealed that alcohol (51%) was the most commonly abused substances among commercial drivers (Akande, et al., 2023). In Nigeria and some other countries, large body of evidence shows a high prevalence of use of psychoactive substances and alcohol among various categories of commercial drivers (Adekoya et al., 2011). Another similar study on drivers revealed that all the participant drivers do consume alcohol with 93.75% often indulging in alcohol consumption and 6.25% being occasional

users respectively, while recorded accidents equally showed that high percentage of drivers in Nigeria are driving under the influence of alcohol (Akpan & Ikorok, 2014).

Determinants of alcohol abuse

No single risk factor can be said to be responsible to vulnerability of a person to develop problematic alcohol consumption. Many factors have been identified to determine the levels and patterns of alcohol consumption among commercial drivers. The factors ranges from individual influences such as age, gender and socio-economic status. In addition, societal factors like culture, social norms, availability of alcohol, advertisement, and poor enforcement of alcohol policies.

Age

The age limit for drinking alcohol in Nigeria is 18 and above but many youths start alcohol abuse much earlier than it is legally acceptable age. Absence of strict consequences or sanctions for underage drinking may be the reason many youth engage in the habit. Studies have documented that commercial drivers' age is significantly and negatively associated with usage of alcohol with younger drivers mostly using alcohol than the older drivers (Osamika et al, 2021). This might explain

the reason for the presence of alcohol-attributable disease burden such as assaults, liver cirrhosis and injuries from motor accidents and among young people aged 15-29 years (Odeigah, Olley & Patton, 2018)

Individuals

Drivers have many reasons for deciding to drink alcohol. Some individuals consume alcohol majorly to reduce stress or ease tension, while some engage in it to socialize, enhance performance, succumbing to peer pressure or by wanting to feel fine (Oridota, et al, 2013). Another crucial reasons according to Akpan & Ikorok (2014) entailed drivers drinking to stay awake and to enhance driving. Alcohol been a depressant has the potential to induce the feelings of relaxation, hence, some individuals can use it as coping strategy to escape from problematic issues like work-related issue, legal or mental health problems. Existing body of literature has it on record that individual turn to alcohol social reasons in celebration of wedding or birthday parties, the need to belong to a peer group where members are alcohol users or family history of alcoholism can predispose an individual to alcohol abuse. In 4 addition, fun or positive past experience and environment of a person such as attractive

advertisement may make alcohol use appealing (Elena & Allison, 2023)

Gender

Alcohol consumption has been observed to vary across gender and culture based on the findings that men across the world consume more alcohol than women (Sudhinaraset, Wigglesworth & Takeuchi, 2016). Likewise, a similar study revealed that males are at a higher risk of high-risk alcohol consumption as males reportedly consume over three quarters of alcohol globally as well as male consuming higher 85.5% than female 65.5% alcohol (Bello et al, 2012; Dias, et al, 2011).

Societal factors

Alcohol use in Nigerian communities is a legal drug though with minimum age limitation set at restraint preventing young people from consuming alcohol (Dunbili, 2013) and laws prohibiting public and drink-driving. The substance has been widely used in many cultures for centuries for worship, medicinal preparations and as relaxant. Globally, drinking alcohol has been a common feature of social gathering with alcohol use deeply embedded in many societies (Chikere & Mayowa, 2011). Consumption of alcohol is widely considered as part of social activities in Nigeria with most consumers seldom

drinking alone (Gureje and Lasebikan, 2006). Alcohol's ability to enhance sociability makes it important in social setting.

It is believed that low or moderate consumption of alcohol could lower blood sugar and weight and it is good for the circulatory system as well as social health. Other social benefits associated with social bonding, having dependable friends and improvement in social activities like singing, communication laughing, dancing and reinforcing social bonds (Dunbar et al, 2017).

Exposure to social media such as television and various forms of entertainment has been recorded to influence social norms about alcohol through advertisement (Sudhinaraset, et al. 2016). Studies have shown that exposure to alcohol marketing through traditional advertising and current digital media channels significantly increase alcohol consumption by users (Gabrielli, et al., 2019).

Culture

Less educated men reported higher consumption than educated men (Dias, Oliveira & Lopes, (2011). Alcohol is very common during group meetings, marriage ceremonies, burials and during rituals. In many of these occasions, alcoholic beverages such as hot drinks, palm wine,

local gin are freely served while during rituals, strong alcoholic drink are used in pouring libations (Nwagu, Dibia and Odo, 2017). Alcohol has many functions in society and represents cultural, religious and symbolic meanings in most countries. Cultures determine majorly constitute what is acceptable in locality. Socio-cultural values and norms has been implicated in the determination of either acceptance or rejection of alcohol in many societies which has amplified the importance of alcoholic beverages in many cultures for thousands of years (Nwagu,et al, 2017). Alcohol intake at high doses in particular tends to claim the lives of many people of Ede town in Southwestern Nigeria (Lasebikan et al. 2018).

Availability

The availability and accessibility of alcohol can make it easier for people to indulge in it. Research evidence on alcohol from community revealed a rapid increase in availability of alcohol within the last few decades based on the increase in production, importation resulting in increase in consumption across all age groups in Nigeria (Lasebikan, et al, 2018). Easy availability, low level of education and low paid jobs have been recorded as some of the enabling factor for alcohol consumption (Ramanan and Singh, 2016). Presence of alcoholic beverages in the

vicinity of motor parks encourages usage among commercial drivers (Abiona, et al, 2006). The most popular alcoholic beverages openly sold within all the motor parks are fermented adulterated local beverage known as 'paraga' or 'sepe' or jedi or ale and bland locally prepared liquor known as 'ogogoro' (Lasebikan & Ayinde, 2012). Commercial drivers, motorpark touts and occasionally some commuters do take time to drink before commencing on their journey because the substance is easily within their reach. The noise of the hawkers while advertising the presence of the substance can lure weak alcohol users to drinking the substance. Alcohol in some instances could be taken by deception. The influx of herbal drinks believed to contain substance that can increase libido, sexual desire, sexual attraction, sexual pleasure, or sexual behaviour activities into the Nigerian society is rising daily and this has significantly increase the consumption rate of aphrodisiac drinks by commercial drivers in Nigeria (Olaniran et al, 2022). Various forms of alcoholic substance believed to have herbal preparation are commonly sold in motor parks in Nigeria which makes it possible for commercial drivers to have easy access to these alcoholic substances (Oluwadiya & Fatoye, 2012)

Poor enforcement of alcohol policies

The contribution of alcohol to road traffic accidents including other social and health consequences signifies the strategic importance of alcohol control among commercial drivers. To nib alcohol related problems in the bud, policy actions to address harmful alcohol use was proposed in the 2007 Federal Road Safety Act. Reports have it that presently there is no standalone, comprehensive policy to regulate the harmful use of alcohol in Nigeria. The reasons could be linked with the low multi-sectoral action for the formulation of the alcohol related policy as well as the non-involvement of several relevant sectors that have critical roles in policy implementation in the formulation process resulting in the lack of holistic or health-sector led policy document to regulate the accessibility, marketing and promotion of alcohol (Abiona, Oluwasanu and Oladepo, 2019). Reduction in the harmful consumption of alcohol through the implementation of effective policies can be achieved only through a good understanding of the development process of the policy and the application of workable strategies.

The fact that uncontrolled alcohol use is associated with 4,679 road traffic accidents in 2006, the figure increased to 6,450 in 2013 and an estimate of 35,641 road traffic fatalities coupled with the

financial burden on the country economy Nigeria has yet to implement alcohol control policy (Odeigah et al, 2018). Despite the discovered high and uncontrolled rates of alcohol use and high death among commercial vehicle drivers, policies under the influence of alcohol and brain altering substances have not been fully enforced by law enforcement agents (Lasebikan & Ayinde, 2012).

The absence of alcohol control policy might be the reason behind the uncontrolled level of alcohol consumption among commercial drivers. With the significant alcohol-related problems in Nigeria, the way out would have been that the government formulate appropriate policies to reduce the weight of the problems but government has found it difficult to surmount some factors preventing the formulation and implementation of the relevant policies to checkmate the marketing, advertising, production and consumption of alcohol

Effects of Alcohol Use

Impact of alcohol consumption on acute or chronic health outcomes would largely be determined by the pattern of drinking as well as the volume of alcohol consumed. The harmful use of alcohol has been linked with high burden of diseases that can have significant physical, social and economic consequences on user and

by extension affect the lives of those around them such family members, friends and other people (Okafor et al, 2022). Alcohol consumption, most especially heavy drinking has been identified as underlying cause of over 30 health conditions and contributing factors to many others (Jurgen, 2011). Studies revealed that excessive alcohol intake will result in modification of blood chemistry because increasing intake of alcohol will result into reduction in the energy obtained from proteins, fat and carbohydrates (Edo & Nwosu, 2022). Alcohol use plays a significant role in car crashes and accident arising from driving under the influence of alcohol. Drink-driving has been found to be the greatest risk factor for road traffic accidents in Nigeria (Odeigah, et al, 2018). Accidents associated with alcohol are more likely to result in death or more severe injury than when alcohol is not involved (Salaudeen et al, 2019). Alcohol intoxication impairs judgment as discovered in studies that revealed that alcohol was a factor in about fifty percent of commercial drivers' death in road traffic accidents (Bello, et al, 2012) with alcohol use been implicated in every three of five motor vehicle accidents (Akande, et al. 2023). Drink-driving has been discovered to be a risk factor for traffic accidents. Studies have shown that driving under the influence of various

psychoactive substances with alcohol been the most involved have been associated with many incidences of vehicular crashes causing significant ailments and death in many communities (Onwuka & Okoye, 2020; Khatir et al 2022). Drink-driving has been implicated in 21-30% of car crash injuries among drivers (Bragazzi, et al, 2018).

In addition, intoxication with alcohol is closely associated violent and aggressive behaviour, increased risk of accidents, vomiting and nausea, headaches, hangover, reduced sexual performance while excessive consumption can result into long term chronic health problems such as high blood pressure, depression, liver disease, gastric ulcer, forgetfulness, premature aging, forgetfulness and cancer (Okafor et al, 2022). Health problems arising from the withdrawal such as tremor, sweating, anxiety, headache, insomnia, hallucinations, convulsion (Bruton, 2010) could negatively impede driving skills.

Conclusion

Drivers of commercial vehicles are of special interest in this study because commercial road transport is the major means of transportation in Nigeria. Extensive body of knowledge has shown the high prevalence of alcohol use among commercial drivers and the danger that the

act pose on the society based on the findings that commercial drivers that consume alcohol in a hazardous manner could endanger several lives. Based on reviewed literature it is suggested that the extant alcohol control should be distinct and enforced appropriately. Health education and sensitization programme on hazards of alcohol.

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