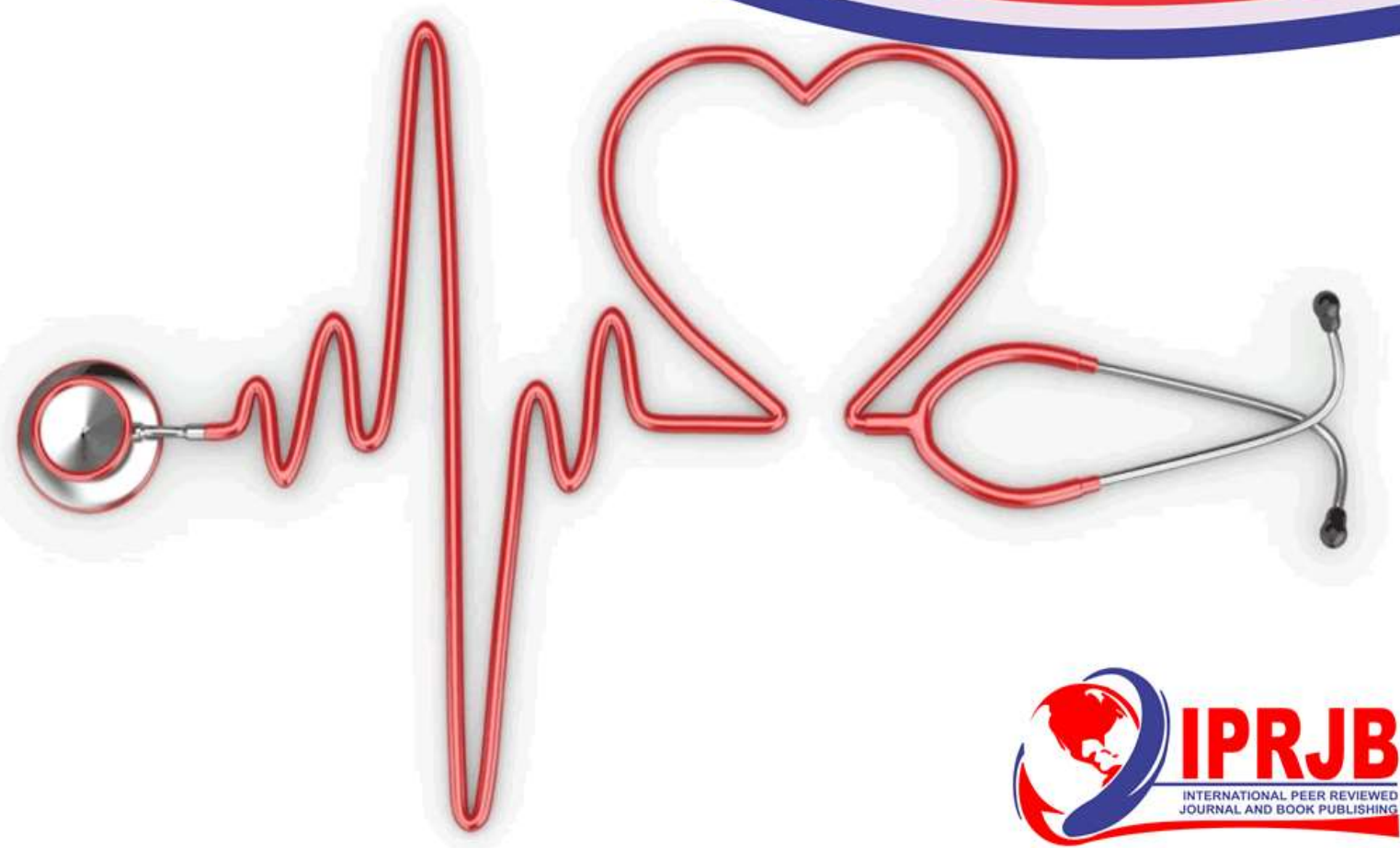


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**Psychosocial Factors Associated With Alcohol Use among Persons Aged 18-35
Years in Kangundo North Ward, Machakos County, Kenya**

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Psychosocial Factors Associated With Alcohol Use among Persons Aged 18-35 Years in Kangundo North Ward, Machakos County, Kenya



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Abstract

Purpose: The objective of this study was to explore the psychosocial factors associated with alcohol use among persons aged 18-35 years in Kangundo North Ward, Machakos County.

Methodology: A cross sectional study design where data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Data entry was done and analyzed using SPSS version 23, descriptive statistics was used. Logistic regressions were used to explore the psychosocial factors associated with alcohol use where Odds ratios were used. Multivariate and bivariate analysis were done to establish association between psychosocial factors and alcohol use.

Findings: 310 respondents were interviewed, the response rate was 100%, 86% were males while 14% were females, 86% of alcohol consumers were males, while 14% who consumed alcohol were females. 89% were aged between 18-24 years, 8% were aged between 25-29 years while 3% were 30-35 years. The study revealed that youths aged 18-35 years suffer a wide variety of challenges. 49% of the respondents had experienced financial difficulties, 11% were victims of robbery, these stressful life events can lead to one using alcohol. Majority of respondents had ever experienced stressful event with 50% using alcohol as a solution to relieve the stress. 50.32% indicated that they started taking alcohol after the stressful experiences, 48% had experienced physical violence, 5% sexual violence, 45% emotional violence while 24% had undergone harsh childhood experiences. The study findings revealed that (28%) had consumed tobacco, (17%) miraa, (8%) marijuana, (1%) inhalants while (46%) had never consumed any psychoactive substance. There was significant association between experiences of emotional, sexual abuse, harsh childhood experiences and use of other psychoactive substances with alcohol use ($p < 0.05$).

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Targeted interventions aimed at addressing psychosocial factors associated with alcohol use is vital. The study adds to the pool of knowledge that psychosocial issues such as stressful life events, gender based violence, harsh childhood experiences and use of other psychoactive substances contribute to alcohol use. Awareness on Gender based violence and other psychoactive substances such as cigarette and marijuana use needs to be enhanced. The findings of the study may inform the local county government of Machakos and Kangundo Sub-county administrators in formulating policies to help address alcohol use among persons aged 18-35 years.

Keywords: *Alcohol Use, Psychosocial Factors, Associated*

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INTRODUCTION

Alcohol is one of the psychoactive substances with dependence-producing properties and widely used in many cultures for centuries (Francis *et al.*,2014). Alcohol use is the result of different factors including economic, environmental, cultural, biological, social and psychosocial factors that interact together and affect the propensity for a human to use this substance. Globally, the harmful use of alcohol is a problem and has resulted in millions of deaths, injury and violence (Chartajee *et al.*, 2018). According to WHO some 2.3 billion people are current alcohol drinkers. Alcohol is attributed to 5.1 % of global burden of disease and 13.5 % of the total deaths in age group 20–39 years. In Africa, alcohol consumption is on the rise, the region has the highest prevalence of heavy episodic drinking with 46% of women and 59% of male drinkers engaging in it weekly. A significant proportion of the disease burden attributable to alcohol consumption arises from unintentional and intentional injuries, including road traffic crashes, violence, and suicides, and fatal alcohol-related injuries tend to occur in relatively younger age groups (WHO, 2018). In Kenya, Use of alcohol and other substances is a social behaviour which is embedded in communities and cultures and is sustained by supply. The NACADA 2017 survey revealed that 12.2% of respondents aged 15 – 65 years are currently using alcohol; 15.1% of respondents aged 25 - 35 years are currently using alcohol; 5.6% of respondents aged 15 – 24 years are currently using alcohol; and 0.9% of respondents aged 10 – 19 years are currently using alcohol. Nairobi region is leading in the prevalence of current usage of alcohol (17.5%) followed by Eastern 14.3% and Western 13.4% regions. The prevalence of alcohol use disorders among respondents aged 15 -65 years stands at 10.4% in 2017(NACADA, 2017). Male gender, secondary and tertiary education and high socioeconomic status were significantly associated with alcohol use (Makau *et.al.*,2021). Advertisements and alcohol regulation was significantly associated with alcohol abuse (Makau *et al.*,2022). In Kangundo North Ward, Machakos County, many persons aged 18-35 years are indulging in alcohol use with some ending up with adverse consequences.

Psychosocial factors that lead to alcohol use include; stressful life events, the various forms of gender based violence, personality disorders, harsh childhood experiences and abuse of other psychoactive substances. Youth in Kenya face a myriad of challenges ranging from unemployment, under-employment, HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), drug and substance abuse, poverty, crime and deviant behaviour, exploitation, lack of opportunities to explore and develop their talents, and low representation at decision making levels (NAYS 2015). Early exposure to child maltreatment is associated with elevated risk for behavioural disorders in adulthood. According to Keyes and others, literatures demonstrate that exposure to stress is an important component in individual differences in risk for alcohol consumption and alcohol use disorders (Keyes *et al.*, 2011).Alcohol use can be caused by a variety of factors and has serious implications ,understanding psychosocial factors and preventive measures may assist in the development of interventions to improve coping mechanisms and reduce the incidence of alcohol misuse(Mercer *et al.*,2023). Alcohol is often considered a gateway to the use of illegal substances. Youth who drink are significantly more likely to use other illicit drugs, compared to young non-drinkers (Patrick *et al.*, 2011). A study done by Chartajee and others noted moderated associations of both abuse and household dysfunction with early initiation of marijuana ($p < 0.003$) and alcohol use(Chartajee *et al.*, 2018). Experiences of emotional abuse and physical abuse show a statistically higher prevalence of lifetime alcohol use disorders (Wang *et al.*,2020). A study by Turkmen and others

noted that adverse childhood experiences are common and may predispose affected individuals to various health problems, including alcohol use disorder (Turkmen *et al.*,2022). Research has shown that patients with common mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, social anxiety, stress, difficulty in expressing emotions are at higher risk of alcohol use disorder

This study focused on psychosocial factors associated with alcohol use. The psychosocial variables studied were; Stressful life events, gender based violence, harsh childhood experiences and use of other psychoactive substances.

Conceptual Framework

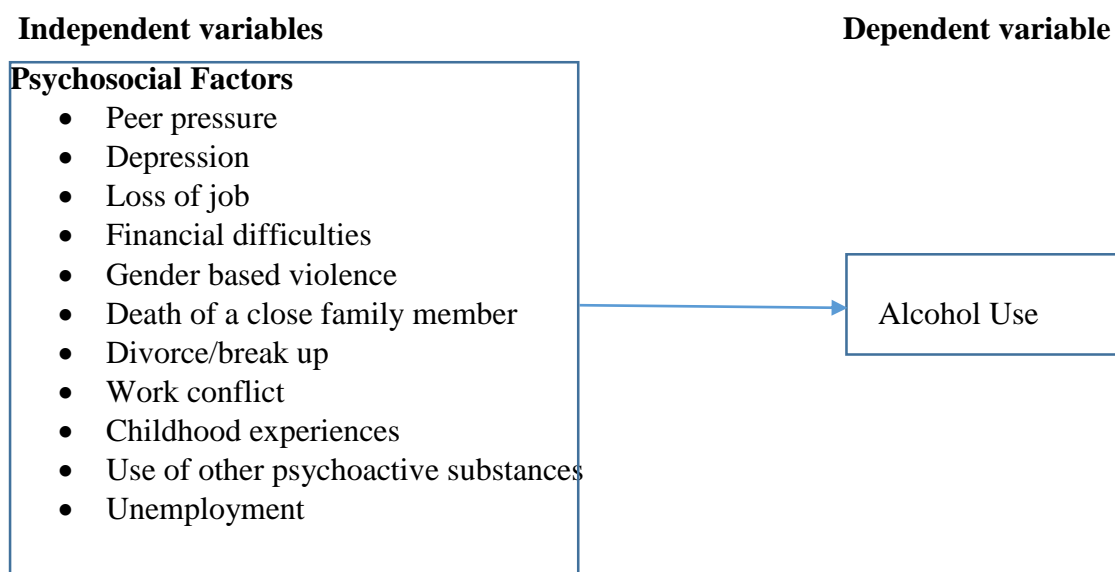


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework

This study conceptualized factors associated with alcohol use among persons aged 18-35 years using the Socio ecological model as a result of interaction of various factors that include individual, biological, social, environmental and psychosocial. The Factors associated with alcohol use tend to be more than one. This study has therefore focused on psychosocial factors as one of the multiple levels of influence. Psychosocial factors such as stressful life events, gender based violence, harsh childhood experiences and use of other psychoactive substances contribute to alcohol use. According to UNDOC, no factor alone is sufficient to lead to the use of substances and these influences change over time. (UNDOC, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional descriptive study design was used whereby data was collected on factors associated with alcohol use among persons aged 18-35 years in Kangundo North ward. The study population was male and female persons aged 18-35 years who met the inclusion criteria and consented for the study were randomly selected. Cochran formulae (1999) was used to obtain a sample size of 310 respondents. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Data entry was done using Microsoft access with unique identifiers in duplicate for validation (double entry) and exported in SPSS. Descriptive statistics was applied. Logistic regression was used to analyse the association between the psychosocial factors and alcohol use. Approval

to conduct the study was given by The Baraton University Ethical Review Committee. (Reference number: B18162019). The Chief Kitwii Location accepted the study to be carried out. Written informed consent was obtained from the respondents. Questionnaires were administered confidentially, and privacy was ensured.

RESULTS

Psychosocial Factors That Contribute to Alcohol Use

To assess the psychosocial challenges faced by the respondents, respondents were asked to indicate the challenges they faced. Majority of the respondents, 49% indicated that they had experienced financial difficulties, 11% were victims of robbery, 9% had experienced divorce, 6 % had a very ill family member and work conflict respectively, 5% had lost their job,12% had experienced the death of a close family member and 4% had experienced drop out of school.

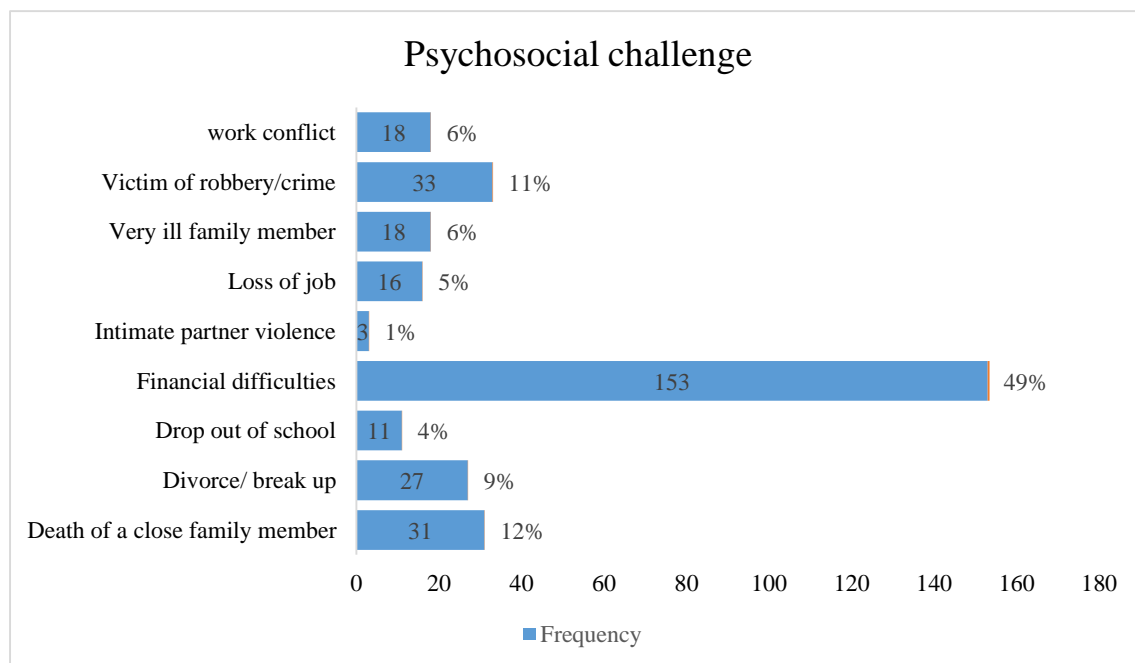


Figure 2: Psychosocial Challenges of Respondents

Above Experience Lead to Alcohol Consumption

53% of respondents indicated that they started taking alcohol after the stressful experiences while 47% did not start taking alcohol as a result of the experiences above.

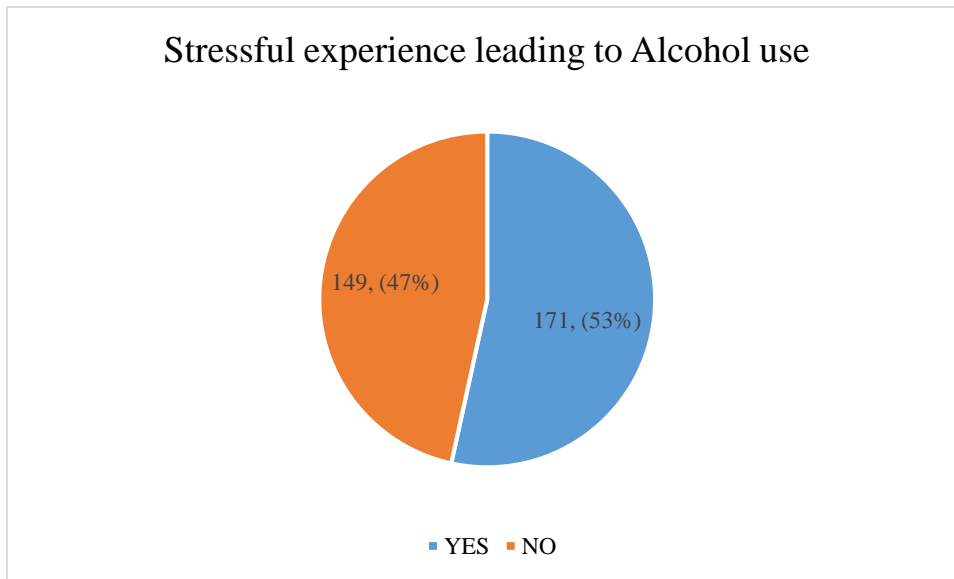


Figure 3: Stressful Experience Contributing to Alcohol Use

Gender Based Violence and Harsh Childhood Experiences

The study sought to know the whether the respondents had experienced any form of gender based violence in the last 1 year, majority, 48% had experienced physical violence, 5% sexual violence, 45% emotional violence while 24% had undergone harsh childhood experiences.

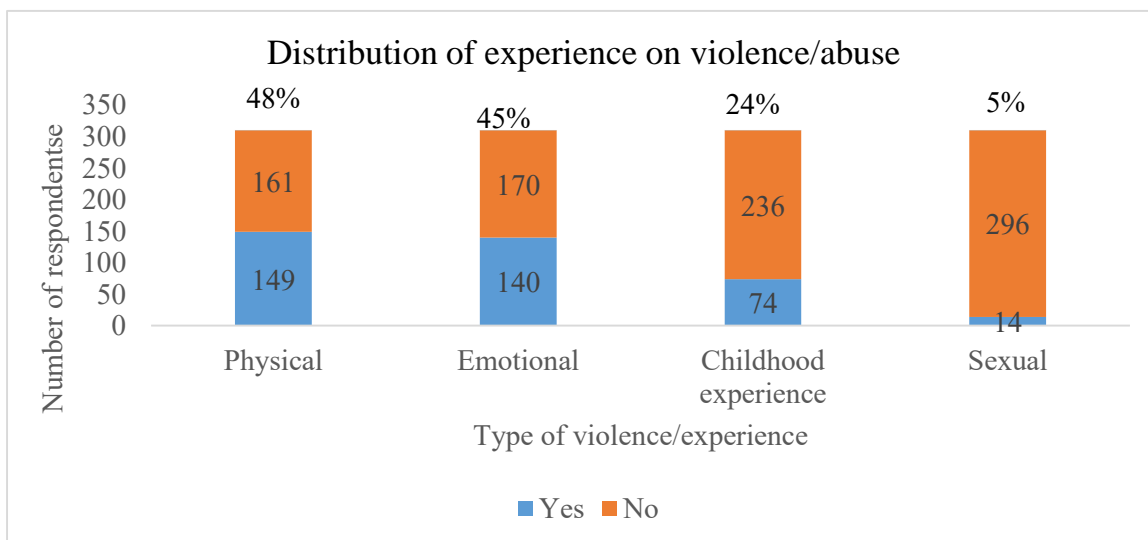


Figure 4: Distribution of Respondent's Experience of Violence and Harsh Childhood Experiences

Distribution of Respondent's Use of Other Psychoactive Substances

Figure 5 shows the types of other psychoactive substance consumed by the respondents. Tobacco (28%) and miraa (17%) were the substances commonly used with alcohol, other substances included (8%) marijuana, (1%) inhalants while (46%) of respondents had never consumed any other psychoactive substance.

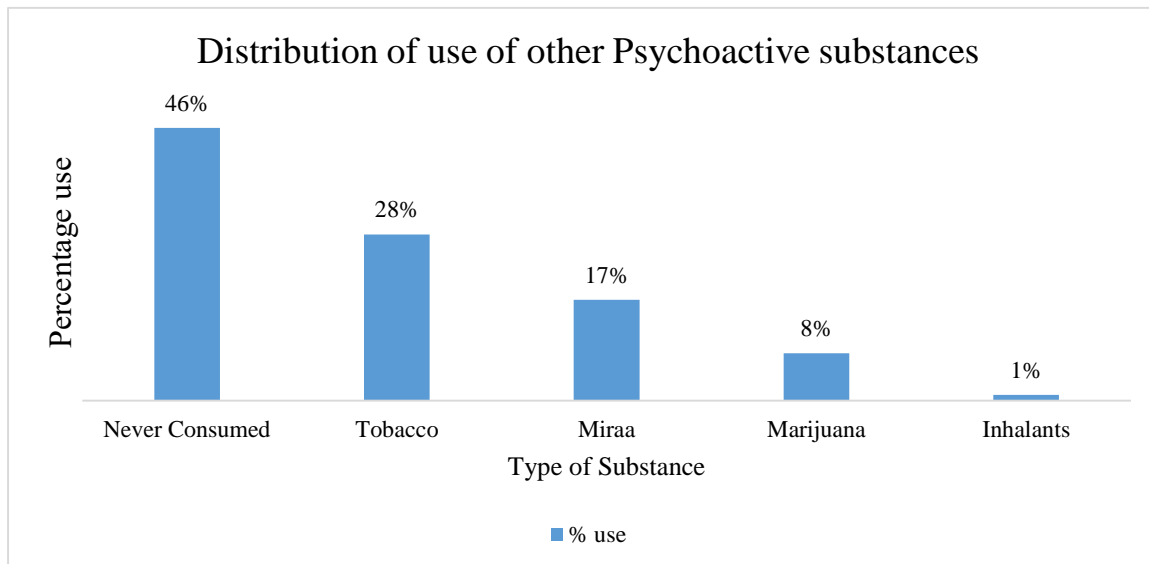


Figure 5: Distribution of Use of Other Psychoactive Substances

Knowledge of Seeking Help for Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The study sought to know whether the study participants had the knowledge of where to seek help for alcohol and drug abuse. 65% indicated that they do not know while 35% indicated that they know where to get help on alcohol and drug abuse.

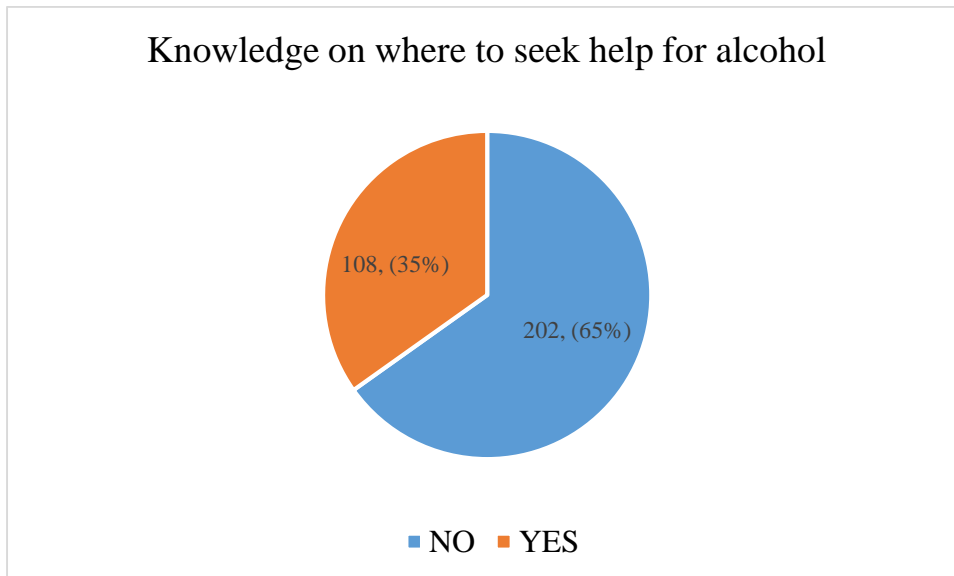


Figure 6: Respondent's Knowledge on Where to Seek Help for Alcohol

Distribution of Respondent's Knowledge of Alcohol Support Centres

Figure 7 demonstrates the respondent's knowledge of alcohol support centres, 65% of the respondents did not know where to seek help for alcohol while 23% indicated health facilities, 10% indicated rehabilitation centres, 3% indicated other centres including counselling.

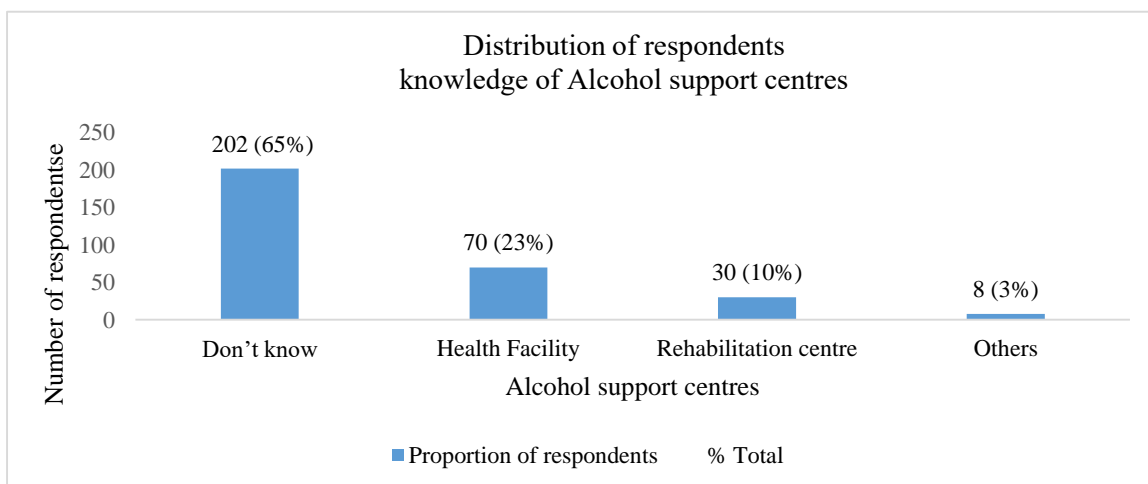


Figure 7: Distribution of Knowledge on Alcohol Centres

Univariate Analysis for the Psychosocial Factors Associated With Alcohol Intake

As indicated in Table 1 below, the significant factor at the univariate level is whether one had experienced sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and whether the experience led to the participant to start using alcohol since the p value is less than 0.05.

Table 1: Univariate Analysis for Psychosocial Factors Associated With Alcohol Intake

Alcohol use	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	95% Conf.	
Stressful life event	0.962	0.062	-0.61	0.544	0.848	1.090
Alcohol to relieve stress	0.615	0.180	-1.66	0.097	0.347	1.091
Educated on alcohol	0.768	0.248	-0.82	0.415	0.408	1.448
Physical abuse	0.762	0.068	-3.04	0.006	0.639	0.908
Sexual abuse	0.792	0.083	-2.21	0.002	0.645	0.974
Parental experience	0.918	0.081	-0.98	0.329	0.773	1.090
Emotional abuse	0.775	0.094	-2.11	0.003	0.612	0.983
Experience led to alcohol	0.750	0.067	-3.22	0.001	0.629	0.894

Multivariate Analysis for Other Substance Abuse Associated With Alcohol Intake

As indicated in Table 2, the substance that was significantly associated with alcohol abuse was marijuana. The individuals who abused marijuana were 0.0108 times less likely to abuse alcohol compared to the ones who abuse tobacco.

Table 2: Multivariate Analysis for Substance Abuse Associated With Alcohol Use

Substance Abuse	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Tobacco	Reference					
Miraa	0.6674	0.3373	-0.8	0.424	0.2478	1.7969
Marijuana	0.0108	0.0096	-5.07	0.001	0.0019	0.062
Inhalants	2.6908	3.0961	0.86	0.39	0.2822	25.6611
Never consumed	1.0601	1.2413	0.05	0.96	0.1068	10.5204
Constant	0.6977	0.8349	-0.3	0.764	0.0668	7.283

Multivariate analysis for the psychosocial factors associated with alcohol use

As indicated in table 3 Individuals who had undergone emotional abuse were 3 times more likely to use alcohol while those who experienced sexual abuse were 2 times more likely to use alcohol. There was no significance for those who experienced physical abuse and harsh childhood experiences.

Table 3: Multivariate Analysis for Psychosocial Factors Associated With Alcohol

Alcohol Intake	OR	Std. Error	Z	P>z	95% CI	
Physical Abuse						
Yes	Reference					
No	0.081	0.103	-1.97	0.049	0.006	0.987
Sexual Abuse						
Yes	Reference					
No	0.035	0.047	-2.53	0.012	0.002	0.473
Emotional Abuse						
Yes	Reference					
No	0.049	0.065	-2.26	0.024	0.003	0.673
Childhood Experience						
Yes	Reference					
No	0.246	0.172	-2	0.045	0.062	0.971
Constant	0.089	0.106	-2.03	0.043	0.008	0.922

Discussion

Psychosocial Factors Associated With Alcohol Use

The study revealed that persons aged 18-35 suffer a wide variety of challenges with the majority of the respondents, 49% indicated that they had experienced financial difficulties, 11% were victims of robbery. These stressful life events can lead to one using alcohol. Majority of respondents had ever experienced stressful event with 50% using alcohol as a solution to relieve the stress. 50.32% indicated that they started taking alcohol after the experiences while 49.68% did not start taking alcohol as a result of the experiences above. This is consistent with National Adolescent and Youth Survey 2015, NAYS 2015) that noted youth face a myriad of challenges which trigger to use of alcohol. In a study done by Jose and others, respondents reporting life events and chronic stressors were compared with regard to their likelihood of heavy drinking (Jose *et al.*, 2015). The findings further coincide with those of Mercer and others that noted workplace trauma and stress contributing to alcohol use (Mercer *et al.*, 2023).

In regards to the opinion on whether alcohol helps relieve stress, 50.32% indicated that they started taking alcohol after the stressful experiences while 49.68% did not start taking alcohol as a result of the experiences above. This is consistent with a study done by Mindigo and others which noted that beliefs and perceptions of experiences with alcohol may perpetuate future alcohol-related expectancies (Mindigo *et al.*, 2019).

Gender based violence experiences reported by the respondents indicated that 48% had experienced physical violence, 5% sexual violence, 45% emotional violence while 24% had undergone harsh childhood experiences. There was significant association between the experiences of emotional and sexual abuse with alcohol use ($p < 0.05$). This is similar to the findings of Wang which noted that experience of emotional abuse and physical abuse show a statistically higher prevalence of lifetime alcohol use disorders (Wang *et al.*, 2020)

The study findings revealed that (28%) had consumed tobacco, (17%) miraa, (8%) marijuana, (1%) inhalants while (46%) had never consumed any psychoactive substance. The findings are consistent with a study among University students by Magu that revealed alcohol and cigarettes were the commonly abused substances in 3 universities with a high proportion of students at JKUAT (20%) and (7%) respectively, marijuana (5%) smokeless tobacco (4%) and stimulants (3%) (Magu *et al.*, 2015). The findings are also consistent with a study done by Chartajee and others that noted moderated associations of both abuse and household dysfunction with early initiation of marijuana ($p < .003$) and alcohol use. (Chartajee *et al.*, 2018).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Individuals who had undergone emotional violence were 3 times more likely to use alcohol while those who experienced sexual abuse were 2 times more likely to use alcohol. There was no significance for those who experienced physical abuse and harsh childhood experiences. Use of other psychoactive substances was significantly associated with alcohol use. The individuals who abused marijuana were 0.0108 times less likely to use alcohol compared to the ones who abused tobacco.

Recommendations

From the study findings we recommend enhanced targeted awareness messaging on the use of alcohol and other psychoactive substances. More referral counselling and rehabilitation centers need to be availed within counties for easier access to counselling and therapy for alcohol use disorders. In addition, we recommend Gender based violence awareness and screening for persons aged 18-35 years in Kangundo North ward. This will help identify and mitigate the cases in advance before they develop psychosocial issues that lead to alcohol use.

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