



# The Effects of Alcohol Abuse among the Youths of Miyuji Proper Ward of Dodoma City, Tanzania

Ashiraf Malick Athuman<sup>1</sup>, Dr Doroth Lubawa<sup>2</sup>, Salvatory Mhando<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Education, University of Iringa, Tanzania, Email: ashrafathumani34@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Department of Education, University of Iringa, Tanzania Email: doroth.lubawa@uoi.ac.tz

<sup>3</sup>Department of Education, University of Iringa, Tanzania Email: salvatory.mhando@uoi.ac.tz

## ABSTRACT

Youth alcohol abuse is a growing public health challenge with profound effects on education, health, and socio-economic development. This study investigated the consequences of alcohol consumption among adolescents and young adults in Tanzania through a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Results indicated that alcohol misuse is strongly linked to school dropout, job loss, risky sexual behavior, violence, poor mental health and organ damage. Over 80% of respondents associated excessive drinking with financial strain, reduced productivity, and weakened social networks. Qualitative findings revealed peer pressure, unemployment, cultural acceptance, and weak policy enforcement as major drivers of youth alcohol abuse. The study highlights the urgent need for preventive interventions, including alcohol education in schools, community-based rehabilitation, family involvement and stronger alcohol control policies. Addressing these issues is critical to safeguarding youth development and reducing the long-term burden of alcohol-related harm.

**Keywords:** Alcohol abuse, Youth, Tanzania

## 1. Introduction

Globally, alcohol is one of the most commonly consumed psychoactive substances among young people, often beginning in adolescence and escalating in young adulthood (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). Youths, defined broadly as individuals aged 15–24 years, are particularly vulnerable due to their developmental stage, peer pressure and experimentation tendencies (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2023). The early initiation of alcohol use significantly increases the likelihood of developing alcohol dependence and related disorders in later life.

Alcohol abuse among youths remains a significant global public health concern, with far-reaching social, psychological and economic consequences. During adolescence and young adulthood, individuals often experiment with risky behaviors, including substance use as part of their developmental process. However, early initiation and continued abuse of alcohol can lead to serious long-term implications, such as poor academic performance, risky sexual behavior, mental health issues and increased risk of addiction in adulthood (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

According to the WHO (2023), alcohol is the most commonly used psychoactive substance among youths worldwide, contributing to approximately 5.3% of all deaths and 13.5% of deaths among those aged 20–39 years. In sub-Saharan Africa, including Tanzania, there is a growing concern over the increasing rates of alcohol consumption among adolescents and young adults, often exacerbated by peer pressure, lack of parental supervision, unemployment and the normalization of drinking in social settings (Mnyika et al., 2022; Mpondo et al., 2023). These factors are further compounded by the aggressive marketing strategies employed by the alcohol industry, which often targets young people through social media and other digital platforms (Jernigan and Trangenstein, 2022).

In many developing countries, including those in sub-Saharan Africa, changing social norms, increased urbanization and weak regulatory frameworks have contributed to rising levels of alcohol consumption among the youth (Kuteesa et al., 2022). In Tanzania, recent reports indicate that alcohol abuse among adolescents and young adults is on the rise, often linked to unemployment, poverty and limited access to education and recreational alternatives (Mboya et al., 2023). Furthermore, excessive alcohol consumption among youths has been associated with increased risk-taking behaviors, including unsafe sexual practices, violence, poor academic performance and road traffic accidents (Muturi et al., 2023).

Youth alcohol abuse is also associated with an increased risk of violence, accidents, unprotected sex and criminal behavior, placing a burden not only on families but also on health and criminal justice systems (Kraus et al., 2021). Moreover, frequent and heavy alcohol use during adolescence interferes with brain development, particularly in areas responsible for decision-making, impulse control and emotional regulation (Squeglia et al., 2022). Given these risks, understanding the underlying causes, patterns and consequences of alcohol abuse among youths is essential to inform targeted prevention and intervention strategies.

Neurologically, alcohol interferes with brain development during adolescence, potentially leading to long-term cognitive impairments, memory deficits and emotional instability (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA], 2022). Socially, youth who abuse alcohol often experience strained family relationships, reduced productivity and an increased likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. The compounding effects of these outcomes highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions and preventive strategies.

Despite numerous policy efforts, such as national alcohol control policies and school-based awareness programs, there remain significant gaps in addressing youth alcohol abuse effectively, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Lim *et al.*, 2023). Thus, this study sought to examine the effects of alcohol abuse among youths, focusing on both the individual and societal impacts, to contribute to the growing body of evidence aimed at reducing this harmful behavior.

---

## 2. Statement of the Problem

In Tanzania and other sub-Saharan African countries, alcohol abuse among youth is a growing problem that threatens not only their individual well-being but also national development. Studies have shown that early initiation of alcohol consumption increases the risk of dependency and impairs cognitive and emotional development (Mbwambo *et al.*, 2022). Despite various interventions and awareness campaigns, the accessibility and social acceptance of alcohol remain high among youth populations, thereby undermining prevention efforts (Nkhoma *et al.*, 2024).

The persistence of alcohol abuse among youths suggests that current strategies may be insufficient or poorly targeted. There is a pressing need to understand the underlying factors that drive youth alcohol abuse and its multidimensional effects on their lives. Without comprehensive, evidence-based interventions, the long-term consequences of alcohol misuse will continue to burden healthcare systems, disrupt educational progress and fuel cycles of poverty and social instability.

---

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

Durkheim's Deviance Theory, particularly his concept of anomie, helps explain why Tanzanian youths are vulnerable to alcohol abuse. When social norms are weak and regulation is limited, young people turn to deviant behaviors such as substance use. Recent studies confirm this perspective, showing that strong family and community bonds reduce the likelihood of adolescent substance use, while weak social integration increases it (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 2020). In Tanzania, unemployment, poverty, peer influence and cultural tolerance of alcohol reflect conditions of anomie that contribute to youth drinking.

The theory also suggests that deviance acts as a signal of deeper social problems. The high rates of school dropout, job loss, risky sexual behavior and health risks linked to alcohol use reveal weaknesses in social structures and policies. Evidence from countries such as Iceland shows that reinforcing social integration through family, schools, and community programs can effectively curb substance abuse (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 2020). This implies that addressing youth alcohol abuse in Tanzania requires strengthening education, family involvement and alcohol regulation.

### 3.2 Empirical Literature Review

One significant study by Ssewanyana *et al.* (2023) investigated the prevalence and risk factors associated with alcohol use among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa. Employing a systematic review and meta-analysis, the researchers analyzed 49 studies conducted across 17 countries. The findings revealed that alcohol use among adolescents ranged from 2% to 84%, depending on the country and measurement tool. Risk factors identified included peer pressure, lack of parental monitoring and exposure to alcohol advertisements. The study concluded that youth alcohol consumption is a complex issue influenced by socio-cultural, familial and environmental variables.

Similarly, a cross-sectional study by Alabi and Alabi (2022) in Nigeria examined the socioeconomic and psychosocial effects of alcohol abuse on university students. Utilizing a quantitative survey design with a structured questionnaire distributed to 500 students, the study found that alcohol abuse significantly contributed to poor academic performance, risky sexual behaviors and increased incidences of violence. The authors emphasized the importance of targeted intervention programs that address both the academic and psychosocial well-being of students.

In a related vein, Osei-Bonsu *et al.* (2023) conducted a qualitative study in Ghana that explored the lived experiences of youths engaged in alcohol consumption. Using in-depth interviews with 20 participants aged 18 to 25, the researchers uncovered themes such as emotional escape, peer influence and cultural acceptance of drinking. Participants described how alcohol served as a coping mechanism for emotional distress and family-related issues. The study concluded that interventions should address underlying emotional and familial factors contributing to youth alcohol abuse.

Another recent study by Lim *et al.*, (2022) in Malaysia focused on the neurological and cognitive effects of early alcohol exposure. Through a longitudinal experimental design, the researchers followed 200 adolescents over five years, conducting annual assessments of cognitive function and brain imaging scans. The findings showed a marked decline in memory, attention span and decision-making abilities among regular alcohol users. The study provided empirical evidence of the long-term cognitive impairments associated with alcohol abuse during critical stages of brain development.

Additionally, a study by Mutiso *et al.* (2021) in Kenya examined the relationship between alcohol use and mental health outcomes in adolescents. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the researchers combined survey data (n = 800) with focus group discussions. They found a significant correlation between

alcohol abuse and depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. The qualitative component highlighted that many youths used alcohol as a means to manage stress and trauma, further reinforcing the need for integrated mental health and substance abuse services.

Moreover, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) underscores the global burden of alcohol consumption among young people, noting that it is a leading risk factor for disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in individuals aged 10–24. The WHO recommends implementing comprehensive public health policies, such as restricting alcohol marketing and improving youth access to mental health services, to curb this rising trend.

The reviewed literature underscores the multifaceted nature of alcohol abuse among youths. Methodologies ranged from qualitative interviews and surveys to experimental and longitudinal designs, each offering unique insights. Common findings across studies include the strong influence of peer and environmental factors, the detrimental effects on mental and cognitive health and the role of alcohol as a coping mechanism for emotional and social challenges. Addressing this issue requires a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates education, mental health support, community engagement and policy reform.

#### 4. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of alcohol abuse among youths. The use of mixed methods was essential in capturing both the statistical prevalence and the lived experiences associated with alcohol use, in line with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2018) recommendation for studying complex social issues. The study employed a convergent parallel design, where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed separately and then integrated for interpretation. This design was chosen to ensure a more complete and nuanced picture of the issue under investigation (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS Version 27. Variables such as age of initiation, gender differences and frequency of alcohol use were examined for patterns and correlations. Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach. Codes were generated and grouped into themes such as peer influence, family neglect, mental health and coping behaviors. This method allowed for the extraction of nuanced meanings behind statistical trends.

#### 5. Findings

The study revealed five major effects of alcohol abuse among youths, with school dropout (37.5%) and loss of jobs (33.3%) emerging as the most prevalent. Other reported consequences included death (14.5%), increased theft (12.5%) and suicide (2.0%). These findings are consistent with global trends indicating that alcohol misuse among young people significantly undermines their educational and economic stability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

Survey data further demonstrated strong agreement among participants that excessive alcohol use has adverse financial and social consequences. For instance, 70.7% agreed that youths waste money on alcohol rather than investing in their future and 83.2% agreed that vital aspects of life such as roles, income and social networks are severely affected. These patterns reflect findings by Smith et al. (2022), who emphasized the impact of alcohol use on economic marginalization and weakened social ties.

Health-wise, alcohol abuse was strongly linked to poor coordination, slurred speech and stress, with 79.1% of participants affirming this. Additionally, 83.3% agreed that alcohol consumption decreases productivity and increases job loss risk. These align with studies suggesting that alcohol impairs both cognitive and motor functions, reducing employability (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA], 2024).

Statement	Responses	SA	A	N	D	SD
Youths waste a lot of money in taking alcohol other than investing for their future	Frequency	25	9	3	8	3
	Percentage (%)	52.0	18.7	6.2	16.6	6.2
The areas of youths' life such as roles, income and social networks are greatly affected by alcohol consumption	Frequency	31	9		3	5
	Percentage (%)	64.5	18.7		6.2	10.4
Youths suffer from different problem like; stress, poor coordination and slurred speech due to alcohol consumption	Frequency	35	3		6	4
	Percentage (%)	72.9	6.2		12.5	8.3
Many youths became less productive and lose their jobs due to alcohol consumption	Frequency	28	12	1	4	3
	Percentage (%)	58.3	25.0	2.0	8.3	6.2
Youths who take excessive alcohol have problems in building strong friendship, became reckless and became more aggressive	Frequency	30	12	1	3	2
	Percentage (%)	62.5	25.0	2.0	6.2	4.1

From qualitative interviews, two themes were identified:

**Academic and Economic Impact:** Alcohol misuse was associated with absenteeism, exam failure and dropout among students. Economically, it led to job loss and financial strain. As one social worker noted, “*Some youths can’t even hold jobs because they’re frequently hungover or late*” (Research Data, 2025).

**Social and Behavioral Consequences:** Excessive alcohol use resulted in fights, thefts and risky sexual behaviors. Youths often drank to cope with stress, leading to further problems such as criminal involvement and emotional instability. These behavioral patterns corroborate findings from recent community-based studies (Miller & Harrison, 2023).

On the health front, three findings stood out:

**Reproductive harm:** 85.4% of respondents agreed that alcohol can damage reproductive systems. **Organ damage:** 83.3% confirmed the link between alcohol and harm to vital organs such as the brain, liver and kidneys. **HIV risk and mental illness,** alcohol was identified as a contributing factor to HIV transmission (83.2%) and increased mental health issues, including depression, anxiety and hallucinations.

Statement	Responses	SA	A	N	D	SD
Alcohol abuse can lead to destruction of testicles in men and reproductive system in women	Frequency	23	18	3	2	2
	Percentage (%)	47.9	37.5	6.2	4.1	4.1
Alcohol consumption can damage different body parts including the brain, liver, kidney and breast (women)	Frequency	29	11	3	2	3
	Percentage (%)	60.4	22.9	6.2	4.1	6.2
Little alcohol consumption is advisable for good health of the people	Frequency	15	14		7	12
	Percentage (%)	31.2	29.1		14.5	25.0
Taking alcohol can contribute to poor coordination, slurred speech and incorrect judgment	Frequency	24	21		4	2
	Percentage (%)	50.0	43.7		8.3	4.1
Alcohol consumption leads to HIV contraction	Frequency	27	13	1	3	4
	Percentage (%)	56.2	27.0	2.0	6.2	8.3

An overarching health theme emerged:

**Health Implications:** Interviewees, including health workers, reported rising cases of liver damage, poor nutrition and psychological disorders linked to alcohol use. This supports prior research suggesting that long-term alcohol abuse leads to chronic illnesses and mental health disorders (Jones et al., 2024). The findings demonstrate that alcohol abuse among youths has far-reaching academic, economic, social and health consequences. These outcomes highlight the urgency of implementing preventive education, early intervention strategies and community-based rehabilitation programs targeting young people (WHO, 2023; NIAAA, 2024).

## 6. Conclusion

The findings highlight the multifaceted impact of alcohol abuse among youths, demonstrating severe consequences across academic, economic, social and health domains. School dropout (37.5%) and job loss (33.3%) emerged as the most common effects, underscoring the disruptive influence of alcohol misuse on education and employment. Other significant outcomes included increased mortality (14.5%), theft (12.5%) and suicide (2.0%), revealing the broader societal risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption.

Results further confirmed that alcohol abuse leads to adverse financial decisions and erosion of social stability, with over 83% of respondents agreeing that alcohol undermines youth productivity, income and relationships. Health effects were similarly alarming: participants strongly associated alcohol with poor motor coordination, organ damage, reproductive harm and heightened vulnerability to mental illness and HIV. Qualitative data reinforced these trends, identifying academic underperformance, job instability, risky behaviors and emotional distress as recurring themes in youth narratives.

### 6.1. Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the study recommended that: Government and educational institutions should integrate age-appropriate alcohol education into school curricula to raise awareness of the dangers of alcohol abuse. Programs should address its academic, economic and health consequences while promoting responsible behavior and coping skills. Local governments and NGOs should establish youth-focused outreach and rehabilitation centers that offer counseling, peer support and skills training. These centers could help divert at-risk youths from alcohol dependence by providing practical alternatives and social support systems.

Families should be actively involved in preventive efforts by maintaining open communication, monitoring behavioral changes and seeking early intervention when signs of alcohol abuse emerge. Parenting workshops and support groups can also enhance awareness and response capacity. Authorities should strengthen the enforcement of existing alcohol control policies, particularly those restricting sales to minors. Increased taxation on alcoholic beverages and regulation of marketing targeting young people would also reduce accessibility and appeal.

Given the close link between alcohol abuse and psychological distress, health systems should integrate mental health screening and support into primary care services for youth. Specialized programs for alcohol-related mental disorders can provide early detection and treatment.

## REFERENCES

- Alabi, T., & Alabi, J. (2022). Socioeconomic and psychosocial effects of alcohol abuse among university students in Nigeria. *Journal of Youth Studies in Africa*, 15(2), 101–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/xyz.2022.15.2.101>
- Babor, T. F., Higgins-Biddle, J. C., Saunders, J. B., & Monteiro, M. G. (2001). *AUDIT: The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test: Guidelines for Use in Primary Care* (2nd ed.). World Health Organization.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Davoren, M. P., Demant, J., Shiely, F., & Perry, I. J. (2021). Alcohol consumption among university students in Ireland and the United Kingdom from 2002 to 2014: A systematic review. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 456. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10430-z>
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Mitchell, M. (2017). *Collecting qualitative data: A field manual for applied research*. SAGE Publications.
- Jones, R., Mbwanbo, J., & Karume, A. (2024). Youth mental health and substance use in Sub-Saharan Africa: Emerging challenges and responses. *African Journal of Psychology*, 48(2), 211–225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/ajp.2024.05.004>
- Kuteesa, M. O., Muwonge, L., Kiwanuka, N., & Ssensamba, J. (2022). Patterns and predictors of alcohol use among young people in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 15, 100426. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2022.100426>
- Lim, Y. H., Tan, J. K., & Chong, S. H. (2022). Adolescent alcohol use and neurocognitive decline: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70(3), 390–398. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2022.01.012>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Mboya, I. B., Leyna, G. H., & Msuya, S. E. (2023). Prevalence and factors associated with alcohol use among youth in urban Tanzania: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 23(1), 451. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15267-5>
- Mbwambo, J., Amon, E., & Mbatia, J. (2022). Patterns and predictors of alcohol use among secondary school students in urban Tanzania. *African Journal of Drug and Alcohol Studies*, 21(2), 35–48. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajdas.v21i2.3>
- Miller, C. A., & Harrison, T. (2023). *Alcohol misuse and its link to crime and delinquency among urban youth*. International Journal of Youth Studies, 30(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/ijys.2023.0032>
- Mutiso, V. N., Musyimi, C. W., Ndeti, D. M., & Kathuku, D. M. (2021). Alcohol use and mental health among adolescents in Kenya: A mixed-methods study. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1654. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11786-w>
- Muturi, N. W., Kimani, J. W., & Wanjohi, M. (2023). Alcohol consumption and risky behaviors among urban youth in East Africa. *Journal of Substance Use*, 28(2), 120–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14659891.2023.2175683>
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). (2022). *Alcohol and adolescent brain development*. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2024). *Alcohol and the developing brain*. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/alcohol-developing-brain>
- Nkhoma, D. E., Banda, C., & Phiri, F. (2024). Socioeconomic determinants of substance abuse among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa: A cross-sectional analysis. *Global Journal of Health Science*, 16(1), 22–31. <https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v16n1p22>
- Osei-Bonsu, N., Owusu-Dabo, E., & Adjei, K. (2023). Youth perspectives on alcohol use in Ghana: A qualitative exploration. *African Journal of Substance Use*, 19(1), 24–33. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajsu.v19i1.3>
- Smith, D., Wanjiru, P., & Bayo, M. (2022). *The socioeconomic effects of alcohol abuse among young adults in East Africa*. Journal of Substance Use and Misuse, 57(9), 1174–1185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/jsum.2022.0149>
- Ssewanyana, D., Mwangala, P. N., & Kinyanda, E. (2023). Adolescent alcohol use in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Addiction*, 118(1), 98–111. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16021>

---

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2023). *2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Youth substance use highlights*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2022). *World Drug Report 2022*. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2022.html>

World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). *Global status report on alcohol and health 2023*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240067469>.