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An assessment of how alcohol availability contributes to underage youth drinking in Gauteng, South Africa

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ABSTRACT
*Underage drinking is one of the consistent growing social problems throughout the world (Rolando & Katainen, 2014). In mitigating this phenomenon various communities across the globe adopted multifaceted interventions ranging from socialisation mechanisms to legislative regulations (*Carels, Florence, Adams and Savahl., 2022*). This article explores factors that perpetuate this phenomenon through the assessment of the current measures in the province to prohibit juveniles in accessing alcohol. Using a quantitative technique, researchers selected 40 participants in the five districts of Gauteng. Subsequently, the data was captured and analysed using a statistical package for windows known as Census and Survey processing software (CSPro) (GDCS, 2021). The descriptive statistics charts were developed to depict variations and commonalities from the datasets. Finally, cross tabulation was used to test the relationship between variables (GDCS, 2021).*

KEYWORDS: *Underage drinking, liquor act enforcement, juvenile substance abuse, Liquor Policing Strategy*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Underage drinking is one of the complex behavioural challenges that impact different countries throughout the world (Rolando & Katainen, 2014). In an effort to deal with this phenomenon, various countries across the globe adopted multiple interventions to prohibit juveniles from accessing and consuming alcohol (Rolando & Katainen, 2014). These measures include among others the promulgation of legislative prescripts that regulate the sale of alcohol to underage youth (GDCS, 2021). However, despite all attempts to set the minimum age for legal drinking, minors are still able to access alcohol with ease in South Africa (Fletcher, Toomey, Wagenaar, Short, & Willenbring, 2000).

According to research, the current level of alcohol consumption among youth in South Africa has a significant impact on their quality of life, which in turn negatively affects the country's public health system and economy (Carels, Florence, Adams, & Savahl, 2022). Underage drinking has become an everyday reality; that directly or indirectly impairs young peoples' lives, not only individually, but also on familial, societal and national levels (Hanes, 2012; Carels et al., 2022).

This article explores the impact of poor enforcement of liquor regulations on the growing trend of underage drinking among the youth in Gauteng. The intention in this regard is to identify factors that are responsible for ineffective application of the provisions of section 46 of the Gauteng Liquor Act (Act 2 of 2003). Drawing from the Gauteng Department of Community Safety's 2021 study on the impact of alcohol on the province's communities, this paper further examines the effects of underage drinking on crime. The ultimate objective of this article is to designate policy and legislative gaps in regulating liquor access to the underage youth in Gauteng.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a succinct account of the literature reviewed to understand the fundamental tenants that underpin the phenomenon of underage drinking in Gauteng. For this article to successfully investigate factors that impact poor application of the regulations that are aimed at prohibiting juvenile drinking in Gauteng, it remains prudent to examine factors leading to alcohol abuse. This is critical in establishing the research context which the 2021 GDCS research study was based on. This section highlights the factors leading to alcohol abuse and the impact of alcohol in South Africa. It also includes a literature review on the socio-economic impact of alcohol abuse, and measures meant to reduce the abuse of alcohol within communities.

2.1 Factors that contribute to alcohol usage

2.1.1 Modernisation and urbanisation

Rapid social and economic changes stemming from urbanisation account for new patterns of drinking in most African settings (Parry & Bennets, 1998). However, such emerging patterns are often not built upon traditional drinking behaviours where there was social control (Parry & Bennets, 1998). Instead, these are influenced by factors such as easy access to alcohol, which has a higher ethanol content, as well as vigorous advertising in the media (GDCS,2021; Parry & Bennets, 1998). Such factors disregard traditional constraints on when alcohol may be consumed, by whom and where (Parry & Bennets, 1998). Previously, a pattern existed where people used to drink until "the beer ran out", but this is being radically replaced by a pattern of drinking "until the money runs out" (Jernigan, Monteiro, Room & Saxena, 2000).

Furthermore, alcohol consumption has become highly commoditised and is no longer restricted to adults or certain restricted occasions (Willis, 2006). The traditional culture of drinking, which seemed to have been obtained and determined by "proper" drinking patterns, appears to have been eroded and replaced by multiple drinking cultures varying from one community to another (Willis, 2006). Most of these drinking cultures openly challenge earlier ideas of temperance, age and gender restrictions; and migration has also contributed to this problem (Willis, 2006). Urbanisation appears to have impacted negatively on rural areas, as some of the urban ways disperse back to them (Willis, 2006). For instance, traditional home-brewed beverages, known for their nutritional value, have been replaced by deadly concoctions which pose a health hazard (Willis, 2006).

2.1.2 Alcohol availability

One of the causes of alcohol abuse and misuse is its availability in terms of location, time and affordability (Parry & Bennets,1998). For example, in South Africa in 1997, there were about 22 900 licensed outlets, including liquor stores, restaurants, taverns and supermarkets (Parry & Bennets,1998; GDCS, 2021). This compared to about 20 000 informal liquor outlets, such as shebeens, which were mostly unregulated and operated outside the confines of the law; however, after nearly a decade these outlets had multiplied (Parry & Bennets,1998). The Gauteng Liquor Act of 2003 regulated the times when liquor could be traded in the province (DTI, 2016). However, outlets such as supermarkets and taverns traded at different times than bottle stores (Setlalentoa, 2009). Nevertheless, some unregulated outlets operated according to demand (GDED, 2011; DTI,2012). According to Setlalentoa (2009), the age restriction at that time was 18 years and this information was displayed in bottle stores and supermarkets, but there were no proper measures to ensure that it was adhered to. This has made alcohol easily and widely available and affordable to all races, genders, and ages, despite the restrictions (Setlalentoa, 2009).

2.1.3 Gender factors

A number of scholarly articles highlight gender dynamics as one of the contributory factors in their analysis of alcohol use and related problems (GDCS, 2021). Thus, masculinity and femininity are considered in very specific ways when it comes to alcohol use (Carels et al., 2022). According to literature, men are portrayed as vulnerable users of alcohol and other harmful substances (Wechsberg et al., 2016; Peer, Lombard, Steyn, & Levitt, 2014). Furthermore, they often become violent and bound to harmful masculinity (Makanga, Schuurman, & Randall, 2015; Pérez et al., 2016). Women, on the other hand, are portrayed as victims (Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002) and as vulnerable (Wechsberg et al., 2014; Makanga et al., 2015; Wechsberg et al., 2016). Du Toit and Neves (2007) moreover portray women purely in economic terms, as survivalist entrepreneurs and Peer et al. (2014) portray women, specifically black women, as users of alcohol and other harmful substances.

2.1.4 Violence, crime and alcohol

Alcohol abuse is a significant risk factor for domestic violence and intra-family violence, although the relationship is complex (WHO, 2004). Evidence has suggested a strong association between abuse and marital violence, but that violence rates identified vary, based on research design, methodologies and samples (WHO, 2004).

In 1998 a South African cross-sectional study on violence against women, undertaken in the Western Cape (WC), KwaZulu Natal (KZN) and Gauteng (GP) provinces, found that domestic violence was significantly positively correlated with women drinking alcohol, and conflict over the partner's drinking (Jewkes, Levin, & Penn-Kekana,2002). Jewkes et al., (2002) further stated that alcohol is often one of the factors that are present in

the gender-based violent events. The results of Phase 3 of the Arrestee study which was conducted in three (3) metropolitan cities (Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg) during August and September 2000 in South Africa, also reported a high level of drug use, including alcohol use among arrestees (Jewkes et al., 2002). Overall, 50% or more people arrested for crimes such as drug and alcohol offences, housebreaking, motor vehicle theft and rape tested positive for at least one drug (Jewkes et al., 2002). Exposure of children to violence and alcohol was also identified as one of the developmental factors contributing to violence (Boles & Miotto, 2003). Withdrawal symptoms can develop into aggressive behaviour towards family members, friends or members of the community (Rasool, Vermaak, Pharaoh, Louw & Stavrou, 2002). Furthermore, these violent behaviours often result in sexual assault (Boles & Miotto, 2003 ; Rasool, Vermaak, Pharaoh, Louw, & Stavrou, 2002).

2.1.5 The relationship between alcohol and crime

The research has revealed that alcohol use is viewed as one of the key drivers of abuse and violence between partners (Freeman & McDonald, 2015); especially violent crime (Seekings & Thaler, 2014) and sexual crime (Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002; Gibson, 2003; Thaler, 2012). However, the difficulties of enforcing alcohol policy and policing crimes where alcohol has played a significant role has also been well represented (Lawhon, 2013; Charman et al., 2014; Drivdal & Lawhon, 2014; Herrick, 2014; Freeman & McDonald, 2015).

The three-metros study as reported on by Leggett, Louw, & Parry, (2002) and Parry, Plüddemann, Louw, and Leggett, (2004) presented a large body of work on the relationships between alcohol and substance use and crime in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. When arrestees in these areas were subjected to urinalysis, a significant proportion tested positive for alcohol or other substances (Leggett et al., 2002). This was especially true for those arrested on housebreaking or alcohol and drug-related offences, as well as those with previous arrests (Parry et al., 2004). The use of alcohol and other substances as a driver for rape and sexual coercion was also noted (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). However, while men arrested on rape or attempted rape charges were likely to test positive for alcohol or other substances, inebriated women were also more likely to become victims of rape and other sexual crimes (Leggett et al., 2002; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Gibson (2003) also found the persistence of violent masculinities to be one driver of alcohol abuse in sexual violence and rape.

Crime and alcohol abuse were traced back to the same structural drivers by Robins (2002). As his findings suggested the two were intricately linked to persistent poverty and inequality between the middle and working classes (Robins, 2002). This has presented significant challenges for the policing of substance-fuelled crimes, as current efforts at law enforcement have failed to reflect the complex nature of these combined problems (Seekings & Thaler, 2014). As a result, holistic approaches such as a focus on spatial control and management may be necessary to tackle the problem while addressing the bigger picture driving crime (Herrick, 2014; Seekings & Thaler, 2014; Smit, 2014).

2.2 Impact of alcohol on communities

2.2.1 Alcohol and economic cost

According to the WHO (2004), the annual economic cost of alcohol misuse in South Africa at the beginning of the twenty-first century ranged between 0.5% and 1.9% of the gross domestic product (GDP) (WHO, 2004). These figures were based on the utilisation of a middle-of-the-range estimate which considered costs associated with treatment, trauma, mortality and crime (WHO, 2004). This translated to about R8.7 billion per year, an amount almost twice that received in excise duties on alcoholic beverages in the period 2000/01 (DSD, 2007). Moreover, alcohol abuse and poor roads were cited as the main contributing factors for traffic accidents (Brysiewicz, 2001). For example, it was found that motor vehicle crashes in the country accounted for approximately 11 deaths per 100 million kilometres travelled, while traffic crashes that involved pedestrians accounted for about 40% of annual mortality on the roads in South Africa (Brysiewicz, 2001).

2.2.2 Poverty and alcohol

Matzopoulos, Bowman, Mathews, and Myers (2010) recognised the significance of both alcohol and poverty, amongst other factors, as drivers of interpersonal violence. Their review of potential interventions for interpersonal violence prevention highlighted the need for a multi-sectoral approach which addresses poverty on a structural level and alcohol use on a behavioural level (Matzopoulos et al.,2010). The complexity that is required for interventions to be successful was also illustrated by Lawhon et al. (2014); however, alcohol control strategies rarely consider the structural drivers of problem drinking, including poverty (Lawhon et al. (2014).

Alcohol policy enforcement therefore needs to go hand-in-hand with poverty alleviation strategies, among other aspects, for it to be successful (GDCS, 2021). Swart (2006) presented the development of social capital as a strategy to stem poverty in Western Cape communities, eradicating associated social ills such as alcohol and drug abuse in the process. He noted the unique position of religious communities in facilitating such a process.

Several studies suggest that the relaxation of law enforcement around illegal alcohol trade in townships has been driven by the centrality of the alcohol trade to the township economy (Robins, 2002). Poverty is understood as an enduring legacy of South Africa's apartheid past, fostered by socio-spatial engineering and perpetuated by the country's massive unemployment levels (Robins, 2002). Additionally, poverty has been cited as a driver for problem drinking and alcohol abuse (Lawhon, 2013; Seekings & Thaler, 2014; Makanga et al., 2015).

Several studies from the alcohol industry-funded Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation have pointed to the role of shebeens as so-called incubators of black entrepreneurship, and the importance of shebeens in providing employment (Charman & Petersen, 2010; Charman, Petersen & Piper, 2013). For example, according to Charman et al. (2009), shebeens at that time employed 77 800 people in the Western Cape. The maintained employment was threatened by stricter alcohol law enforcement (Charman & Petersen, 2010).

This figure was based on an estimate by Charman et al. (2009) of 20 500 illegal shebeens in the Western Cape, which was 257% higher than the number of 6 000 to 7 000 estimated by the SAPS, as cited in the same article (Charman et al., 2009). These studies also drew only on shebeen owners and other operators in the alcohol industry as key informants and failed to engage with the general population (Charman et al., 2009).

The women who participated in Kane's (2009) study described a very specific experience of poverty, informed by a pervasive sense of insecurity, lack of safety and lack of protection for their children. Moreover, they directly linked their experience of poverty to the alcohol abuse of male partners and neighbours (Charman et al., 2009). The flip side of the experience of these women was suggested by Herrick (2014), whose study positioned drinking and visiting shebeens as the only rational option for the poverty-stricken populations of Western Cape townships.

Du Toit and Neves (2007) further documented the establishment and management of shebeens as a way of surviving outside the formal economy for unemployed residents of Khayelitsha and the Eastern Cape. According to Herrick (2014) the illicit sale of alcohol in townships was posited as both the driver and alleviator to pervasive conditions of poverty. However, these authors failed to engage with the majority of the population in each case, with their sampling biased in favour of those who do gain materially from the sale of alcohol (Herrick 2014;GDCS, 2021). This Industry-funded research highlighted the potential of shebeens as entrepreneurial enterprises to influence poverty levels in townships and the unintended effects on shebeens, owners and customers (Petersen & Charman, 2010).

According to Petersen and Charman's (2010) case study, the mass closure of unlicensed shebeens had dire consequences for the livelihoods of shebeen owners and their employees (many of whom had never been employed in the formal economy). The case study drew on their previous work, data from media reports, policy documents and interviews with shebeen operators, as well as a discussion forum with 31 shebeen owners conducted in 2010 (Petersen & Charman, 2010). The input of members of the broader community was, again, conspicuously absent (Petersen & Charman, 2010). According to shebeen owners interviewed by them, the stricter regulation of the flow of alcohol to shebeens had the undesirable effect of encouraging the manufacture of illicit alcohol, with deadly consequences for some patrons (Mtyala, 2009).

The effects of what is typified as poor law enforcement strategies were expanded upon by Charman et al. (2013). They maintained that current enforcement strategies were tying shebeen owners to the informal economy, and hamstringing efforts to migrate informal businesses into the formal economy (Charman et al., 2013). Again, these authors relied on interviews with shebeen owners only, privileging the concerns of those who sold alcohol, whether legally or illegally, over the concerns of the communities at large in which alcohol merchants operated (Charman et al., 2013). Of the 117 shebeen operators in their sample, only 41% had made some effort to apply for licencing, with new businesses, businesses with low capital and businesses with a low turnover failing to do so; those who had applied for licences were notably well-resourced and had extended business networks that supported them (Charman et al., 2013).

2.3 Alcohol policy and prevention strategies literature

2.3.1 The media influence and regulation of alcohol promotion

Advertising and commercial marketing of alcohol plays a substantial role in the promotion and consumption of alcoholic beverages (Babor, 2010). Alcohol products have been traditionally promoted through an integrated mix of strategies notably: television, print and radio media, the internet and point of sale promotions (Babor, 2010; Caetano et al., 2003). For instance, alcohol brands have been associated with particular consumer identities, lifestyles and sport, and repeated exposure to advertising messages has been shown to cultivate a user culture (Caetano et al., 2003). Not only do individuals respond cognitively to advertising messages, but their perceptions about the level of consumption by others may also be influenced (Babor et al., 2003). Hawks et al. (2002) referred to several studies, which showed that the advertising of alcohol products, particularly beer, if associated with sporting competence were found to influence the perceptions and future drinking intentions of underage viewers, particularly males.

Self-regulation in the alcohol industry has been documented as poor because it is not self-serving (Scott et al., 2002). Further, there has been a particular concern for developing contexts where alcohol and tobacco have continued to be widely marketed, and consumption levels have increased (Hawks et al., 2002). Both the alcohol and tobacco industries have deliberately targeted developing countries because there is a large body of consumers who do not consume these products and who therefore represent an untapped market for these industries (Hawks et al. 2002).

2.3.2 Instituting restrictions on outlet density

Increasing the opportunity costs associated with obtaining alcohol, by restricting outlet density has been shown to affect consumption levels and alcohol-related problems (Parry, 2005). In the South African setting, Parry (2005) suggested that the licensing of all currently unlicensed outlets, and the offering of incentives to liquor outlets should move, so as to change outlet density.

2.3.3 Community-based programmes

Interventions concerning community response have typically included the involvement of police, health and justice systems, as well as community leaders and a Community-Based Organisation (CBO), known as a "systematic" approach (Hawks et al, 2002). Authors have noted that the success of such programmes is contingent on ownership, choice of community, and sustainable linkages between key players; nevertheless, evidence has been problematic to appraise due to the multiplicative nature of the interventions (Hawks et al, 2002). Furthermore, interventions that are popular in the community may not be feasible within their remit, such as changing liquor licensing laws (Hawks et al, 2002). The Communities that Care (CTC) programme has been implemented in the past in several hundred communities in the USA, Netherlands, Scotland, Wales and Australia (Hawks et al, 2002). In the CTC programme, communities have used local data on risk and protective factors to develop interventions that reduce community violence and aggression (Jané-Lopis, 2005). Also, before-and-after studies have demonstrated improvements in youth cognitive abilities, parental skills, community relations, and decreases in behavioural problems, assault charges, drug offences and burglaries (Jané-Lopis, 2005). Similar interventions have been successfully implemented in India and China where community interventions reduced alcohol consumption, drug abuse and domestic violence (Patel et al., 2005).

2.3.4 Education and school-based programmes

Evidence on early intervention approaches, based on the provision of information and education on substance abuse, has shown that these factors may impact knowledge of substances, but fail to impact drug and alcohol use (Botvin, 2000). Moreover, introducing long-term programmes at the primary school level may increase the effectiveness of such programmes if the following are included as approaches (Parry, 2005):

- Increasing parental and community support;
- Incorporating peer-led and life skills training;
- Incorporating resistance training within a culturally relevant context; and
- Providing alternate recreational activities.

2.4 Liquor regulation framework

In 1997 the South African government started a process of restructuring liquor trading in the country to facilitate entry into the industry (Manamela and Snyman, 2020). This culminated in the adoption of various pieces of legislation to regulate the production and the retail of alcohol in South Africa (Manamela and Snyman, 2020). Act 59 of 2003 The National Liquor Act of 2003 (NLA) (Act 59 of 2003), is responsible for regulating the manufacturing and distribution of alcohol at the macro level and the provincial legislations provide retail and small-scale production guidelines (DTI, 2003; Manamela and Snyman, 2020).

In the case of Gauteng, the 1989 Liquor Act (Act 27 of 1989) was replaced by the NLA of 2003 (Act, 59 of 2003) to regulate macro manufacturing and distribution of liquor in the country (GDED, 2011; DTI, 2016). Similarly, the Gauteng Liquor Act (Act, 2 of 2003) was also promulgated with an intent of providing guidelines on the micro production and retail of alcohol in the province (GDED, 2011; Manamela and Snyman, 2020). In addition to the national and provincial regulations for the production and retail of alcohol in the province, the municipalities have a significant role in defining the locations of the liquor outlets in Gauteng (DTI, 2012).

In the context of this paper the emphasis would be vested in examining the aspects of the legislation aimed at preventing underage drinking in the province. These include:

- Section 9 subsection 1(A) and section 10 of the NLA.
- Section 45 and 46 of the Gauteng Liquor Act (GLA) (Act, 2 of 2003); and
- Regulation 13 paragraph 3(C and F) (DTI, 2012).

All the above-mentioned pieces of legislation stipulate that the minimum drinking age is 18 years old (Manamela and Snyman, 2020). Moreover, it is worth noting that there are indications as reflected by the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) liquor regulations conference report, which was held in March 2012 to increase the drinking age to 21 years (DTI, 2012; DTI, 2016).

Both the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) conference report and Gauteng's draft liquor regulation policy, acknowledge the ineffective application of the said rules (DTI, 2012; GDED, 2011). For Manamela and Snyman, (2020) this is perpetuated by a lack of capacity from both the South African Police Service (SAPS) and Liquor Board Inspectorate. The proliferation of unlicensed liquor outlets, particularly in the townships further enhances the chances of underage youth to access alcohol (GDED, 2011; Manamela and Snyman, 2020).

2.5 Concluding remarks

The poor implementation of the current regulations to prevent access to alcohol by minors provides a serious challenge in reducing underage drinking in Gauteng (GDED, 2011). It is within this context that the 2016 National Liquor Regulations Policy calls for stricter measures in preventing underage youth from consuming alcohol (DTI, 2016). This policy to a larger extent succeeds in designating critical reforms to enhance the efforts of minimising the under-age youth access to alcohol (DTI, 2016). However, the key challenge remains with the impact of socio-cultural influences that perpetuate the normalisation of alcohol abuse in communities (Carels et al., 2022; Manamela and Snyman, 2020). It is therefore critical to devise multifaceted strategic approaches to address underage drinking in the province (Manamela and Snyman, 2020).

III. METHODOLOGY

The data that underpins the thesis of this article is drawn from a study which was conducted by the GDCS in the 2021/2022 financial year to determine the impact of alcohol on communities in Gauteng province. The original research study largely employed a quantitative approach in examining the aforementioned subject matter through administering survey questionnaires (GDCS, 2021). In addition, open-ended questions were used to triangulate the data sources (GDCS, 2021). Moreover, this also enabled the researchers to explore the nuances that informed the perspectives of the community members on the impact of alcohol on crime (GDCS, 2021). A total of 2 736 participants were sampled from the 40 high crime policing precincts across all five districts in Gauteng, using the 2021 population mid-year estimates from Statistics South Africa (GDCS, 2021). In alignment with research sampling procedures, the confidence level for the study was estimated to be 90% with a margin error of 10% (GDCS, 2021). The study participants thoughts on the subject matter were explored in the following aspects: they subsume among others the proliferation of liquor outlets in their communities, the availability of alcohol to underage youth and its impact on crime in their areas (GDCS, 2021). Finally, the data

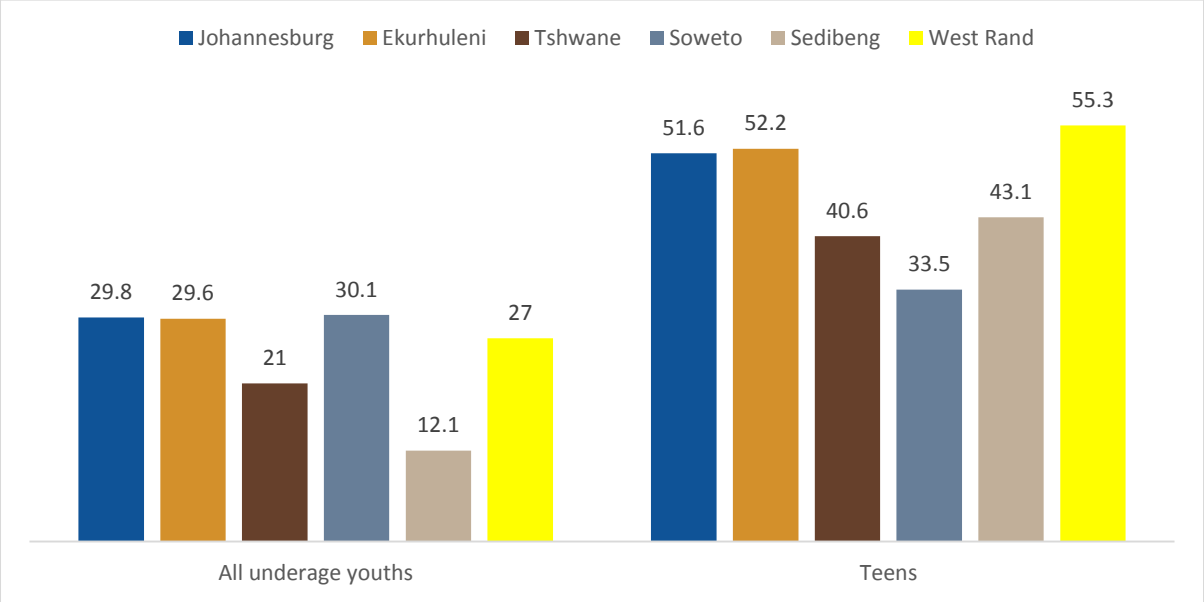
was captured and analysed using a statistical package for Windows known as Census and Survey Processing Software (CSPro) (GDCS, 2021). The descriptive statistics charts were developed to depict common and divergent nuances from the data, subsequently cross tabulation was used to test the relationship between variables (GDCS, 2021).

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Accessibility of Alcohol in Communities

The 2021 GDCS study also sought to establish the extent and impact of underage drinking in the province. This was realised by examination of the perceptions of participants on the ease of teens access to alcohol (GDCS, 2021). When analysing the data, the researchers noted that 47.8% of participants argued that it was very easy for teens to obtain alcohol within their communities, while 27.8% noted that it was somewhat easy for all underage youths to obtain alcohol. When the ease of teens and underage youths' access to alcohol was grouped by metropolitan areas, the highest proportion of participants who classified underage youths access to alcohol as 'very easy' were in Soweto, followed by Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, and then West Rand. A further statistical test conducted to establish the level of significance of differences yielded a rejected null hypothesis at the 90% confidence level. It was hence concluded that communities' views on the ease of access to alcohol by underage youth differs significantly between districts/major metropolitan areas. Figure 1 below provides a clear delineation of this phenomenon.

Figure 1: Ease of underage youth and teens access to alcohol by major metropolitan areas



4.2 Sources of alcohol for underage youth

In addition, the study results showed a high proportion of participants (21.4%) who thought that underage youth obtain their alcohol from private youth parties, while fairly high numbers argued that underage youth obtain their alcohol from other youth, older friends, and friends homes. These findings suggest that there are possible loopholes within communities that underage youth drinking alcohol can take advantage of, such as parties and older friends.

On the possible consequences of teen alcohol abuse, the majority of participants (54.4%) noted that it was "very likely" for teens who abuse alcohol to be suspended from school. In addition, the majority of participants (52.8%) noted that it was "very likely" for teens who abuse alcohol to experience arrest as teens. Another majority (54.5%) noted that it was "very likely" for teens who abuse alcohol to experience physical or mental harm from themselves or others. Moreover, the majority of participants (57.4%) argued that it was "very likely" for teens who abuse alcohol to experience difficulty in achieving future life goals. Lastly, the majority of participants (58.4%) noted that it was "very likely" for teens who abuse alcohol to experience alcoholism as adults. These findings paint a picture of communities who feel that teen alcohol abuse within their areas is likely to lead to extremely negative consequences. This suggests the need for immediate action in such communities to curb teen alcohol abuse and its possible consequences.

To solicit further responses on the ease of access to alcohol by teens in their communities, participants were asked to indicate the places where they think underage youth obtain alcohol. Figure 2 below summarises the findings.

Figure 2: Sources of alcohol for underage youth

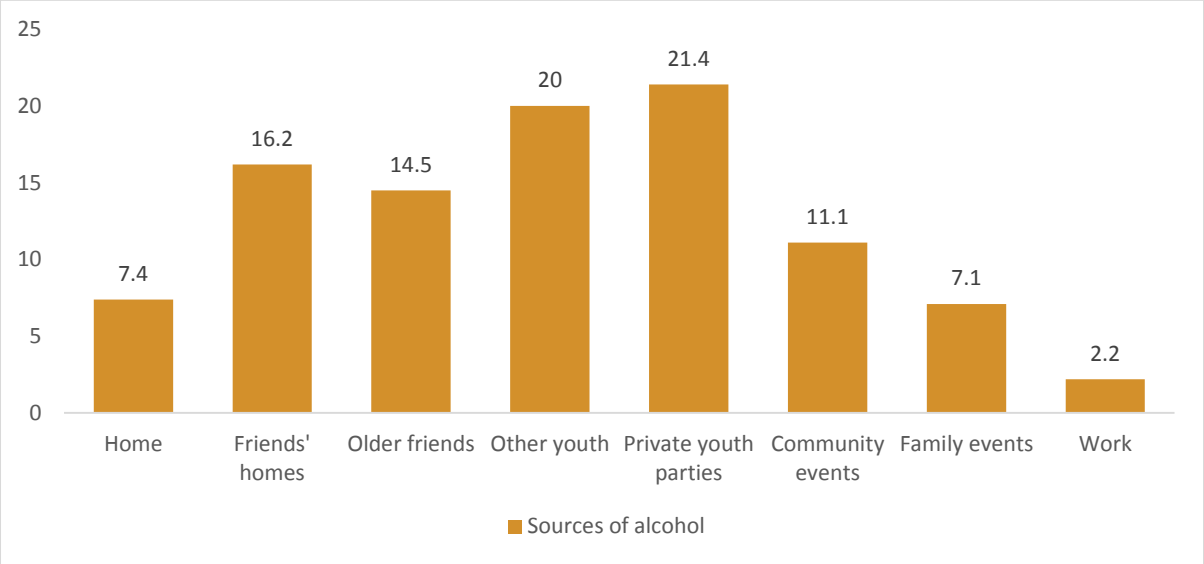


Figure 2 above depicts that the most mentioned alcohol sources for underage youth in Gauteng communities were private youth parties (21.4%), followed by other youth with 20%, friends' homes (16.2%), and older friends (14.5%). Other mentioned sources include at home (7.4%), community events (11.1%), family events (7.1%), and work (2.2%). The majority of participants pointed out that underage youth obtain alcohol from private youth parties, as well as other youth.

V. Conclusion

The study used primary community perceptions data to establish the extent of problem drinking as well as its impact on communities, and the popularity of suggested measures. Cross-referencing data from multiple variables across major metropolitan areas revealed that the prevalence of underage drinking and alcohol abuse varied throughout the province. In addition, different communities offered different degrees of support for suggested measures against alcohol abuse, hence pointing to the need for customised solutions to alcohol abuse in different communities. Another key takeaway from the study was that communities across Gauteng appear to be fairly wary of the extent of alcohol abuse within their areas as well as the prevalence of crime at or around liquor outlets and are in general support of interventions meant to reduce alcohol abuse notably underage drinking. As a result, communities are likely to be receptive of interventions that target stricter law enforcement, or community interventions that seek to condition and educate them.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the key findings of the 2021 GDCS study, the following recommendations are suggested for implementation within Gauteng communities:

6.1 Increased law enforcement monitoring of liquor outlets across the province

The 2021 GDCS study findings depicted that the majority of community members view liquor outlets in their areas as unlicenced. While this could not be positively established to be a true reflection of what is on the ground, it presents a possible situation in which existing outlets may need to be monitored for compliance. In addition, while the majority of community members did not associate their local liquor outlets with crime, it was established that a fairly high number of community members did so. Both the association of liquor outlets with crime and the views on unlicenced outlets were not the same across all metropolitan areas. As a result, it is suggested that law enforcement should employ a prioritisation approach to first target areas that have been associated with the highest number of unlicenced outlets, and the areas where most community members think liquor outlets are contributing to crime. Monitoring activities should include spot checks to measure compliance with alcohol sale laws, as well as the opening and closing times.

Law enforcement should also be extended to the increased closure of shebeens in local areas, which have been identified as some of the sources of alcohol for underage youth and are all unlicenced. By looking at the mapping of shebeen locations and numbers as per findings of the study, shebeen raids can hence be targeted towards areas with the highest number of shebeens first, then other areas as well.

6.2 Interventions against underage alcohol abuse

It is suggested that the prevalence of underage alcohol abuse be tackled from both the law enforcement perspective and the humanitarian perspective. From the law enforcement perspective, taverns may need to be monitored to ensure they do not sell alcohol to underage teenagers. Underage youth private parties may need to be monitored to remove any alcohol at such events, and shebeens in the areas will need to be raided and closed. On the other hand, humanitarian actions should involve interventions that can distract underage teens from using alcohol. These can include the availability of alternative recreational facilities, as well as interventions targeting education and awareness of the dangers of underage youth alcohol abuse. The GDCS can further fortify its partnership with non-governmental organisations, local schools, and law enforcement agencies to provide educational programmes about the dangers of teen alcohol abuse, such as the possibility of early arrest and criminal records, as well as the chances of facing further personal problems as an adult.

6.3 Implementation of popular interventions across communities

The 2021 GDCS study also resolved that there were varied opinions on the perceived usefulness of different interventions for the control of underage alcohol abuse between communities. As a result, it is recommended that the implementation of measures be based on the level of support that such interventions have in the specific communities within which they are being implemented. However, interventions against issues such as drunk driving do not necessarily have to be based on their level of popularity in specific communities, but rather the extent of drunk driving incidents reported. For instance, given that the Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, and Soweto areas had the most reported drunk driving incidents, law enforcement can target these areas first, then also extend interventions to other areas.

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