

Identification of Positive Alcohol Expectancies among Male and Female Adolescents in Rivers State: Implication for Intervention

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Abstract: This study was set out to identify alcohol expectancies held about alcohol consumption by male and female adolescents in Gokana local government area of Rivers State. The population for the study comprised of 10,750 public secondary school students while the sample of the study was 300 adolescents students that were selected through simple random sampling technique. A researchers made instrument tagged Adolescents Alcohol Expectancies Inventory (AAEI) was used. Data were collated and computed with simple percentage to find out the alcohol expectancies of male and female adolescents. The findings revealed that adolescents have a very high percentage of alcohol expectancy. Furthermore, there is higher percentage of male adolescent alcohol expectancy than female adolescent in Gokana local government area of Rivers State. Implications for intervention were presented, conclusion and recommendations were also made.

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I. Introduction

Every research effort towards ameliorating the high rate of alcohol consumption among youths in Rivers State will definitely be a welcome development. This is owing to the high prevalence of youth restiveness and criminality that pervade the State. The thought of drinking is first initiated during childhood when children indulge in fantasies and wishful thinking. During adolescence stage, this thought becomes stronger. The consistent thought about the usefulness of alcohol leads to the development of its expectancies. This tendency extends to other psychoactive substances. Although problematic alcohol use occurs across many age groups, young adults aged 18–24 show the highest rate of alcohol use and have the greatest percentage of problem drinkers, (US Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS] 1997). Unfortunately, the problem of drinking does not only affect individuals by changing their drinking behaviour but to the society at large by endangering other nondrinking students and the community in general. Alcohol consumption appears very rampant in schools, it seems to be the source of one of the country's major health challenge as well as social problems (Bada, 2014). The impact of alcoholism on youth has remained a source of worry to parents, schools, society and even the governments because of the attendant misbehaviours that usually follow and the negative effect it has on the health of the students (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman & Schulenberg, 2004).

Understanding the dynamics of adolescent risky behaviours is important because it is associated with many dangers and negative health outcomes which include increased heart rate and blood pressure, respiratory illness, heart attack, irreversible brain damage and death (Stanley & Odejide, 2002). In Nigeria secondary schools, aggressive behaviours have become a source of worry for teachers, parents, school authorities, and society at large which makes schools unsafe for formal academic processes (Uwakwe, Amusan-Ikpa, Ofole, Akanbi, Ojukwu and Ejiofor 2014)

Expectancies are thoughts or information stored in the memory about something. The existence of such thoughts facilitates actions and reactions when an individual comes in contact with the particular stimulus. Alcohol expectancies are conceptions associated with the use of the substance. According to Goldman and Dunn (1998), when expectancies become positive and strong towards alcohol, individuals who may not have used the substance would begin to desire it, and subsequently indulge in the use of the substance. Expectancies make people to act almost automatically without conscious effort of pondering over a thought, because they are already nurtured in the mind. Goldman and Dunn (1998) assert that expectancies significantly contribute to early use of alcohol. They further found that people who maintain strong positive alcohol expectancies engage in more serious drinking and suffer severely from the habit of drinking.

Stanley and Odejide, (2002) posit that while very young children maintain negative expectancies about alcohol, the adolescents develop positive expectancies. Their positive expectancies about alcohol infuse the urge to make first attempt. Some of the positive expectancies are highlighted in Iruloh and Amadi (2008). They

include the conception about the intake of alcohol as a means to attain euphoria, to relax the body, to alert the brain, to gain social acceptance, to gain fluency in speech and to gain boldness.

Identification of alcohol expectancies of adolescents would guide counsellors, teachers, parents and psychotherapists in their efforts to desensitize the young ones who are highly susceptible to abusive and habitual drinking. This study is anchored on Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1977), who has made a strong contributions on alcohol abuse. The theory posit that drinking behaviour is a part of behaviour that is govern by the outcome of expectances related to the perceived consequences of consuming alcohol which is a representation of alcohol related reinforcement. Bandura empahazized that reinforcement can be either positive or negative with the aim of change in behaviour. Nwankwo (2003), emphasized the efficacy of counselling against adolescents’ antisocial behaviours such as alcohol use and abuse. To the best knowledge of the researcher, previous research works on the risk factors for adolescents’ alcohol or drug use and abuse mainly focused on social and environmental factors. This study is poised to identify the underlying mental precursors (expectancies) that instigate the drinking habit among adolescents. Gender dimension of expectancies was also considered in the study.

II. Research Objectives

1. To find out the percentage of adolescents on alcohol expectancies.
2. To ascertain the percentage response of male and female adolescents that indicate positive alcohol expectancies.

Research questions

1. What is the percentage response of adolescents on alcohol expectancies?
2. What is the percentage response of male and female adolescents that indicated positive alcohol expectancies?

III. Method

Simple random sampling technique was applied in selecting 300 adolescents in Gokanalocal government area of Rivers State. The instrument for data collection was Adolescents Alcohol Expectancies Inventory (AAEI) which was constructed by the researcher. The instrument had two sections. The first section solicited demographic information from the respondents while section two had 30 items on positive expectancies of alcohol use. The items were responded on a 2-point scale of “Yes” or “No” response pattern. “Yes” response indicated that the respondent accepted that the statement indicating alcohol expectancy is true while “No” meant that the respondent did not accept the reality of the item as an indicator of alcohol expectancy.

The researchers gave out the instrument for face and content validity. The items were scrutinized by test experts who confirmed the appropriateness of the study. Due to the large sample size, the researcher employed the service of research assistance that helped in the administration of the instruments and retrieval of the instruments.

IV. Results And Discussion

Research question 1: What is the percentage response of adolescents on alcohol expectancies?

Table 1: Percentage of Yes and No responses of adolescents on alcohol expectancies

S/N	Items on adolescents’ alcohol expectancies	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Yes response	Percentage of No response
1.	Alcohol makes people to gain social competence	300	275 (91.7%)	25 (8.3%)
2.	Alcohol removes anxiety	300	252 (84%)	48 (16%)
3.	Alcohol increases vigour	300	260 (86%)	40 (13.3%)
4.	Alcohol helps someone to build confidence	300	251 (83.7%)	49 (16.3%)
5.	Alcohol is an energizer	300	248 (82.7%)	52 (17.3%)
6.	Sexual ability is enhanced with alcohol	300	246 (82%)	54 (18%)
7.	Alcohol intake alerts the brain	300	250 (83.3%)	50 (16.7%)
8.	Alcohol build boldness	300	273 (91%)	27 (9%)
9.	Alcohol aids remembering	300	225 (75%)	75 (25%)
10.	Alcohol contributes to good health	300	173 (57.7%)	127 (42.3%)
11.	Alcohol helps someone to say his or her mind	300	150 (50%)	150 (50%)
12.	Alcohol helps to improve sleep	300	164 (54.7%)	136 (45.3%)
13.	Alcohol helps to reduce stress	300	136 (45.3%)	164 (54.7%)
14.	Alcohol helps someone to gain relief from painful feelings	300	157 (52.3%)	143 (47.7%)
15.	Alcohol helps individuals to exercise independence	300	170 (56.7%)	130 (43.3%)
16.	Alcohol aids someone to be brave	300	183 (61%)	117 (39%)
17.	Alcohol helps someone to withstand crowd influence	300	192 (64%)	108 (36%)
18.	Alcohol helps individuals to gain fluency in speech making	300	142 (47.3%)	158 (52.7%)

Research question 2: What is the percentage response of male and female adolescents that indicated positive alcohol expectancies?

Table 2: Percentage response of male and female that indicated positive alcohol expectancies

S/N/Items on adolescents' alcohol expectancies		Percentage of response on alcohol expectancies (Male)		Percentage of response on alcohol expectancies (Female)		Outcome
		Yes	No	No	Yes	
1.	Alcohol makes people to gain social competence	115 (92%)	10 (8%)	42 (24%)	133 (76%)	Expected
2.	Alcohol removes anxiety	108 (86.4%)	17 (13.6%)	52 (29.71%)	123 (70.28%)	Expected
3.	Alcohol increases vigour	103 (82.4%)	22 (17.6%)	82 (46.85)	93 (53.1%)	Non Expected
4.	Alcohol helps someone to build confidence	86 (68.8%)	39 (31.3%)	79 (45.1%)	96 (54.8%)	Expected
5.	Alcohol is an energizer	100 (80%)	25 (20%)	60 (34.2%)	115 (65.7%)	Expected
6.	Sexual ability is enhanced with alcohol	108 (86.4%)	17 (13.6%)	85 (48.5%)	90 (51.4%)	Expected
7.	Alcohol intake alerts the brain	74 (58.2%)	51 (40.8%)	86 (68.6%)	89 (71.2%)	Expected
8.	Alcohol builds boldness	107 (85.6%)	18 (14.4%)	105 (60.1%)	70(40.1%)	Expected
9.	Alcohol aids remembering	54 (43.2%)	71 (56.8%)	42 (24.0%)	151 (86.2%)	Not Expected
10.	Alcohol contributes to good health	76 (60.8%)	49 (39.2%)	52 (29.7%)	123 (70.2%)	Not Expected
11.	Alcohol helps someone to say his or her mind	74 (59.2%)	51 (40.8%)	45 (25.71%)	130 (74.2%)	Expected
12.	Alcohol helps to improve sleep	86 (68.8%)	39 (31.2%)	92 (52.57%)	83(47.4%)	Expected
13.	Alcohol helps to reduce stress	67 (53.6%)	58 (46.4%)	62 (35.42%)	113(64.5%)	Expected
14.	Alcohol helps someone to gain relief from painful feelings	89 (71.2%)	36 (28.8%)	86(49.1%)	89(50.8%)	Expected
15.	Alcohol helps individuals to exercise independence	71 (56.8%)	54(43.2%)	50(28.5%)	125(71.4%)	Not Expected
16.	Alcohol aids someone to be brave	90 (72%)	35 (28%)	62(35.4%)	113(64.5%)	Expected
17.	Alcohol helps someone to withstand crowd influence	102 (96%)	23 (18.4)	78(44.5%)	97(55.4%)	Expected
18.	Alcohol helps individuals to gain fluency in speech making	72 (57.6%)	53(42.4%)	44(25.1%)	131(74.8%)	Expected

V. Discussion

Entries in Table 1 showed that respondents agreed that item 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11, 12, 14,15, 16 and 17 have a high percentage of alcohol expectancies among adolescents while item 13 and 18 disagreed that there are no alcoholic expectancies among adolescence in Gokanalocal government area of Rivers State. Furthermore in table two which addresses the percentage response of male and female adolescence on positive alcohol expectancies, the table revealed that male adolescence has positive alcohol expectancies from their responses in item 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,14,16,17,18 while item 9 disagreed that male adolescence has a positive alcohol expectancies. On the other hand respondents agreed that female adolescence have negative alcohol expectancies from their responses in item 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10,11,13,14,15,16,17 and 18. While 8 only disagree with the fact that female has a negative alcohol expectancies in Ogoni local government area of Rivers State. This result is expected because alcohol plays an important role in the life of every human being since humans need certain percentage of alcoholic intake for effective functioning of the body system. This result is in agreement with that of Saunders (2004) who conducted a study on the role of alcohol expectancy and drinking refusal self-efficacy beliefs in university students drinking using a descriptive survey design with a sample of 174 undergraduate students with a structured questionnaire as instrument for data collection. The findings revealed positive alcohol expectancy factor accounted for significant variance in all drinking indices and negative expectancy did not add incremental variance to the prediction of drinking behaviour. Also Marlatt and Witkiewitz (2002) carried out a study on alcohol expectancies and self-efficacy among young adults in the high school at Algria, the result indicated that environmental factors can increase alcohol expectancy and self-efficacy among younger adults. However, in a study of US collage drinkers administered the adolescent expectancy questionnaire and the factors measuring negative expectancy was the only expectancy domain not to show a significant difference between problem and non-problem drinkers (Oei, 2005).

Implications for intervention

The findings above have some implications for intervention. First, there is implication for early alcohol abuse education. Schools at the early childhood, primary and secondary levels are expected to regularly enlighten children and adolescents about the danger of alcohol use. Early intervention would guide them in the process of formation of alcohol expectancies. Rather than forming the positive expectancies, which in reality are deceptive and destructive, which will guide them to know the true facts. Another strategy the school could use is the formation of drug free club for students. This would be a veritable platform for students to interact among themselves and gain insight from group discussions. The school could also initiate special training programmes for personal competence and social skills for students. Timidity and anxiety have made many young people to take alcohol to overcome their fears during public performances.

Second, there is implication for early counselling intervention. Counselling practice should begin at the early childhood and primary level of education. This would provide children the opportunity to share their feeling and experiences with trained and caring counsellor. Many children are from homes and families where there are ardent users of alcohol. As they observe the adults drink with excitement, they (children) gain some levels of motivation from the habit and thus begin to form expectancies early.

Third, family counselling is also implicated in the intervention against adolescents' alcohol expectancies. Children from families with alcohol users are not only vulnerable to mental illness and medical challenges; they are also highly prone to addiction. The development of addictive tendency begins with the motivation gained in observing parents and adult drink alcohol. The family intervention would involve re-educating parents about the implications of their habits. For instance, children and adolescents that grow up under alcohol using parents and adults turn addictive before the age of 18 years. Through family counselling, alcohol abusing parents will be taught the process of withdrawal and abstinence. More also ignorant children would also be enlightened about the dangers of alcohol use and abuse.

Fourth, government, through relevant agencies and departments can guide and enlighten children and youths against desiring and involving in alcohol use. Regulation of drug advertisement and public enlightenment programmes would proactively avert initial attempt to use alcohol by children and adolescents.

VI. Conclusion

Alcohol expectancy among adolescents have being increasing in daily basis especially among secondary school level. This may have been as a result of inability of the instructors to create awareness on the health implications of alcohol intake by adults. This therefore contributes to the high level of deviant behaviours noticed among adolescent which in turn affects their cognitive constructs. The incorporation of both positive and negative expectances have the potentials of prevention and treatment of adolescents who has drinking problems.

V. Recommendations

Based on the results of the findings the following recommendations were made;

- Awareness should be created on the health implications of alcohol intake by humans.
- Alcohol intervention programs should be carried out by government and non-governmental organizations to rescue those people who are already having positive alcohol expectancy.
- Alcoholic products should be regulated by government to avoid abuse.

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