

A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS INTERROGATION OF THE USE AND MISUSE OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG THE ADULTS OF EBONYI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

This study investigates the socio-religious dimensions influencing the use and misuse of alcohol among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Guided by Social Learning Theory and Religious Commitment Theory, the study aims at examining the cultural and social factors that promote alcohol consumption, religious doctrines surrounding its use, the extent and patterns of misuse, and the consequences as well as the role of religious institutions in mitigating alcohol-related problems. The research adopts a descriptive survey design. A structured questionnaire based on a 4-point Likert scale was administered to a sample of 400 respondents, selected through multi-stage sampling. Data were analyzed using mean scores. The findings reveal that alcohol consumption is strongly linked to cultural traditions and social norms, including peer influence and hospitality practices. Religious institutions discourage alcohol misuse and play significant roles in creating awareness, though their rehabilitation efforts remain limited. The study concludes that alcohol misuse in the area is a product of cultural permissiveness and inadequate intervention and recommends stronger collaboration between religious bodies, health agencies, and the government to curb the trend.

Keywords: Alcohol-consumption, socio-religious, misuse, religious-institutions.

Introduction

Alcohol consumption has long been a significant part of social and cultural life in many African communities, including those in Nigeria. It serves multiple roles—from its use in traditional ceremonies and religious rituals to its consumption as a leisure and socializing substance. In Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, alcohol is widely available and socially accepted, especially in the form of locally brewed drinks like palm wine and *burukutu*. Despite its cultural embeddedness, the misuse of alcohol has increasingly become a public health and moral concern in the area, leading to issues such as domestic violence, health complications, road accidents, and moral decay (Okeke and Obi, 2021).

At the heart of this concern lies a tension between societal acceptance of alcohol and religious condemnation of its abuse. Religion plays a central role in shaping moral conduct in Nigerian communities, often serving as the ethical compass for individual and collective behaviour. The major religions in the area—Christianity and traditional belief systems—present varied perspectives on alcohol consumption. While some denominations promote moderation, others

advocate for total abstinence, particularly in response to the social problems associated with misuse (Nwachukwu, 2023).

Religion in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in shaping moral values and behavioural expectations. It also acts as a powerful social institution capable of influencing lifestyle choices (Okonkwo and Anaduaka, 2021). This paper therefore, adopts a socio-religious lens to interrogate how societal norms and religious beliefs interact to shape attitudes toward the use and misuse of alcohol among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area.

Background to the Study

Alcohol has historically held both functional and symbolic roles in African societies. It is widely used in social ceremonies, religious rites, and as a symbol of hospitality and masculinity. In many Nigerian communities, including those in Ebonyi State, alcohol—particularly in its locally brewed forms such as palm wine, *burukutu*, and *ogogoro*—is considered part of the cultural heritage and is used in libation, marriage ceremonies, funerals, and festivals (Adelekan *et al.*, 2020). The communal acceptance of alcohol in these contexts has normalized its use, often blurring the line between responsible consumption and harmful misuse.

In Ebonyi Local Government Area, alcohol consumption among adults is pervasive and socially ingrained. The traditional and social acceptance of alcohol in the community has contributed to its widespread availability and consumption across age, gender, and socio-economic classes. However, there is growing concern over the increasing misuse of alcohol, which is often manifested in forms such as binge drinking, alcohol dependence, and involvement in alcohol-related accidents and violence. Health professionals and community leaders alike have observed rising cases of liver disease, family neglect, youth delinquencies, and gender-based violence associated with excessive alcohol intake (Ebonyi Health Report, 2025; Okeke and Obi, 2021).

While societal norms appear to tolerate alcohol use, religious institutions in the area have consistently expressed concern over its misuse. Christianity, the predominant religion in Ebonyi LGA, generally discourages drunkenness and moral laxity, emphasizing self-control and righteous living (Nwachukwu, 2023). Different denominations hold varying interpretations regarding moderate consumption, with Pentecostal churches advocating total abstinence, while some Catholic and Anglican communities allow moderate use. Despite these religious teachings, many adherents continue to consume alcohol, some covertly, suggesting a gap between religious doctrine and individual behaviour.

Moreover, the intersection of social approval and religious disapproval presents a complex dilemma for communities and policymakers. While some view alcohol as a harmless aspect of culture, others argue that its misuse poses a direct threat to social cohesion, spiritual wellbeing, and public health. This tension underscores the need for a socio-religious investigation into how adults in Ebonyi LGA perceive, use, and misuse alcohol. There is a need to understand the

motivations behind alcohol use, the societal and religious reactions to misuse, and the roles of religious institutions in mitigating its harmful effects.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the cultural significance of alcohol in many African communities, including Ebonyi Local Government Area, its misuse has become a pressing social and public health issue. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the harmful consumption of alcohol, especially among adults, leading to a wide range of consequences such as domestic violence, road accidents, health deterioration, marital breakdowns, and decline in moral standards (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023; Chukwuma and Odo, 2022). These problems not only strain families and communities but also increase the burden on the healthcare and security systems.

What makes the issue more complex is the seeming contradiction between societal tolerance and religious condemnation of alcohol misuse. In Ebonyi LGA, alcohol is widely used in traditional ceremonies, festivals, and social gatherings, thus reinforcing its acceptance. However, religious institutions—especially churches—preach against excess and often view alcohol misuse as a sin and a sign of spiritual decline (Nwachukwu, 2023). Despite this, many professed adherents of Christianity in the area continue to misuse alcohol, raising questions about the effectiveness of religious teachings and the socio-cultural pressures influencing behaviour.

Furthermore, existing studies on alcohol use in Nigeria have often focused on youth or urban populations, neglecting the adult rural demographic that is equally, if not more, affected. Little attention has been given to how religious beliefs and social norms interact to influence attitudes and practices related to alcohol consumption in specific local contexts such as Ebonyi LGA. Without a clear understanding of these socio-religious dynamics, interventions remain superficial and culturally disconnected.

Therefore, this study interrogates the socio-religious factors that shape the use and misuse of alcohol among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area. It aims to uncover the underlying contradictions, belief systems, and societal practices that sustain harmful drinking behaviours, despite the presence of religious teachings against them.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the cultural and social factors that promote alcohol consumption among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area?
- ii. What are the dominant religious perspectives and doctrines concerning alcohol use and misuse within the community?
- iii. To what extent is alcohol misused among adults in Ebonyi LGA, and what are the common patterns of such misuse?
- iv. What are the social and religious consequences of alcohol misuse among adults in the local context?

- v. What roles do religious institutions play in addressing and mitigating alcohol misuse among adults in Ebonyi LGA?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to interrogate the socio-religious dimensions of alcohol use and misuse among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Examine the cultural and social factors that promote alcohol consumption among adults in Ebonyi LGA.
- ii. Investigate religious perspectives and doctrines on alcohol consumption and misuse within the community.
- iii. Assess the extent and patterns of alcohol misuse among adults in the area.
- iv. Identify the social and religious consequences of alcohol misuse in the local context.
- v. Evaluate the roles of religious institutions in addressing and mitigating alcohol misuse among adults.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons, especially within the context of public health, religious engagement, social behaviour, and community development in Ebonyi Local Government Area and beyond.

The study contributes to existing scholarly literature by offering a multidisciplinary analysis that combines sociological and religious perspectives on alcohol use. It will fill a gap in empirical research that often overlooks adult alcohol consumption in rural communities and rarely integrates local religious views into behavioural health discourse. It may also serve as a reference point for future researchers who are interested in substance use within socio-religious frameworks in African contexts.

The findings will be valuable to public health practitioners by highlighting the extent and pattern of alcohol misuse among adults, and the sociocultural factors contributing to it. This can inform health education, community-based interventions, and the development of locally appropriate strategies for reducing harmful drinking.

Religious institutions, especially churches and faith-based organizations, will benefit from insights into how their teachings are perceived and practiced regarding alcohol use. The study may help them refine their moral teachings and pastoral approaches to more effectively address alcohol-related problems in their congregations.

By revealing the socio-religious dynamics behind alcohol use and misuse, the study can foster a more coordinated response involving families, religious bodies, and local government. It will encourage community dialogue around responsible living, health, and social accountability.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited to examining the socio-cultural and religious factors influencing the use and misuse of alcohol among adults (aged 18 and above) in Ebonyi Local Government Area of

Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It focuses on understanding how traditional practices, social norms, and religious doctrines—particularly within Christian denominations—shape attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol consumption. The study investigates patterns of alcohol use, the social and religious consequences of misuse, and the role of religious institutions in addressing alcohol-related challenges. Data collection and analysis are restricted to the specified geographical area and demographic group to ensure contextual relevance and depth of analysis.

Conceptual Framework

Alcohol use is a widespread social practice that serves diverse functions across cultures and communities. It is often associated with leisure, social bonding, religious ceremonies, and rites of passage (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). In many African societies, including communities in Nigeria, alcohol consumption is deeply embedded in traditional and social events such as festivals, marriages, burials, and conflict resolution (Olanrewaju *et al.*, 2022). Moderate alcohol use in such settings is often culturally acceptable and may even symbolize hospitality and maturity. However, this cultural normalization may obscure the transition from use to misuse, particularly in communities where regulation and awareness are limited.

Alcohol misuse, on the other hand, refers to patterns of consumption that pose risks to an individual's health, social relationships, or economic well-being. It includes binge drinking, chronic dependency, and drinking that results in physical, psychological, or social harm (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA], 2022). According to WHO (2023), alcohol misuse is a major global health concern, contributing to over 3 million deaths annually and exacerbating conditions such as liver disease, mental disorders, domestic violence, and road traffic accidents. In Nigeria, studies have shown an increasing trend in alcohol abuse, particularly among adults in both urban and rural communities (Okonkwo and Abah, 2021).

The distinction between alcohol use and misuse is not always clear-cut, especially in communities where excessive drinking is normalized or even valorized. Cultural practices and peer influence play a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward alcohol. For example, men are often encouraged to drink as a symbol of masculinity, while women who consume alcohol may face stigma (Adediran and Okoye, 2023). Additionally, economic hardship, unemployment, and psychological stress are known drivers of alcohol misuse, especially in low-income settings.

Religious beliefs and institutions also significantly influence perceptions of alcohol use. In Christian communities across Nigeria, alcohol consumption is generally discouraged, especially among devout members and clergy. While some denominations allow moderate drinking (e.g., wine during Eucharist), others condemn it entirely as sinful (Iheanacho, 2022). Despite this, alcohol misuse persists among some adherents, indicating a gap between doctrine and practice. Religious institutions, therefore, play a dual role: they can either provide spiritual support for those battling addiction or contribute to silence and denial around the issue due to fear of stigma.

The socio-religious perspective on alcohol use and misuse provides a comprehensive lens through which to understand the complex interplay of cultural norms, social expectations, and religious doctrines that influence individuals' behaviors concerning alcohol consumption. In many African societies, including Ebonyi State, alcohol occupies a dual role: it is both a socially accepted substance used in communal and traditional rites and a subject of moral concern within religious teachings (Okonkwo and Abah, 2021). This duality often creates tension between cultural heritage and religious obligations, shaping individual and community attitudes toward alcohol.

Socially, alcohol use in Ebonyi communities is closely tied to cultural identity, status expression, and social cohesion. It is common during ceremonies such as marriages, festivals, funerals, and traditional meetings, where offering alcohol is considered a symbol of respect and hospitality (Olanrewaju *et al.*, 2022). Peer influence and community norms further reinforce the acceptability of drinking, especially among men. However, these social dynamics also contribute to patterns of excessive consumption and normalization of misuse, especially in contexts where regulatory mechanisms are weak or non-existent.

From a religious standpoint, most Christian denominations dominant in Ebonyi Local Government Area—including Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Pentecostalism—discourage excessive drinking and interpret alcohol misuse as morally and spiritually harmful. While moderate use (e.g., sacramental wine) may be tolerated in some churches, many religious leaders preach total abstinence based on biblical injunctions such as Ephesians 5:18, which warns against drunkenness (Iheanacho, 2022). Religious teachings often associate alcohol abuse with sin, moral decay, and spiritual weakness. Consequently, devout Christians may refrain from drinking entirely or do so in secrecy, leading to underreporting and hidden patterns of misuse within religious communities.

Moreover, religious institutions in the area serve as important agents of socialization, rehabilitation, and moral guidance. Through sermons, counseling, youth programs, and community outreach, churches attempt to shape public morality and promote healthy lifestyles (Adediran and Okoye, 2023). However, their effectiveness in curbing alcohol misuse varies depending on their level of engagement with social realities such as poverty, unemployment, and trauma, which are underlying factors in substance abuse. Some scholars have argued that the religious condemnation of alcohol, while morally grounded, may sometimes lead to stigmatization rather than supportive interventions (Eze and Chukwuma, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two major theories: Social Learning Theory and Religious Commitment Theory

Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) as propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977 posits that behavior is learned through the observation, imitation, and modeling of others within a social environment. According to Bandura (1977), individuals—especially children and

adolescents—acquire new behaviors not only through direct experience but also by watching others, especially those they regard as role models, such as parents, peers, religious leaders, and community figures.

In the context of alcohol use and misuse, Social Learning Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area may adopt drinking behaviors based on what they observe in their immediate social and cultural environment. When individuals see respected community members or elders consuming alcohol during cultural events or family gatherings, they may begin to associate alcohol with social acceptance, adulthood, or prestige. This modeling effect is reinforced when such behaviors are met with positive social outcomes, such as praise, attention, or inclusion in community circles (Cheng and Lo, 2021).

Furthermore, peer influence plays a significant role in shaping drinking behavior, especially among adults in rural and semi-urban settings. Social Learning Theory explains how individuals, through social interaction, may learn and internalize norms that either condone or discourage excessive alcohol consumption (Elek *et al.*, 2020). In communities where alcohol use is normalized or even glorified, individuals are less likely to perceive drinking—especially in excess—as harmful. Conversely, if the dominant group exhibits abstinence or moderation, others may adopt those behaviors to maintain social alignment.

Social Learning Theory also helps to explain the potential impact of religious institutions in modifying behavior. Religious leaders who model abstinence or preach against the misuse of alcohol can influence their followers through verbal persuasion and moral example. When these teachings are reinforced through communal practices—such as counseling, public testimonies, or support groups—they can contribute to behavior change by altering the perceived rewards and consequences associated with alcohol misuse (Beck *et al.*, 2022).

Thus, Social Learning Theory is particularly relevant for a socio-religious analysis of alcohol use because it bridges the social and religious dimensions of behavioral acquisition and transformation. It provides a theoretical foundation for exploring how observed behaviors, reinforced by cultural and religious norms, shape individual choices regarding alcohol. The theory also offers practical implications for designing interventions that use positive role modeling, community engagement, and faith-based programs to reduce alcohol misuse in Ebonyi Local Government Area.

Religious Commitment Theory

The Religious Commitment Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how individuals' levels of religious involvement and adherence to spiritual principles influence their behavior, including the use or misuse of alcohol. Rooted in the broader sociology of religion, this theory posits that individuals who are highly committed to their religious beliefs are more likely to exhibit behavior that aligns with their faith's teachings and moral codes (Worthington *et al.*, 2003). Religious commitment encompasses both intrinsic dimensions—such as personal

devotion and internalized belief systems—and extrinsic aspects—such as participation in organized religious activities, church attendance, and adherence to institutional expectations. In the context of alcohol consumption, the Religious Commitment Theory suggests that people who are more religiously committed are less likely to engage in behaviors considered sinful or harmful by their religious communities, including alcohol misuse (Mokhtari *et al.*, 2021). For example, Christian denominations dominant in Ebonyi Local Government Area—including Catholic, Pentecostal, and Evangelical churches—generally condemn drunkenness and view it as both a moral and spiritual failing. Individuals with higher levels of religious commitment may internalize these teachings and, as a result, are more likely to abstain from or strictly regulate their alcohol intake to align with spiritual and communal expectations.

This theory is particularly useful in a socio-religious study of alcohol use in Ebonyi Local Government Area, where religion plays a central role in shaping social norms and personal values. People with strong religious ties may avoid alcohol misuse not only due to personal convictions but also because of fear of social stigma, loss of religious fellowship, or divine retribution (Onyekuru & Onuoha, 2022). Religious commitment also fosters social support systems, such as pastoral counseling and prayer groups, which can serve as protective factors against substance abuse.

Moreover, religious commitment can act as a behavioral anchor in environments where other regulatory systems are weak. In rural or semi-urban communities where law enforcement and health education are limited, strong religious involvement may substitute for formal controls by promoting internal discipline and moral accountability (Iwuagwu *et al.*, 2023). However, the effectiveness of this theory is mediated by the consistency of religious messaging, the authenticity of role models within religious institutions, and the extent to which religious organizations engage with broader social issues like poverty, unemployment, and trauma—factors that often lead to alcohol misuse.

In summary, Religious Commitment Theory supports the notion that increased religiosity is associated with reduced likelihood of alcohol misuse. It provides a framework for understanding how religious beliefs and practices influence individual behavior and highlights the potential for faith-based interventions in addressing alcohol-related problems in Ebonyi Local Government Area.

Empirical Review

Agbo (2021) conducted a study titled “*Cultural Beliefs and Alcohol Consumption Patterns Among Adult Males in Nsukka, Enugu State.*” The research adopted a descriptive survey design involving 250 adult male respondents selected using simple random sampling. The findings showed that alcohol consumption was deeply entrenched in cultural practices such as traditional marriages and burial rites. The study concluded that cultural norms significantly influence the initiation and continuation of alcohol use. The researcher recommended culturally sensitive interventions that respect traditions while discouraging misuse.

Okafor and Nwankwo (2020) examined “*Religious Influence on Alcohol Use Among Adults in Southeast Nigeria.*” The study employed a mixed-method design with a sample size of 300 adults drawn purposively from churches and mosques across Ebonyi and Anambra States. Findings revealed that individuals with higher religious commitment—especially in Pentecostal and Catholic settings—were significantly less likely to misuse alcohol. The study recommended that religious institutions play a more proactive role in substance misuse education.

Ifeanyi and Okoye (2022) carried out a study on “*Alcohol Misuse and Social Dysfunction Among Married Adults in Abakaliki Urban.*” Using a cross-sectional survey approach, the study sampled 200 participants through stratified random sampling. Results indicated that alcohol misuse was closely linked to domestic violence, marital discord, and economic instability. The researchers recommended integrating alcohol counseling services into community health programs.

Adebayo and Yusuf (2023) explored “*Faith-Based Interventions and Alcohol Addiction Recovery in Southwest Nigeria.*” This qualitative study involved 30 recovering alcoholics enrolled in religious rehabilitation centers. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that spiritual discipline, moral teachings, and religious fellowship played a crucial role in relapse prevention. The study recommended government partnerships with faith-based organizations for more holistic alcohol abuse recovery programs.

Chukwu and Okorie (2021) investigated “*Peer Pressure and Alcohol Misuse Among Youth and Young Adults in Ebonyi State.*” The study used a correlational research design and involved 350 participants between the ages of 18 and 35, selected through multistage sampling. The results confirmed that peer influence was a significant predictor of alcohol misuse, particularly among those with weak family or religious support. The authors advocated for youth mentoring programs anchored in religious and cultural institutions.

Mbah and Okonkwo (2022) studied “*The Role of Religion in Reducing Substance Abuse in Rural Communities in Nigeria.*” Using a descriptive survey design, 280 adult respondents from four rural communities in Southeast Nigeria were selected through cluster sampling. Findings indicated that regular religious attendance, pastoral counseling, and community prayer sessions reduced the incidence of alcohol and other substance misuse. The study recommended increased government funding for religious-based health promotion initiatives.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The design is suitable for studies that aim to collect detailed information about existing phenomena from a large population. It enables the researcher to systematically describe the current socio-religious dynamics influencing alcohol use and misuse among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area without manipulating variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Area of the Study

The study is situated in Ebonyi Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The area is predominantly rural with emerging urban settlements and is characterized by strong traditional customs and vibrant religious institutions including Catholic, Pentecostal, Anglican, and indigenous churches. These socio-religious contexts provide a unique environment for understanding the factors influencing alcohol consumption among adults.

Population of the Study

The target population for the study comprises all adults aged 18 years and above residing in Ebonyi Local Government Area. According to projections from the National Population Commission (NPC, 2023), the adult population in the area is estimated to be 64,000.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 400 adults was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for finite population:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (64,000)

e = margin of error (0.05)

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{64000}{1 + 64000(0.05)^2} \\ &= 398.76 \\ &= 400 \end{aligned}$$

A multi-stage sampling technique was used: Stratified sampling to categorize the area into urban and rural zones. Cluster sampling to select wards from each stratum. Simple random sampling to select individual respondents from households within each cluster.

Instrument for Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "*Socio-Religio Alcohol Use and Misuse Questionnaire (SRAUMQ)*". The instrument comprised two sections: Section A contained the demographic data of the respondents while Section B contained the main items on use and misuse of alcohol. The questionnaire utilized a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from *Strongly Agree (4)* to *Strongly Disagree (1)*.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through trained research assistants who administered the questionnaires in person. Assistance was provided to respondents with low literacy levels by translating the items into the local dialect (Izzi). Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were strictly observed.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics such as means were used to summarize demographic information and item responses.

Findings and Analysis

The table below contains the responses generated in the answer to the research questions:

Research Question 1: Cultural and Social Factors Promoting Alcohol Consumption

Table 1 presents respondents' responses on the cultural and social factors promoting alcohol consumption.

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Alcohol is used in cultural/social events	180	120	60	40	3.1
Peer influence contributes to drinking	160	130	70	40	3.0
Alcohol is used to show hospitality	150	140	70	40	3.0
Alcohol consumption is more accepted for men	130	150	80	40	2.9

The mean scores indicate that cultural and social factors such as cultural ceremonies and peer pressure are key promoters of alcohol consumption. The high mean score for cultural events (3.1) and peer influence (3.0) suggests that alcohol use is deeply embedded in social norms. Gender norms also play a role, though slightly less strongly (2.9), pointing to gendered perceptions of drinking.

Research Question 2: Religious Perspectives and Doctrines Concerning Alcohol Use

Table 2 shows respondents' responses on the religious perspectives and doctrines concerning alcohol use

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
My religion discourages alcohol use	200	110	60	30	3.2
Religious leaders preach against alcohol misuse	180	120	70	30	3.1
Some religious groups allow moderate drinking	100	120	100	80	2.6
My religious beliefs influence my view on alcohol	190	130	50	30	3.2

Most respondents affirmed that their religions discourage alcohol use and that their personal views are influenced by religious teachings (Mean = 3.2). However, the mean score for moderate alcohol use being allowed by some denominations (2.6) shows moderate variability in religious stances, indicating that while abstinence is dominant, some denominations may tolerate limited alcohol use.

Research Question 3: Extent and Patterns of Alcohol Misuse

Table 3 shows respondents' responses on the extent and patterns of alcohol misuse

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Alcohol is excessively consumed in this area	160	140	60	40	3.0
Daily alcohol consumption is common	150	130	70	50	2.9
There is a problem of alcohol dependency	140	130	80	50	2.9
Binge drinking is a frequent practice	155	135	70	40	3.0

The responses point to a noticeable level of alcohol misuse in Ebonyi LGA. All items have means around or slightly below 3.0, indicating that a significant portion of adults regularly engage in harmful drinking patterns including dependency and binge drinking, though some respondents remain neutral or disagree slightly.

Research Question 4: Social and Religious Consequences of Alcohol Misuse

Table 4 presents respondents' responses on the social and religious consequences of alcohol misuse

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Alcohol misuse leads to family conflict	170	130	60	40	3.1
It causes job loss or poor performance	160	130	70	40	3.0
It affects religious participation	165	130	70	35	3.1
It brings about social stigma	175	130	60	35	3.1

Respondents agree that alcohol misuse has serious social and religious consequences. The highest mean (3.1) reflects that many people associate alcohol misuse with social stigma, while family conflicts and reduced religious participation are also widely acknowledged problems. These findings reinforce the negative impact of alcohol on community wellbeing.

Research Question 5: Role of Religious Institutions in Mitigating Alcohol Misuse

Table 5 presents respondents' responses on the role of religious institutions in mitigating alcohol misuse

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Religious institutions organize awareness campaigns	180	130	60	30	3.1
They offer counseling services	160	140	60	40	3.0
They run faith-based rehabilitation programmes	150	130	70	50	2.9
They collaborate with health agencies	160	140	60	40	3.0

The data shows that religious institutions play an active role in curbing alcohol misuse. With a mean score of 3.1, organizing awareness campaigns is the most recognized effort. Other roles such as offering counseling and collaborating with health institutions are also moderately affirmed, though support for rehabilitation efforts (2.95) is slightly lower, suggesting room for growth in direct intervention services.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the socio-religious dynamics surrounding alcohol consumption and misuse among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area. The analysis was guided by five research questions and responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale.

The findings revealed that cultural and social elements strongly influence alcohol consumption in the area. Respondents generally agreed that alcohol is used during social and cultural events such as traditional marriages, funerals, and community festivals (Mean = 3.1). Peer influence was also highlighted as a strong factor (Mean = 3.0), affirming Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory which emphasizes that behaviors are learned through observation and imitation. The use of alcohol to express hospitality (Mean = 3.0) and the societal norm that views alcohol consumption as more acceptable for men (Mean = 2.9) further reveal the entrenched social norms that perpetuate drinking habits.

Respondents agreed that most religious doctrines in the area discourage alcohol consumption (Mean = 3.2) and that religious leaders often preach against its misuse (Mean = 3.1). However, there was some neutrality in responses regarding the allowance of moderate alcohol consumption by some denominations (Mean = 2.6), indicating a theological variance in alcohol-related doctrines. Most respondents affirmed that their religious convictions shape their views on alcohol (Mean = 3.2), supporting the Religious Commitment Theory (Worthington et

al., 2003), which posits that religious teachings significantly influence individual behavior and lifestyle choices.

The study found that alcohol misuse is prevalent in the area, with mean scores ranging from 2.9 to 3.0. Respondents acknowledged excessive consumption (Mean = 3.0), daily use (Mean = 2.95), dependency (Mean = 2.9), and binge drinking (Mean = 3.0). These patterns align with previous studies such as Agbo and Okoye (2022), which report an increase in habitual and problematic alcohol use in rural and peri-urban Nigerian communities. These patterns indicate a public health concern that needs targeted interventions.

Findings showed high levels of agreement on the negative consequences of alcohol misuse. Most respondents strongly agreed that alcohol abuse leads to family conflict (Mean = 3.08), job loss or underperformance (Mean = 3.03), diminished religious participation (Mean = 3.06), and social stigma (Mean = 3.11). These consequences point to the disruptive nature of alcohol misuse on personal, family, and communal life. This confirms earlier empirical work by Eze and Nwankwo (2021), which showed that alcohol misuse in local communities contributes significantly to household dysfunction and moral decline.

The findings reveal that religious institutions are actively involved in reducing alcohol misuse. Respondents indicated that these institutions organize awareness campaigns (Mean = 3.15), offer counseling (Mean = 3.05), run rehabilitation programmes (Mean = 2.95), and collaborate with health agencies (Mean = 3.05). These interventions show a strong institutional commitment to addressing the issue from both moral and psychosocial standpoints. The active participation of religious organizations is crucial for reinforcing abstinence and recovery programs, especially in deeply religious societies like Ebonyi.

Summary of the Study

This study examined the cultural, social, and religious dimensions of alcohol use and misuse among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The research was anchored on Social Learning Theory and Religious Commitment Theory, which provided a lens for understanding how individuals' behaviors are shaped by their environment and religious beliefs. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population consisted of adult residents of Ebonyi LGA, from which a sample of 400 respondents was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire based on a 4-point Likert scale was used to collect data. The instrument covered aspects such as socio-cultural motivations, religious doctrines, patterns of alcohol misuse, consequences, and the role of religious institutions. The data were analyzed using mean scores.

The findings revealed that alcohol consumption is deeply rooted in cultural practices and social interactions, with peer pressure and traditional hospitality norms being significant drivers. Most religious doctrines in the area discourage alcohol use, and religious beliefs significantly influence personal attitudes toward alcohol. The extent of alcohol misuse was found to be moderately high, characterized by binge drinking, daily use, and dependency. Socially, alcohol misuse was linked to family breakdowns, job loss, and stigma, while religious participation

was negatively affected. Importantly, religious institutions were shown to play proactive roles in addressing alcohol misuse through awareness campaigns, counseling, and limited collaboration with health agencies.

The study concludes that both cultural acceptance and religious disapproval coexist in a complex dynamic that influences alcohol-related behaviors in the community. It recommends stronger faith-based interventions, public health education, and community-level dialogue to reduce harmful alcohol use among adults in Ebonyi LGA.

Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive socio-religious exploration into the factors influencing alcohol consumption and misuse among adults in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The findings show that alcohol use is not only a personal choice but also a cultural and social practice entrenched in community traditions and events. While the use of alcohol is often normalized in social contexts, its misuse has resulted in adverse outcomes, including family disintegration, poor job performance, diminished religious involvement, and social stigmatization.

Importantly, the study highlights the role of religious belief systems in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol. While many religious doctrines condemn alcohol misuse, their effectiveness in influencing behavior varies across denominations. Religious institutions, however, have emerged as vital agents in promoting behavioral change through awareness campaigns, counseling, and spiritual guidance, even though their capacity in providing structured rehabilitation remains limited.

Ultimately, the study concludes that addressing alcohol misuse in Ebonyi LGA requires a multi-dimensional approach—one that recognizes the influence of cultural norms, strengthens religious institutional involvement, and incorporates public health strategies. A collaborative effort among families, religious leaders, community heads, and policy-makers is essential for reducing the prevalence and impact of alcohol misuse in the area.

Community leaders and cultural custodians should initiate awareness programs that re-evaluate traditional practices which promote alcohol consumption during events such as burials, marriages, and festivals. These practices should be redesigned to emphasize moderation or alternatives to alcohol use.

Religious bodies should intensify their efforts in addressing alcohol misuse by incorporating structured rehabilitation support, regular sermons against excessive drinking, and setting up faith-based counseling centers that can offer both spiritual and psychological support.

Local health authorities and Ebonyi State Ministry of Health should work collaboratively with religious institutions to implement public health campaigns on the dangers of alcohol misuse. Mobile sensitization units and community seminars could be effective in reaching adults in rural and urban parts of the LGA.

The local government should regulate the sale and distribution of alcohol, especially in proximity to schools, churches, and residential areas. Age restrictions, operating hours for bars, and licensing enforcement should be strictly upheld.

Schools and community development associations should design and implement life-skills programs targeted at young adults to equip them with decision-making skills that discourage substance abuse. This will help break the cycle of early exposure to alcohol consumption.

Community-based peer support groups should be established to help individuals struggling with alcohol dependency. These groups can offer a safe space for sharing experiences, encouraging sobriety, and reintegrating into the community.

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