

Psychosocial and Demographic Factors That Compound Alcohol Abuse Amongst Youth: A Case Study of Musina High School

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Abstract

The risk factors that compound alcohol abuse by young people have significant effects of individuals. The sole purpose of social work is to enhance the social functioning of clients and in most cases, clients have impairments as the result of high density of alcohol outlets, affordability of alcohol, which later give birth to psychosocial challenges. The aim of this study is to describe psychosocial and demographic factors compounding alcohol abuse amongst youth. The study employed quantitative approach and descriptive case study design. Data was collected at Musina High School and 96 learners were sampled using stratified sampling to complete the questionnaire. Data was analysed descriptively with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Science. The study revealed that psychosocial and environmental factors compound to alcohol abuse amongst youth in Musina High School. The study concludes that the context determines the excessive use of alcohol abuse by youth. Young people especially those who reside in rural areas are exposed to high density of alcohol outlets and they are left without guardianship. Due to lack of guardian or parental involvement they end up indulging in excessive use of alcohol.

Keywords: alcohol abuse, accessibility, consumption, peer pressure, youth

1. Introduction

Excessive use of alcohol amongst youth is a major concern globally and South Africa is not an exemption (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). There are numerous factors that compound youth excessive indulgence in alcohol. Robertson, David and Rao (2003) assert that these factors can be classified as internal and external. For example, the excessive usage of alcohol by a young person might be influenced by age or sex (internal factors) and/or learning from peers (external factors). In support of this, Gale, Lenardson, Lambert and Hartley (2012:5), aver that "age and sex are identified with pre-adult alcohol utilise". A young person may indulge in alcohol abuse because his male peers assert that manhood is proven by drinking alcohol or to look sexy to her friends. Mafa et al (2019) aver that the assumption that women do not indulge in heavy drinking may lead to minimization of problem drinking by male drinkers. To that end, this study was aimed at describing psychosocial and demographic factors that compound alcohol abuse amongst youth in Musina High School.

2. Background Information and Problem Formulation

A study by Donovan (2004), demonstrates that drinking regularly starts at extremely young age. In corroboration, Grunbaum, Kann, Kinchen, Ross, Hawkins, Lowry, and Collins (2004) discovered that the debut drinking age is 9 to 10 years, while Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA] (2003) discovered that debut drinking is at the age of 14. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA] (2017) and Caron Treatment Centers (2004) have reported that females are more likely to rapidly develop alcohol dependency as compared to their counterparts. The expansion of alcohol abuse among female understudies is particularly disturbing. Caron Treatment Centers (2004) have also noticed and strongly indicate that alcohol abuse amongst female is rapidly increasing than for male.

Several authors, Lambert, Gale and Hartley (2008); Gfroerer, Larson and Colliver, (2007); Lasser, Schmidt, Diep and Huebel (2010), have all discovered that young people in rural areas abuse alcohol more than their counterparts in urban areas. this can be attributed to boredom due to the absence of recreational facilities in rural areas. In support of this, Freeman (1999) indicated that young people drink due to government failure to produce recreational facilities, especially in rural areas. Instead of producing recreational facilities, there are overcrowded

alcohol outlets. Connor, Kypri, Bell and Cousins (2010) aver that high-density of alcohol outlets contribute to alcohol abuse amongst youth. In corroboration, Masemola, van Aardt, and Coetzee (2012) aver that young people find themselves in an environment wherein there is an easy access of alcohol and their friends are using it.

Finlay, Ram, Maggs, and Caldwell (2012) and Patrick, Maggs, and Osgood (2010) have discovered that the affordability of alcohol also makes youth vulnerable to binge drinking. In support of their argument, Ayuka, Barnett and Pearce (2014) discovered that young people are more likely to choose cheaper alcoholic beverages to maximise alcohol intake for the money they use. As such, the increase in alcohol pricing will result in the decrease of alcohol consumption. In support of this, Anderson and Baumberg (2006) discovered that an increase in alcohol prices generally leads to a decrease in alcohol consumption, and a decrease in alcohol prices usually leads to an increase in alcohol consumption. While, Wagenaar, Salois and Komro (2009) avow that the increase of alcohol taxes serves as a strategy to reduce alcohol consumption.

3. Methods

The research type for this study involved empirical data where questionnaires were utilised to describe risk factors that compound youth into alcohol abuse in Musina High School. Quantitative approach was used because of its ability to quantify and measure social phenomena – alcohol abuse (Creswell, 2003). A descriptive case study design was utilised because of its ability to describe, analyse, and interpret psychosocial and demographic factors compounding alcohol abuse amongst youth in Musina High School (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). The population of the study was drawn from learners from Musina High School. Authors selected both male and female alcohol users and non-users between the ages of 18 and 20 years to respond to the questionnaire.

Stratified sampling techniques was employed in this study. It was essential to employ a stratified sampling approach due to its ability to divide the population into several strata that were mutually exclusive (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). A sampling frame was developed for the youth between the ages of 18-20 years in each geographical area targeted – Musina High School. Musina High School was conveniently included as the study area because it is situated in a border town where alcohol consumption is high. Mafa et al. (2019) reported that high alcohol consumption is found in young people. Authors ensured that a purposeful systematic method was adhered to with a controlled list of specified populations (male and female) in Musina High School. According to Christensen et al. (2015:168) “stratified sampling requires slightly fewer people”. As such, controlled list was developed, wherein a 2nd member from 192 respondents were randomly picked to form a sampling size of 96. Authors used a small number of population to control the administration of questions.

Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), which is a comprehensive system for analysing data. It can take data from almost any type of file and use them to generate tabulated reports, charts, plots of distributions and trends, descriptive statistics, and complex statistical analyses (Gilman & Weber, 2007). Since this was descriptive in nature, data was also analysed descriptively and not inferentially.

4. Results

4.1 Demographics of the Respondents

The demographics represents the summary of learners who responded to the questionnaires in this study.

Table 1. Gender of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Female	62	65%
Male	34	35%

The above table shows that a substantial majority (at 65%) of the respondents were females followed by 35% of males.

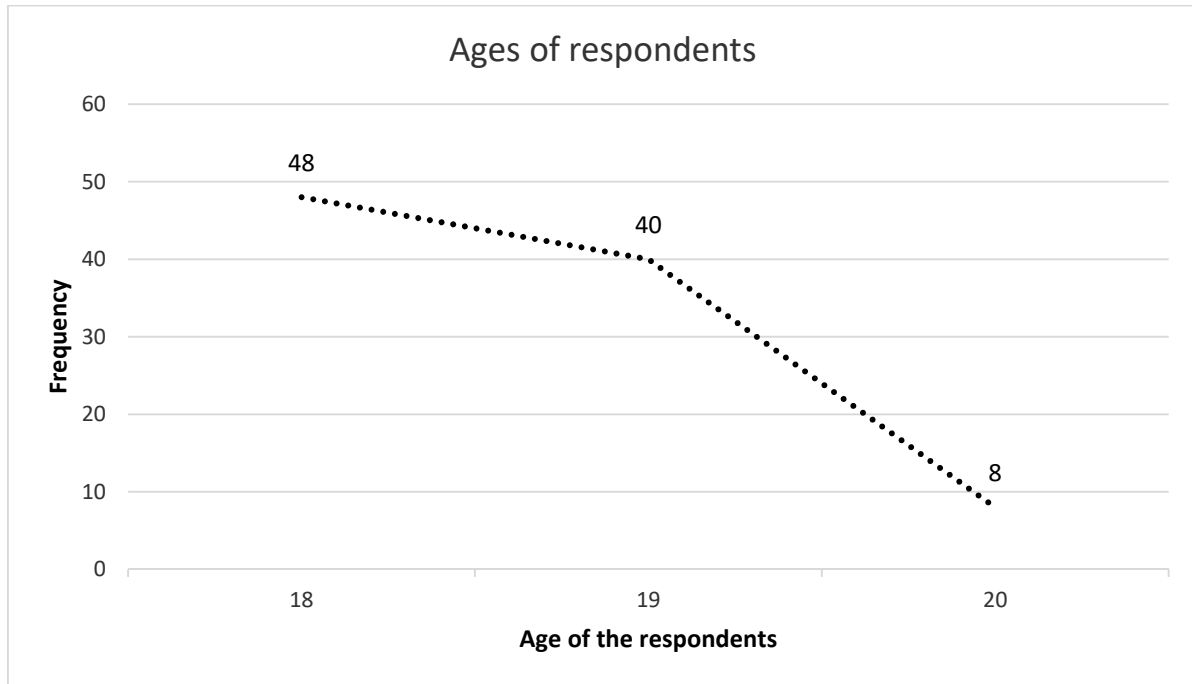


Figure 1. Age of the respondents

From the above figure, it can be depicted that half (at 50%) of the respondents were aged 18 years, followed by 42% for the age of 19 years and 8% for the age of 20 years. Globally, studies have a different view as when youth start to indulgent into alcohol. Ramsoomar and Morojele (2012) discovered that young people start to indulge in alcohol abuse between the ages of 13 to 19 years. Whilst, Fortune, Watson, Robinson, Fleming, Merry, and Denny (2010) discovered that young people aged 12 to 16 years engage in binge drinking and those who are aged 16 to 21 years engage in hazardous drinking (Wells, Baxter, & Schaaf, 2007). Nonetheless, in South Africa, as in other countries, the alcohol debut age has reduced significantly. Youth starts to indulge in alcohol between the ages of 15 to 24 years (Peltzer, & Ramlagan, 2009). This shows that bar owners, in spite of the Liquor Act 53 of 2003 clearly stipulating age restrictions, sell alcohol to anyone including those who are under the age of 18.

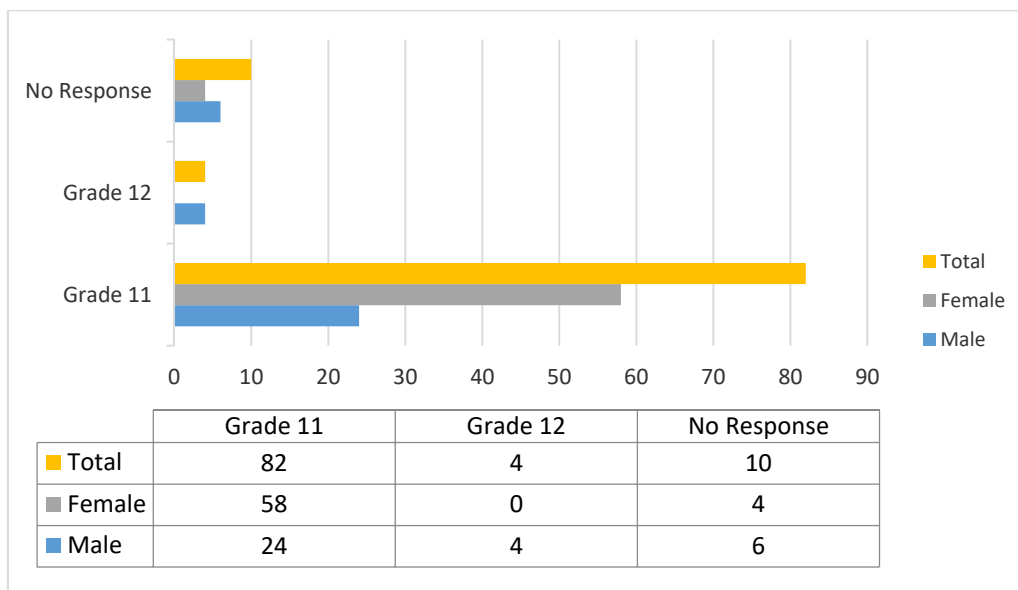


Figure 2. Educational status

The study intended to discover the educational status of both alcohol users and non-users distinguishing them by their gender. As such, the above figure depicts that a substantial majority (n=82; at 85%) of the respondents are in Grade 11; n=4, at 4% are in Grade 12 and n=10, at 11% did not respond to the question.

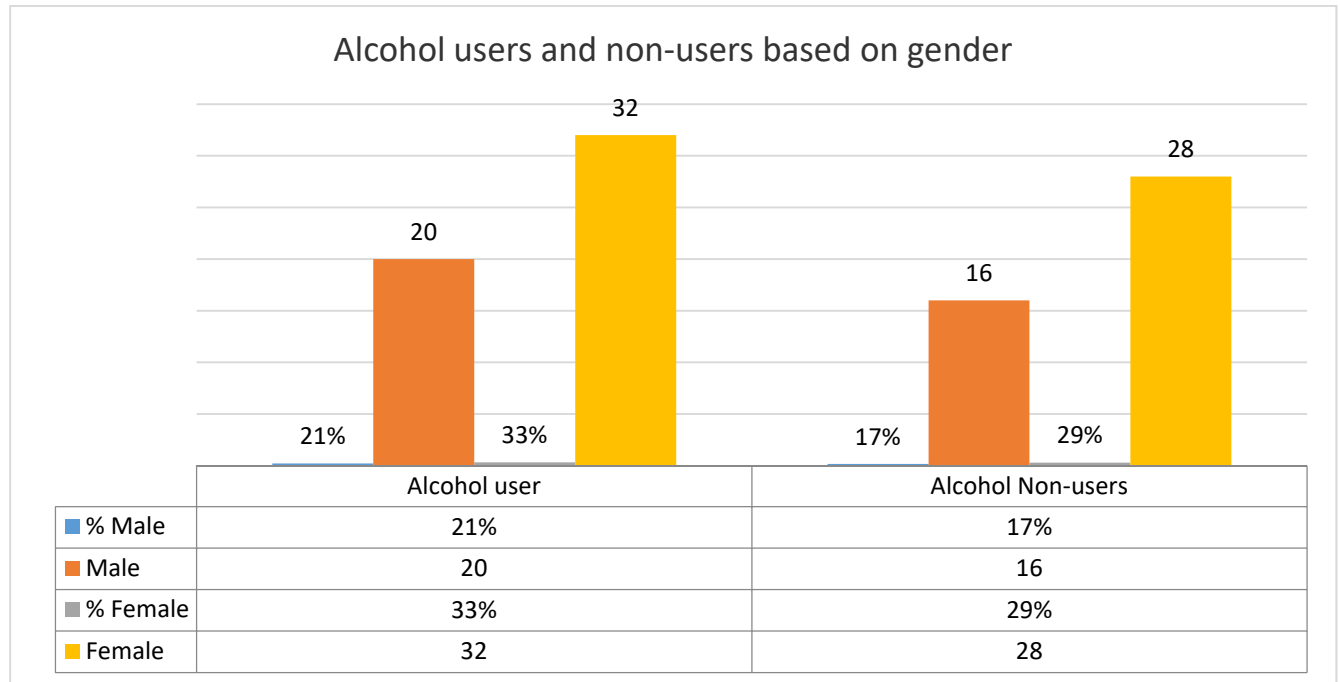


Figure 3. Number of alcohol users and non-users

The figure above provides information regarding the number of respondents who are currently using and not using alcohol. It could be depicted from the figure that the majority of females (33%) and males (21%) are alcohol users with a representative of 54%. Whilst, female (29%) and male (17%) are non-users with a representative of 46%.

4.2 Factors Compounding to Alcohol Abuse

4.2.1 Accessibility of Alcohol

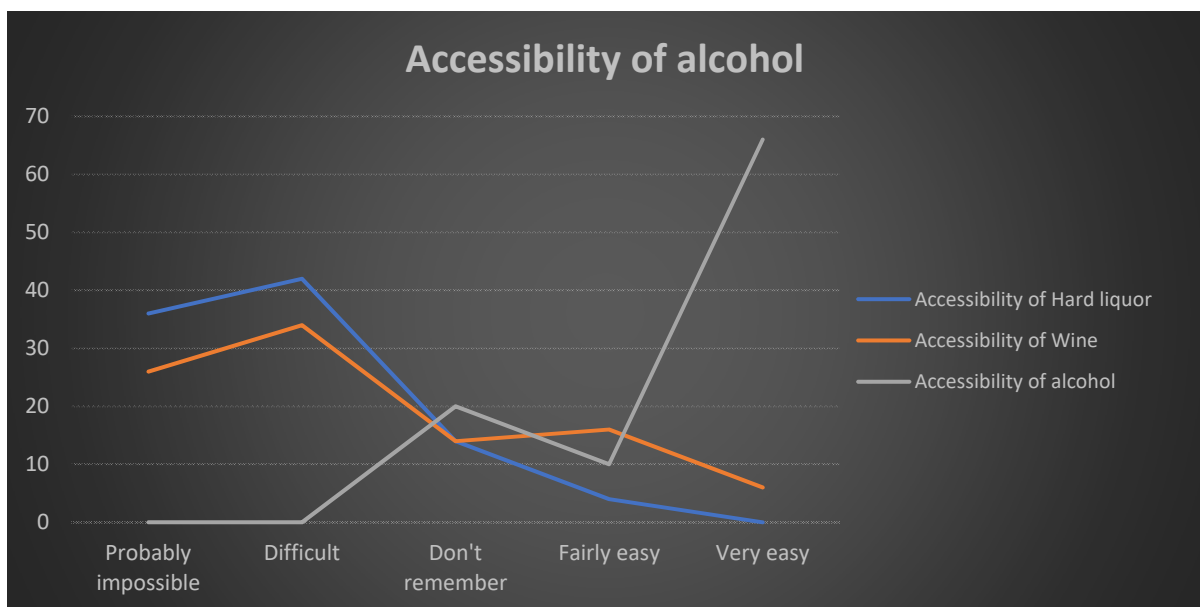


Figure 4. Accessibility of alcohol

The figure above shows that a substantial majority (at 69%) reported to have an easy access to purchase alcohol; 35% reported that it is difficult to purchase wine and 44% reported that it is probably impossible to purchase hard liquor (such as brandy). It is not surprising to see alcohol being accessible as compared to other substance, because in rural areas, there are many alcohol outlets.

4.2.2 Alcohol Consumption

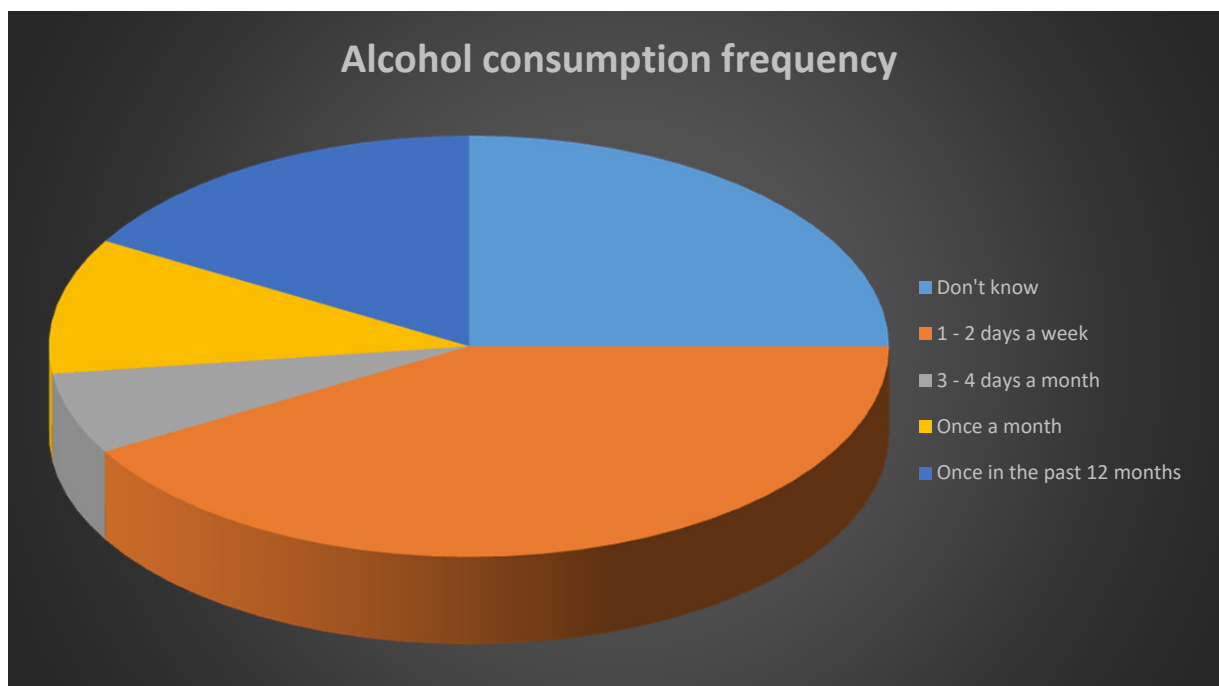


Figure 5. Alcohol consumption frequency

The above chart shows that 42% of the respondents reported that they consume alcohol in 1-2 days a week; 17% once in the past 12 months; 10% once a month, 6% in 3-4 days a month; 25% does not know. Most of the respondents' drink alcohol 1-2 days a week because they are learners and during the week they have no time to drink as they attend classes. Evidently, Finlay et al. (2012) discovered that learners were more likely to indulge in binge drinking on weekends. Whilst, Patrick, Maggs, and Osgood (2010) state that learners indulge in binge drinking when they go out to bars and parties which are more likely to take place on weekends. Hence, it can be deduced that on weekends youth indulge on binge drinking as a way of celebrating and refreshing. During weekends, youth tend to buy cheaper beverages as they have insufficient money to sustain themselves throughout the part or their stay in the bar. In support, Ayuka et al. (2014) discovered that youth tend to choose cheaper alcoholic beverages to maximise alcohol intake for the money they use.

4.2.3 Family Members Who Drink

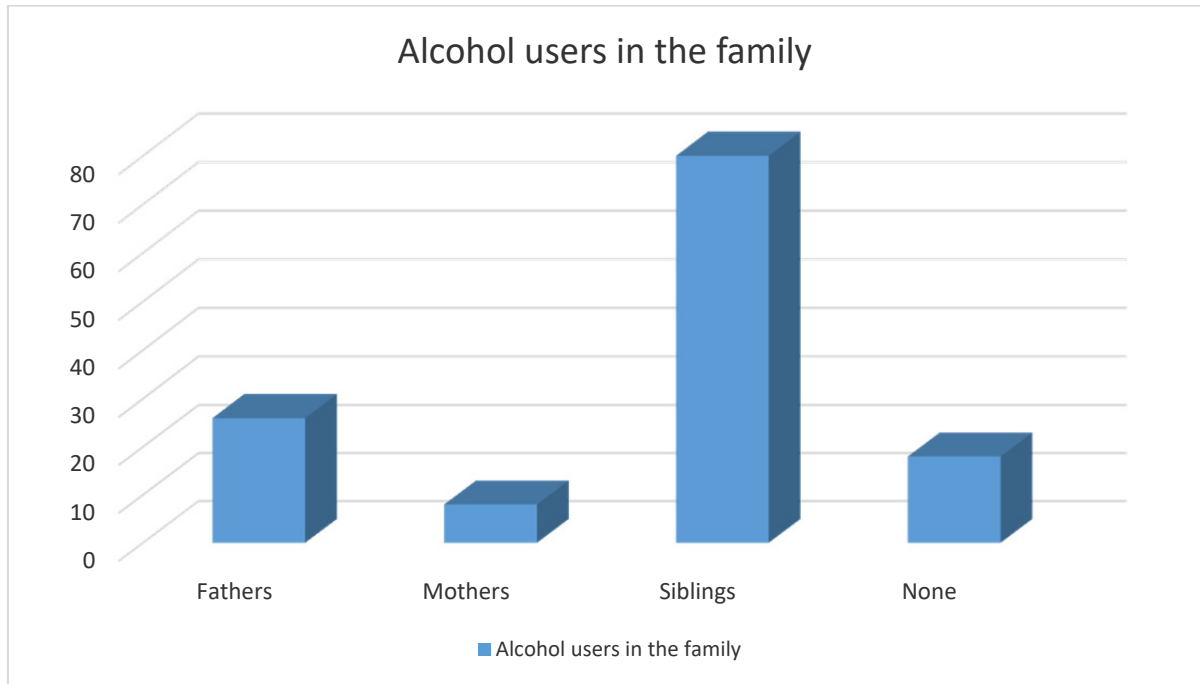


Figure 6. Family members who drink

The table above shows that an absolute majority (at 61%) of the respondents have siblings who consume alcohol; 20% has fathers who consume alcohol, 6% have mothers who consume alcohol; and 13% reside with family members who do not consume alcohol.

4.2.4 Peer Pressure

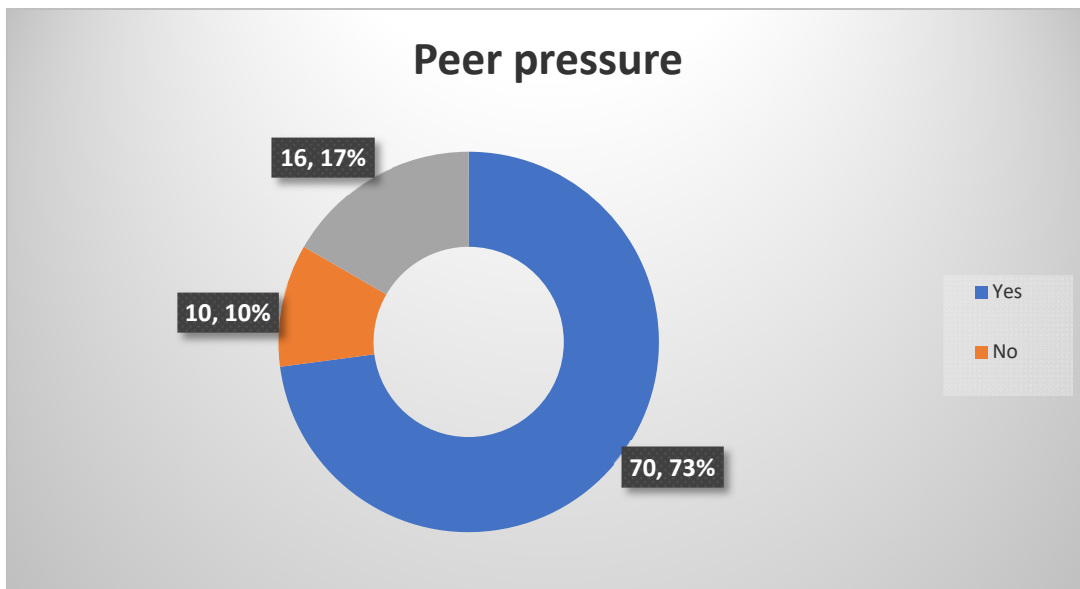


Figure 7. Peer Pressure

The above chart shows that an overwhelming majority (at 73%) of the respondents stated that peer pressure influences youth to indulge in alcohol abuse; 10% did not see peer pressure as the contributing factor; and 17% remained neutral. The results affirmed the view of Gale *et al.* (2012), who stipulated that peer impact is an essential determinant of whether, how frequently, how much, and under what conditions an adolescent will drink. For a young person to indulge in alcohol abuse is because of learned maladaptive behaviour from their peers. If learned

patterns from home are not covered with precise caution from secondary source of socialisation, that is friends, young ones accommodate behaviour from extended sources whether positive or negative into their memory.

This result upheld the views of Atkins, Oman, Vesely, Aspy and McLeroy (2002) who postulated that peer influence has either a protective factor or a risk factor and friends who use alcohol and other drugs are an important determinant of drinking behaviour and another drug use (Branstetter, Low & Furman, 2011). Authors are of the notion that the type of friends that a young person keeps have an impact on his or her behaviour since they are secondary source of socialisation. For instance, if one associates him or herself with alcohol non-users, he or she will learn positive habits and the opposite is true.

4.2.5 Self-Esteem

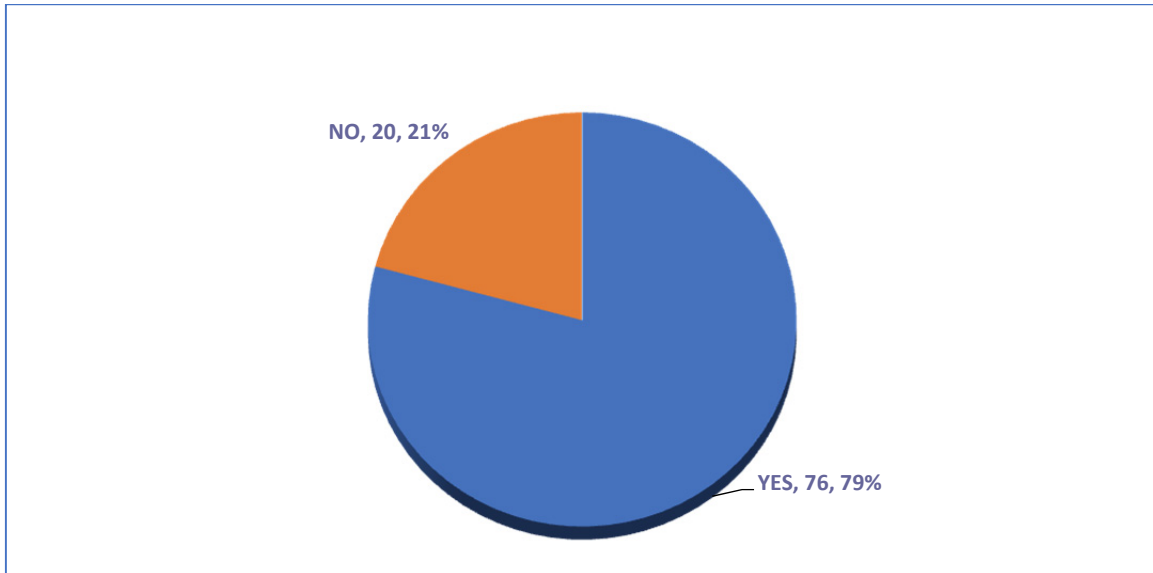


Figure 8. Self-esteem

The chart above showcase that a substantial majority (at 79%) of the respondents stated that youth indulge in alcohol abuse because of low self-esteem whilst 21% are opposing the idea. Young people lack self-esteem and they consume alcohol to so as to develop their self-esteem.

4.3.6 Stress

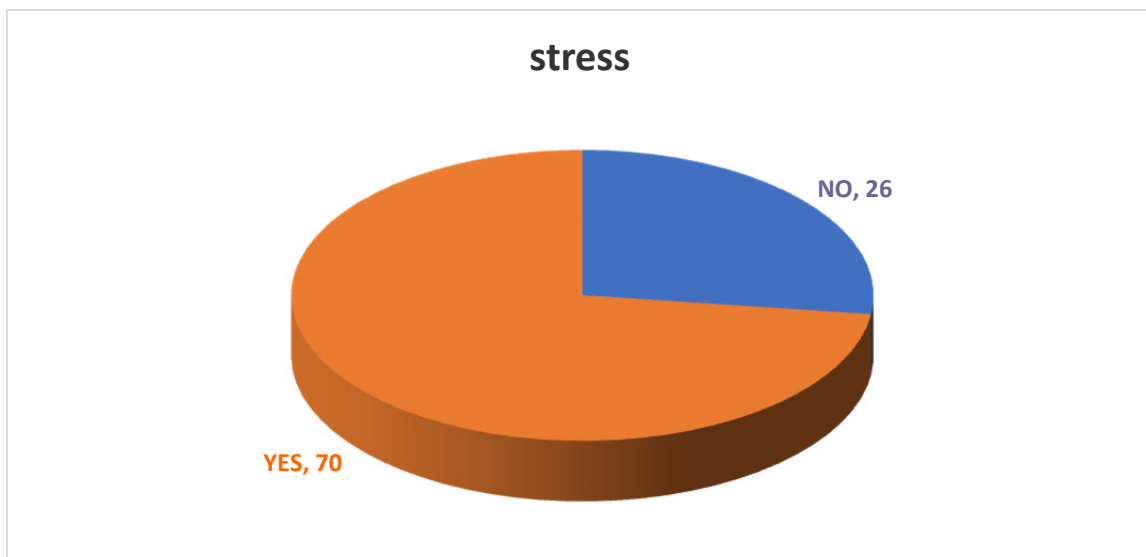


Figure 9. Stress

From the chat above, a substantial majority (at 73%) of respondents stated that youth indulge in alcohol abuse because of stress whilst 27% did not see stress as a risk factor of alcohol abuse. This result substantiates the findings of Jackson, Knight, and Rafferty (2010) who assert that stress is strongly associated with alcohol use amongst the youth. Thobejane and Raselekoane (2017:95) substantiate the view of the latter authors and state that, “youth indulge in alcohol abuse to try and forget about their problems because they believe that alcohol is a depressant that paralyses the brain of a certain moment”. In corroboration, Shilakwe (2005) has noticed that youth consistently indulged in alcohol to deal with their psychological problems, which then bears alcohol dependency or abuse.

5. Discussion

Connor, Kypri, Bell and Cousins (2010) discovered that an increase in binge drinking is associated with high-density outlets in a community. Youth, especially in rural areas find themselves in an environment that is populated with alcohol outlets, hence, their receptiveness to alcohol use increases. The accessibility of alcohol in rural areas, varies from friend to media. Giesbrecht, Patra, and Popova (2008) argue that access to alcohol through adverts and promotion on media brings a variety of substances in the disposal of youth. Thobejane and Raselekoane (2017) concur with the above authors and in their study conducted in Musina Town, they discovered that alcohol is being advertised every 5 minutes on television. These adverts evoke an attitude of a young person by association of unconditioned stimulus with a conditioned stimulus. Alcohol advertisements are associated with professionals that young people admire such as musicians and soccer stars. As such, one could conclude that when alcohol is advertised during soccer matches a young person salivates. Hence, *Liquor Amendment Bill* (2016) is calling for the restriction of advertisement of alcoholic beverages, prohibitions of sponsorship and promotion associated with alcoholic beverages. Their argument is based entirely on the fact that young people see alcohol use as socially acceptable and something that is on the agenda.

Youth learn to consume alcohol from their family members. Hayes, Smart, Toumbourou and Sanson (2004), in their study, discovered that when parents use alcohol frequently, their children have an increased likelihood of being exposed to alcohol and related risk behaviours. If a father or mother, as discipliner or those who enforce discipline, is intoxicated, how then can such a person reprimand the child? Parents need to be wary of their own behaviour in the presence of their children, not only their children but also the children within the community. Elderly people have what is known as streetwise intelligence or wisdom and they cannot transfer their historical norms (specifically, mores) when they are intoxicated. Authors are of the notion that positive conduct from elderly people will result in reduction of binge drinking from youth as primary socialisation is instilled by them. Children assimilate mores learned from their family and accommodate what they learn on street as a way of attempting to broaden their vocabulary in their brains. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2004) reported that young people start experimenting alcohol as part of their search for an identity and, as such, they use substances to define their belonging to a particular group or to relieve feelings of anxiety or stress in this search for the self.

Young people lack self-esteem and they associate themselves with alcohol to develop their self-esteem. This statement is backed by Suvitha, Navaneetha, Nappinai, Sridevy and Premila (2017) who discovered that youth with low self-esteem struggle to find success and happiness. This is mostly because they do not feel themselves worthy of enjoying such things. For that reason, youth indulge in alcohol abuse because it offers them a temporary solution to their problems. Their problems could include making friends in a new school. However, that does not solve the problem because, as much as they temporarily deal with their problems, they also expose themselves to potential alcohol addiction (Suvitha et al., 2017). Suvitha et al., (2017) further allude that alcohol increases self-confidence of alcohol first time users.

Donovan (2004) avows that youth indulge in alcohol abuse as a means of coping with stress, anxiety, or depression. It could be assumed that youth indulge in binge drinking because they attempt to deal with their life challengers, including their school work, not necessarily forget them. This assumption is supported by Keyes, Geier, Grant and Hasin (2009) who discovered that increased alcohol consumption was caused by academic stress. Liu, Keyes, and Li (2014) found that the relationship between academic stress and alcohol use was more likely to be moderated by peer influence. As such, they have encouraged that positive peer influences should be encouraged to delay the onset of alcohol use in adolescents. For example, adolescents with friends who focus on their school work could discourage alcohol abuse and encourage focus on their school work and vice versa. In other words, those youth that experience academic stress and negative peer support are vulnerable to embracing adverse drinking habits.

6. Conclusion

This paper covered array of psychosocial and demographic factors compounding to alcohol abuse amongst youth. Young people especially those who resides in rural areas are exposed to high density of alcohol outlets and they are

left behind by their parents. Due to lack of guardian or parental involvement they end up indulging into excessive use of alcohol. The study recommends that Alcohol Act should be amended and the age restriction to purchase alcohol should be reconstructed from 18 years to 21 years. In addition, universities, research institutes and publishing houses should implore to partner with community members to conduct awareness campaigns as intervention method on alcohol abuse.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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