



“YOU CAN CLOSE BUT YOU CANNOT DENY ME”: PERCEPTIONS OF, IMPACT AND ADHERENCE TO THE ALCOHOL BAN DURING COVID-19 IN BOTSWANA

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INTRODUCTION

- During COVID-19, Botswana, implemented a lockdown and a temporary full alcohol sale ban
- Botswana observed a six-month lockdown
- April 2, 2020, to April 21, 2020, and August 5, 2020, to September 3, 2020
- Business operations, leisure places, schools, and churches, were closed
- Only essential jobs were operating
- Alcohol users found alternative ways to sustain their drinking behaviours



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...INTRO

- There were job losses as some businesses closed
- Financial strain on many households
- Added economic distress coupled with biopsychosocial complexities
- prolonged lockdowns and isolation led to people experiencing anxiety, fear of dying, grief caused by sudden COVID-19
- Suicidal ideation, depression, self-harm, suicide, and emotional uncertainty
- Distressful complexities led to people resorting to excessive alcohol use as a coping mechanism



...INTRO

- USA, sales of beer, wine, and spirits increased by 14%, 28%, and 26%, respectively
- 14th March 2020 when compared with the same period in 2019
- In March, in the UK, sales of wine, beer, and spirits jumped to 22% in supermarkets and corner shops
- Botswana Police statistics in 2021, 6028 arrests of violations of liquor conditions of sales, consumption, and smuggling occurred
- **Aim**
- **This study explored COVID-19 and alcohol consumption experiences during the temporary lockdown in one village in Botswana**



FINDINGS

- **Alcohol restrictions were not observed**
- People found ways to continue with their alcohol-drinking habit in the community
- **Illegal trade of alcohol**
- People made harmful homemade alcohol
- Some alcohol was smuggled from neighbouring countries
- **Traditional homebrew sellers' livelihoods affected**
- Risked their lives to brew and sell alcohol to make a living
- **Reduced bad behaviour in the community**



It is very difficult to find ingredients due to restrictions

The seller would brew this alcohol in a hidden place at the home, and during the night, she will go somewhere in the bush to sell. You will only find people loitering the streets drunk, and you wonder where they got alcohol from

A few days back, I heard that some girls travelled approximately 300 km to buy khadi in our village.

homemade brew sellers use different things, such as batteries and spirits, to speed up the reaction, as sales are high

They know it is not allowed, so what they do is dig a hole and put a drum of alcohol and cover it up with soil.

Honestly, since the curfew and other COVID-19 restrictions, alcohol misuse is better,

I was charged P1000 for secretly selling alcohol, it was very sad, and the situation was bad. They took all the containers stored with alcohol; it was very saddening. They took approximately 9 20 liters of alcohol containers and a big container which I think is 100 liters.

DISCUSSIONS

- pattern of hazardous alcohol misuse that violated the COVID-19 protocol
- Implementing a strict global COVID-19 protocol on alcohol bans was not necessary.
- Botswana could have opted for off-premises and online alcohol sales.
- Alcohol misuse is a behavioural issue that needs to be cut down gradually.
- Sellers are self-employed; without sales of alcohol, they are subjected to hunger and poverty together with their families.



CONCLUSION

Protocols did not consider alcohol as a behavioural issue

Adapt and modify interventions to communities

Accommodate human needs as realities not abstract

Unique of African context, dynamics of human behaviour



IMAGES OF ILLEGAL ALCOHOL THAT EMERGED DURING COVID-19 IN BOTSWANA



THANK YOU
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