

## DOES ALCOHOL CULTURE AFFECT RISK PROPENSITY AND PERFORMANCE IMPAIRMENT OF WORKERS? EVIDENCE FROM A CAMEROONIAN SAMPLE

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**ABSTRACT:** *Workplace alcoholism has been perceived as a workplace hazard and poses a great threat to organisations as health, safety and performance risks. In order to ensure effective management and control problematic alcohol thinking and behaviours, interest has been on factors that determine alcoholism. Although individual psychological factors have been identified, socialization has often been held responsible for workplace alcoholism. The study examined prevalence of alcohol culture and relationships with risk propensity and performance impairment. The study used data collected from a survey with a sample of teachers in Dschang Municipality in West Cameroon. The instrument used to collect the data was designed by the researcher, and tested for reliability (aggregate  $\alpha=.77$ ). The study revealed a significant positive correlation between societal drinking culture with risk propensity ( $p<.01$ ) and performance impairment ( $p<.01$ ). The study further reported insignificant relationships between workplace alcohol culture with risk propensity ( $p>0.05$ ) and performance impairment ( $p>0.05$ ). The study appears necessary and relevant given the increased interest for drinking and consequences in social and work life. While policy and practice implications have been discussed, there are new directions for future research.*

**KEY WORDS:** Alcohol culture, risk propensity, health and safety, performance impairment

### INTRODUCTION

There is growing interest and recognition of alcoholism as both a social action and a lifestyle in work-related context, and this is why occupational alcoholism has become a disturbing phenomenon workplace health and safety. Generally, people drink alcohol for hedonistic motives such as pleasure, pain avoidance and reduction, comfort, anxiety and fatigue management (Fomba, 2009; Myadze and Rwomire, 2014; Pidd et al., 2006). Despite socio-cultural benefits of alcohol, it is as well considered a chronic disease with different manifestations having a lot of costs on individuals, family and communities (Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth, 2016). It is clear that alcohol misuse is associated with a wide variety of costs such as accidents, psychosomatic diseases and economic exaction, and these consequences in turn affect performance and productivity in different ways. Since alcohol is considered a social problem in society, it is equally an occupational challenge. Due to the fact that unhealthy living habit is associated with high social cost, alcoholism has become a high risk factor, instigating a lot of debates and analysis in the domain of occupational health psychology. In this respect, Knott (2012) was categorical that workplace alcohol abuse need not be accepted as an inevitable cost of doing business. Although the practice of planned, fast-paced, heavy drinking among colleagues and business partners are often very common and the outcome is often binge drinking (Fomba et al., 2012), workplace alcoholism has been perceived as safety and performance risks. Due to impairments, it produces a host of acute consequences, including injuries and deaths from falls, burns, drowning, car crashes, and alcohol overdoses (White et al., 2018). There is no gainsaying that individuals who engage in high-level

consumption patterns represent the highest level of risk to health, safety, and compromise workplace productivity (Pidd et al., 2006). The present study has largely been driven by concerns regarding, health, safety and performance of employees and this is due to the presumption that environmental factors, particularly the social environment can influence alcohol consumption patterns and work behaviors of employees.

Workplace alcohol puts workers at risk of injury and performance, and represents a great danger to the sustainability of organizations. Although individuals generally drink to satisfy physiological needs, culture normally sanctions choice behaviours and drinking patterns (Fomba et al., 2012; Pidd et al., 2006), and consequently projects the role of context in alcohol use. The act of drinking is a learned behaviour acquired through a process of socialisation in the work environment where workers acquire attitudes, values and skills necessary to become valued as effective members of work organisations (Pidd et al., 2006). This justifies a proposed model of socialization as capable of explaining drinking behaviours in societal and occupational contexts. When alcohol abuse interferes with workers' ability to play safe and perform his duties, it becomes a legitimate concern for the employer, and this is why drinking at work has become a human resource management challenge. For instance, the benefits of workplace alcohol programs could be advantageous to organisation in terms of increased productivity, reduced costs, greater employee retention, morale and job satisfaction (Knott, 2012). But despite the cost of drinking, it should be maintained that the consumption of alcohol per se does not necessarily constitute a problem since social or moderate drinkers do not find the use of alcohol as problematic (Myadze and Rwomire, 2014). It is only when it deviates from expected code of conduct that it becomes a problem at work. The interest of the present study is heavy drinkers or alcoholics, whose adaptive mechanisms are often overwhelmed by alcohol effects, and making them safety and performance risks at work. The study maintains that workplace alcohol policies can provide a framework for managing alcohol related matters, and this is enshrined in the policies and practices of responsible, supportive and caring organizations. There is no doubt that many work settings are affected, but a free alcohol workforce in the academic industry is necessary to harnesses responsible citizens and future of a nation. Therefore, the present paper examines the flow of alcohol in the education sector with regards to safety and performance of teachers.

### **Alcohol lifestyle in social and occupational settings**

The setting of this study is Cameroon, a nation with a stimulating drinking environment, and a country in which alcohol consumption has been strongly embedded in its social, cultural, political and economic fabric. It has been observed that socio-legal requirements, which determine who should drink, in what contexts drinking should occur, and how much should be consumed vary from context to context (Pidd et al., 2006), and this is typical of the Cameroon milieu. Moreover, wide variations exist in the cultural patterns of alcohol use, its integration into everyday life, associated meanings and how alcohol use is shaped, including physical and social consequences (Myadze and Rwomire, 2014). In the present context, alcohol plays a considerable role in how people socialize and consume alcohol during meals, religious ceremonies, weddings and on special occasions and this usually disregards reflections on possible negative consequences. Many Cameroonians believe that drinking can help one relax, deal with pressure, feel more in control of situations, more powerful and deal with pressure at work (Fomba et al., 2012). In this respect,

professional identities are often acknowledged and promoted through stronger family, friends and cultural values, and this usually occurs during socio-cultural and professional rituals. In traditional work settings, taking homemade brews had long been perceived as a means of coping with the physical and psychological stress resulting from hard manual labor (Myadze and Rwomire, 2014). Today, this has logically encroached into contemporary work settings as a way of work life. Despite the fact that the production and consumption of alcohol has not been well documented, some patchy data can be found. In 2004, the World Health Organisation (WHO) lamented that “what is problematic in Cameroon is the high cost of purchasing even one beer a week given the income of an average rural family. When comparing the price of two major beers sold in a rural village in 1983 as a percentage of male and female wages, it was found that the cost of one beer represented 60–84% of women’s and 36–50% of men’s daily wages. Drinking in these small amount means that one day’s wages is quickly consumed. The danger is when individuals start forsaking paying children’s school fees because their money is spent on beer”. This is a lifestyle of a people, who have embraced alcohol into their psyche, and are ready to let go all other things because of a bottle of beer. Furthermore, these are indicators of cultural enslavement at risk of meaningful and sustainable living which is often invisible as public perception is distorted by the psychosocial and cultural functions of alcohol (Fomba et al., 2012). In another survey, WHO (2004) reported that large percentages of respondents in Cameroon (84%), Mozambique (77.2%) and Cote d’Ivoire (71%) had drunk alcohol in the previous 12 months. In the study Cameroon was isolated as highest in per capita consumption. Apart from societal drinking, this is evident considering that with off-office alcohol use, drinking spots have been transformed into offices by some officials and real offices reduced to rubber stamping.

There is no doubt that organizations can reduce the risk of alcohol misuse by employees through legislation and health-promotion programs. Consequently, workplace rules, values, and norms concerning alcohol use may be particularly important in determining subsequent consumption patterns of new entrants (Pidd et al., 2006). Despite available measures of social control, Government’s intention has been visible according to the provisions of Law No. 92/007 of 14<sup>th</sup> august 1992 on the Cameroon Labour Code. Section 97 (1) states that “It shall be forbidden to bring alcoholic beverages to the work place and to consume them within the establishment during working hours”. Article 2 further submits that “consumption of such beverages within the premises may be authorized only during normal break periods and exclusively within canteens and refectories placed at the disposal of workers by the employers. According to Article 3, “the employer shall supply water and non-alcoholic beverages shall be controlled occasionally by the Labour Inspector or the occupational health doctors”. These provisions are merely cosmetics since drinking behaviours have been overridden by psychological and socio-cultural factors. In Cameroon, the Ministry of Transport is the lone Ministerial Department that has taken the challenge to control alcohol abuse at work. This is visible with alcohol test for drivers to reduce risk and injury, though it is limited only on some major highways. Infact, Government’s weak control mechanisms have been decried particularly over the production, distribution and consumption of alcohol. With work related alcoholism, off-office drinking is very common as workers usually escape the fragile instruments to enjoy themselves during work. It appears the presence of alcohol is perceived in all dimensions of national life and the smell has become a facility in making things happen in all areas of operations by the people (Fomba et al., 2012).

Despite the fact that all workplaces are vulnerable, educational establishments and their workers are no exception, and the role of socialisation greatly accused.

In Cameroon, the present alcohol situation is anxiety-provoking, and the main concern is the motive of work related alcoholism. Although individual beliefs, attitudes, and intra-psychic factors are important determinants of workers' alcohol consumption patterns, alcohol-related culture of the organisation predominantly shapes drinking behaviour (Pidd et al., 2006). Social pressure by peers to drink heavily and tolerance of heavy drinking explains high rates of alcoholism and consumption within occupations (Olkinuora, 1984). Therefore, the interaction of workers in society and at work can affect attitudes and consumption patterns that in turn affect expression of safe and work-relevant behaviours. The study examines individual and group drinking behaviours as occurring through a social-ecological framework (Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth, 2016), because many organisations function in harmony with existing social and cultural norms of the society. Due to perceived influence of cultural values on work behaviours, the present discussion shifts from the analysis of cognitive to environmental determinants of occupational alcoholism. It builds on the premise that the acquisition and development of drinking patterns are more of a socialization process than cognitive dispositions, assuming powerful connections among societal culture, organizational culture, drinking patterns and performance (Fomba et al., 2012). Furthermore, the paper advances that since work-related drinking patterns are elastic depending of prevailing community and work values, cultural factors can offer an explanatory framework for alcohol use and relationship with work behaviour. With close observation of the Cameroonian society concerning alcohol consumption (Fomba et al., 2012; Sobngwi-Tambekou, 2016), the study maintains that drinking styles in society and at work can constitute safety and performance risk factors. This perception reiterates that societal and workplace patterns could constitute risk factors with corresponding danger to risk propensity and safety impairment, and the model of social learning has been deployed for explanation. The model positions that the environment constitutes a powerful influence that defines, shapes, or prescribes alcohol related behaviours and expectations of others in a social group (Pidd et al., 2006). In addition, the paper upholds that relating societal and work culture to alcohol use risk is critical in occupational health and safety programmes because it allows management and line managers to understand how changing lifestyle in society can affect work culture and possibly risky behaviours and performance.

It has been recognized that certain occupations entail a greater risk of alcoholism than others. This implies that the nature of work activities attracts people predisposed to become alcoholics, and this appears feasible with many public service workers in Cameroon. Literature on community influences on alcohol use focuses primarily on environmental aspects (Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth, 2016), and the question is whether stimulating alcohol culture can influence work behaviours. Considering that drinking spots are littered around work places and that workplace culture and alcohol use has been perceived as factors in health, safety and productivity hazard (Pidd et al., 2005), the study wonders if the role of context could be responsible for performance impairment. Furthermore, very little has been explored regarding alcohol patterns of employees with regard to workplace injuries and performance in Cameroon. It is strongly believed that the present investigation, while contributing to a body of knowledge in the domain will reawaken dormant instruments capable of promoting a free alcohol workplace. In the light of the foregoing, the study

is designed to explore the relationships between societal and occupational alcohol lifestyles, and if they could be responsible for safety risk and performance impairment of workers.

### **Conceptual orientation**

This section starts with the exploration of basic concepts used in the conduct of the study, and the second part is on the theory deployed to explain socio-occupational drinking culture as a factor in health, safety and performance risks. Alcoholism is widely seen as a multi-etiological phenomenon to which genetic, biological, social, and psychological factors contribute (According to Olkinuora, 1984). Workplace alcohol refers to the utilization of alcohol in ways which are medically, socially and legally non sanctioned, and this is in terms of drug addiction, dependency and drug abuse or misuse (Myadze and Rwomire, 2014). It is largely defined and confined to drinking within the working day and the work setting and not necessary within the working days and within work settings (Pidd et al., 2006). The concept of work-related consumption also encapsulates effects of risky patterns, which are often undermined with traditional and narrower conceptualizations of workplace drinking. Meanwhile, alcohol abuse is a maladaptive pattern of use indicated by continued use despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent social, occupational, psychological or physical problem that is caused or exacerbated by the use or recurrent use in situations in which it is hazardous (ILO, 1996).

Culture is a life style of a group of people implying the way they do their own things, where they are. In-context, alcohol culture is understood from the standpoint of social alcohol culture and workplace drinking culture. It could be defined as social alcohol and this refers to the attitudes, beliefs, values, customs, and norms of a group of people with regards to alcohol use. Therefore, workplace alcohol implies a shift in shared norms and learning about alcohol and consumption patterns from society to work settings. To Pidd et al. (2006) workplace culture of alcohol use can be defined as the learned and shared norms that transmit information to workers about the benefits of alcohol use, the workplace tradition of use, the expectations of use, and the tolerance or support of alcohol use. It is obvious that culture can also be closely associated with abuses since values or pressure from the social environment can either facilitate or inhibit problem drinking. It should be noted that alcohol abuse use can become problematic when individuals consume regularly or in such quantities that they start to depend on it to feel normal in everyday life.

Risk is a subjective construct and refers to the possibility of harm or loss presented by the existence of perceived threats within a particular situation (Cooper, 2003). Risk propensity has been conceptualised with the context of occupational health and safety as the probability that a person may be harmed or suffers adverse health effects if exposed to any hazard in the work station. Health and safety risks imply unsafe working situations, conditions that can cause injury, illness or death, while risk propensity is the probability that a worker will express unsafe or risky patterns. To Cooper (2003) risk propensity is the likelihood that a person will take risks if he is predisposed towards doing so based on personality, and the extent to which the prevailing situation is seen as threatening and the potential rewards for taking the risk. It is perceived that alcohol consumption could be responsible for risk propensity and performance impairment of employees.



Impairment has generally been discussed as a result of substance use or in terms of addiction or dependence on the illegal consumption of alcohol or drugs. According to ILO (1996), impairment refers to any loss or abnormality of a psychological, physiological or physical function. It consists of the various long or short term situations, which may distract a person from focusing on their tasks. Performance impairment is often referred to a situation where workers have performance difficulties in the workplace as a result of alcohol use disorders. In the present context, performance impairment has been conceptualised as a dysfunction in occupational spheres of life, resulting from alcohol misuse or dependence, and deployed in the current study as an outcome measure.

### **Theoretical framework**

A host of theories have been proposed to explain the incidence and prevalence of alcohol abuse, and these theories consider single or combinations of factors such as biochemical, psychological, social, cultural, economic and legal factors (Myadze and Rwomire, 2014). For the purpose of this paper, Social Learning Theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1977) has been used to explain drinking culture, safety risks and performance impairment. The model proposes that people learn through modeling and environmental influences help determine how patterns of behaviours are acquired and this is typical of drinking behaviours in socio-occupational settings. SLT also refers to the reciprocal relationship between social characteristics of the environment, how they are perceived by individuals, and how motivated individuals are able to reproduce behaviours they see happening around them. This model challenges popular personality doctrines that behaviours are impelled by inner forces in terms of needs, drives and impulses (Bandura, 1977). Although social learning has not been widely used in occupational health and safety research, it appears useful in explaining a variety of risk and performance behaviours derived from alcohol lifestyle. In a simplistic manner, social learning theory is also known as observational learning, which occurs when an observer's behaviour changes after viewing the behaviour of a model (Edinyang, 2016). This is customary in socio-cultural contexts and dictates alcohol behaviours in different ways. SLT emphasizes the role of societal influences and submits that people's decision-making and actions are influenced daily by countless people, and the modeling effect becomes probable in alcohol use.

In social learning systems, new patterns of alcohol behaviour could be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviours of others, through observation and imitation. But it should be noted that during social learning people do not only perform responses but they also observe the differential consequence accompanying their various options (Bandura, 1971). This highlights the role of reinforcement as a key element of social learning, where behavioural outcomes drawn from experience, such as alcohol use or misuse are either rewarded or punished through social control mechanisms. Consequently, drinking experiences that are rewarded are reinforced and those that are disapproval by the socio-professional milieu are punished. The informative function of the theory has also been emphasized in the drinking context. There is also an emphasis on behavioural control through self-regulation, and this requires a person to self-observe, make judgments about the environment and self-response (Edinyang, 2016). This means that cognitive events are thus selectively strengthened or disconfirmed through differential consequences of overt behaviour. With learning experience, reinforcement serves as a way of informing drinkers what they must do to have beneficial outcome or to avoid unproductive

practices. A key element of SLT is reinforcement considering that individuals will copy patterns of drinking behaviour that are rewarded such as reinforcement from the pleasure of alcohol, appreciation and recognition from peers. Recalling the challenges facing workplace alcoholism, SLT appears a relevant explanatory framework for drinking culture and work behaviours.

## **Related Literature Review**

There have been some efforts made by researchers to explore safety risk and performance as antecedents of socio-professional drinking lifestyles. Pidd et al. (2006) observed that social groups establish norms and social controls on consumption patterns and drinking also served useful functions in enhancing relationships between group members and in stress management. The pleasure of drinking is cautioned by social control measures that dictate drinking styles, and this serves as useful indicators for risk propensity. Knott (2012) found that drinking outside the workplace significantly affected workers' productivity due to absenteeism, accidents and poor job performance. Fomba et al. (2012) reported societal drinking lifestyle as a significant predictor of occupational consumption patterns. Although not directly on risk propensity and performance impairment, socio-cultural values influence workplace alcohol motivation, and the strength of the alcohol practices could possibly influence risk taking at work. Sobngwi-Tambekou et al. (2016) revealed that alcohol misuse and nighttime work schedule increased the likelihoods of driving under influence of alcohol due to socialisation. Although the study did not explore socio-professional milieu as a factor, workers abused alcohol during socio-cultural activities, socialization among colleagues and at break times or periods of inactivity. Furthermore, Knott (2012) observed that problem drinking by a family member contributed to negative outcomes in the workplace. Such secondary effects are indicators that consumption patterns in society could be responsible in many ways for risk propensity and performance impairment. Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth (2016) discovered that media exposure influence social drinking norms through advertising, product placements through movies, television, social media, and entertainment. Alcohol sales and marketing processes are no doubt regulated, but people are still exposed to a wide variety of alcohol and, that could influence consumption patterns. Thus, societal drinking practices could determine safe and performance behaviours.

Some studies have been realised on performance behaviours emanating from occupational drinking styles. Olkinuora (1984) explored occupational-related factors affecting alcohol consumption, and revealed that availability of alcohol at work, social pressure to drink at work and freedom were responsible for problem drinking. Apart from social pressure exposure to alcohol and lack of social control could be critical factors in workplace alcoholism. Silfies & DeMicco (1992) found that alcohol abusers have three to four times as many accidents on the job, and four to six times more accidents off the job, which in turn contributes to absenteeism. In addition, the abuser is absent from work up to two and one-half times more often than the non-abuser, and his or her medical costs and benefits run three times higher. Pidd et al. (2006) carried out an elaborate investigation on drinking culture and workplace alcoholism in different sectors of the economy. The first outcome was on important changes in perspective involving a shift in focus from exclusive concerns about 'drinking at work' to a much broader focus that addresses 'work-related drinking'. In making the shift, emphasis was placed on the drinking culture of a given workplace and accompanying consequences. It was also discovered that apart from employees and co-

workers, drinking by others in the workplace such as clients and visitors had important occupational health and safety implications. From all indications it is evident that work culture exerts strong influence on consumption patterns of workers. The findings of Fomba et al. (2012), confirmed workplace drinking as a determinant of alcohol use while value pressure made work-related drinking a way of life, and in some cases a core cultural value in many dimensions of work life. Knott (2012) found that on-the-job alcohol abuse affected workers' productivity and this was due to absenteeism, accidents, poor job performance, disability and premature death. This suggests that the effects of occupational drinking culture on work behaviours of employees as critical in performance processes. Knott (2012) found that heavy alcohol use did not only contribute to a series of medical problems, but also increased the chances of unintentional injury both on and off the job. In a similar study, Myadze and Rwomire (2014) observed that excessive reliance on drinking adversely affects the drinker's health, interpersonal relations as well as task performance. In one of the recent studies, Sobngwi-Tambekou et al. (2016) assessed the prevalence and correlates of driving under the influence of alcohol, and about one in 10 drivers was tested positive for driving under the influence, while 3% were impaired during driving. It was evident that alcohol misuse is a health and safety hazard with implications on performance. From the foregoing review, little investigation has been undertaken on the influence of societal and workplace drinking culture on work-related behaviours. The scarcity is glaring in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Cameroon, where alcohol has been internalized as a way of life. Nevertheless, the present study stands to add value to existing literature, as well as stimulate more researchers on workplace alcoholism.

### Theoretical model and hypothesised relationships

According to the model of the study, alcohol drinking culture is expected to relate significantly and positively with risk propensity and performance impairment of employees at work. This has been drawn from the social learning theory, and the theoretical model of study has been presented in Figure 1.

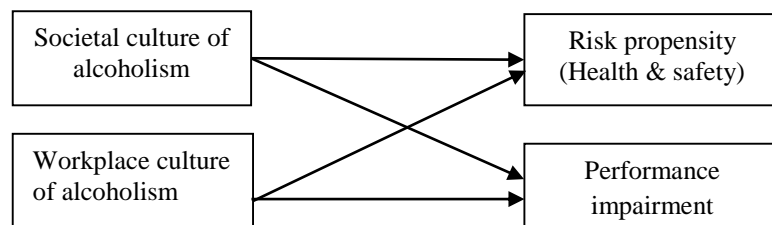


Figure 1: Theoretical model of study

The model positions that pressure from the social and occupational environments could contribute to risk propensity and performance impairment of employees. This stems from the knowledge that individuals in a micro system are found within a larger context with norms that may dictate on perceptions and consumption of alcohol (Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth, 2016). This conforms to the influential power of socio-occupational drinking culture on consumption motivation and safety risks of workers (Fomba, 2012; Sobngwi-Tambekou et al., 2016). This presumes that drinking



lifestyle can influence alcohol abuse with accompanying effects on behaviours of employees in any work-related environment. Precisely, the proposition holds that socio-occupational drinking culture could be highly responsible for risk propensity and performance impairment. This builds on the platform that workplace drinking networks impact on employees' alcohol consumption patterns (Pidd et al. 2006), and with undesired consequences on performance (Knott, 2012; Myadze and Rwomire, 2014). Although people learn alcohol experience through observation and imitation, they differentiate reinforcers in the process of selecting desirable patterns of behaviour. Based on the literature reviewing alcohol drinking lifestyle and relationship with safety risk and performance impairment, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

1. A significant positive relationship exists between societal culture of alcoholism and risk propensity of workers
2. A significant positive relationship exists between societal culture of alcoholism and performance impairment of workers
3. A significant positive relationship exists between workplace culture of alcoholism and risk propensity of workers
4. A significant positive relationship exists between workplace culture of alcoholism and performance impairment of workers

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Population and sample**

The study used an exploratory research design with teachers in public institutions in the Dschang Municipality, West Region of Cameroon, to explore the relationship between drinking culture and work behaviour. Authorization was obtained from administrations of target institutions. Simple random sampling was used to select 314 employees (161 males, 153 females), aged 18-60 for the investigation. The instrument was distributed to participants and detailed instructions were provided on how questionnaires had to be completed and returned. Out of the 375 employees that were solicited to fill the questionnaires, a total of 314 employees returned valid questionnaires making a response completion rate of 83.73 %.

### **Data collection**

A Self-administered questionnaire was designed to collect data. The main instrument of data collection was the Occupational Alcoholism Questionnaire (OCAQ), a 5-point Likert scale with sub-scales developed by the investigator. The self-report scale comprised 30 items coded with five possible answers that include "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neutral", "agree" and "strongly agree" with numerical values of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. To ensure consistency of the measure, a pilot-testing was conducted and necessary adjustments made. In addition, there were some open items that measured demographics including age, sex, drinking frequency, drinking venue, choice of drink and quantity. The subscales were tested for internal consistency with the following

corresponding number of items and alphas: Societal drinking culture; 5 items,  $\alpha=.63$ , work drinking culture; 5,  $\alpha=.72$ , health and safety risk; 7,  $\alpha=.85$ , and performance impairment; 7,  $\alpha=.89$ . The aggregate alpha for the subscales was .77. Descriptive statistics and Person Product Moment correlation was used to analyse the data.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### Descriptive results

The first section presents descriptive results. A cross-tabulation of drinking places and choices has been presented on Table 1. Majority of workers drank alcohol at meetings (37.2%), and in ordinary bars (26.5%). Another favourite drinking venue was celebrations (13.6%), while drinking at work (0.3%) recorded the lowest frequency. In terms of choice, majority drank beer (80.3%).

Table 1: Drinking places and choices of drink

Drinking Venues	Beer	Wine	Whisky	Local brew	Mixtures	Flexible	Others	%
Institution	0.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.3
Ordinary bar	29.8	1.0	-	-	1.9	-	-	32.7
Snack bar	4.2	-	0.3	-	-	-	-	4.5
Night club	1.3	-	-	0.6	-	-	-	1.9
Meetings	26.5	3.9	0.3	0.6	3.9	-	1.9	37.2
Celebrations	12.3	-	-	-	-	-	1.3	13.6
Everywhere	0.3	-	0.3	-	0.6	1.0	-	2.3
Others	5.50	0.6	-	-	1.0	-	0.3	7.4
%	80.3	5.5	1.0	1.3	7.4	1.0	3.6	100

Participants' results on drinking frequency and amount of drinks by workers have been presented in Table 2. According to analysis, 29.7% drank almost weekly, closely followed by monthly sprees (24.0%). Majority of teachers (45.5%) consume two bottles of beer at a spree and 29.7% consume almost weekly and this is closely followed by a near monthly (24%) drinking spree.

Table 2: Drinking frequency and amount of drinks

Amount (bottles)	Almost daily	Almost weekly	Almost fortnightly	Almost monthly	More than monthly	%
1	2.2	3.9	2.5	8.6	9.7	26.9
2	2.2	15.1	11.5	11.8	5.0	45.5
3	4.7	6.5	4.7	3.2	0.4	19.4
4	1.4	3.2	1.1	-	-	5.7
5	1.1	0.4	-	0.4	-	1.8
6	-	0.4	-	-	-	0.4
7 +	-	0.4	-	-	-	0.4
	11.5	29.7	19.7	24.0	15.1	100

### Test of hypothesis

This section presents the results of the tests of hypothesized relationships between the independent variables and the outcome measures, and this has been summarized in Table 4. The results of the assumptions that socio-occupational drinking lifestyle will significantly relate with risk propensity and performance impairment of workers has been presented. Results for means, standard deviations and reliability coefficients have equally been shown.

Table 4: Correlation results and descriptives

Factors	N	Mean	Std.D	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4
Societal drinking culture (1)	312	13.69	3.776	.53	1	.559**	.029	.146**
Workplace drinking culture (2)	314	9.73	3.966	.62	.559**	1	.020	.104*
Health and safety risk (3)	314	16.33	5.126	.75	.029	.020	1	.632**
Performance impairment (4)	312	21.84	7.105	.89	.146**	.104*	.632*	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

The first hypothesis assumed a significant positive relationship existing between societal drinking culture and risk propensity of workers (See Table 4). Analysis of societal drinking culture significantly related with safety risk,  $r=.723$ ,  $p<.01$ . The correlation coefficient is high suggesting that an increase in the level of alcohol consumption in society will increase the workers' propensity to take health and safety risk. Therefore the alternative hypothesis was confirmed following the degree of relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The second hypothesis proposed that a significant positive relationship exists between societal drinking culture and performance impairment of employees (See Table 4). Analysis reported a positive significant relationship between societal drinking lifestyle and the outcome measure,  $r=.146$ ,  $p<.01$ . This suggests that the more workers drink in society, the more they suffer from

performance impairment. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted following the significant relationship between societal drinking style and performance impairment.

The third hypothesis assumed the existence of a significant positive relationship between occupational drinking culture and risk propensity of workers (See Table 4). Results of testing showed an insignificant result, suggesting that there is no relationship between workplace drinking culture and the propensity to express health and safety risk,  $r=.029$ ,  $p>0.05$ . This implies that the way the workers drink at work cannot expose them to health and safety injuries. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis was rejected due to the absence of significant relationship between the independent variable and the outcome measure.

Finally, it was hypothesized that a significant positive relationship exists between occupational drinking culture and performance impairment of employees (See Table 4). Analysis showed an insignificant result,  $r=.020$ ,  $p>0.05$  indicating that workplace drinking values are unable to influence performance impairment of workers. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is rejected on grounds that drinking lifestyle at work does not risk performance at work. Summary of the study has been presented on Table 5.

Table 5: Summary results of findings

No.	Hypothesised relationships	r	Alpha	Decisions
Ha 1	Societal drinking culture X Risk propensity	.723	$p<.01$	Accepted
Ha 2	Societal drinking culture X Performance impairment	.146	$p<.01$	Accepted
Ha 3	Workplace drinking culture X Risk propensity	.029	$p>0.05$	Rejected
Ha 4	Workplace drinking culture X Performance impairment	.020	$p>0.05$	Rejected

## DISCUSSION

The study investigated the role of context in drinking behaviours, and how alcohol culture relates with risk propensity and performance impairment of workers. Analysis of the link between societal drinking culture and risk propensity was significant. This concurs with Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth (2016) on influence of social norms in neighbourhood on binge drinking, notwithstanding individuals believes in binge drinking. It also agrees with prior studies on normatic group pressure (Pidd et al., 2006) societal lifestyle and risks propensity at work (Fomba et al., 2012), and effects of stimulating work setting (Sobngwi-Tambekou et al., 2016). The results reflect realities on the ground as observed with qualitative reports, where workers drink heavily off-work, but with consequences felt at work. It would be recalled that majority workers drink at socio-cultural meetings, ordinary bars and at ceremonies, but with just a negligible percentage at work. These are socio-cultural structures where alcohol is perceived as a need and capable of facilitating business and pleasure among participants. In these venues, much alcohol is drunk by workers, and one cannot be skeptical of its role in influencing risk-taking and ineffective performance. Analysis confirmed the relationship between societal drinking lifestyle and performance impairment of workers. This concurs with the findings of Knott (2012) on family

alcohol lifestyle and negative outcome at work, Fomba et al., (2012) on alcohol culture, and psychological dependence, and Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth (2016) on exposure to marketing mix and social drinking norms and performance. Results suggest that the level of socio-cultural drinking style can disrupt effective performance of workers. This implies that drinking could lead to unproductive work behaviours such as absenteeism and hangovers, which could affect effective performance. Therefore, perceptions hold that work-related alcohol effects can be very detrimental to the effectiveness and efficiency of workers in organisations.

The relationship between workplace drinking culture and risk propensity did not receive any support from the studies. This suggests that the way employees drink at work does not influence the expression of risky patterns that could cause harm or injury. This is inconsistent with the results of Pidd et al. (2006) on employees and co-workers on occupational health and safety implications, Olkinuora (1984) on problem drinking at work, Silfies & DeMicco (1992) on numerous accidents and Sobngwi-Tambekou et al. (2016) on drinking culture on risks propensity of drivers. Anyway, descriptive results showed that little alcohol is consumed at work and this may account for the fact that it does not increase health and safety risk for the employees. This could also be explained by the fact that teachers' occupational settings are not highly risk settings due to the tender nature of their clients, and the properties of the environment are accommodating, while drinking is just a past time especially after work with little to do with safety hazards. The relationship between workplace alcohol culture and performance impairment also showed insignificant results. This implies that drinking at work does not negatively affect performance of employees. This disagrees with findings on on-the-job alcohol and absenteeism, accidents, absenteeism, poor job performance and productivity (Knot, 2012; Silfies & DeMicco, 1992). It appears that though socialization is critical in drinking processes, employees are equally conscious of their occupations as a source of livelihood. Furthermore, qualitative data showed that the amount of alcohol consumed is just 0.3%, and this could possibly account for the insignificant results obtained from the study. In African traditional work settings, alcohol is integrated into work processes as social norms dictate eating and drinking at work. Participants could have internalized such values where workplace alcohol does not influence negative behavioral outcomes at work, and this could depend on the personality characteristics of individuals.

### **Implications of findings**

The study is relevant from the perspective of workforce care, and provides feasible building blocks capable of generating appropriate policies and intervention to deter workplace alcohol. Increasing reinforcement to reduce risk propensity and counter impaired performance is indispensable. Analysis of occupational alcoholism as a risk factor is gaining increased attention and this warrants corporate efforts to deal squarely with alcohol problems (Fomba et al., 2012). In this respect, appropriate measures should be put in place to control alcohol in society and the work place. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the consumption of alcohol has implications for workplace health and safety. Since it impairs co-ordination, judgment and decision making in work processes, it should be redressed to ensure organizational health and productivity. The effect of drinking pressure on health and safety risk propensity, and performance impairment has been unveiled with policy and practical implications. Alcohol and drug testing is an essential element of a drug-free workplace program (Knott, 2012), but in Cameroon the practice is renounced only



with the Ministry of transport by instituting alcohol testing programmes for drivers. Despite the nonchalance of the Government and inertia of enterprises, it is regrettable that harmful effects of alcohol misuse are far reaching and range from accidents and injuries to disease and death with secondary effects on family, friends, and society (Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth, 2016). This calls for the reinforcement of social control norms and education of the public on harmful effects on individuals and occupational life. Nevertheless, the problem in Cameroon is not the absence of legislation but that of implementation. In most work settings, regulatory mechanisms are perceived to have failed to bail problem drinkers due to cultural dictates of the society and ensuing organizational culture (Fomba et al., 2012). Efforts should focus on the social, psychological and economic exactions from alcoholics. Exposure to alcohol and environmental pressure has been accused for alcohol abuse due to non-respect of laws establishing drinking spots. Interventions that integrate policy, treatment and prevention strategies, and target workplace culture to influence behaviour are more likely to be effective in reducing alcohol-related harm (Pidd et al., 2006). The Government needs to exert more control and local administrators and traditional authorities should be involved in promoting a free alcohol environment. In addition, community education at meetings, ceremonies and on the media should be initiated and intensified. Although workplace alcohol was not significant with safety risk and performance, influences from the wider environment affects workplace processes in the likes of health and safety risks. It has been observed that productivity and health care costs negatively impact on both episodic and chronic heavy drinking (Knott, 2012), and attention should be given to wider alcohol influences. The socio-cultural perspective of the model implies that social control is necessary and workplace interventions should not isolate the social learning theory since societal culture appears to play a critical role in the development of workplace norms regarding alcohol use (Pidd et al., 2006).

There are limitations due to the fact that many organisations do not have workplace health and safety policies, not to talk of alcohol policies. Consequently, it becomes difficult to implement what is not available on policy statement, though management still play tough on problem drinkers at work. In spite of the fact that some managers believe in strong disciplinary measures as a deterrent to alcohol abusers (Silfies & DeMicco, 1992), this may become counterproductive considering that drinking values have been highly internalized at societal level, and workers have become mentally and emotionally attached to alcohol. In terms of workplace policy strategies, education and training of supervisors and line managers to handle cases of abuses is indispensable. Health professionals and counselors could play a vital role in influencing attitudes and perceptions towards drinking in order to ensure health, safety and effective performance. Most often this is the direct responsibility of the Human Resource Management department, particularly the Safety or Occupational health Units. The service has preventive functions, and responsible for advising the employer, as well as the workers and their representatives on the requirements for establishing and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment to facilitate optimal physical and mental health in relation to work (ILO, 1996). This is no doubt ideal but the question is whether Human Resource Management departments do exist with occupational health units, and whether they are fully functional in many organisations to address alcohol-related problems at work.

There are different theoretical explanations connecting environmental factors and consumption patterns, and a unifying and consistent explanation is culture (Pidd et al., 2006). SLT has been used as explanatory framework since culture has been perceived as capable of dictating on alcohol

drinking patterns. Though people learn through observation and imitation of behaviours observed in other people, the rudimentary form of learning rooted in direct experience is governed by rewarding and punishing consequences that follow each action (Bandura, 1971). This emphasises the role of societal and influence on alcohol drinking styles for workers exposed to the drinking systems.

Interest is on the modeling of individuals such as teachers, parents or peers in consumer decision-making strategies. SLT is relevant and gives explanation to environmental influences of alcohol consumption. Since societal culture appears to play a critical role in the development of workplace norms regarding alcohol use (Pidd et al., 2006), it is possible to use cultural properties to redress problems of norms and attitudes of heavy drinkers in the workplace. Therefore, the application of SLT could focus on environmental modification and cognitive restructuring to improve individual's sociability to learn new ways of coping with drinking demands or pressure from the social environment.

## CONCLUSION AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Alcoholism no matter how it is defined is an enormous problem in work life and heavy drinking and alcoholism as a problem calls for preventive efforts and treatment (Olkinuora, 1984). This could possibly reduce risk propensity while improving performance and productivity. Although alcohol values could be highly responsible, personality factors should equally be recognized and included in any strategy that purports to solve problems of workplace alcoholism. However, studies have revealed that attention on changing social norms is insufficient, since broader interventions that influence multiple levels of an individual's environment may have greater impact (Sudhinaraset & Wigglesworth, 2016). In this respect, education on alcohol consumption and safety practices through environmental modification could influence expected behaviours of employees. This builds on the premise that a well-designed and carefully-targeted health promotion programs can cause changes in employee behavior and reduce associated risk factors (Silfies & DeMicco, 1992). Therefore, an environment free of problematic drinking is a pathway to alcohol free workplace. In the process, organizations with policies and procedures to eradicate alcohol abuse during their working hours (Knott, 2012) could be more effective in controlling work-related alcohol effects and promote maximum functioning of the organisation.

These findings, however, must be interpreted with caution, as it is difficult to determine whether alcohol drinking culture in society and at work with results from a single sector could be directly generalised to safety and health behaviours of employees. Despite these challenges, it is important to develop new strategies to systematically examine the impact of drinking lifestyles on alcohol abuse, and accompanying outcome on risk propensity and performances difficulties. Despite policy gaps in ensuring a free alcohol workplace, the study noticed some significant gaps and limitations of data on workplace alcohol in Cameroon. Further research activities could be expanded to occupational alcoholism and differential analysis of individual and environmental factors and workers in the public and private sectors could be initiated.

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