

The Prevalence and Impact of Alcoholism on Christian Communities in Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Apart from drug abuse, alcohol abuse has emerged as a significant social and public health challenge in Taraba State, Nigeria. This study examines the prevalence and impact of alcoholism within the Christian communities in Taraba State. A quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted, using descriptive and survey research methods. Data were collected through structure questionnaire from 384 respondents including religious leaders, community representatives, and individuals affected by alcoholism. Findings reveal a high prevalence of alcohol abuse in Taraba State, Nigeria, with 67.2% of respondents acknowledging its widespread nature, and 65.3% perceiving an increasing trend over recent years. The study identifies key drivers of alcoholism, including peer pressure, and poverty, which contribute to escalating addiction rates and associated societal issues such as crime, family breakdown, and economic instability. Notably, 58.2% of respondents link alcohol abuse to rising crime and violence, while 64.8% highlight its adverse effects on family and economic productivity. Christian organizations play a pivotal role in combating alcoholism through awareness campaigns, faith-based rehabilitation programs, religious counselling, and support groups. The study finds that 56.9% of respondents recognize the contribution of awareness campaigns, while 66.1% acknowledge the role of religious counselling in discouraging alcoholism. Faith-based rehabilitation programs also receive positive assessments, with 58.7% of respondents viewing them as effective tools for addiction recovery. While 38.9% indicates that there is some skepticism, the response suggests that many see value in faith-based programs, others may not fully endorse their superiority over traditional government facilities. 62.2% respondents agree or strongly agree that recovery testimonies from faith-based programs encourage others to seek help. The study concludes that while Christian organizations provide valuable support mechanisms for individuals battling alcoholism, their efforts require greater financial resources, increased community engagement, enhanced training for personnel, and stronger partnerships with government bodies.

INTRODUCTION

Alcoholism has escalated into significant societal problems in Nigeria, particularly among the youth, impacting both individuals and communities in profound ways (Saheed et al., 2024). According to Abiodun (2020), alcohol is one of the most commonly abused psychoactive substances in the country. Studies have shown sharp increases in alcohol consumption among Nigerians. This increase is likely to continue because of increased in local production and availability of alcohol in the country. According to [29], the prevalence of current alcohol use varies between regions, age groups, gender and socio-economic status. Several studies from the western part of Nigeria revealed a prevalence of current use of alcohol between 14% - 32.7% depending on gender and location (Adeloye et al., 2019; Adewuya et al., 2021; Ajayi et al., 2019; Edo &Nwosu, 2022). More recent studies clearly reveal persisting high rates of alcohol use especially among the young (John et al., 2024; Akpan et al., 2024; Elemile et al., 2023). Current alcohol use has been associated with age, gender, marital status, level of education, socio-economic class, employment status and religious beliefs (Ebuehi&Osibogun, 2024; Dumbili, 2022; Onodugo et al., 2019; Ajayi et al., 2019). While the health benefits of drinking alcohol at low amounts remain controversial,(Costanzo et al., 2019). Many studies have documented that alcohol consumption is related to several acute and chronic diseases, family and social disruptions as well as physical injuries (Onodugo et al., 2019; Rehm, & Shield, 2019; Safiri et al., 2022; Aslam &Kwo, 2023). For instance, communities plagued by high levels of drug and alcohol abuse often experience a breakdown in family units, leading to further social instability and increased vulnerability among children and other dependents.

Moreover, the relationship between alcoholism and crime is particularly concerning. Studies have shown that areas with high rates of alcohol consumption often see a corresponding rise in criminal activities, including theft, violence, and trafficking. Health-wise, the implications of alcoholism are equally dire. Individuals who engage in heavy drinking are at a higher risk for a range of health issues, including mental health disorders, liver disease, and infectious diseases linked to risky behaviors. As a result, the healthcare system faces increased pressure to address these challenges, diverting resources from other critical areas of public health (Asrani et al., 2021; Rehm& Shield, 2019).

The urgency to tackle the menace of alcoholism is underscored by these alarming trends. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that combines public health initiatives, community engagement, and effective policy-making. It is essential not only to provide treatment and rehabilitation for those affected but also to implement preventive measures that educate the youth and promote healthier lifestyle choices. The involvement of various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and religious institutions, will be crucial in creating a comprehensive strategy to combat alcoholism abuse in Nigeria.

In Northern Nigeria, interventions by Islamic organizations like Hisbah have demonstrated how faith-based approaches can contribute to curbing high level of alcoholism. However, there is limited research on how Christian organizations specifically address alcoholism in Northern Nigerian states like Taraba State. This study aims to explore the Christian religion's response in

curbing the rising cases of alcoholism within the state with an emphasis on understanding the unique challenges faced and strategies employed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of religion as an instrument of social control: this theory proposes that religion serves as a means to maintain social order, stability and conformity. The theory was propounded by Emile Dukheim (1915). Dukheim argues that religion serves as social cement, binding individuals and groups together and promoting social cohesion or stability. Research findings about the influence of religion on the behaviour of its members indicate that religion provides social control. Religious beliefs, symbols; the church, mosques, temples, and shrines are integrative mechanisms for various communities of believers. They exist to bring up their members morally. This means that religion restrains its members from certain behavioural tendencies like alcohol abuse and other substances abuse.

Social learning theory of violent crime: this is a sociological theory of crime causation and a cluster of social process theory. Albert Bandura developed the social learning theory in 1977 and is one of the most widely acceptable theories. This theory suggests that people learn how to commit crime from other. The theory maintains that new behaviours can be cultivated by learning and emulating others through observation, imitation and modelling. This means that no individual is born with instinct of alcoholism. Rather people involved in alcoholic abuse because they learn to do so in the course of their growth or development within social environment. The theory opined that wrong behaviours are a function of individuals' socialization. The theory is always known as link between behaviourist and process of learning and understanding things because it covered memory, motivation and attention. The Social Learning Theory of crime causation disclosed that people learn and imitate things from the environment close to them. Drawing on Emile Durkheim's theory of religion and social control and Bandura social learning theory, religious organizations act as a regulatory force, reinforcing community morals and discouraging deviant behaviours (Uzobo et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches for the purpose of data collection. Descriptive method involving the use of primary and secondary sources was employed. Primary source of data collection were derived through structured questionnaire to collect data from respondents. While the secondary sources of data cover journals, magazines, periodicals, textbooks, newspapers (print and electronic), and relevant internet articles.

This research is based on a total sample size of three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents with the study having 378 respondents for questionnaire administration. The research relied on methods of data collection which were the administration of structured questionnaires in the survey aspect of the study. The instrument was prepared with scale question method which requires the respondents to choose in terms of categories of certain option and phenomena of interests. This necessitates the use of strongly agrees (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The probability sampling which was the multi-stage sampling method was used and it comprised of cluster sampling, stratified sampling and snowball sampling techniques. The cluster sampling technique was chosen because Taraba State is geographically a wide settlement and large in size with its population scattered across sixteen (16) local government areas, which made it impossible to have a sample frame of all the persons who have knowledge of prevalence and impact of alcoholism on Christian in the study area. Due to the nature of the research, stratified sampling technique was employed to stratify the entire population of the study according to the Christian-populated areas

The data generated from the survey through the use of questionnaires were sorted, coded and analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 through the use of statistical methods of tables with frequencies and percentages. The data generated were analysed and interpreted in a descriptive form to supplement the quantitative data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mathai (2024) analysed the Biblical and pastoral approaches used by Presbyterian Churches in addressing the problem of alcoholism. Multistage Cluster sampling technique was used to select three Presbyterian regions from the five regions. The study had a total sample of 144 respondents who were the Parish ministers. A descriptive survey research design was used to obtain qualitative data. Instrument for data collection was structured interview schedule. Data collected from the Parish ministers was analysed qualitatively. The study established that the Presbyterian churches integrated both Biblical and pastoral approaches in mitigating alcoholism. Majority of the parish ministers indicated that they used sermons as a pastoral intervention for alcoholism among the youth in the Presbyterian churches. Other pastoral interventions included pastoral analysis, open discussions on alcohol and praying for the addicts. Parish ministers also indicated that they used the Bible to warn against the use of alcohol and more specifically its intoxicating effect and this justifies why the church should get involved in the lives of those abusing alcohol so as to help them get out of the bondage. The Bible commends self-control with regard to alcohol. Parish ministers used Bible verses to explain that the Bible forbids participating for the sake of personal pleasure, in practices that hinder moral judgment or weaken self-control. The findings of this study will help the clergy to address problem of alcohol and drug abuse in the society and particularly among the youth as this segment of the population is vital for church and societal development.

Alcohol is a psychoactive substance with addictive properties. It is widely used worldwide. From a conceptual perspective, alcohol can be analyzed in terms of its nature, composition, types, and its effects on both social behaviour and human health. Alcohol, chemically known as ethanol (C_2H_5OH), is a colorless, volatile liquid derived from the fermentation of sugars by yeast. Ethanol is the primary active ingredient in alcoholic beverages, and it affects the central nervous system, leading to its classification as a depressant (Murray & Pihl, 2022). The composition of alcoholic drinks varies by type, ranging from lower concentrations in beer (approximately 3-6% alcohol by volume) to higher levels in spirits (up to 40% or more) (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Alcoholic beverages are generally categorized into three main types: beer, wine, and spirits. Beer is brewed from cereals like barley and has a relatively low alcohol concentration, typically between 3-6%. Wine is produced from the fermentation of grapes or other fruits, with an alcoholic content

generally between 9-15%. Spirits, such as vodka, whiskey, and rum, are distilled beverages with a higher concentration of alcohol, usually around 40-50% (Smith et al., 2021).

Alcohol consumption is deeply embedded in many social contexts, where it is often associated with celebrations, relaxation, and social bonding. However, excessive consumption has numerous social implications. It can lead to increased aggression, impaired judgment, and a higher likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours, such as violence or unsafe driving (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA], 2023). Excessive alcohol use is also linked to social issues like family breakdown, unemployment, and increased crime rates, which collectively impact both individuals and communities (McHugh & Warde, 2023).

Alcohol impacts the body in numerous ways, both acutely and chronically. In the short term, alcohol can cause impaired coordination, reduced inhibition, and slowed reaction times. Chronic alcohol abuse has been linked to severe health complications, including liver disease (such as cirrhosis), cardiovascular problems, gastrointestinal issues, and increased risk of certain cancers (NIAAA, 2023). Alcohol also negatively affects mental health, contributing to disorders like depression and anxiety, and can exacerbate cognitive decline over time (Liang & Chikritzhs, 2022).

Alcohol dependence, is a serious health condition characterized by an inability to limit consumption, affects millions globally. This condition disrupts daily life, reduces quality of life, and increases the risk of early mortality (Nutt et al., 2022). The World Health Organization highlights that alcohol use is a leading risk factor for mortality and disability worldwide, stressing the importance of responsible consumption and awareness (WHO, 2022).

Alcohol, while a common part of social life, presents significant health and social risks when consumed excessively. Understanding its composition, types, and effects can inform responsible drinking and help mitigate its adverse impacts. Continued education and interventions, both at the individual and community levels, are crucial to reducing the negative consequences associated with alcohol misuse.

Prevalence of Alcoholism in Nigeria

Recent studies indicate that alcohol use are widespread across Nigeria, cutting across all age groups and socio-economic classes. Alcohol consumption rates in Nigeria are seriously concerning. A study by [1] revealed that 35% of Nigerians consume alcohol regularly, with 12% engaging in heavy episodic drinking, characterized by consuming large quantities of alcohol within short periods. This pattern of drinking significantly increases the risk of liver diseases, accidents, and social problems such as domestic violence. The World Health Organization's report on alcohol use indicates that Nigeria ranks among the highest alcohol-consuming countries in Africa, with an annual per capita alcohol consumption of approximately 10 liters (WHO, 2021). This has led to an alarming trend where young people, especially in urban centers like Lagos, Kano, and Abuja, are drawn into alcoholism.

The rural-urban migration pattern also exacerbates this problem. Young individuals moving to urban areas in search of better opportunities often find themselves vulnerable to alcoholism culture due to a lack of guidance and support networks. This is particularly evident in slum areas, where poverty and limited access to education further fuel alcoholism. Efforts to address this issue require

targeted interventions that focus on prevention, education, and rehabilitation. Incorporating these strategies into national and community-based programs can help curb the prevalence of alcoholism across in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Impact of Alcoholism in Nigeria

The health consequences of alcoholism in Nigeria are severe, ranging from immediate physical harm to long-term chronic illnesses. Excessive alcohol consumption is linked to liver cirrhosis, cardiovascular diseases, and a heightened risk of cancer (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Alcoholism have profound and far-reaching socio-economic consequences that affect individuals, families, communities, and national development. Economically, these issues result in decreased productivity, increased healthcare costs, and a strain on public resources.

Socially, alcoholism often leads to family disintegration, domestic violence, and heightened crime rates. Studies have established a strong correlation between alcoholism and various criminal activities, including theft, armed robbery, and sexual violence. This creates a ripple effect, destabilizing communities and increasing insecurity. In many cases, children suffer the most in families affected by alcoholism, facing neglect, emotional and physical abuse, and disruptions to their education and overall development. These challenges not only hinder the social fabric but also perpetuate intergenerational cycles of poverty and dysfunction.

Cultural practices and societal attitudes significantly influence the prevalence and normalization of alcoholism in Nigeria. Alcohol consumption, for instance, is deeply embedded in many cultural and social activities, such as weddings, festivals, and communal gatherings. This normalization of alcohol consumption, often from a young age, creates a permissive environment that can lead to dependency. Such cultural attitudes present a unique challenge in combating substance abuse, as they necessitate culturally sensitive interventions that respect traditions while promoting healthier behaviors.

Psychological factors, including stress, trauma, and mental health issues, are equally critical drivers of alcoholism. The high levels of unemployment, poverty, and insecurity in Nigeria contribute to chronic stress, making individuals more susceptible to alcoholism as a coping mechanism. Additionally, experiences of trauma, such as domestic violence, conflict, or displacement, further elevate the risk of alcoholism.

The lack of access to mental health services compounds these challenges. According to [15], Nigeria has a severe shortage of mental health professionals, with many regions lacking adequate facilities to diagnose and treat psychological disorders. This gap leaves vulnerable individuals without the necessary support, increasing the likelihood of turning to alcohol or drugs as a form of self-medication. Addressing these psychological factors requires prioritizing mental health care in national health policies and creating accessible support systems for at-risk populations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1 Prevalence and Impact of Alcoholism in Taraba State, Nigeria

Table 1: Prevalence of alcoholism in Taraba State, Nigeria

S/N	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	Alcoholism are widespread issues in Taraba State	51	73	141	113
2	Alcoholism is on the increase in Taraba State over the past years	79	52	138	109
3	The impact of alcoholism is visible in our community and contributes to increased violence and crime in the community.	71	87	150	70
4	Alcoholism significantly affect family stability and economic productivity.	51	82	143	102

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents data on the prevalence of alcoholism in Taraba State, reflecting respondents' perceptions. The first statement indicates a significant awareness of substance alcoholism problems in the community, with a total of 254 (67.2%) respondents (combining Agree and Strongly Agree) acknowledging that alcoholism are widespread issues. This suggests a strong consensus among the population regarding the severity of alcoholism in Taraba State. The second statement reveals mixed perceptions about the trend of alcoholism. While 247 (65.3%) respondents agree that alcoholism has increased over the past years, a notable number 131 (34.7%) either disagree or strongly disagree. This discrepancy may indicate varying experiences or observations within the community, possibly influenced by factors such as individual neighborhoods or social circles. The third statement addresses the visible impact of alcoholism on crime and violence. Here, 220 (58.2%) respondents agree that alcoholism contributes to increased violence, suggesting a significant concern about the broader social consequences of alcoholism. The relatively lower number of Strongly Agree responses (70) indicates that while many see a connection, there may be some skepticism or differing viewpoints on the extent of that impact. The final statement highlights the perceived effects of alcoholism on family stability and economic productivity. With 245 (64.8%) respondents agreeing that alcoholism significantly affect families and the economy, this underscores the widespread recognition of the social and economic ramifications of substance abuse issues. The findings align with the findings of Uzobo et al. (2024) that highlight that faith-based organizations such as Hisbah in Northern Nigeria play an active role in promoting substance-free lifestyles. Similarly, [27] stress the need for multi-sectoral approaches, including education, law enforcement, and community intervention.

Both respondents acknowledge the widespread nature of alcohol, indicating that it affects a broad spectrum of the population, including young people and adults. This prevalence signals a significant public health concern that requires urgent attention.

The result from Table 1 reveals a strong recognition of the prevalence and impacts of alcoholism in Taraba State, Nigeria. While there is significant agreement on the issues of alcoholism, variations in perceptions about trends and specific impacts suggest that community experiences may differ. This information is critical for informing interventions and support strategies tailored to the unique challenges faced in this area. Understanding these perceptions can aid local

organizations and policymakers in effectively addressing substance abuse and its related challenges within the community.

2. Effectiveness of Faith-Based Interventions on Behavioural Change among Christian Taraba State.

Table 2: Effectiveness of faith-based anti-alcoholism initiative

S/N	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
5	Faith-based interventions have positively influenced the behaviour of individuals struggling with alcoholism.	53	57	102	166
6	Participants in church programs show significant improvement in their alcoholic use patterns.	51	66	137	124
7	Church-based rehabilitation programs are more effective than government rehabilitation centres in the fight against drug alcoholism.	63	84	109	122
8	Recovery testimonies from faith-based programs encourage others to seek help.	85	58	93	142

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents respondents' view about the effectiveness of faith-based initiatives aimed at combating alcoholism. A significant majority of the respondents (268) represented by 70.9% agree or strongly agree that faith-based interventions positively influence the behaviour of individuals struggling with effect of alcoholism. This suggests a strong belief in the effectiveness of these interventions in promoting healthier behaviours. A total of 261 (69%) respondents believe that participants in church programs show significant improvement in their substance use patterns. This indicates a positive perception of church-based programs as effective tools for recovery. While 231 (61.1%) respondents agree that church-based rehabilitation programs are more effective than government centers, the number of those who strongly disagree or disagree (147) represented by 38.9% indicates that there is some skepticism. This mixed response suggests that while many see value in faith-based programs, others may not fully endorse their superiority over traditional government facilities. A total of 235 (62.2%) respondents agree or strongly agree that recovery testimonies from faith-based programs encourage others to seek help. This highlights the motivational aspect of personal stories in recovery, suggesting that testimonials can play a crucial role in attracting individuals to seek assistance. This is consistent with findings from [28], who argue that faith-based interventions aid recovery, though with moderate effectiveness.

This anecdote underscores the potential effectiveness of faith-based interventions in facilitating recovery and transformation. The mention of counseling, prayers, and support emphasizes a holistic approach to recovery. It illustrates how combining spiritual guidance with practical support can create a nurturing environment for individuals seeking to overcome addiction. The fact that the individual now helps others struggling with alcoholism points to the ripple effect of successful recovery. It demonstrates how faith-based programs not only assist individuals in their recovery journeys but also empower them to contribute to the community, fostering a cycle of support and healing. Additionally, a meta-analysis on religious interventions supports the idea that such approaches contribute to long-term behavioral change. This echoes the study of Mwangi and Twala (2022), which showed that spirituality fosters self-discipline and rehabilitation success.

The results indicate a strong belief in the effectiveness of faith-based initiatives in addressing substance abuse, particularly in influencing behaviour and improving substance use patterns. While there is some skepticism regarding the comparative effectiveness of church-based rehabilitation programs versus government facilities, the overall sentiment remains positive. Furthermore, the impact of recovery testimonies suggests a powerful tool for encouraging others to seek help. These findings can inform future initiatives, emphasizing the importance of faith-based approaches and community engagement in combating substance abuse. Continuous evaluation and improvement of these programs could further enhance their effectiveness and reach within the community.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the study clearly demonstrate the urgent need to address alcohol abuse in Taraba State, Nigeria as reflected in both quantitative data and qualitative insights from community leaders. The prevalence of alcohol abuse poses serious social, economic, and family challenges, necessitating comprehensive and collaborative interventions. While faith-based organizations play a significant role in addressing these issues through awareness campaigns and rehabilitation programs, the limitations in funding, stigma, and community involvement must be addressed to enhance their effectiveness.

The recognition of the impact of alcoholism on crime, family stability, and economic productivity suggests that this is not only a health issue but a broader societal concern that requires a multifaceted approach. The positive perceptions of faith-based interventions indicate that such initiatives can be effective; however, there is a clear need for increased resources, better training for personnel, and stronger partnerships between religious organizations and government agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forth:

- i. Christian organizations engaged in the fight against alcoholism should develop strategies to foster greater community involvement in anti-alcoholism initiatives. This can include outreach programs, community meetings, and partnerships with local businesses to create a supportive environment for individuals seeking help.
- ii. Educational campaigns should be implemented aimed at reducing the stigma associated with alcoholism. This could involve seminars, workshops, and the use of social media to promote understanding and encourage individuals to seek help without fear of judgment.
- iii. Formal partnerships should be established between Christian organizations and government agencies to create a comprehensive framework for addressing alcoholism. This collaboration can enhance resource sharing, improve program effectiveness, and foster a unified approach to tackling high rate of alcoholism in various community in Taraba State and Nigeria at large.

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