Academic Implications of Alcohol Use

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Abstract: Alcohol use, a universal phenomenon among youth, keeps raising questions and attracting researches on its hold among them. The issue of alcohol use is viewed differently by different cultures and ages for different reasons. However, there seems to have less differences of opinion as regards its use by students. In most cases use of alcohol by students is disapproved by most societies. This paper is an attempt to study the impact and implications of alcohol use by college students of West Siang district on their academic achievements and social relations. Adopting explanatory sequential and nested research design and mixed method approach this study attempted to unearth how alcohol use by college students affect their academic achievements in relation to Grade Point Average (GPA), their discontinuing from studies, and their ambitions in life. In all these grounds the findings showed that alcohol users were more likely to lower their GPA, discontinue from studies and lose sight of their ambitions in life, which indicate a lessened interest in studies. The study also showed that there is neither any predictors to say that alcohol use is associated with any particular class of students nor that its use enhances in social relations and peer admiration.

Introduction
Higher education has become the basic and the backbone of success in the development of people in the present day more than any other times. Academic emphasis, the extent to which an institution is driven by a quest for academic excellence, is a distinguishing mark of modern educational institutions. Academic performance or a student’s learning is commonly and comprehensively measured by the Grade point average (GPA) pupils score in the academics. Every well-meaning institution targets the best performance of its students, strives towards it, and is delighted when their students achieve high grades in examinations. Similarly, every parent and guardian aspires the best performance of their children in their education as much as in their life. Best academic excellence of students’ is achieved by satisfactory academic interest of the students coupled with academic emphasis of the institution. Hence academic ambience in the institution and academic interest of students are key to academic performance. This paper presents how alcohol use by students is related to the academic performance of students.

Alcohol Use (AU) has an age old history across civilizations. Its use has evolved over years to the modern day distillations and continue to attract humans, especially the youth. Humankind and society need to be cognizant of it and to respond responsibly and consciously to adopt mechanisms to make it beneficial to society (Joseph & Pereira, 2014, p.1; Joseph, 2015). Literature reviewed on the topic noted that alcohol use is increasingly becoming a common phenomenon in college and university campuses and it adversely affects the academic performance of students. Students often cite varied reasons for consuming alcohol, but most neglect to consider the implications of their actions, both short term and long term. Once they get addicted to alcohol use, some of them tend to lose interest in their academic life and it can lead to long term addiction leading even to the use of harder drugs. Regular and daily intake of alcohol can affect someone physically and mentally: the internal organs of the body wear away, decision making capacity gets affected, the very motivation for study gets diluted and capacity to concentrate gets affected. Even if one is an occasional user of alcohol, it can still seize precious time meant for study affecting one’s grades and relationships. While assessing association between educational achievement and alcohol consumption Ansari et al (2013) reported that alcohol consumption showed negative association with motivation for and subjectively achieved academic performance. Butler et al (2011) reported that some students do not reduce alcohol intake even when they have academic demands like, examination, project presentation etc. to meet the next day. He quotes national surveys to establish that “40 per cent of college students binge drink regularly and that the rate of binge drinking is increasing” (p. 359-360) and argues that drinkers tend to ignore about the implications of their actions. Butler et al(2011) reported that some students do not reduce alcohol intake even when they have academic demands like, examination, project presentation etc. to meet the next day. He quotes national surveys to establish that “40 per cent of college students binge drink regularly and that the rate of binge drinking is increasing” (p. 359-360) and argues that drinkers tend to ignore about the implications of their actions. Butler et al(2011) reported that some students do not reduce alcohol intake even when they have academic demands like, examination, project presentation etc. to meet the next day. He quotes national surveys to establish that “40 per cent of college students binge drink regularly and that the rate of binge drinking is increasing” (p. 359-360) and argues that drinkers tend to ignore about the implications of their actions.
and females (p.4). Chatterji (2006), suggests that the effects of teen drinking on years of education and schooling completion are very small and/or non-significant. Similarly, other studies have shown that alcohol use during adolescence affects educational attainment by decreasing the number of years of schooling and the likelihood of completing school (Gil-Lacruz & Molina 2007; Chatterji & DeSimone 2005; Koch & McGeary 2005).

The male respondents constituted 53.8 percent and female population was 46.2 percent. The mean age of the respondents was 20.1 with the range being 18 to 25, and a standard deviation of 1.672. Alcohol use among the respondents.

While alcohol use (AU) may not affect the academic performance of some students, some other students experience its adverse impact. As regards the influence of AU on the academic performance of students, the literature related to the topic revealed that immediate impacts include shorter attention span, poor note taking, decreased reading speed and comprehension, less efficiency in studies, poor abstract thinking, reduced time spent on studying, increased likelihood of missing classes/absenteeism, decline in GPA, and dropping out from studies. Thus the studies show that when AU leads to binge drinking, heavy drinking, often drinking and regular drinking, its impact on educational achievement is dreadful.

The literature reviewed also revealed that AU-TU (tobacco use) by the adolescents operates as a gateway to use of illicit drugs in later life. Besides, there is a greater and much higher chance of an adolescent user becoming an illicit drug user if s/he has been initiated into AU-TU in early age.

This article highlights the effect of alcohol use among college students on the following aspects: on their study, on their social relationship, on their peer status, their GPA achievement and on their aim and motivation in life. In addition, it attempts to establish the relation between AU and loss of ambition in life.

The data showed the prevalence of apong, alcohol and tobacco use among the respondents as follows: Apong Use: As many as 95 (23.8%) respondents have ‘never used’ apong while 57 (14.3%) had ‘quit using’ thus 46% leaving 248 (62%) to be consumers of apong. Of the 248 (62%) consumers of apong, there were 189 (47.3%) who were ‘occasional’ consumers, 51 (12.7%) who consumed apong ‘often’ and 8 (2%) who consumed apong on a ‘daily’ basis. Apong used and using population together stood at 305 (76.3%). Alcohol Use: Among the respondents with regard to AU, 182 (45.5%) are non-users, and another 34 (8.5%) had ‘quit’ using. Of the remaining 184 (46%), 31.8 percent were occasional users, 13.3 percent were ‘often’ users and 01 percent were daily users. Alcohol used and using population together stood at 218 (54.5%). Tobacco Use: As regards the tobacco users, there were 214 (54%) users and 186 (46%) non-users. Among the 186 non-users, 151 (37.8 %) were ‘non-users’ and 35 (8.8%) were ‘quit users’. Among the 214 (53.5%) users, 89 (22.3%) were ‘occasional users’, 80 (20%) were ‘very often users’ and 45 (11.3%) were ‘daily users’. Tobacco used and using population together stood at 249 (62.8%).

1. Objective of the Study

To examine the relationship between alcohol use and academic performance of college students.

2. Methodology of the Study

The research was undertaken among the college students of West Siang Districts in Arunachal Pradesh, India. The 400 under graduate indigenous tribal students (humanities) of St. Francis De Sales School, Aalo and Donyi Polo Government College, Kamki, provided the primary quantitative data for this study, while qualitative data were provided by 12 senior members of the Galo tribal community. In obtaining authentic and reliable information, the variables of gender, tribe, age and education were considered in selecting the informants. Other important variables considered include the social standing of the informants and their understanding of the community practices. This resulted in choosing senior (aged above 45), experienced (minimum 20 years) teachers, and community leaders of local standing as respondents for in-depth interviews that they could speak not only for themselves, but could also articulate the views of the larger spectrum of society. Their learning and analytical abilities provided adequate space between personal as well as community beliefs and understanding. Stratified random sampling was followed in balancing the factors of gender, tribe, age and education while purposive sampling was employed in identifying the respondents (Creswell 2011, p.217). Thus the study followed the mixed method for its enquiry. The in depth interviews were conducted between 12th April, 2014 and 24th January, 2015 while quantitative data were obtained during the academic session of 2014-15.

The target population was all the indigenous tribal college students of West Siang district while the accessible population was the
students of the two colleges in the West Siang district. The selection of quantitative respondents from the accessible population was done through a process of probability random sampling. Survey method was adopted for the quantitative data as “surveys are excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientation in a larger population” (Babbie 2004. p.243). Primary data have been collected through filled in questionnaire from the field study and in-depth personal interviews. Structured, semi-structured and open ended questions completed the interview schedule which were personally administered to the respondents whose responses were documented.

The research adopted explanatory sequential and nested design. Sequential explanatory design strategy is credited for its “straightforward nature” with “the steps of research being clear and separate” and “description and reporting” easier (Creswell 2011, p. 211). Following the sequential explanatory design strategy, the quantitative phase of data collection preceded the qualitative as more weight was on the quantitative data. Mixing of data occurred when the initial quantitative results informed the qualitative data, whereby the two data remained both separate but connected.

The study concentrated on the use of apong: a home brewed drink, alcohol and tobacco by the respondents who were either users themselves or associates of the users.

3. Influence of Alcohol Use on Academic Performance

As a preliminary enquiry into the influence of alcohol use on selected aspects of the academic life of students study enquired whether alcohol use is associated with any particular kind of students.

3.1. Students who are Perceived to be Users of Alcohol and Tobacco

The research considered two variables: study and behaviour, in relation to AU (including apong) to learn which category of students are more likely to use alcohol. The variables were subcategorized into ‘those who study well’, ‘those who don’t study well’, ‘those who behave well’, ‘those who don’t behave well’, ‘those who study and behave well’ and ‘those who don’t study or behave well’. A seventh option was ‘all categories of students’. The overwhelming response (63.5%) was that AU is found among ‘all categories of students’, with the next highest (12.3%) being ‘students who don’t study well and behave well’.

Similarly, as regards TU, 59 percent felt that tobacco is used by ‘all categories of students’.

However, the study also found that respondents are of the view that tobacco use do not highly coexist with those who study and behave well. The study revealed that those who study well (1.5%), and behave well (1%) or ‘those who behave well and study well’ (1%) are perceived to be in the group of less users of tobacco. Against this data, those who don’t study well (8 %), and don’t behave well (15%) or ‘those who don’t behave well and study well” (14.5%) are felt to be in the group of more users, pointing to the perception that tobacco users are more likely to be found among those categories of students. Similar pattern of relationship was found regarding AU and the studied variables.

3.2. Impact of AU on Study, Social Relationships and Social Status

The second factor studied was on how AU of students is related to three variables: namely, study, social relationship, and social status, with three possible responses: ‘positive’, ‘negative’ and ‘no difference’. Study showed that 129 (32.3% of total) had no response, while 168 (62% out of 271) users said that it has negative effect on study while 90 (33% of 271) felt that it makes no difference and 13 (5% of 271) were of the view that it was positively useful.

With regard to its effect on ‘social relations’; 144 (36% of total) did not express their view, 89 (35% out of 256) expressed that it negatively affects in social relations, 108 (42 % out of 256) said it made no difference and 59 (23% out of 256) said that AU positively helps. As regards its contribution on ‘social status’, 144 (36% of total) did not answer, 99 (39% out of 256) said that it negatively affects, 142 (55% out of 256) said it made no difference and 15( 6% out of 256) said it positively contributes.

As much as 5 percent of respondents stated that AU helps in study, 23 percent noted that it facilitated social relation and 6 percent held that it contributed to their social status. In contrast, as much as 62 percent felt that alcohol use negatively impacted their study, 35 percent stated that it had detrimental effect on social relation and 39 percent held that it adversely affected their social status.

3.3. Response of Users and Non-users on the Impact of AU on Study

The respondents were categorised as either ‘never users’, ‘quit users’, ‘occasional users’,
The data showed that the negative influence of these on studies was reported by ‘all categories of users’ though in varied degrees.

‘Occasional users’ admitted the negative effect as ‘to some extent’ or to ‘high decline’ in academic performance: that 86 (21.5% of total respondents) among ‘occasional users’, 54 alcohol (13.5% of total respondents) ‘occasional users’ and 37 tobacco (9.2% of total respondents), ‘occasional users’ have admitted that use of these objects caused decline in studies of the students ‘to some extent’. And 54 (13.5% of total respondents) among ‘occasional users’, 34 (8.5% of total respondents) alcohol ‘occasional users’ and 29 (7.2% of total respondents) tobacco ‘occasional users’ reported that use of these objects cause ‘high decline’ in their academic performance.

‘Often users’ too classified the negative effect either as ‘to some extent’ or to ‘high decline’ in academic performance. Similar to occasional users, 22 (5.5% of total respondents) among often users’, 23 (5.8% of total respondents) alcohol often users’ and 33 (8% of total respondents) tobacco ‘often users’ admit that use of these objects caused decline in studies of the students ‘to some extent’, while 19 (4.8%) among often users’, 16 (4% of total respondents) alcohol often users’ and 23 (4.8% of total respondents) tobacco ‘often users’ expressed that use of these objects cause ‘high decline’ in the academic performance of students.

Similar to the present users, those who were once users but have ‘quit using’ too have admitted its effects in the decline in studies: From those who quitted, 20 (5% of total respondents) among users, 17 (4% of total respondents) alcohol users, and 14 (3.5% of total respondents) tobacco users felt that its effects is ‘to some extent’, while 22, (6% of total respondents) among users, 7 (2% of total respondents) alcohol users, and 9 (2% of total respondents) tobacco users, put the effect as ‘high decline’ in academic performance.

An equally relevant number of respondents who have ‘never used’ among, alcohol and tobacco also admit that use of these objects causes decline in the academic performance of users: 32 (8% of total) among non-users, 69 (17.2% of total) alcohol non-users and 60 (15% of total) tobacco non-users put the impact of AU on study as ‘to some extent while 31 (7.8% of total) among non-users, 69 (17.2% of total) alcohol non-users and 50 (12.5% of total) tobacco non-users view the impact of AU on study as ‘high decline’. Academic performance of alcohol users.

Thus the negative impact of AU on academic performance is acknowledged by both users and non-users of alcohol.

3.4. Academic Performance of Alcohol Users in High School and College

To know about the extent of effect of AU on academic performance, the respondents were asked to record their grade (marks) when they were studying in high school and now, when they are doing their college studies. The two were compared to know if a decline has taken place. That was cross tabulated with the alcohol use habit of the respondents.

The data revealed that there is noticeable decline in the academic performance of alcohol users as they transited from high school to college phase of their academic life. The most striking difference was noticed among the students with average performance, i.e., 40-60 percent scorers. There were 32.8 percent users who scored B+ grade (50-60 marks) in their school days. This category of performers came down to 21 percent in the college, showing a 11.8 percent decrease in the category.

In the case of B graders the change was in the opposite direction, i.e., the performance of B graders (40-50 marks) increased from 19 percent in the school days to 33 percent in the college; marking a 13 percent increase.

Further, the percentage of A graders (60-70 marks) during school days was 15.2. This percentage came down to 11 during college days; marking a 4.2 percent decline.

Data revealed that there was a 12 percent decline in the B+ grade (50-60 marks) achievers between school days and college days while there was a 13 percent increase in the B grade (40-50 marks) achievers between school days and college days. Though it might be premature to attribute this decline in academic performance solely to AU, it could reasonably be proposed that AU is a determining factor, especially in the context of students themselves observing that substance use negatively influences their academic performance.

3.5. AU and Student Dropout from Studies

The views of the respondents, who were both users of alcohol (76%) as well as non-users (24%) regarding AU as a cause of students dropping out from studies was as follows:

As many as 190 (47.4%) respondents either denied or confessed that they don’t know whether AU is a factor in students dropping out from studies while the remaining 210 (52.6%) affirmed it. Among the total respondents, 305
(76.2%) affirmed that AU is a key factor in students dropping out from studies.

Thus, a sizeable number of students are aware that AU can be a crucial determining factor in students deciding to dropout from studies.

3.6. Alcohol Use as a Factor for Ambition in Life

The data also showed that 328 (82%) respondents had specific aim and ambition in life while they were in school. Of these 328 respondents, 249 (62%) were alcohol users and 79 (19%) were non-users.

Among the 328 (82%), who had an aim in life during school days, 249 (62.2%) were alcohol users. Among this category, those who still have an aim in life came down to 204 (51%) during college days. This shows a decline of aim in life in the category of alcohol users coming down by 11.2 percent out of the total decline of 14.2 percent. In comparison, the decline among alcohol non-users came down only by 3 percent in the same period.

The number of alcohol users (respondents) who had a specific ambition in life during their school days decreased by 11.2 percent: from 249 (62.2%) to 204 (51%). In contrast, this number among non-users came down only by 3 percent: from 79 (20% of total) to 67 (17% of total). While the number of respondents who lost sense of academic and life ambition dwindled both among users and non-users of alcohol, the data reveal that larger number of alcohol users reported having lost track of aim in their life. Thus the data suggest that AU has negative impact on students’ aim and ambition in life.

The data affirms that more percentage of decline in the aim of life is noticed among alcohol users than non-users. This research does not propose which causes the other: i.e., whether AU effecting purposelessness or purposelessness causing AU. However, the correlation should not be missed out as it suggests that the two are conjointly related.

3.7. Data from In-Depth Interviews

According to most interviewees, AU is harmful to students and it negatively affects the academic life of students. Very specific aspect of the enquiry was to unearth the views of the interviewees with regard to the influence of apong use on academic life. Therefore, the focus of the in-depth interview was on understanding the perception of the interviewees regarding the relation of apong and AU with academic performance of the students.

3.7.1. Positive Association between Apong Use and Poor Academic Performance

The interviewees were unanimous in their opinion that AU is harmful to students and that it negatively affected the academic life of the students. Ten out of 12 interviewees (83.3%) were insistent in their opinion that use of apong by students negatively affected their academic performance. The interviewees used strong expressions like “those who use apong/alcohol are found ‘retarded’ and ‘dull’” (II-1), their academic performance is ‘very poor’ (II-7) and it ‘is definitely harming’ (II-8). One of the interviewees captured aforementioned view in following words:

Those who use apong and alcohol are found retarded and dull. Most of the time, they do not behave in a normal way. Their behaviour is abnormal. Such behaviour of students leads to absenteeism in the college and some of them dropout of studies... Most of those who don't succeed in life are generally found associated with these drinks. I am very sure that many who do not perform well in life have in some way are associated with intake of drinks or drugs (II-1).

The abstract above from an in-depth interview strongly endorses the negative impact of alcoholic beverages on one’s success in life. In unequivocal terms, the interviewee asserts the harmful influence of alcohol and apong on the performance of individuals.

One of the two interviewees, who differed (II-10), argued that “some take apong and are good in studies, while some don’t take and yet are not necessarily good in studies”. Later, during the interview, however, she admitted that these are ‘exceptions’ rather than norm and said “…it is generally accepted that irresponsible use of apong causes loss of memory and promotes disinterestedness in daily activities including studies, leading to absenteeism and dropout, etc.”

The overwhelming view among the interviewees can be summed up in the words of an interviewee: “I agree with the fact that many have failed due to their drinking of these objects” (II-7). He reiterated his view with an example of his classmate who went astray because of AU.

One of my classmates, a guy, regularly scored 80 plus in high school and was very brilliant in mathematics. He went to the science stream but failed. Came back to arts, but dropped out after two years. I completed my B.A one year ago. But he is still in the second year of graduation. He is a regular user of apong, alcohol and tobacco, and friends and family members say that it is because of this that he continues to fail (II-7).
In trying to understand how the habit of using apong and alcohol affects the studies of students, the following insights came from the research. A student who recently passed out of the college said: “We used to go out of the college campus to drink apong or alcohol during class hours. Once we take liquor, we get affected by it and we do not feel like coming back to the college. So we used to go to the riverside and sit there talking and singing songs. This certainly affected our study” (II-6). The student quoted above might have echoed the experience of most students who took to alcohol during their college days. Similar could be the experience of many students who got out of the college during class hours.

While the absenteeism in the college increases due to AU, it also affects the amount of time a student spends at home or hostel. According to an interviewee, AU results in delaying one’s return to home or hostel from the college on a daily basis. He noted: “The usual tendency while consuming alcohol is spending a lot of time in each other’s company and returning late to home or to hostel” (II-4). Obviously, the undue delay in returning home affects the quantum of time spent in study.

Students lose undue amount of time drinking apong and alcohol in the company of friends. They cannot study after the intake of alcoholic beverages and this affects the amount of time they spend on study. A principal expressed it thus: “The students don’t concentrate on studies after its use. They lose concentration. Even in the class room many sleep after taking apong and alcohol. (II-9). Others reiterated that AU results in ‘failing to study’ (II-4, 5) and ‘dropping out, and absenteeism (II-1, 2).

Presuming that some students may be into AU due to academic pressure, another teacher leniently viewed the phenomena and said: “It is to overcome pressure in studies that AU begins. And a habit is quickly formed, and it gradually leads them to disinterestedness in studies” (II-11). He observed that the AU results in inappropriate behaviour pattern among students like indiscipline in the class, coming late to class and student absenteeism. He put it succinctly when he said: “...their way of life itself is undisciplined” (II-12).

While interrogating the impact of AU, a question also was posed regarding its positive impact on students. None of the interviewees noted its positive impact. They emphatically disagreed to AU having any beneficial influence on the students. One of the interviewees noted: “Apong and alcohol use has absolutely no positive effect. It never helps the students in their studies” (II-1). While most interviewees categorically denied any positive impact of AU, a few interviewees refrained from making any unequivocal statement about its influence. Their ambivalence in taking a stand does not mean that they seem to observe any enhancing or uplifting influence of AU on studies.

Was failure in studies or failure in life the reason for drinking? None among the interviewees stated failure in life or studies as the cause of AU. On the other hand, most interviewees noted that it is AU that led to failure in studies. Echoing such an opinion, an interviewee observed: “In my opinion, if at someone says that failure is the reason to drink and smoke, they are taking solace in it. It is their laziness to study that led to failure in the exams. This laziness is partly due to use of alcohol/apong”. She continued; “It is not true to say that they drink because they failed; rather, they failed because they drink” (II-7).

3.7.2. Other implications of Alcohol Use

A positive correlation between apong used and other areas of life was also affirmed by the respondents. These include ‘unfulfilled achievements in life’ (II-7), ‘developing unwanted behaviour’, ‘abnormal behaviour’ (II-1), ‘laziness’ (II-6), and ‘ending up as losers in life’ (II-2). In most instances they are found ‘to be ill mannered’. (II-10).

In conclusion, it is to be noted that these findings in no way lead to the inference that only academically poor students use apong and alcohol as II-7 says “It is not that only students who are weak in studies use it but that its use affect students” nor does it mean that poor performance is caused only by the use of these as expressed “…poor study could be due to poor foundation (II-9) or “laziness” (II-7).

4. Analysis and Discussion

As a whole, the preceding analysis suggests that access to alcohol and apong does affect student performance, reducing Grade point average (GPA), dropping out of studies, loss of motivation to study were compared between alcohol users and non-users. In all these the responses showed a negative correlation between the variables compared.

4.1. Students who are Perceived to be Users of Alcohol and Tobacco

To assess the impact of alcohol on students the variables ‘study’ and ‘behaviour’ of students were considered. With regard to AU as well as TU, the response showed that these are used
by ‘all categories of students’. No noticeable distinction was drawn between ‘those students who study well or those who do not’ or ‘those who behave well or those who do not’. It implies that study and behaviour were not determining variables in the AU and TU behaviour of students. Only an ignorable portion of 01 to 01.5 percent of the respondents felt that it is a behaviour of ‘those who study or behave well’ (those who study well (1.5%), and behave well (1%). In this sense, a negative correlation is proposed between AU-TU and study, and AU-TU and good behaviour. However, tobacco users as well as alcohol users were thought to be significantly less among those who study well and behave well. People do not think that there is any significant difference between users as ‘those who don’t study well’ (10%) and ‘those who don’t behave well’ (11%). In the views of one of the interviewees, the popular perception regarding apong/alcohol users is that “those who don’t succeed in life are generally found to be associated with these. Poor performance in life is being associated/affected by regular and addictive use of apong and alcohol” (II-1). Similarly, another interviewee (II-6) observed: “It is not that only students who are weak in studies use it, but its use affects studies”.

Response of the users: - To assess the impact of AU on students, three variables ‘study’, ‘social relationship’, and ‘social status’ - were considered. The response of alcohol users to it showed that an overwhelming majority acknowledge its negative impact as against a small percent expressing it as positively contributing: ‘study (negative-42 % vs. 3.3 % positive), social relations (negative-22.2% vs. 14.8 % positive), and social status (negative-24.8% vs. 3.8 % positive)). This indicates that ‘lack of knowledge and awareness’ is not a very strong reason for the use of alcohol or tobacco by the students. The interviewees too were equally clear about whether apong/alcohol use in any way helped students: “It is never true that apong use help students to study” (II-1).

Secondly, against the popular understanding that AU helps in strengthening social bond and relationships among peers, only 23 percent (59 out of 256 who responded) respondents endorsed such view while 35 percent (89 out of 256 who responded) disagreed and 108 (42 % out of 256) said that it made no difference. 144 (out of the 400) did not express any view. Hence the notion that students use apong to strengthen their social bond is contestable.

The third variable, ‘social status’ was studied to understand whether the youth are using it because they thought that the use of alcohol/tobacco was acceptable among peers. The response pointed that it did not enhance their social status, and that they know about it. Only a 3.8 percentage thought that its use enhanced their status among peers.

Thus, in all three counts: on ‘study’, on ‘social relations’ or on ‘social status’, its contribution is more negative than positive. Thus majority of the respondents disagreed with the view that alcohol in any way enhanced their study, social relations and social status.

Response of non-users: - Both users and non-users were clear about the negative impact of AU on studies of the students. A total of 168 (42%) said that AU negatively affected the students, against 63 (16%) who argued that AU in no way affected the students (Table 5.2). Further, to another question whether the respondents noticed any decline in the academic performance of alcohol users, 127 (31.8 %) said that AU caused a ‘high degree of decline’ while 164 (41%) felt that it caused decline ‘to some extent’ (Table 5.1).

The opinion of the interviewees was no different. Ten out of 12 interviewees (83.3 %) were categorical about their opinion that the use of apong by students negatively affected their academic performance.

Therefore, the study seems to indicate that in the understanding of all the respondents AU is a negative factor in the academic performance of students. That one reason alone should be sufficient to take more serious steps towards addressing this issue among the students.

4.2. Decline in the Grade of Alcohol Users from High School to College Days

To probe further the negative influence of AU on student’s performance in studies, a comparison was made between the academic grades achieved by them at the high school level and at the college level of their education. It revealed that among those who dropped in their GPA, a great majority were alcohol users.

There was a decline in the grades of all the sections of alcohol using students from school to college. There was no remarkable change in the number of students who declined in their grades among the very high performing students (70 % and above marks) or very low performers (scoring below 40 %). However a large degree of change was noticed among the average and above average performing students (40-70 % scorers), with the 40-60 percent scorers standing out. The categories of 60 to 70 percent and 50-60 percent scorers decreased by 4 and 11 percentage respectively,
while 40-50 percent group increased by 14 percentage in college days. And it was found that of the 15 percent who recorded decline in GPA, 14 percent were alcohol users. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that alcohol use had contributed towards this change, though other factors are not denied. It is the ‘average’ performers who were most affected in this aspect. Hence, alcohol use was a critical factor in their declining performance in academics. The users themselves acknowledged that alcohol use had a negative influence on their academic performance. This finding corroborates the findings of Pascarella et al. (2007), Wolaver (2002) and Schulenberg et al. (1994) who found that AU significantly lowered semester grades (GPA) of students. This also is in keeping with the finding of CAAPCS, (2014) which claimed that AU could have a negative effect on academic success.

4.3. AU as Causative Factor for Dropping out of Studies

This study did not attempt in finding out the number of students who may have dropped out of studies due to alcohol use; rather its scope was limited to articulating the views of the respondents in this regard. The respondents expressed themselves based on their experiences of the past. As much as 53 percent of respondents said that they knew of students who have dropped out of schooling and studies due to AU. This could be either as a direct consequence or as an indirect one. Dropping out of study is a long process, as alcohol use does not directly make a student to be undeserving to attend school or write exams and, as such, it is an indirect factor. However, when this habit takes greater control of the student, the student is bound to lose focus in studies and spend less time in studying (Wolaver, 2002), leading to irregular attendance in classes. This will result in poor grade marks in exams, which in turn takes away the little motivation the student may have had in studies. As a result, finally one decides to discontinue studies altogether. Usually it happens in the company of peers who also face similar life experiences. This is an accepted fact, as proved by Richardson and Barrow (2000) whose study showed that the consequences of heavy drinking were poorer grade point averages, and increased likelihood of missing classes. Similar studies by AlcoholEdu, (2008-2009); Porter and Pryor (2007); Wechsler et al. (1998) and Nagi (1993) also endorsed this finding.

The view of one of the interviewees expresses this stance: “Yes it is true. I have seen it among the children of my neighbours. They become addicts, then they look for money, come home late, and then fail to study. I have seen cases of neighbours who have dropped out after getting into alcohol use” (II-4).

4.4. Having Ambition in Life and Alcohol Use

Another important variable that this chapter analysed to examine the effect of alcohol use on academic performance was ‘having an aim or ambition’ in one’s life. The respondents were asked whether they held the same aim/ambition in life as they had it in their school days. The study presumed that every student had a certain personal ambition in their younger days regarding who they would become when they grow up. The analysis of the responses showed that of the 62.2 percent alcohol using students who had a definite aim in life when they were in schools, only 51 percentage nurtured it when they reached college, i.e., a decline of 11.2 percent. In comparison, only three percent students reported loss of aim in the same period from among the non-users (from 19.8%, the percentage came down to 16.8 %). This change could be related to alcohol use. The result showed that the two variables are related positively, i.e., alcohol users are more inclined to lose their aim or ambition in life.

Having a positive ambition or aim is a resilient factor against alcohol use. However, this is not to affirm that lack of aim in life causes alcohol use or vice versa, but to say that the two variables are positively associated with one another. Hence we can reasonably claim that lack of definite purpose in life and alcohol use are positively linked.

To sum up this section, this study found that neither ‘behaviour’ nor ‘study’ among students could be predictors in anticipating the alcohol users, as 63.5 percent said it is a phenomenon found among ‘those who study well as well as those who behave well’. Variables such as ‘study’, ‘social relations’, ‘socials status’, ‘academic grade points’, and loss of interest in studies leading to ‘dropping out of college’ and ‘loss of purpose in life’ were found to be positively associated with alcohol use and the academic life of the students.

5. Inferring and Interpreting

Leatherdale et al. (2008) found that youth who drink and smoke were more likely to fair poorly in studies, and this study seems to strengthen that finding. Both quantitative and qualitative data validated the postulation. The interviewees were almost unanimous as regards this view as only one of the them contested this theory
with his argument that there are instances of poor academic performance by non-apong users.

It must be noted that the study has not presumed or taken a stand that ‘all poor performing students are alcohol users’ nor that ‘all alcohol using students are poor academic performers’. It does not presume that alcohol use is the only reason for poor performance in studies. The hypothesis states that ‘alcohol use is one of the determining conditions or factors for poor academic performance’. And this had been acknowledged by the interviewees and was substantiated by quantitative data. Number of interviewees (II-6, II-7, II-1) cited examples to prove this point. One of the interviewees (II-6), a former student, brought in his own example as well as that of his friends and showed how true the statement was.

The other impacts of apong/alcohol use as viewed by the informants that has an indirect impact on their career include ‘lack of motivation to achieve desired success in life (II-7), developing unwanted behaviour, not being completely normal in life (II-1), and laziness’ (II-7). None of the informers were in any way willing to give in to the argument that ‘poor performance in studies was a cause for getting into alcohol use’.

Secondly, the GPA of alcohol using respondents showed a steady decline in comparison to their GPA in high school days. Among the respondents, of the 32.8 percent students, who scored B+ grade (50-60 marks) in schools, came down to 21 percent in college, resulting in a 12 percent decline in the group. At the same time, the number of B graders (40-50 marks) increased from 19 percent in the school days to 33 percent in colleges, resulting in 14 percent difference. In the analysis it was found that of the 14 percent whose GPA got decreased, 12 percent were alcohol users.

Thirdly, 53 percent of respondents said that they have come across cases of students discontinuing studies due to uncontrolled alcohol use that led to their absenteeism and poor performance which resulted in lack of interest in studies. In some cases students dropped out from studies.

Fourthly, the findings indicated that of the 67.8 percent students who confessed that they experienced loss of ambition in life as they moved from school to college, 51 percent were alcohol users.

Drinking, both apong and alcohol, is harmful to the academic achievements of the students. The study ascertains that AU negatively affected the students in their academic performance. Its use resulted in decline in the users’ grade point average (GPA), in their interest in studies, in dropping out of education and resulted in losing their aim or ambition in life. Unlike the general perception that apong use aids users in building up social relationships among peers, the study showed otherwise. The users were well aware that other students do not hold ‘users’ in high esteem or status. These are adequate reasons for the disapproval of its use by the students.

Conclusion

The data analysis and discussion suggest that alcohol use does affect students performance, reducing their grades, affecting their ambition in life, decreasing their motivation to study and affecting their social relationship. Alcohol consumption and partying has negative effect on study hours irrespective of one being a binge drinker or frequent drinker. The findings seem to reveal that alcohol consumption has a definite influence on the academic life of college students in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Use of alcohol by college students is a debatable issue as far as their freedom of choice is concerned. One is well within the limit to argue that college students are not minors and are mature enough to make a choice in their life whether to use alcohol. In Arunachal Pradesh the legally permissible age for alcohol consumption is 18. Against this social background, the mean age of respondents stood at 20.1. In that sense, they are within the legal rights to use alcohol. Hence, abstinence of students from alcohol is not something that can be addressed by legal measures. In such a socio-political scenario, either the state must raise the legal age for drinking, or the students should voluntarily abstain from its use. The latter is where educational and social institutions can effectively intervene. In this context, responsible understanding of life and its values are to be evoked in educating students with regard to the effects of AU. Its effects are short-term and long term and hence the matter needs to be addressed with due seriousness.

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