

Alcohol Use and Abuse among Female High School Learners: A Qualitative Approach

By

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Declaration

I, Thokozani J. Hlomani, declare that *Alcohol Use and Abuse Among Female High School Learners: A Qualitative Approach* is my original work, that it has not been previously submitted for any other degree at any other university, and that all sources that I have used have been acknowledged.

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Dedication

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Abstract

The increasing levels and more frequent use of alcohol among females especially those in younger age groups has been noted with concern worldwide. However qualitative data on this problem is limited. This study therefore aimed to explore qualitatively factors contributing to female adolescents' alcohol use and abuse, their knowledge regarding risks associated with alcohol use and abuse and to understand the contextual and environmental factors that render female adolescents vulnerable to engage in drinking behaviours. This study was guided by the Prototype/ Willingness model. The data was collected using two (2) focus groups and five (5) individual semi- structured interviews with Grade 9 female high school learners. Data analysis was done using thematic analysis. The findings of the study indicated that there are various individual, social as well as contextual factors contributing to alcohol use among female learners. These factors include age onset, low self-esteem, influence of significant others e.g. parents, peers, celebrities, media alcohol adverts especially through Television, easy availability and accessibility of alcohol as well as lack of law enforcement on selling of alcohol to minors. Protective factors emerged from the findings and these include parental monitoring, high self-esteem and good mother- daughter attachment. The study also indicated various positive perceptions why female adolescents use alcohol. These included perceiving alcohol use as fun, "cool" and glamorous, as a coping mechanism as well as a symbol of adult status and being "Western". Although female adolescents have knowledge of most of the health and social consequences of alcohol most of them believe that they cannot be affected and they still continue to plan to use alcohol.

Several recommendations are also presented. These could assist female learners, parents (and other caregivers), community members, policy makers, researchers, program developers especially those interested in adolescent health as well as other stakeholders e.g. South African Police Services (SAPS) and Department of Education etc.

KEY WORDS

Alcohol; alcohol use; alcohol abuse; high school learner; adolescent; female adolescent.

In this particular study the words learner and adolescent are used interchangeable.

Definition of concepts

Alcohol

The word alcohol is derived from Arabic *al- kuhul*. It refers to beverages such as beer, wine and spirits (Parry & Bennets, 1998). This type of alcohol is called ethanol or ethyl alcohol (International Center for Alcohol Policies, 2005).

Alcohol use

In the context of this study, alcohol use involves drinking beer, ciders, wine, or hard liquor.

Alcohol abuse

Alcohol abuse is described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM –IV- TR) as a psychiatric diagnosis describing the recurring use of alcoholic beverages despite negative consequences (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), 1995). This pattern of drinking can harm one’s health, interpersonal relationships or their ability to work. Alcohol abuse is said to be common among people between the ages of 15 and 24 (Moreira et al., 2009). **Binge drinking** is regarded as another form of alcohol abuse. Alcohol binging is defined in the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) as 5 or more drinks in succession on one or more days in the past month (Reddy et al., 2010).

Adolescence

The word adolescence is from the Latin word *adolescere* meaning “to grow up”. It is a stage of transition of physical and psychological human development occurring from puberty and adulthood (Berk, 2007). Adolescent refers to a boy or girl who is between the ages of 10 and 20 (Berk, 2007).

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Introduction

Alcohol use and abuse is a worldwide social and health problem affecting people of all ages, from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Alcohol plays a complex and controversial role in South Africa since it poses challenges to the health and development of the nation. The Social Development Minister of South Africa pointed out that the South African government recognised that alcohol and substance abuse are seen as affecting the health and developmental efforts of the country. This is considered as undermining existing strategies and mechanisms of creating healthy societies (News24, 2011).

South Africa is one of the countries showing a dangerous trend of drinking (Parry 2005; Rehm et al., 2003). Of the factors leading to disability and diseases in South Africa, alcohol was thirdly placed after risky sexual behaviour and interpersonal violence (News 24, 2011). According to the WHO (2002), the alcohol consumption rate per capita in South Africa is between 10.3 and 12.4 litres. The higher level indicates the amount of home brewed alcohol. The history of alcohol use in South Africa has its roots in the period of colonialism. Following their arrival, the European settlers didn't succeed in prohibiting the use of alcohol by Africans despite various attempts. Alcohol use was perceived as contributing to moral decay and disorganisation in society. In African societies people drank occasionally, mostly for communal and ceremonial purposes. However, laws passed at the time meant to discourage black Africans from producing and obtaining liquor. In later years, during the 2nd half of the 20th century, illegal alcohol outlets known as shebeens were established in black communities as a way of resisting the apartheid laws which limited business opportunities in certain areas.

The high rate of alcohol use in the Western Cape Province can be traced back to the "dop" system (London, Nell, Thompson & Meyers, 1998; McKinstry, 2005). This system was introduced by the Dutch settlers and Later French Huguenots who landed in the Cape to become wine farmers in the mid 1600's and contracted amongst others, Africans as labourers (Setlalentoa, Pisa, Thekisho, Ryke & Loots, 2010). Under the "dop" system farm workers received their payments in the form of bread, tobacco and wine (McKinstry, 2005; Mkosi et al., 2008). This system therefore encouraged distribution of wine at regular intervals during the day and also on weekends to farm workers and working children as young as 12 as part

payment for their labour (ibid). This was a cheaper way of paying the farm workers for their labour and over time the system was a profitable way for farmers to dispose excess poor quality or “reject” wine which could not be sold in the open market and was considered unfit to drink (McKinstry, 2005). McLoughlin (2007) argues that this “poor quality” wine sold in inferior packaging such as “papsakke” by legitimate retailers to farm workers has continued to influence the drinking patterns and alcohol related problems amongst farm workers and in particular female farm workers. Women in Western Cape are targeted by farmers as labourers. According to McKinstry (2005) women in the Western Cape Province constitute about 30% of the workforce in the commercial agriculture sector and are 2- 3 times more likely than men to be hired as labourers.

Although this system was banned its effects still persist. The effects of the “dop” system are most evident in the generations of the predominantly coloured farm workers who are caught up in cycles of poverty and heavy alcohol use. Heavy drinking particularly on weekends and holidays has become so ritualised and is a time where farm workers find temporary relief from their difficult circumstances (De Kock as cited in Mkosi et al., 2008). Alcohol is thus valued, favoured and an expected commodity among many of the people who are paid little and live in poverty.

The “dop” system did not only promote and sustain a drinking culture that left local communities poor but it also had severe negative implications which were biological, psychological and social (McKinstry, 2005). Some of the negative health consequences include greater poverty, pesticide poisoning, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and growth faltering (Mkosi et al., 2008). The Western Cape Province in South Africa has the highest rates of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome in the whole world (Harker et al., 2008; McKinstry, 2005). According to a research conducted in Wellington, a wine growing region in the Western Cape the prevalence of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome among grade 1 learners was found to be 41-46 per 1000 in 1997 and increased to 65 – 74 per 1000 in 1999. Higher rates of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome among grade 1 learners (55.2 – 74.2 per 1000) in a wine region in the Western Cape were also reported by (Viljoen as cited in Peltzer & Ramlagan, 2009). These high rates of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome are evidence that there is alcohol misuse among women in the Western Cape Province. This could be as a result of the social conditions in which the women of this province live in. High rates of unemployment and poverty are evident in the Province,

coupled with the responsibilities of being mothers, women in the Western Cape Province drink alcohol to forget their problems.

About 60% of deaths related to violence in the Western Cape are attributed to the use of alcohol. Allan Winde, the Western Cape Finance, Economic Development and Tourism Minister reported that the province has about 25 000 illegal “shebeens” (taverns), high rates of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and about 300 deaths every month due to injuries connected to alcohol. The province spends about R15 billion annually on issues directly or indirectly related to alcohol (as cited in News24, 2010).

Many studies have pointed out that alcohol is the most commonly used substance among learners in South Africa (Madu & Matla, 2003; Masita, 2007; Moodley, Matjila & Moosa, 2012; Visser & Routledge, 2007). This could be due to its widespread availability, accessibility and its greater social acceptability than any other illicit drug (Madu & Matla, 2003). The majority of South African adolescents drink wine, beer or ciders mainly because these are considered cheap and easily accessible in South Africa (ibid). A cider is fermented alcoholic beverage like wine which is made from apple juice. It has been reported that 12% of South African learners begin to drink alcohol before they reach the age of 13 (Reddy et al., 2010). This is a concern since the use of alcohol in the early or middle adolescent period is associated with alcohol problems later in life (Hingson, Heeren, Levenson, Jamanka & Voos, 2002). Alcohol use and abuse among adolescents exposes them to health and social consequences such as sexual and physical assault, motor vehicle accidents, dropping out of school, teenage pregnancy, delinquent or criminal behaviour and HIV and STI's (Raufman, Kantor & Asligian, 2002; Hingson et al., 2002; NIAAA, 2003; WHO, 2007). According to Gonet (1994) learners who use alcohol are likely not to perform well at school.

Some of the socio demographic factors related to alcohol use and the potential risk factors that may influence an adolescent to start drinking include family approval of alcohol, modelling by parents or significant others, peer pressure as well as media influence (Donovan, 2004).

1.2. Background of the research problem

Across all cultures and traditions, drinking has always been seen as a problem for males. This idea is however changing; females seem to be drinking as much as males (Bergman & Kallmen, 2003; Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS), 2007; Phillips, 2008); Ghuman, Meyer

Weitz & Knight, (2012). According to Bobak, Mckree, Rose and Marmot significant changes have been noted in the levels and patterns of drinking in females worldwide (as cited in Phillips, 2008). High rates of alcohol use and harmful drinking patterns among African women have been highlighted by some population based surveys (Martinez, Roislien, Naidoo & Clausen, 2011). This is alarming since alcohol use among African women has always been low (WHO, 2004). In South Africa, problem drinking among females is also evident in the Western Cape. Qualitative research conducted in Cape Town by the South Africa Health Information (2003) suggested that changes were being noted in the profile of people using alcohol. An increase in alcohol use was reported among females, people with low income in the Cape flats and Afrikaans speakers. According to Harker et al. (2008) the extent of problem drinking including binge drinking among males relative to females are more equivocal. Results of a survey conducted by the South African Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS) (2003) showed that the rates of binge drinking on weekends were higher among females (48%) than males (23%). Another study by Myers (2007) reported that females drink more on a daily basis than males. The rise on alcohol consumption among females has particularly been noted among women in younger age groups (Ghuman et al., 2012; Phillips, 2008; NIAA, 2005).

Higher levels of drinking among female learners were also highlighted in the YRBS (Reddy et al. 2010) which found higher rates of alcohol use among male learners in all South African provinces except in the Limpopo and Western Cape provinces which had high lifetime alcohol use rates among female learners than male learners. In another recent study conducted in Gauteng, it was found that 6.2% of Grade 8 female learners had used alcohol in the past month and this was higher than the Grade 8 males (4.4%). The study also found that there was high lifetime prevalence of alcohol use in female learners compared to other black female learners in previous studies conducted in South Africa (Moodley et al., 2012).

The reasons for the changes in alcohol consumption among females in general may be complex. These changes have been related to changes in the perception of female roles in society. According to Wilsnack and Wilsnack (1997) the regulation of gender roles within societies“ is usually related to gender differences in alcohol use. The increase in females“ drinking has also been linked to social changes that allow females to perform other roles that were once reserved for men (Bergmark, 2004).

Mustonen (2003) argues that when the societal values with regard to alcohol change, females' alcohol consumption either becomes more or less tolerated. A gradual change towards the social acceptance of drinking among females has lessened the gap in the amount and style of drinking between males and females (Roche & Deehan, 2002).

According to Jernigan (as cited in Mkosi et al. 2008), the changes in females' levels of alcohol consumption in developing countries can also be attributed to industrialisation, urbanisation, availability of beer, imitation of "western drinking styles", targeted advertising directed at women, and financial emancipation.

Furthermore, the transformation of alcohol products by the alcohol industry has made alcohol consumption more accessible to young women (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2007). This has seen the introduction of alcohol beverages like fermented alcoholic drinks (ciders) and wine coolers which are alcoholic beverages made from wine and fruit juice specifically for consumption by females (Mkosi et al., 2008). Holmila and Railatsalo (2005) argue that the alcohol industry has been interested in promoting drinking among women as they are a consumer group that has not been targeted previously.

Increases in alcohol use and abuse among adolescent females raises concerns as evidence points out that females are at a higher risk for social, physical, medical and psychological consequences of alcohol (Epstein, Fischer- Elber & Al- Otaiba, 2008). A study conducted in Southern KwaZulu-Natal District emphasises the need to pay attention to the increase of alcohol consumption among young women as their alcohol use might be as dangerous as that of young males with reference to clinical categories of safe and harmful drinking (Ghuman et al., 2012).

The discussion above is a clear indication that alcohol use and abuse among female learners is on the rise in South Africa. It is therefore against this background that this study was undertaken.

1.3. Rationale and significance of the study

Not many studies globally and even in South Africa have focused on the reasons for females' drinking as well as their views on their alcohol consumption and exposure to risk (Armstrong, Thunstrom & Davey, 2011). The existing quantitative studies reporting on the shifting patterns on female learners use and abuse of alcohol add little understanding to this "new" drinking pattern. Furthermore, most studies and intervention and prevention strategies

on alcohol use have been based on males' perspectives of drinking (Armstrong et al., 2011). It is therefore imperative to understand the views of females in examining alcohol consumption and alcohol related problems so as to have a more balanced and competent version of drinking in today's society (Allamani as cited in Armstrong et al., 2011). The study therefore aims to explore qualitatively the perceived factors that render female learners vulnerable to alcohol use and abuse particularly those who live in the Western Cape, the wine growing area of South Africa well known for high rates of drinking among females (Harker et al., 2008). The research findings could be used to add new insights to the existing body of knowledge on female adolescents' alcohol use and abuse in the Western Cape. Study findings could also be used to inform the development of interventions specifically designed for adolescent females, as well as help policy makers about likely strategies to curb alcohol use and abuse among female adolescents. It should however be noted that due to the qualitative nature of the study, generalisation of the findings are constrained.

1.4. Research Aim and Questions

The study aims to gain a better understanding of young females' alcohol use in the Western Cape. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- (a) What are the factors contributing to alcohol use among female adolescents?
- (b) What is the role played by family, peers and environmental factors in female alcohol use?
- (c) How does the media influence alcohol use among female adolescents?
- (d) What are female adolescents' perceptions of their risk vulnerability associated with alcohol use and abuse?

1.5. Ethical clearance for the study

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee (See Appendix 2). The school principal granted the researcher permission to conduct the study at the school and also gave consent on behalf of the parents for learners to participate in the study since the study was conducted on school premises and in accordance to the School Governing Body guidelines.

1.6. Outline of the study

Chapter 1 is an introduction of the study. It provides a brief history of alcohol use in South Africa and the background of the study. The rationale, research aim, questions, significance of the study and ethical clearance are outlined in the chapter.

Chapter 2 presents some of the available literature on alcohol consumption among adolescents. Available literature specifically focusing on female adolescents use and abuse has been presented in this chapter. The Prototype/Willingness model (Gibbons, Gerrard & Lane, 2003), the theoretical framework underpinning the study, is also discussed.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology of the study, beginning with the aim of the study. The research paradigm, design, data collection instruments, sampling, measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, reflexivity issues as well as the role of the researcher in the research are also addressed in the chapter. This chapter also highlights the advantages and limitations of using the chosen methods and how these limitations were dealt with.

Chapter 4 presents the major findings of the study which followed from the focus groups and individual interviews. The findings are categorized into overarching themes and subthemes as identified during thematic analysis by the researcher. Discussion of the findings are also integrated in this chapter. Excerpts from the interviews as well as literature have also been used to discuss and interpret the research findings.

Chapter 5 concludes the study and provides recommendations emanating from the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

The literature review will address the following aspects; alcohol trends among adolescents, feminism and alcohol consumption, onset of drinking among female adolescents, consequences of adolescent alcohol use and abuse, factors related to alcohol consumption among adolescents, and the context in which alcohol is often used.

2.2. Alcohol trends among adolescents

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2004) reported that many learners begin experimenting with alcohol before the age of 12. Research has pointed out that adolescents who begin to drink before the age of 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those adolescents who do not drink before the age of 21, (National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), (2004); Bonnie & O'Connell, 2004). In South Africa, alcohol, cocaine, tobacco and other drugs are a problem among school-going adolescents with alcohol being the primary drug abused by young adolescents (Hamdulay & Mash, 2011). The South African Demographic and Health Survey (2003/4) reported a prevalence for alcohol use of 70.35% for males and 39.2% for females over the age of 15 years.

The 2008 South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) reported that a significant number of learners in higher grades had used alcohol at some point in their lives than those in lower grades (Reddy et al., 2010). Nationally, 59.0% grade 11 learners and 54.9% grade 10 learners reported to have ever used alcohol, and 38.7% of the grade 8 learners. The survey also reported that 38.4% of learners who were 13 years and younger had lower rates of ever using alcohol compared to 53.7% of 16 year old learners. With regard to binge drinking, 28.5% of school going adolescents in South Africa had drunk 5 or more drinks of alcohol within a few hours on one or more days in the past month, with significantly more males 33.5% than females 23.7% reporting to have done this (Reddy et al., 2010).

In another study conducted among secondary school students in KwaZulu-Natal by Ghuman, et al. (2012), 54% of the learners reported to have used alcohol at some point in their life and 28.6% of the learners had their first drink when they were between the ages of 15-16 years.

The study found that 22.45% of the learners had their first drink at the ages of 13-14 years and 14.5 % had consumed alcohol before the age of 13.

The study also showed a comparison between alcohol use prevalence rates from the YRBS's and a Southern KwaZulu-Natal school based study. The table below shows the results of the 2 studies, reflecting the changes of alcohol use patterns among females. Adapted with permission from (Ghuman et al., 2012).

YRBS 2002 (N=10,481)			YRBS 2008 (N=10,038)			S.KZN 2007 (N=704)		
Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Ever used alcohol								
56.1%	43.5%	49.1%	54.4%	45.1%	49.6%	64.3%	46.8%	53.8%
Alcohol use in past month								
38.5%	26.4%	31.8%	40.5%	29.5%	34.9%	51.2%	33.7%	40.8%
Binge drinking in past month (more than 5 drinks in succession)								
29.3%	17.9%	23%	33.5%	23.7%	28.5%	43.5%	24%	31.8%

2.3. Feminism and Alcohol use

Feminism is an ideological perspective of the social, economic and political equality of the sexes. The rise of feminism during the 1960's has influenced the changes regarding social norms for females (Mohan, 2008). According to France, this evolution had a huge impact on social ideology as it questioned the understanding of gender differences within society. Another aim of the feminist movement was to create societies where females were free from domestic responsibilities and duties (as cited in Mohan, 2008).

Woolcock argues that the previous traditional roles of women were powerful in controlling their alcohol use but with the onset of feminism and the empowerment of women, this regulatory mechanism has weakened (as cited in Davey, 1997). The movement of women from traditional expectations associated with femininity, has made them to adopt roles and behaviours that have traditionally been associated with males. Before the rise of feminism, alcohol consumption by women was stigmatised. Women usually drank secretly at home, and they were also reluctant to admit publicly that they drank a lot. However the changes in the social roles since the 1960's have increasingly liberated women to drink more openly.

Gomberg contends that before the changes brought about by the feminist evolution, females were discouraged from drinking alcohol with the fear that it would decrease their inhibitions towards sexual advances thus exposing them to the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancies (as cited in Mohan, 2008). There is now a noted shift in women's perceptions towards alcohol consumption. Women who drink a lot, now receive positive attention which reinforces their sexual attractiveness to men rather than negative consequences of immorality (Youngs, Morales, McCabe, Boyd & D'Arcy, 2005). Women are said to want equality with men in all things including alcohol consumption. According to the results of a study done in Australia, the changes in levels and patterns of drinking by young teenage women are a reflection of the move from behaviours which were traditionally stereotyped and the lack of modern social or cultural benchmarks which regulate drinking among young women's alcohol consumption (Davey, 1997).

2.4. Onset of drinking among female adolescents

The age of debut of alcohol use is considered as one of the important factors which influence the development of alcohol related problems later in life. There is however contradicting evidence with regard to the age at which female adolescents start using alcohol. Leite and Parish found that in North America 11.5 years is the average age when girls have their first experience with alcohol (as cited in Madu & Matla, 2003). Contrary to these findings Madu and Matla (2003) found that in Polokwane, South Africa, the average age at which females used alcohol for the first time was 15.17 years. It is however important to highlight that the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption among adolescents is increasing and that the age onset of drinking among females is declining (Reddy et al., 2010), thus young women are increasingly exposed to the effects of alcohol use and abuse.

2.5. Health and social consequences of adolescent alcohol use and abuse

Alcohol use and abuse is linked to a number of acute and chronic health and social consequences.

2.5.1. Health consequences

Worldwide, 9.8% of the diseases affecting people between the ages of 15-29 years are due to alcohol and other illegal substances (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), 2005). Alcohol consumption is responsible for several harmful health consequences and deaths for people below the age of 21 (Center for Disease Control (CDC), 2004).

As the human brain matures throughout the adolescent period into the mid to late twenties, alcohol use during this critical time exposes the brain to its harmful effects (Spear, 2002; White & Swartzwelder, 2005; Johnson et al., 2006). Alcohol use during adolescence can alter the structure and functioning of the hippocampus which is a part of the brain responsible for the learning process. The abuse of alcohol during this period can cause permanent impairment to the developing brain. The changes in the structure and function of the developing brain caused by alcohol may have effects reaching far beyond the adolescent period. Evidence of this has been pointed out by a recent study with adolescent animals and limited adolescent humans. This study speculated that alcohol use during this period may change the brain both functionally and structurally (Brown, Tarpert, Granholm & Delis, 2000). Alcohol use during adolescence can also hinder puberty development and cause increased risk of bone fractures (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2007; Baron, Bachman & Weiderpass, 2001).

There is evidence to show that alcohol exposes females to greater harmful medical, social, psychological and physical consequences than males (Epstein, et al., 2007). Females who drink alcohol tend to experience alcohol related problems at lower drinking levels than males. This is attributed to biological differences including hormones and also to the fact that females have lower body weight than males and have less body water. Decreased body size in women allows higher volumes of alcohol in the blood, thus putting women at greater risk for harm (NIAAA, 2011). According to Frezza et al. (as cited in NIAAA, 2005), women also have lower levels of alcohol dehydrogenase enzyme as compared to men, this enzyme is

found in the stomach and small intestines critical in the chemical process of breaking down alcohol in the system.

Alcohol use among adolescents is also related to a number of health risk behaviours including smoking, sexual behaviours and illicit substance use (Windle, 1999; Shiffman & Balabanis, 1995; Grunbaum et al., 2004). There is also an association of drinking among adolescents with deaths and injuries due to motor vehicle accidents, depression and suicide, absconding from school, poor performance at school, blackouts, memory loss, fighting, damage to property, relationship problems with peers and broken friendships and sexual assault (Anderson, 2001; Brown & Tapert, 2004; King et al., 2004; Miller and Plant, 1999; Onongha, 2012; Binder, 2010; Swahn et al., 2007).

Alcohol consumption increases the likelihood for adolescents to engage in risky unwanted and unintended sexual activities. This is because adolescents who drink have higher chances of engaging in unsafe sex with multiple partners at an earlier age than those who do not drink (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), 2007). Female adolescents who drink are therefore in danger of being infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), HIV and having unplanned pregnancies (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2007; NIAAA, 2003).

Alcohol use during pregnancy may contribute to foetal alcohol disorders, including Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) which is a major cause of intellectual disability in children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). FAS has four key features, these are Prenatal exposure to alcohol, brain damage, certain facial characteristics and growth deficiency (Streissguth & Kanter; Carrier et al., as cited in Scheepers, 2009). Globally, South Africa has the highest prevalence of FAS ever recorded with the Western Cape Province and the Northern Cape Province having the 2 highest number of FAS ever recorded in the country, followed by Gauteng (Harker et al., 2008; May et al., 2000; May et al., 2005; McKinstry, 2005; Birn & Molina, 2005). The Western Cape Province and Northern Cape Province are wine growing areas and alcohol abuse problems in these areas can be traced back to the "dop system" highlighted previously. High rates of FAS in the world have been mainly identified in these Provinces with the marginalized group of people classified in South Africa as „coloured“ (Scheepers, 2009).

Research has shown that women who give birth to children with FAS are often uneducated and are therefore not aware of the risks associated with alcohol use during pregnancy. They have little or no access to public or private health facilities and could be victims of FAS themselves and are ignorant of the disorder and its effects. As a result of their poor educational background these women have the inability to identify the learning difficulties faced by their children with FAS (Connor & Streissguth, 1996; May et al., 2000; Viljoen et al., 2002).

There is also an association between alcohol use in the early and the middle stages of adolescence with greater likelihood of alcohol problems in later life (Hingson et al., 2002). It has also been found that having one drink per day increases the risk of breast cancer in women, particularly if there is a history of the disease in the family (Aronson, 2003; NIAAA, 2011). Women who drink about one drink daily increase their chances of developing breast cancer by 10% than those who do not use alcohol at all (NIAAA, 2011). Heavy alcohol consumption among females may also be a contributing cause of infertility (Olsen, Bolumar, Boldsen & Bisanti as cited in International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP), 2008). According to Plant, Miller and Plant, eating disorders and behaviours such as obsessive shopping have been linked to heavy and problematic drinking among females (as cited in ICAP, 2008). According to Allan; Chander and McCaul; Pukkinen and Pitkanen, there has been an association between affective and anxiety disorders and alcohol abuse among women and this often increases with age (as cited in ICAP, 2008). Alcohol abuse can also lead to infertility, menstrual problems and early menopause.

2.5.2. Social consequences

Alcohol use among adolescents is also associated with a number of social problems. The social consequences of alcohol can be significant, affecting the family, friends as well as society at large. Growing evidence points to the role of alcohol in the commitment of crimes that result in arrests (WHO, 2007).

Kaufman Kantor and Asdigian as well as Mohler- Kuo, Dowdall, Koss and Wechsler argue that some patterns of drinking and situations increase the vulnerability of females and their risk of harm from sexual assault and violence (as cited in ICAP, 2008). Alcohol use and abuse among females can put them at a risk of being raped. One survey reported that close to

10% of high school girls admitted being raped (Binder, 2010). A study on gender based violence conducted in the Gauteng Province found that about 4.2% of women had been raped while they were intoxicated or drugged. The study also found that 14.2 % of men who participated in the survey had forced a woman to have sex with them when the woman was too drunk to refuse (Sekeso, 2011). Another study also reported high chances of sexual assault by a male associate when alcohol is used by the offender, the victim or both (NIAAA, 2005).

According to Armstrong et al. (2011) females are not only at risk of being intentionally or unintentionally injured, they are also implicated as perpetrators of alcohol related violence. Research has also found that females are likely to bear injuries related to alcohol that are inflicted by other females rather than by males (Sivajasingam, Morgan, Shepherd & Mathew as cited in Armstrong et al., 2011). It has also been found that adolescents who depend on alcohol to cope with stress do not have appropriate decision making skills and alternative coping strategies.

Many studies have tried to determine the pathways and origins of alcohol use and abuse among adolescents. These studies have shown that several factors influence adolescent substance abuse and these factors range from individual to social-environmental factors (Sookyung, Haeryun & Haesung, 2009).

2.6. Factors related to alcohol use among adolescents

Honess, Seymour and Webster (2000) suggested that the reasons for alcohol use among the youth have become more complex and is therefore seen nowadays as one of the „normal“ behaviours in society, similar to that of adult alcohol consumption. However, there has been emerging consensus in the literature and previous studies that alcohol use among adolescents is a consequence of stress, peer pressure, lack of parental guidance or largely as a result of environmental variables (Peitzer & Phaswana, 2000; Edmonds & Wilcocks, 2000). However, during adolescence girls and boys may initiate and increase alcohol use for different reasons (Epstein, Griffen & Botvin, 2004). Research has shown that factors like self- esteem or feelings of ineffectiveness and stress amongst others play a major role in the epidemiology of alcohol use among girls than boys (Epstein et al., 2004; Kumpulainen & Roen, 2002; Ge, Lorenz, Conger, Elder & Simons, 1994).

2.6.1. Individual factors

Self esteem

Evidence has pointed out that self-esteem is an important factor in the epidemiology of alcohol use among girls (Epstein et al., 2004). Self-esteem is defined as one's judgement of personal worth, feelings of competence and self acceptance (Rosenburg, 1965). Self-esteem is also defined as "the attitudinal, evaluative component of the self; the affective judgements placed on the self - concept consisting of feelings of worth and acceptance, which are developed and maintained as a consequence of awareness of competence, sense of achievement, and feedback from the external world" (Guindon, 2002, p.207). According to Connor, Poyrazli, Ferrer-Wreder and Grahame, high levels of self-esteem is related to a general sense of well being whereas risk behaviour and negative developmental consequences may be linked to lower self-esteem (as cited in Kavas, 2009).

In South Africa, Wild, Flisher, Bhana and Lombard (2004) found out that low self-esteem was associated with drinking, smoking, and other drug use in both male and female adolescents. A study conducted with Finnish adolescents revealed that the probability of heavy drinking doubled more in girls than boys when feelings of ineffectiveness and low self-esteem are experienced (Kumpulainen & Roen, 2002). Another study conducted by Kumpulainen and Roine (2002) found that girls who had low levels of self-esteem at the age of 12 were nearly 2.5 times more likely to abuse alcohol at the age of 15 than those with higher levels of self-esteem, however this relationship was not found in boys.

There is however uncertainty regarding the association between self-esteem and engaging in health risky behaviours. A study by McGee and Williams (2000) found that self-esteem predicted early sexual activities, involvement in more than one health risk behaviour, problem eating and suicidal ideation, but was not related to the use of cannabis, alcohol or cigarette smoking.

Stress

Stress refers to the body's response to stimuli or particular events perceived as potentially harmful to the body (Brady & Sonne, 1999). There can either be physical stressors e.g. physical attacks or environmental conditions or psychological stressors e.g. familial or occupational difficulties in nature (Brady & Sonne, 1999).

Adolescence is often described as a stormy period. Changes related to the social and sexual experiences of growing adolescents created by the physical effects of puberty require significant social and psychological adaptation mechanisms. Coupled with behaviour and mood changes induced by hormones, these social and sexual maturation stressors are likely to contribute to increased alcohol use during adolescence (Tschann et al., 1994). An increase in responsibilities and high academic expectations resulting from changes from elementary to middle school, from middle school to high school, from high school to tertiary or workplace are some of the possible sources of stress (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). Although most adolescents go through the adolescent period without any serious problems, a third to a half of them go through significant depression or emotional disturbances (Compas, Hinden & Gerhardt, 1995).

Female adolescents are more vulnerable to stress than males (Ge et al., 1994). According to Steinberg and Belsky (1996), the maturation of girls during puberty is associated with self image problems, emotional difficulties, depression, and an increase in engaging in risky behaviour. Research also shows that young females especially those from African societies face social prejudice and inequality and are more vulnerable to stress and depression than young males (Jonker, 2002; Lemmer, 1993). Anxiety and stress experienced during adolescence may play an important role in the initiation of alcohol use and other drug use (Pohorecky, 1991; Wagner, 1993).

2.6.2. Social factors

Parenting influences

A number of variables related to parenting have been identified as influencing the initiation and consequent alcohol use among adolescents. These variables include parental monitoring, parental modelling, parent-child alcohol specific communication, parental discipline, parental disapproval of drinking, provision of alcohol to adolescents by parents and the quality of the parent-child relationship (Ryan, Jorm & Lubman, as cited in Ryan et al., 2011). In a study conducted at a secondary school in Durban, learners reported that parents and guardians are influential when it comes to alcohol use. A majority of female learners (56.8%, n=239) reported that parents or guardians are the most influential in their lives, followed by friends. In the same study male learners reported that both parents or guardians and friends as influential (43.1%, n=122 and 41.7%, n=118 respectively (Ghuman et al., 2012).

Parental modelling

The role of parents as role models and the influence of their practices on their children's use of alcohol have been pointed out in various studies (Ghuman et al., 2012; Onya & Madu, 2005; Payne, 2008; Hoque & Ghuman, 2012). According to Poelen et al. (2007) the drinking patterns of parents and other members of the family explain to some extent the patterns of alcohol consumption by adolescents. In a study conducted by Hoque and Ghuman (2012) in South Africa there was a significant association of adolescents' parents alcohol use and adolescents alcohol use. Adolescents were more likely to use alcohol when they reported that they had often seen either of their mother or father drunk or both.

According to Mokgethi (2009) young people model the behaviours of significant others such as parents and therefore may learn from them that alcohol use is a way to cope with difficult life circumstances. Alcohol consumption by parents influences their children's drinking throughout their lifetime. Adolescents model their parents' drinking patterns which include quantity and frequency of alcohol use, contexts where alcohol is used, attitudes regarding use and expectancies of the behaviour of their parents. In a study conducted by Ghuman et al. (2012) learners had a perception that their parents influence their own alcohol use behaviour and some learners were firstly introduced to alcohol by their parents. Alcohol abuse by fathers was a significant predictor in learners' alcohol use in the past month and the data suggested that the perceived frequency of parental or guardians alcohol abuse was a significant predictor in adolescents' engagement in binge drinking. The study reported that learners who had often seen their fathers drunk were 1.9 times to have used alcohol in the preceding month and 1.5 times more likely have been engaged in binge drinking in the preceding month. Those who have often seen their mothers drunk were about 1.4 times more likely to have engaged in binge drinking in the preceding month (ibid).

According to a study among adolescent boys in Durban, South Africa, adolescents do not only model parental risk behaviour but also behaviours that involve not using alcohol. It also emerged in the study that fathers can be extremely positive role models with regard to alcohol use among mid adolescent boys, as the boys wanted to live up to their expectations and not disappoint them (Payne, 2008).

Parental support

Rayner and Montague suggested that having a warm supportive relationship with one significant adult can help to protect youths in the face of adverse events in adolescence (as cited in Ward & Snow, 2010). De Haan and Boljevac (2009) found that adolescents who have a supportive relationship with their parents were less likely to have tried alcohol. Within a supportive parent - child relationship, specific alcohol rules are of paramount importance in influencing alcohol use among adolescents (Van der Vorst, Engels, Meeus & Dekovic, 2006). Noller, Feeney and Petersen contend that a supportive environment and effective parenting can make adolescents resilient and the good connections within the family can provide a safe base for adolescents to explore a wide range of views and identities (as cited in Ward & Snow, 2010).

Choquet, Hassler, Marin, Falissard and Chau found that parental control and parental emotional support were mostly related to substance use outcomes in girls rather than boys (as cited in Luk, Farhat, Iannotti & Simons-Morton, 2010). Brook, Morojele, Pahl and Brook contend that the quality and quantity of time that parents spend with their adolescents is related to their children's use of alcohol and other drugs (as cited in Morojele, Parry & Brook, 2009). When parents or caregivers spend much time with their children, who in turn feel that their parents or caregivers care about them, substance use is less likely to occur (Brook et al., as cited in Morojele et al., 2009).

Parental monitoring/ supervision

It has been found that when parents monitor their adolescents' behaviour, problematic behaviours including substance misuse are likely to be reduced (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell & Dintcheff, 2006). Parental monitoring can be considered as the awareness of the activities of the child and communicating to the child that the parent is concerned about, and aware of their activities (Dishion & McMahon, 1998). It involves parents being aware of and supervising the various areas of the life of an adolescent, including their school, friends and behaviour at home (Dishion & McMahon, 1998).

According to Perozzi (2007) parental monitoring has been recognized as having an influence on adolescent behaviour, and is linked to the prevention of adolescent alcohol use and abuse. Parental monitoring and their disapproval of heavy drinking have both been found

to be negatively associated with heavy episodic drinking, this means that there is an association between higher levels of parental monitoring and disapproval, with lower levels of alcohol use among adolescents (Wood, Read, Mitchell & Brand, 2004; Barnes & Farrell, 1992; Barnes, Reifman, Farrell & Dintcheff, 2000). When monitoring levels are low, parents are less likely to discuss alcohol use as well as expectations regarding alcohol consumption (Engels et al., 2007; Nelson, Patience & MacDonald, 1999). It has been found that parental monitoring of adolescent behaviour is often poor and the home provides easy access to alcohol for adolescents (Payne, 2008).

Payne (2008) as well as Veal and Ross (as cited in Payne, 2008), found that parental monitoring levels are much stricter for girls, possibly due to the fact that girls are considered as more vulnerable, as well as fear of sexual promiscuity and pregnancy. A longitudinal study that examined the relationships among gender, perceived parental monitoring and adolescent alcohol use among 11- 17 year olds, females reported more perceived parental monitoring and less alcohol use than males (Webb, Bray, Getz & Adams, 2002). Perozzi (2007) conducted a study examining adolescent drinking and adolescent perceptions of parental monitoring, communication and parenting style. Females reported more perceived parental monitoring and less alcohol use than males. Contrary to the above findings Barowski, Ievers-Landis, Lovegreen and Trapl (2003); van de Vorst (2006) found that high parental monitoring was associated with less drinking in males but did not have any effect on females.

Parent-adolescent communication

Openness in communication is the ability of parents and adolescents to share their feelings, desires and needs. This enables families to respond to the adolescents' changing needs in a supportive manner (Finger man & Berman, 2000). There is concern among some parents that they lack credibility in talking to their children about the risks related to the use of alcohol (Ward, Snow, Munro, Graham & Dickson- Swift, 2006). According to DeVore and Ginsburg, parent-child communication is a protective factor of adolescent substance use (as cited in Luk et al., 2010). Engels et al. argue that parents who are able to communicate openly with their children about alcohol are more likely to influence their children's attitudes towards alcohol use (as cited in Ward & Snow, 2010). It has been pointed out in other studies that mothers usually cover a wide variety of topics when they talk to their children whereas fathers cover a

few topics, concentrating mainly on school work, rules and instrumental activities (Miller-Day, 2002; Stafford & Dainton as cited in Perozzi, 2007).

In the study of 7th – 12th grade learners by Perozzi (2007), it was hypothesized that adolescents who perceived higher levels of communication will report lower levels of alcohol consumption and binge drinking. Higher levels of perceived communication with parents were reported by females than males. Higher levels of perceived communication were linked to binge drinking in boys as compared to that of lower levels of communication. Communication was however not seen as a protective factor for binge drinking in girls (ibid). Another study conducted in America found that parental communication was not protective against adolescent drinking (Luk et al., 2010).

Peer Influence

During the adolescent period, there is a change in emotional attachment between parents and the youth (Ward & Snow, 2010). According to Steinberg, adolescents strive to become more autonomous and independent and the attachment extends beyond parents to peers (as cited in Ward & Snow, 2010). A study conducted in South Africa by Mohasoa (2010) found that adolescents depend on their peers for care and support and because of this they reported to have no choice but to give in to everything that their peers offered. Adolescents drink to please friends and to gain a sense of belonging (Leteka, 2003). There seems to be a consensus amongst adolescent drinkers that they or their peers drink to be part of the crowd, to celebrate significant occasions or to enjoy themselves (ibid).

There is evidence that for young adolescent females who are vulnerable to peer influence a greater likelihood exists for substance use (Killeya, Jones & Costanzo, 2007). According to Barber, Bolitho and Bertrand (1999) when a girl's closest friends smoke or drink, they are more than 7 times likely to drink alcohol while boys who have several close friends who smoke or drink are only 3 times more likely to drink alcohol. Donovan (2002) argues that peer pressure may be more strongly linked with drinking for girls than it is for boys. Two earlier cohort studies of middle school adolescents from South Eastern Michigan found that perceived exposure to peer drinking in the 7th grade contributed to alcohol use between 7th and 8th grade in girls but not in boys (Schulenberg et al., 1999).

Adolescents who drink heavily have been found to be more likely to socialize with other heavy drinkers, while those who don't drink tend to associate with other non-drinkers (Arata,

Stafford & Tims, 2003). Although pressure is usually imposed by peers of same age groups, isolation from own aged peers may influence adolescents to seek acceptance from older peers (Reddy, 2009). It has also been pointed out that girls who mature early are at an increased danger of being initiated into older deviant peer groups (Berk, 2007; Ge, Brody, Conger, Simon's & Murray, 2002; Ge et al., 2006). These adolescents are more likely to imitate the behaviour of the older peers due to the pressure to act older thus resulting in early initiation into sexual activities, and in experimenting with alcohol and tobacco.

2.6.3. Contextual factors

Media Influence

Adolescents are often exposed to higher or the same levels of alcohol advertising as young adults, who are the target population for advertisers (Winter, Donovan & Fielder, 2008; O'Hara & Jernigan, 2003). Although the alcohol industry claims that alcohol advertising is aimed at brand switching and not at encouraging more alcohol consumption especially among young people, there is evidence to suggest that alcohol advertising does however increase consumption of alcohol amongst the youth (Synder, 2006). Many studies have linked mass media exposure to the portrayal of alcohol use with the development of positive alcohol use expectations by children and adolescents (Austin & Knaus, 2000; Austin & Hust, 2005).

In a study conducted in the United States of America (USA), a strong association was found between film alcohol exposure and onset of drinking in 3577, 10-14 year olds who were never drinkers (Sargent, Wills, Stoolmiller, Gibson, & Gibbons, 2006). Associating role models with alcohol adverts encourages drinking behaviour since emulating this behaviour makes one to believe that they will be like the role models. A study by Collins, Ellickson, McCaffrey and Hambarsoomians (2007) reported that children who are exposed to extremely high levels of alcohol advertising were 50% more likely to drink and 36% more likely to intend drinking than children exposed to low levels of advertising. This was also supported by Saffer and Dave (2006) who concluded that reducing alcohol advertising could also reduce the number of adolescents who consume alcohol.

A systematic review of 13 longitudinal studies that have investigated the relationship between exposure to alcohol advertising and promotion and adolescent drinking (Anderson, de Bruijin, Angus, Gordon and Hastings, 2009), found evidence in twelve of the studies that

exposure to alcohol advertising predicts both onset of drinking amongst those who don't drink and increased levels of drinking among those that are already drinking. A study conducted by Pasch, Komro, Perry, Hearst, and Farbaksh in 2007 was the only study that did not find any effect on behaviour. This study examined the impact of exposure to outdoor advertising placed within 453m of schools and the researchers found an impact of exposure on intentions to drink in the next month (Anderson et al., 2009). There are also some cross sectional studies that have reported that increased exposure to alcohol adverts is correlated to the greater likelihood of current drinking (McClure, Dal Cin & Sargeant, 2006; Hanewinkel, Tanski & Sargent, 2007).

Adolescents find many aspects of alcohol advertising attractive (Waiters, Treno & Grube 2001; McCreanor, Barnes, Kaiwai, Borell & Gregory, 2008; Chen & Grube 2002). Focus group discussions conducted with 9- 15 year olds and 10-17 year olds by Waiters, Treno and Grube (2001) and by Chen, Grube, Bersamin, Waiters and Keefe (2005) found that alcohol advertisements include specific elements which adolescents find appealing, this includes animals, humour, music, bar or party settings, and technical aspects. These specific elements seemed to evoke positive affect and increase the intention to purchase the products and brands promoted by the adverts (Chen et al., 2005).

Alcohol advertising is therefore associated with fun, excitement and being "cool" by adolescents (McCreanor et al., 2008). It influences the perceptions, attitudes, and expectancies of adolescents around alcohol use which in turn play a role in their decisions to drink (Grube & Waiters, 2005). According to Austin and Knaus, (2000) interactions of adolescents with alcohol first start by liking alcohol advertisements then to the internalization of the messages about alcohol and then to the intention to drink or actual drinking behaviour.

Settings or environment

There are different settings in which adolescents consume alcohol. Amongst others, parties have been identified as one of the settings in which binge drinking takes place (Simones, Batista-Forguet, Matos & Calmeiro, 2007). Binge drinking is consuming five or more consecutive alcoholic drinks on a single occasion (Windle et al., as cited in Simones et al., 2007). It was reported that youths are likely to drink more alcohol at parties when they are with peers than at home during family occasions (Lundborg, 2007; White & Hayman, 2006). In addition, parties could be ideal settings for adolescents' alcohol consumption because

parents often do not communicate with each other about alcohol availability and the level of supervision at parties their children attend (Ward et al., 2006).

The study conducted among a sample of 435 high school adolescents in Polokwane (Madu and Matla, 2003), found that the percentage of females who drink alcohol at a party was 61.5% more than that of males, which was 27.2%. This was attributed to the fact that females use alcohol more for socialization and entertainment purposes than males (ibid).

In Australia the NSDHS data showed that private parties were the most common settings where adolescents between the ages of 14-19 had consumed alcohol, 67.8% males and 70.2% females reported drinking at private parties. This was followed by friends' homes (males 62.9% and females 63.9%) or their own homes (males 61.5% and females 61.1%). In Western societies, licensed outlets, sporting clubs, seasonal celebrations including holiday breaks, „Schoolies“ and other social events have been identified as settings where young people come in contact with alcohol (Ward & Snow, 2010).

2.7. Theoretical Framework

According to Inglis (1990) a theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts that guide the research and help to determine what to consider in the study and how. The research study made use of the Prototype/Willingness model.

Prototype/Willingness model

This model seeks to explain complex health risk behaviours in adolescents and young adult populations (Gibbons & Gerrad, 1995; Gibbons, Gerrard, Blanton & Russel, 1998).

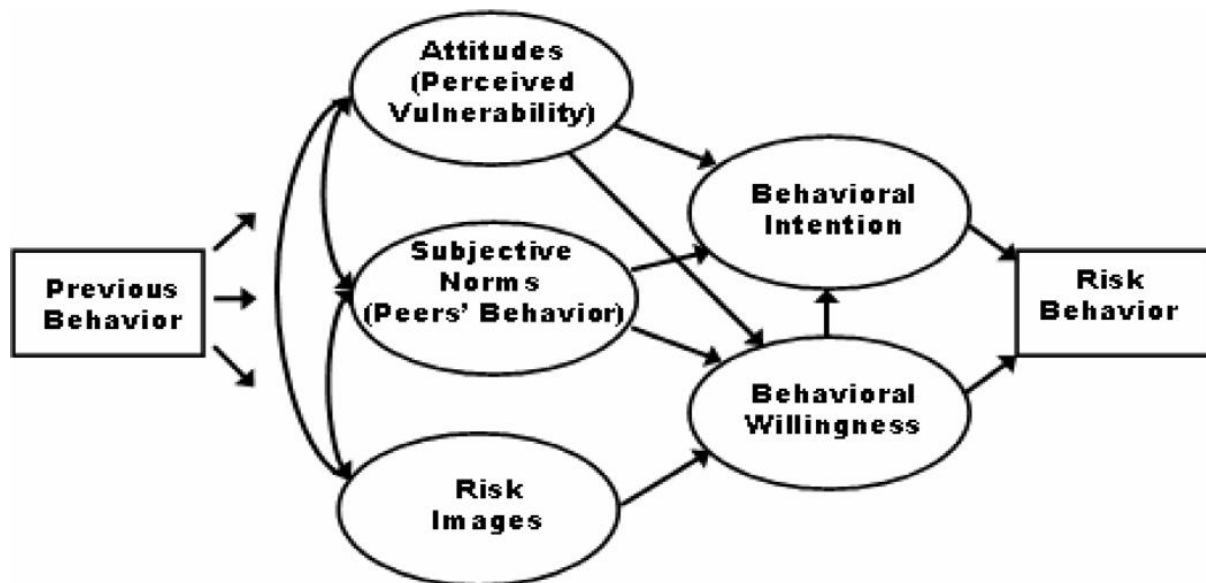


Figure 1: Prototype/Willingness Model (Gerrard, Gibbons, Houlihan, Stock, Pomery, 2008).

This model is considered a dual processing model in that it is based on the belief that two types of decision making are involved in health behaviour, these are the *reasoned path* and the *social reaction path* (Gerrard, Gibbons, Stock, Vande Lune & Cleveland, 2005; Gibbons, Gerrard & Lane, 2003). The reasoned path reflects the fact that some of the risky behaviours that adolescents engage in can be intentional (Webb et al., as cited in Gerrard et al., 2005). Even if this approach views adolescent risk behaviours as being a result of reasoning it does acknowledge that the process is not always rational. The social reaction path attempts to explain the unplanned behaviour of adolescents, with specific reference to their unintended decisions to start, continue or to stop risky health behaviour (Gerrard et al., 2008). The social reaction path is much more reactive, less deliberate but simply a social reaction to circumstances.

The Prototype/Willingness model is based on three assumptions which are as follows

- Health risk behaviour of adolescents is volitional but is not deliberate or rational. It is a reaction to circumstances and situations which trigger health risk behaviour. (Gerrard et al., 2008).
- Behaviour is a social event, and occurs in a social context.
- There are social images which are linked to health risk behaviours and these have an impact on adolescents' decisions to engage in them (Gibbons et al., 1996). These

social images are recognized by a lot of people since these behaviours happen in social events.

Based on the above assumptions the Prototype/Willingness model aims at explaining and predicting the health risk behaviours of adolescents simply as a reaction to social events. The model has two main concepts which are *prototype* and *willingness*. The individual concepts are explored below:

Prototype

Erikson; Manning & Allen contend that during adolescence people tend to focus more on their social images and of those surrounding them (as cited in Gerrard et al., 2005). This therefore makes them sensitive to the impact their behaviour will have on their image. This pre-occupation with social images shows that adolescents have clear prototypes or social images of the type of people of their age who drink alcohol, smoke or engage in specific health risk behaviours (Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Setterlund & Niedenthal, 1993). Thus, for example if a female adolescent holds a positive view about a particular prototype e.g. a typical female drinker this will make them more willing to engage in this kind of behaviour. If these images are however unfavourable to adolescents (Pomery, 2008), the awareness of these prototypes may make them realize that people may associate that negative image with them if they were to engage in that behaviour.

Gibbons, Helweg-harsen and Gerrad (1995) point out that alcohol consumption studies show that there is a relationship between social images and engaging in health risk behaviour. Prototypes act as motivators to engage in health risk behaviours. Adolescents can for example drink alcohol so that they can be seen by their peers as independent. This assumption is indicated by studies which revealed that if the adolescent drinking prototype was closer to their self image this would increase their intention to drink, this is described as prototype similarity or prototype matching (Chassin, Tetzloff & Hershey, 1985).

Willingness

The second concept of the model is willingness. Behavioural willingness is the openness to risk opportunity that is what an individual is willing to do when they are placed in a risk conducive environment (Pomery, 2008; Gerrard et al., 2005). Although both behavioural willingness and behavioural intention predict risky behaviour, there are however some

differences between them. According to the model, behavioural willingness involves less pre-contemplation of the behaviour and its outcomes but instead adolescents find themselves in situations where there may be a chance to engage in health risk behaviours such as drinking, smoking or unprotected sex (Gibbons et al., 2003; Gibbons, Gerrard, Ouellette & Burzette, 1998). Willingness is associated with positive attitudes towards the behaviour in question. It lacks reasoning and consideration, but is a social reaction to circumstances. Behavioural intention involves planning and thinking about both the behaviour and its consequences. The second difference between behavioural willingness and behavioural intention is that there is less internal attribution of responsibility with behavioural willingness compared to behavioural intentions (Gibbons et al., 2003).

The Prototype/Willingness model states that willingness to engage in a risky behaviour usually develops before intentions. Behavioural willingness is therefore a better predictor in adolescents and young adults' behaviour than intention (Pomery, Gibbons, Reis-Bergman & Gerrard, 2008).

This model depicts that some antecedents outlined in the theory of reasoned action are shared by behavioural willingness and intentions. There is an association between subjective norms or perceptions of what others are doing (i.e. descriptive rather than prescriptive or injunctive norms) with both greater willingness and greater intention (Gibbons & Gerrard, 1995). Similarly to positive attitudes toward risk behaviour these are generally linked to more intention and more willingness to engage in risk behaviour.

Previous behaviour is also included as an antecedent in the Prototype/Willingness model. The model suggests that previous behaviour is an antecedent to favourable attitudes toward the behaviour, positive subjective norms, and both intention and willingness to engage in it (Bentler & Speckart, 1981; Gerrard, Gibbons, Benthin & Hessling, 1996; Bagozzi, 1981).

Antecedents of images

At the age of 7 children's images of people who drink or smoke are fairly reliable (Andrews & Peterson as cited in Gerrard et al., 2008). Andrews et al. contend that between the ages of 10-11 these images are a projection of smoking or drinking 4 to 5 years later (as cited in Gerrard et al., 2008). Gibbons et al. (2008) found evidence that children get these images from television, movies, magazines, family, peers and friends. Evidence from other studies also points out that parents who drink are more likely to have children with more favourable

images of drinkers (Gerrard et al., 1999; Blanton et al., 1997). Furthermore alcohol use by peers and friends is also associated with more favourable images (Gerrard et al., 2008).

Previous studies have also pointed out evidence of the *contextual or environmental influence* on risk cognitions including both risk images and willingness e.g. adolescents raised in environments where drugs are common are likely to develop more favourable risk images (Gerrard et al., 2008).

Perceptions of personal vulnerability

Perceived risk is a component of the Prototype/Willingness model and it refers to one's perceptions of the extent of their vulnerability to a variety of dangers linked to the behaviour (Gerrard et al., 2008). In the Prototype/Willingness model this construct is a conditional perception of vulnerability. Studies using the model have shown that the association between personal vulnerability and willingness is actually reciprocal in adolescents who are older and that low conditional vulnerability can lead to lower perceived personal vulnerability (Gibbons et al., 2002). Beyth-Marom and Fischhoff as well as Gerrard and Luus contend that this latter relation is not credited to not having enough information- unconditional estimates of danger that are analytic cognitions are often comparable to actual risk rates (as cited in Gerrard et al., 2008). Instead a negative relation reflects two related characteristics of high willingness in adolescents. The first characteristic is optimistic bias. According to Weinstein as cited in Gerrard et al. (2008) optimistic bias is the adolescents' belief that they can "get away" with certain risky activities more so than others.

Secondly it is argued that adolescents tend to process risk information in a shallow way, focusing more on what they are likely to gain than the losses and also not considering long term risks (Lowenstein et al., 2001). Gerrard et al. (2008) contends that in some cases adolescents completely avoid thinking about the danger. The more willing an adolescent to engage in risk behaviour, the less likely s/he is to think about the effects of that behaviour.

2.8. Chapter summary

The chapter has shown evidence that alcohol consumption among adolescents is a problem in South Africa and worldwide. There is also evidence that consumption levels among women especially among female adolescents are rising. The reasons for these changes are however complex. Various researchers have suggested reasons for factors contributing to adolescents'

alcohol use, which include self-esteem, stress, parental factors and media amongst others. Females are at higher risk than males regarding the negative effects of alcohol use. The Prototype/Willingness model by Gibbons and Gerrard (1995) seeks to explain adolescent health risk behaviours, addressing the reasoned and less reasoned aspects of decision making.

The next chapter explores the research methodology and design used for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed in conducting the study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2010) research methodology focuses on the research process and the sort of tools and procedures to be used. Research design “is a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research” (Babbie & Mouton, 2010, p.74) and the kind of results a researcher aims to get (ibid). The chapter also includes discussions about research site, sampling, data collection methods, ethical considerations and reflexivity and researchers’ role. Justifications for the choice of methods and limitations are also covered in this chapter.

3.2. Aims and Objectives of the study

The study aims to provide a qualitative understanding of alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners in a town in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The specific objectives were as follows,

- To explore factors contributing to female adolescents alcohol use and abuse.
- To understand the role played by peers, family and environmental factors in female adolescents’ alcohol use and abuse.
- To explore the role played by media in influencing female adolescents’ use and abuse of alcohol.
- To understand female adolescents’ perceptions of the risks associated with alcohol use and abuse.

3.3. Research site

The female learners who participated in the study are from a high school in a town in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. This town is located in the Western Cape Wine lands, about 75 km north-east from Cape Town. The town is situated around wine farms and there is also a flourishing brandy industry and more than 30 local wineries. The Western

Cape Province was particularly chosen for this research because there is evidence of alcohol misuse among women in this province. Evidence of this is seen by the high rates of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome in this particular town which is reported as being one of the highest in the world (Harker et al., 2008). There is however no conclusive evidence to suggest that the selected school has alcohol related problems but the overall provincial picture is that most female learners in the Western Cape are using alcohol (Reddy et al., 2010). Most previous studies did not single out any school or schools adversely affected by alcohol abuse probably due to reasons of anonymity and confidentiality.

3.4. Research design

According to Cresswell (2009), the selection of a research design is based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed, the personal experiences of the researcher and audiences for the study. Babbie and Mouton (2010, p.75), highlight the following aspects of research designs:

- Research designs focus on the end product in terms of the kind of study being planned.
- The point of departure is the research problem or question.
- Focuses on the logic of the research i.e. the type of evidence that is required to adequately address the research question.

The study is embedded in the interpretive paradigm. A paradigm is defined as a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The research paradigm influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted (ibid). Interpretivism is an approach which emphasises the subjective meaning of social action and therefore gives priority in seeing the world through the eyes of the participants (Bryman, 1988). Cressell (2003, p.38) contends that the researcher using the interpretive approach relies on the views of the participants“ concerning the situation being studied.

The study employed the qualitative methodological approach. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 17) define qualitative research as any kind of research whose findings are not produced quantitatively or through statistical procedures.

A qualitative approach was chosen because the few studies that have specifically focused on female adolescent alcohol use, were quantitative in nature and therefore primarily highlight the increasing rates of heavy episodic drinking by younger women. Becker (1986) contends that the focus on a qualitative research approach is on an insider perspective rather than an outsider perspective, this means that the qualitative research approach did not only give the researcher an insider perspective but also gave a rich, detailed description of female learners' use of alcohol. Most previous studies focused on counting and quantifying alcohol use prevalence. The researcher also felt that the aim and objectives of the study could not have been met through quantitative measures or statistical approaches which are reductionist in nature, while a qualitative approach is exploratory and descriptive in nature and likely to yield richer data (Mouton & Marais, 1990). Qualitative methods focus on participants' meanings and the research process focused on learning about the meanings that female learners held about alcohol use and abuse.

3.4.1. Limitations of qualitative research

According to Yin (2002) the limitations of qualitative research are rooted in its nature. The approach seeks to answer questions about complicated phenomenon, mostly by describing, exploring with consideration of the feelings and thoughts of the participants. The qualitative researchers therefore rely on a small sample, thus making the findings not generalisable to a broader population. Although generalisability is considered a limitation of qualitative research by some scholars, Creswell, (2009, p.193) points out that "the value of qualitative research lies in the particular description and themes developed in a context of a specific site". The researcher presented detailed descriptions of data so as to allow judgements about generalisability to be made by the reader (Guba and Lincoln, as cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2010).

The discussion below will give attention to the two types of qualitative interviews used for the data collection of this study.

3.5. Interviewing as a qualitative data collection method

Qualitative interviews with reference to focus groups and semi-structured one-on-one interviews were chosen as the research methods for this study. Qualitative interviewing grounded within the interpretivist paradigm, views interviewing as a means to an end. This

approach tries to find out how people really feel about or experience particular phenomena and therefore likely create an environment of openness and trust allowing the interviewee to express him/herself authentically. Qualitative interviewing attempts to elicit the meanings of key themes in the life world of the participants to enable an authentic description thereof (Kvale, 1996). According to Blanche, Durheim and Painter (2006), qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to conduct an interview in a more natural interactive form. This interpretive approach to research gives the researcher the chance to know people intimately and understand how they think and feel. The aim of qualitative interviewing is to create a conversation which explores a research problem with a research participant rather than simply putting respondents' answers into categories or testing knowledge (Burton, 2000). Burgess, calls it "a conversation with a purpose" (as cited in Burton, 2000). Putting this into consideration, qualitative interviewing with specific reference to focus groups and semi structured one-on-one interviews were seen as best methodological approach for this study because this descriptive quality of qualitative interviews would help the female learners to describe as precisely as possible how they feel and experience alcohol use and abuse in their own world.

The researcher chose to use qualitative interviews to explore factors contributing to female adolescents alcohol use and abuse in the Western Cape with consideration of the role of media and the female learners' understanding of the role played by peers, family, broader environment in which they live as well as their perceptions of the risks. This approach allowed the participants to speak for themselves.

3.6. Instruments for data collection

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions were used for data collection. The researcher was guided by a set of predetermined questions in a semi-structured interview schedule. The use of interview schedules is recommended by Bell (1997) who argues that in as much as participants should be allowed to freely talk about issues, there is a need to have some structure in interviews so as to ensure that all relevant topics are covered and also to reduce problems of bias. The interview questions were developed by the researcher based on an extensive review of the literature prior to the interview and experience of her supervisor and another experienced researcher. The key questions were based on the

research questions. The same interview schedule was used for the semi structured one-on-one interviews and the focus group discussions (see Appendix 4).

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews

According to Burton (2000) one-on-one interviews give the researcher the opportunity to explore an individual's opinion in depth thus giving the researcher rich detailed answers. Semi-structured interviews further allow the researcher to gain an in-depth picture of the views, beliefs and perceptions of the participants about a particular topic (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2002). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews made them suitable for this particular study as they allowed the researcher to follow up on interesting points that were raised by respondents during the interviews (De Vos et al., 2002). The respondents were also able to give a fuller picture of alcohol use and abuse among female learners.

Interviewing has its limitations. One such limitation is that responses from participants might be misconstrued or at times untruthful (De Vos et al., 2002). Borg (1981) also warns that respondents might end up giving answers that they feel will make the researcher happy rather than giving their honest opinion. The researcher therefore encouraged the participants to be truthful and discouraged them from giving socially desired answers.

Focus group discussions

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005) this group interaction among participants triggers thoughts and ideas that may not have emerged during individual interviews. The interaction in focus group discussions gives participants the chance to extend and elaborate further on ideas and responses from group members. The focus group technique was chosen for this particular study because it is useful in exploring the knowledge and experiences of people and also because of its interactive nature.

Focus group discussions are a valuable data collection method to researchers when exploring aspects where little is known before hand, or to gain specific insight into existing beliefs, behaviours and attitude (Byers, 1991; De Vos et al., 2002). Group discussions do not only examine what people think, but also how they think and why they think in a particular way (Kitzinger, 1994). Another element of focus groups that makes them valuable is the fact that they encourage a great variety of communication from participants. Kitzinger (1994) argues that researchers can tap into the many different ways that people use to communicate on a

daily basis i.e. jokes, anecdotes and arguments. Through this process much can be learned since not all knowledge and attitudes are embodied in reasoned responses to direct questions. According to Kruger and Casey (1994) focus group discussions present a more natural environment than other forms of interviewing due to the natural, mutual interaction and influence of the group members.

Similarly to in-depth interviews, focus group discussions were also seen to be suitable for this study because they help to tap into participant attitudes, perceptions, and feelings (Kruger & Casey, 1994). Although focus groups have the strength of yielding detailed information on the topic of interest, the researcher was also aware that this interviewing method has its limitations. One limitation of the focussed group discussion lies with what De Vos et al. (2002: p. 319) calls “social posturing or group think that is the desire for participants to be polite and fit within the norm, or forced compliance”. This means that the behaviour of individuals can be subjected to group influence thus distorting the data. Crowne and Marlow also state that social conformity or social desirability, a desire to provide socially acceptable answers in order to conform to group norms, is greater in focus group discussions than in other methods (as cited in Byers 1991).

3.7. Description of school population and participants

Table 1 gives a description of the school population using the variables gender, grade and home language. There are 1214 learners in the school. The school is situated at the boarder of Afrikaans speaking community and a Xhosa speaking community and learners come from either of these two communities. The school is a no fee school and most learners come from poor backgrounds where 60% of parents depend on social grant payments from the state and work in the neighbouring farms and factories.

Table 1: Description of school population in terms of demographic variables.

Demographic variable	N	Percentage
Total= 1214		
<hr/>		
Gender		
Male	519	42.8
Female	695	57.2
Grade		
8	240	19.8
9	283	23.3
10	282	23.2
11	237	19.5
12	172	14.2
Home language		
Afrikaans	971	80
Xhosa	243	20
<hr/>		

Table 2 gives a description of participants in terms of demographic variables Age, Race and Home Language. There were 25 learners who participated in the study.

Table 2: Description of study participants in terms of demographic variables.

Demographic variable	N	Percentage
Total= 25		
<hr/>		
Age		
14	2	8.0
15	20	80
16	3	12.0
Race		
Black/African	20	80
Coloured	5	20
Home Language		
Xhosa	20	80
Afrikaans	5	20
<hr/>		

The above table shows the demographic variables of participants. As mentioned previously all participants were Grade 9 females. Xhosa speaking learners are however overrepresented and this is because they willingly volunteered to be part of the study.

3.8. Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to recruit female learners from Grade 9 as learners in this grade are normally between the ages of 14 to 16 years old – an age group viewed critical to interview as the literature suggests that adolescents at this stage are particularly at risk of engaging in risk behaviours (Reddy et al., 2010). Twenty five female learners were recruited to participate in the study, five for the individual interviews and 20 learners for the two focus group discussions as each group comprised ten Grade 9 female learners. The size of the focus group was guided by the suggestions of Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) and De Vos et al. (2002) that an ideal size of a focus group is six to ten people. This group size allows everyone to participate to elicit a range of responses (De Vos et al., 2002). According to Babbie and Mouton (2010) choosing enough participants ensures that the focus group discussion remain lively even if some members choose to remain silent while choosing too few members might increase the likelihood that individual dynamics outweigh group dynamics.

3.9. Data collection procedures

Whilst awaiting ethical clearance from the university, the researcher first sought permission to conduct the study from the principal of the school. The researcher was assisted by a local member of the community who is conversant with the local language and culture. This assisted in negotiating entry into the school. During the first meeting the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the principal who then requested a formal letter. A formal letter was written to the school principal (see Appendix 1) and the researcher explained to the principal that the data collection dates could only be set after getting ethical approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee.

Upon obtaining ethical approval from the University (see Appendix 2) the researcher had a meeting with the principal to set up the dates for the data collection. On that day the researcher was introduced to some of the academic staff. The principal also introduced the researcher to two Grade 9 classes at the school. This was done to familiarise the researcher with the participants and to provide the researcher with an opportunity to give a brief background of the study to the learners in an attempt to motivate for future participation. During this meeting the researcher asked for those who wanted to participate in the study to volunteer and explained the aims and objectives of the study as well as ethical procedures to be followed.

Since the research was conducted in the school premises, the school principal gave consent on behalf of the parents for learners to participate in the study in accordance with guidelines of the School Governing Body. The school principal then organised the times and venue for the researcher.

After a week the researcher visited the school for data collection. Before the focus group discussions and individual interviews, the aim and objectives of the study were explained again, and the learners were assured of the confidential and anonymous nature of their information, the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Afterwards they were also asked to sign the informed consent forms before the interviews began.

Semi-structured one-on-one interviewing process

The interviews were conducted personally by the researcher. One-on-one interviews were conducted with 5 female learners at the high school, in one of the offices allocated by the principal. The duration of each interview was approximately 30-45 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English but at some point, participants chose to respond in Xhosa. An interpreter was present to assist the researcher in this regard. Translations were done during the interviews and also when researcher was transcribing.

As highlighted earlier, the researcher was guided by an interview schedule during data collection. Probes and open ended questions were used so as to allow the participants to express themselves freely and to get answers in more depth without biasing later answers (De Vos et al., 2002; Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

The research participants gave consent for all interviews to be audio recorded. Using a recorder gave the researcher a much fuller record and also allowed the researcher to interact with the participants and concentrate on the proceedings of the interview (De Vos et al., 2002; Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). The use of a recorder also gave participants a sense that their responses or contributions in the research are valued (Arskey & Knight, 1999). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and De Vos et al. (2002) however warn that participants may be intimidated by the use of recorders and this might have a negative impact on their responses. Taking heed of this warning, the researcher gave each participant the choices of being recorded and also placed the recorder unnoticeable so as not to unnerve the participant as suggested by De Vos et al., (2002). All participants indicated that they had no problem with being recorded.

Focus group discussion process

The focus group discussions were guided by the semi-structured interview schedule. Careful planning pertaining to participants, questions which were to be asked as well the setting was done so as to conduct effective group discussions as suggested by De Vos et al., (2002). The discussions took place at the school library provided by the school principal. This setting was comfortable and none threatening and was not occupied to ensure privacy of the discussion. The seating was arranged in a way that ensured easy eye contact between the researcher and the participants. The first few minutes consisted of introductions and brief background of the study, how the discussions was going to unfold, as well as signing of the consent forms to make sure the learners were participating voluntarily (see Appendix 3). De Vos et al. (2002) argues that having a small talk with the participants before the group discussion, helps to create a warm and friendly environment and also makes the participants feel relaxed. The duration of the focus group discussions was approximately 60-90 minutes. The researcher who had previous training in communication and group facilitation skills, facilitated the group discussions. Focus group discussions were conducted in English but at some point the participants used Xhosa. As mentioned above, an interpreter was present to assist the researcher in this regard. All focus group discussions were audio recorded with the consent of the participants.

Data collection was done for three consecutive days and the researcher thanked the participants for being part of the study and promised to give the principal the final report so that the participants could read it.

3.10. Data analysis

The method of analysis that was used for the study was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Boyatzis (1998) argues that thematic analysis does not only minimally organise and describe the data set in rich detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79) but it also gives an interpretation of the different aspects of the research topic. Thematic analysis aims to “produce a detailed and systematic recording of themes and issues addressed in interviews in order to link the themes and interviews together under a reasonably exhaustive category system” (Burnard, 1991, p. 461). The researcher used the data driven inductive approach as well as the theory to identify the themes or patterns within the data. Patton states that an

inductive approach ensures that there is a strong association between the themes and the data (as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 81) thematic analysis is amongst others a method that gives a “reflection of reality which means that it reports experiences, meanings and reality” of the participants. The researcher chose thematic analysis as an analysis method for the study because of its flexibility and because it is a useful research tool able to provide a rich and detailed account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is also relatively easy to use as it does not require exact theoretical and technical knowledge. The method can also encapsulate key aspects of a large data set and able to give a thick description of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The above mentioned strengths of thematic analysis made it suitable for this particular study.

The researcher used a 6 step by step guide given by Braun and Clarke (2006) to do the thematic analysis.

Step 1: Familiarising with the data

The researcher started familiarising herself with the data by transcribing the verbal data into written form. Bird (2005, p. 227) argues that this is the key phase of data analysis within interpretive qualitative methodology. This interpretive act is further described by Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) as an activity where meaning is created from the verbal data rather than a mechanical act where spoken words are put on paper. During the transcription the researcher made sure that the transcript retained all the information needed and remained true and original. In cases where Xhosa was used, translations to English were done by a person whose first language is Xhosa.

Step 2: Generating of the initial codes

As the analysis progressed the researcher produced initial codes from the data. Coding refers to “the most basic segment, or element, of raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). Coding was performed manually and was theoretically and data driven.

Step 3: Searching for themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the third phase involves the organizing of the various codes into potential themes as well as examining carefully all the relevant data extracts relevant to the identified themes.

Step 4: Reviewing of themes

This stage involves the reviewing and refining of the themes. In the first instance, the themes were scrutinised to ensure that they fitted the data through a process of careful reading and reviewing of the collated extracts pertaining to each theme and were then assessed to see whether they formed a pattern. The second level involved an assessment of the validity of individual themes and their link to the data set. The additional data identified within themes missed previously is coded and thus integrated at this stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

During this step the themes that were to be used for analysis were defined and further refined. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that this step involves the identification of the essence of each theme and the particular aspect of the data that each theme captures.

Step 6: Producing the report

Once the full set of identified themes and sub-themes had been established, the final analysis and write up of the study commenced. The presentation of the data is done to demonstrate the value and rigour of the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data extracts are used to demonstrate the authenticity the identified themes.

Limitations of thematic analysis

Like all other methods, thematic analysis also has its limitations. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is not considered praiseworthy as an analytic method due to the fact that it is poorly demarcated, yet popular. The second limitation of thematic analysis lies with its flexibility. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the flexibility of thematic analysis allows for a wide range of analytic options, this means that a variety of things can be said about the data. This can make it difficult for a researcher to develop specific guidelines for “higher –phase analysis” and for the researcher to decide what aspects of data to focus on (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 28). Another limitation of thematic analysis is that if it is not used

within an existing theoretical framework, it has limited interpretative power. The theoretical framework thus anchors the analytic claims that are made which otherwise would have seemed like mere description (ibid).

3.11. Measures taken to ensure trustworthiness

The key value of qualitative research rests in its trustworthiness or authenticity of its findings or decisions (Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Trustworthiness is about how a researcher can persuade himself or herself as well as his or her readers that the findings of the study are worth paying attention to (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Steps to ensure the validity, reliability and transferability of the findings were undertaken to ensure neutrality of the research findings.

Validity

The indispensable nature of the flexibility and open endedness of qualitative research methods allows for validity issues to be addressed, (Willig, 2008). Qualitative validity determines the accuracy of the research findings from the researchers', participants and readers' point of view (Creswell & Miller, as cited in Creswell, 2009).

The researcher incorporated the following validity strategies outlined by Creswell (2009) into the research. Findings of the study were conveyed using rich "thick descriptions". Providing a detailed description of the setting or providing many perspectives about a theme makes the results more realistic and richer thus adding to the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2009). To increase the accuracy of the study the researcher also used peer debriefing. A peer who had a general understanding of the nature of the study was given a chance to review and ask questions about the study. Creswell (2009, p. 192) states that this strategy which involves an interpretation beyond the researcher and invested in another person adds validity to an account. An open and honest narrative to clarify the researchers' bias towards the study is also highlighted in the report.

Reliability

According to Gibbs (as cited in Creswell, 2009) qualitative reliability indicates the consistency of the research approach across various researchers and various projects. Reliability is considered an important aspect in quantitative data collection, whereas qualitative researchers are less concerned about it (Willig, 2008). To ensure reliability of the

study the researcher thoroughly checked the transcripts so as to make sure that no mistakes were made during transcription (Gibbs as cited in Creswell, 2009). A detailed account of the data collection and analysis strategies was also done by the researcher so as to provide the readers a precise and unambiguous picture of the methods used in the study. Yin, points out that there is a need for researchers using the qualitative approach to write down the procedures of their case studies and to document as many of the steps of the procedures as possible (as cited in Creswell, 2009).

Transferability

According to Babbie and Mouton (2010, p. 277), transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied or generalized in other contexts or with other respondents. Qualitative researchers are however not interested in statistical generalizing (Babbie and Mouton, 2010) but are interested in gaining a deeper and better understanding of specific phenomena. Guba and Lincoln state that transferability in qualitative research rests on similarities between sending and receiving contexts, the researcher gives detailed descriptions of data so as to allow judgements about transferability to be made by the reader (as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

3.12. Ethical Considerations

According to Willig (2008) ethical issues or concerns in qualitative research come into play from the beginning of the research, throughout interaction with the participants and continue to be important till the findings are disseminated. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005, p. 263) contend that there are many ethical issues in qualitative research because “the human interaction in qualitative inquiries affects researchers and participants, and the knowledge produced through qualitative research affects our understanding of human condition”. To ensure that the research was ethically sound, the research proposal including instruments to be used, were reviewed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee where the researcher is studying (Appendix 2).

To gain informed consent from the participants, the researcher informed the participants about the nature of the study and allowed them to give consent before the data collection (Appendix 3). Considering the age of the participants and nature of study the school principal gave consent on behalf of the parents since the research was conducted on school premises during school hours and was done in accordance to the School Governing Body’s guidelines

Participants were also informed about their right to withdraw from the study or to withdraw any information that they would have given the researcher if they wished to do so. The researcher maintained complete confidentiality with regard to the data that was collected from the participants by ensuring the participants that only the researcher and her supervisor were going to have access to the raw data. Confidentiality was also put into cognisance by making sure that the names of the participants would not appear in the final report. Focus group discussions and individual interviews were also conducted in private rooms away so as to avoid disruptions and ensure privacy and group informed consent was negotiated.

3.13. Issues of reflexivity and Researchers' Role

Qualitative research is an interpretative inquiry in which researchers are involved “in a sustained and intensive experience with participants”, (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). It is therefore of paramount importance for researchers to identify reflectively their biases, values, and personal background that may play a role in their interpretations of the study findings (Creswell, 2009). Reflexivity entails self reflection of the researchers’ own ideas, perspectives and beliefs. In my case it was clear that I had my own views about the use and abuse of alcohol among female learners. Firstly my conviction was that the abuse of alcohol by female learners was a result of irresponsibility and lack of good upbringing. Secondly, coming from a social work background, I had the belief that it was wrong for learners to use or abuse alcohol. However this belief did not change throughout the whole research process but as a researcher, I set aside the prejudgements and allowed the research process to unfold. Conducting this study was such a great experience for me. I gained valuable skills which will assist me in my health promotion career. The research process helped me to gain insight and knowledge on issues pertaining to female adolescent health. The knowledge gained will help me in designing interventions specifically for female learners.

3.14. Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the aim of the research, research paradigm, research design, data collection methods, sampling and ethical considerations. Measures taken to ensure trustworthiness and reflexivity and the role of researcher are also discussed. The chapter also addressed the advantages and limitations of using the chosen methodology and how some of these limitations were reduced.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the major findings of the study which became apparent from the focus group discussions and individual interviews. The specific objectives of the study were to explore factors contributing to female adolescents' alcohol use and abuse, their knowledge regarding risks associated with alcohol use and abuse and to understand the contextual and environmental factors that render young people vulnerable to engage in drinking behaviours. The findings are categorized into overarching themes and subthemes derived from the theory used in the study as well as from the data. To support the themes and to provide detail as well as authenticity, extracts from the interviews were used. Literature has been integrated into the findings to aid in the discussion and interpretation thereof. The different views about alcohol use and abuse among female learners will be examined in terms of perceptions regarding the increased use of alcohol among female learners, perceptions regarding the use of alcohol by peers, negative views about peer alcohol use, positive views about alcohol use, factors influencing alcohol use and abuse among female adolescents, legislation, health and social consequences of alcohol use, perceptions of personal risk as well as decision making involved in female adolescent alcohol use.

4.2. Perceptions on the increase of alcohol use and abuse among females

Findings from the study support the view that many adolescent females are using alcohol nowadays. Participants substantiated this view by pointing out evidence which shows the rise of levels of alcohol consumption among female adolescents. The following was mentioned,

“I think it is completely true (adolescent alcohol use) considering the high rate of alcohol use and abuse among female adolescents and considering the high rates of uuhm ... pregnancies, teenage pregnancy among adolescents in the community” IIP4.

“It's true many adolescent females are using alcohol. You can see like many films have got female teenagers using alcohol and even media like radio and TV they talk about alcohol and adolescents” IIP3.

The increased levels and more frequent use of alcohol among women of younger age groups have been highlighted by various authors (Bergman & Kallmen, 2003; Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS), 2007; Phillips, 2008; Ghuman et al., 2012). This is also reflected in the consequences following use and abuse of alcohol among youth.

The participants argued that the increased levels and frequent use of alcohol among females are because they are “now moving away” from their expected societal roles and adopting drinking behaviours which were historically typical of male behaviour. One participant said:

“Long back drinking alcohol was not for girls, girls were expected to stick to female roles for example doing house work but now they spend much time drinking alcohol which has always been seen as a male thing”. FGDIP3

These findings are consistent with other studies which found that the consumption of alcohol that has traditionally been associated with males is now part of the behaviour for many young females (Davey, 1997). It has also been noted in literature that as women move away from traditional expectations associated with femininity, they have adopted roles and behaviours that have historically been associated with males, like drinking (Davey, 1997).

Despite gender role changes and changes in female adolescents drinking patterns, it seems that alcohol use and abuse among female learners is still viewed by society in terms of traditional gender role attitudes which define drinking as unacceptable behaviour for women. It was pointed out by participants that society views alcohol use among female learners as inappropriate because of their gender, age and vulnerability when drunk and because they are not fully aware of the risks associated with drinking. Participants mentioned the following,

“Actually hum ... they think it is very wrong for them to drink because they are still young and don’t know what alcohol can do to them”. IIP2

“Some people in the community are against it..... Because they are afraid of what will happen to the learner when they are drunk, a lot can happen to them”. FGDIP5

Participants further highlighted the various negative stereotypes attached to females who use alcohol. During the discussions it emerged that those female learners who use and abuse alcohol are perceived in their communities as “loose” and as “having no morals”. Studies have pointed out that social attitudes still continue to be more permissive about drinking in males and many negative stereotypes about women’s drinking still continue (Ricciardell,

Connor, Williams & Young, 2001). This could be because drinking has always been embedded in a gendered belief system where most societies view drinking as a privilege for males (Bullers, 2012). In the work of Payne (2008) it was pointed out that society is more accepting of alcohol use by boys rather than girls since they view it as a rite of passage for boys to engage in. However girls are expected to curtail risk behaviours which are acceptable and idealized for boys like drinking and substance use (ibid).

“Usually they are said to be loose and they don’t have morals..... In the African culture women are not supposed to drink and if you drink you will be considered as someone who aaaa .. who have I don’t know how to explain it who has loose morals as in you are not like following what the society sees as right”. IIP4

“It kind of gives them a bad name and reputation..... You see, uuhm, females are supposed to be role models or stuff like that - but they drink and they don’t make a secret of it they don’t do it in private they do it publicly”. IIP5

One participant however pointed out that even though alcohol use among female learners is not accepted in their community, female learners still continue to drink and secretly hiding it from their parents. Similarly a study by Sheehan and Young, (2001) found that young women tend to hide their drinking from outsiders including adults and other youths because of fear of being judged.

“It is not accepted but most female high school learners” drink behind closed doors some parents are not aware”. FGI2P9.

The more females use alcohol, the more it is socially accepted in society. One participant pointed out that some community members are however not against the use of alcohol by female learners as there are many females in their community who drink.

“... well some are not, I mean most people even females in our community drink, so who would give a fuss even if a female learner drinks alcohol”. FGDIP4

Therefore, it appears that the increasing levels of alcohol use among female adolescents are evident to their peers and that some societies still view alcohol consumption by young women as inappropriate.

4.3. Perceptions regarding the use of alcohol by peers

Participants had clear cognitive prototypes of other female learners who use alcohol. These findings are in line with one of the main assumptions of the Prototype/Willingness model (Gerrard et al. 2008) that children and adolescents have clear cognitive social images or prototypes of the type of person their age who engages in specific risk behaviour. Furthermore the findings from the study revealed that female learners hold both negative and positive views about peers who drink.

Negative views about peer alcohol use

It was however noted in this study that more negative than neutral images of peers who drink were expressed. In the study of Spijkerman, van den Eijnden, Vitale and Engels, (2004) it was found that adolescents were unsure and rather negative about images of peers who smoke or drink.

*“I will use an example of someone from my class uuhm, she is tall, light, she comes from a female headed family, she doesn’t know her dad uuhm she doesn’t do well in her school work, ja **she is not that intelligent** ja that is I can say...Oh! My God **she is carefree**, she doesn’t care or see the after (pause) the risks of drinking alcohol or whatever”. IIP4*

*Ok, they are people who are jo, whose parents do not worry about them, they are people who **don’t listen to their parents** and when their parents tell them not to do bad things they tell their parents that they will do it”. IIP2*

*“They **do not concentrate on their school work** especially on Fridays and Mondays (other participant laughs) I am serious guys, it is like on Fridays they will be already planning where and who they will be drinking with and on Mondays its hangover”. FGDIP6*

*“Some they say it just **does not seem right** for a female to drink alcohol and if you drink alcohol they say you **lose respect and dignity**”. FGDIP2*

*“People in the community think that female learners who drink have **no morals and they are loose** and uuhm they don’t have a future..... By being loose like they are easily taken advantage of or they are easily tempted by other people to take alcohol - like people who are legally allowed to take alcohol so you find maybe 30 year old men tempting them to take alcohol so that they can sleep with them and in turn they get money from the men, ja”. IIP3*

Studies have also shown that fairly negative risk images may play an inhibitory rather than a facilitating role in adolescent risk behaviour (Gibbons, Gerrard, Blanton, & Russel, 1998; Gibbons et al., 2003).

It is however intriguing that despite the fact that peers who use alcohol are perceived in a negative light, it is exactly the same behaviour that female adolescents are increasingly engaging in. Various positive images about using alcohol were also talked about.

Positive views about alcohol use

Perceiving alcohol use as fun

Findings from the study showed that female learners also perceive alcohol use and abuse as fun. These findings are similar to those of other researchers who found that learners viewed alcohol use and abuse as a way to have fun (Ghuman et al., 2012; Leteka, 2003). Payne (2008) found that adolescent boys use alcohol to arise out of boredom and as entertainment and to have fun.

“They think it is fun because some of them drink so they think it is a good thing...”. IIP2

“... they say it is nice and fun”. IIP1

“Me and my friends drink so we definitely think it is cool..... yep! we just do it for fun”. FGDIP4

The above quote also suggests that alcohol use is perceived as having the ability to act as a “social lubricant” which facilitates interaction among peers and makes them have fun when they are together. This concurs with the findings of Seamon and Ikegwonu (2010) who reported that drinking and socialising with peers go hand in hand as it allows young people to relax and ease their socialisation. The participants also reported that peers who are drunk seem to be funnier and that this also facilitates socialising.

“They uuhm... pause.... my friends that drink they are not weird or anything like that when they drink they are kind of funny and actually they the same like when they are sober so I don’t think there is any difference about them the only difference is that they are drunk and they are a bit more funnier and they always talk at so ja they are funny..... They like to talk about simple things, things that do not make sense like imagine this and imagine that it is like they are day dreaming”. IIP5

Perceiving alcohol use as “cool”

There was evidence from the data that alcohol use and abuse is perceived as “cool”. Participants in the study reported that their peers find it “cool” to drink alcohol. Similarly Brown et al. (2007) found that early adolescents who report experimenting with alcohol primarily do so because “they think it will make them cool”.

“...they think it is cool and glamorous to drink”. FGDP6

The use of alcohol in this study corresponds to the other findings where alcohol use was synonymous to being nonchalant, glamorous and exciting (Edmonds & Wilcocks, 2000).

*Uuhm a typical female who uses alcohol ok, I, she will be **confident**, and uuhm talks too much and uuhm the way she dresses, she dresses like what they call an uptight girl... Uptight girl or up class girl ok, when it comes to teenagers an uptight girl is someone who wears uuhm uuhm labels or expensive clothing”. IIP3*

It has been suggested that perceptions of alcohol use as “glamorous” is promoted by and reinforced through alcohol advertising which links alcohol to humour, music, physical attractiveness and sex appeal (Babor et al., 2003; Novak, 2004).

Perceiving alcohol use as symbolic of adult status and being “Western”

One participant mentioned that female learners think alcohol use is part of growing up or symbolic to an adult status. Similarly Este and Heinemann (as cited in Leteka, 2003) suggested that alcohol use among adolescents is viewed as an integral part of growing up, and a rite of passage to adulthood, or an introduction to adult status and the termination of adolescent dependency. Kloep, Hendry and Ingebrigsten (2001) found that young people wish to be accepted as adults and so they try to imitate adults in different ways, including drinking.

It also emerged from the discussion that female adolescents see alcohol use as being modern, or more “Western” and because of the aspirations to be seen as being more progressive or Western, they think it is acceptable to use alcohol as portrayed in the media. It can therefore be suggested that the increasingly persuasive appeal of “modernity” and “Westernisation” may be partly responsible for the increase in alcohol use among female adolescents. This has

also been pointed out in previous studies that an increase in alcohol consumption is associated with greater modernisation and Westernization (Onya, 2005). Literature suggests that increasing urbanization and acculturation of young African women facilitate the emulation of Western behaviours accepting of drinking among women and men, even in public places (Setlalentoa et al., 2010).

“Some think it’s cool and it’s part of growing up and part of changes in culture some think it is cool in the sense that uuhm, because the media shows it as something that is OK so people are moving with times, culture is more Westernised now, so drinking alcohol is OK in the way it is portrayed in the Western countries through media - then it is fine to drink”. IIP3

Perceiving alcohol use as a coping mechanism

Participants in this study were of the view that female learners use alcohol as a way to deal with stress. Similarly, a study by Mohan (2008) found that adolescents perceived alcohol consumption as a means of relieving stress.

“Some female learners drink because they have stress, they can be having problems at home or school and because they have no one to talk to about their problems they drink alcohol...”
FGDIP9

“Stress, they think alcohol relieves stress”. IIP3

“They claim they have stress and they don’t want to go into detail or talk about the stress, they think drinking alcohol is the solution....” IIP1

It was evident from the data that female adolescents drink to cope with problems like poverty in the family, abuse at home and other life stressors e.g. death of parents. Findings from the data pointed out that the socio economic status of the family may influence a female learner to use alcohol. The relationship between socio economic status and alcohol related problems has also been highlighted by Khan, Kaplowitz, Goodman & Emans, (2002). Participants reported that female adolescents who do not get financial support at home, may end up drinking with older partners with whom they also engage in risky sexual behaviours in exchange for money.

“Some girls who are from poor families go to places where alcohol is sold to look for men who will give them money, so they end up drinking alcohol and these men sleep with them and give them money”. FGD1P3

“Shortage of money - maybe they are poor at home and not having a source of income, so maybe they meet a guy, an older man who is drinking.... and they associate with that person because he is drinking and they can also get some money”. IIP3

One participant also mentioned that female learners who do not have financial support drink alcohol because they think drinking alcohol is the solution to their problems. Literature indicates that many people live in poverty or in circumstances that bring about emotional pain and therefore drink alcohol to “dull” the pains of poverty or other difficult life circumstances (Freeman & Parry, 2006).

“Uuhm, if people (female learners) do not have proper sources of support in terms of income and when they are stressed they might think maybe alcohol is the only solution”.

It also emerged from the data that verbal, physical, sexual or emotional abuse within the family can lead to the use of alcohol by female adolescents. This supports the findings of Phillips (2008); and Ghuman et al. (2012) who found that some learners reported to drink alcohol because they have problems at home and so they see drinking as a solution. Rothman, Edwards, Hereem, and Hingson (2008) conducted a study among former and current alcohol users in the United States and found that respondents who reported being neglected, or having been abused physically or sexually during childhood, or reported alcohol abuse at home, were more likely to report that they used alcohol to cope compared to respondents who had not experienced these unfavourable circumstances.

“If a female child is being abused within the family, she would want to turn to alcohol thinking that alcohol will make problems go away, maybe they are being raped or ill-treated”. FGD2P6

“If a girl is being abused (verbally, emotionally / even physically) at home they can end up drinking alcohol so as to cope with the abuse”. FGD1P3

“By judging her (family) and saying bad stuff or just criticising her it can crack her self-confidence and she will drink thinking that it is gonna solve her problems”. IIP5

Participants also mentioned that female learners use alcohol to cope with other daily life stressors like the death of parents or other difficult circumstances. Research suggests that alcohol is often used to reduce the tension of an event (Freeman & Parry, 2006) or when life stressors are experienced that may include death, family conflict etc. These were also found to be associated with higher levels of substance abuse, including tobacco and alcohol use (Baer, as cited in Amoeteng, Barber, & Erickson, 2009).

“Most of those who drink they say that they drink because they might have been abused or they have been in difficult circumstances as in their parents have died and ja ... they want to cope somehow when they use alcohol...”. IIP4

“Uuhm... and ... daily pressures of life the problems they face in life they think alcohol is the solution”. IIP3

It became apparent from the discussions that female adolescents undergo many stressful situations and do not have effective coping strategies to deal with these stressful conditions or events. They believe that by avoiding their problems through alcohol use and being aggressive they will cope.

*“Well, I know someone she is not my friend, she doesn't go a day without a cider, she even smokes. I think she is having problems. **She is miserable**, she uses alcohol and smoking to forget her problems”. FGD2P6*

*“Some of them seem as if they have got issues as if something is bothering them, they are just **aggressive** they like fighting...have got scars on their faces, **they like fighting**”. FGD1P5*

4.4. Factors Influencing alcohol use and abuse among female learners

This section will present and discuss findings on factors that influence alcohol use and abuse among female learners.

4.4.1. Individual factors

The individual factors such as age of drinking onset and self-esteem will be presented.

Age of drinking onset among female learners

The age of drinking onset is seen as the most important factor for developing alcohol problems later in life. There was no consensus with regard to age of the onset of drinking

among female learners however the majority of participants indicated that the females' age of first use of alcohol is between the ages of 12 and 15. This concurs with the findings of the South Africa Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (Reddy et al. 2010) which found that in South Africa 12% of the youth experimented with alcohol before the age of 13. Similarly in the work of Ghuman et al. (2012) it was found that 14.5% of learners started drinking before the age of 13. The results of the study suggested that children between the ages of 13- 16 years are at a risk of initiating alcohol use (ibid). It has been argued that adolescents start using alcohol during early adolescence since this is a period of development where there is an increase in the amount of time spent with peers and peer relationships become the primary social context that influences social development (Johnson et al., 2005).

"Some start at 12 and some at 13". IIP2

"Around 13- 14 years". FGD1P9

"I don't know but I think some around 14, 15 somewhere there". IIP4

It was also evident from the study that some female learners start using alcohol before the age of 12, thus showing that learners start using alcohol from a very young age. This confirms a report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) which pointed out that many school children begin experimenting with alcohol before the age of 12 (WHO, 2010). This is however a cause of concern since starting to use alcohol at a young age is associated with dependence and alcohol abuse problems later in life.

"Guys you know two weeks back I saw girls as young as 8 drinking and dancing and another girl giving hunters to a 3 year old". FGD2P7

The findings suggest that the early onset of alcohol use is influenced by adults.

"Some even start at 9 years, there are some adults who give beer to their children". FGD1P8

It is also interesting to note that other participants felt that the transition from primary school to high school is a contributing factor to the onset of drinking among female learners. Adolescent school transition involves new and changing peer relationships and is a time when social acceptance and support are highly valued (Aikins, Bierman, & Parker, 2005). Participants elucidated that the transition to high school is viewed as a sign of maturity and stage of exploration of new behaviours and adolescents strive to fit in within a new group of peers.

“Mostly they start at the age of 12/ 13 as soon as they leave primary school they go to high school then they start drinking..... Uuhm I think it”s because at high school you meet new friends and some of them will be drinking alcohol and because you want to fit and be part of the group you end up drinking. I don”tknow but also when adolescents enter high school they also think they are now mature and can do what they want ja ... we all think like that anyway”. IIP3

“Usually at the beginning of their high school period because you meet new friends you want to explore new things and starting to drink and abuse alcohol is part of that. So that is at about 13, 14 there”. IIP5

“... most of the times when adolescents enter high school and we are a group of friends we want to follow what our friends do”. FGD2P

Self-esteem

Female learners in this study talked about the likelihood of using and abusing alcohol when young people have a low self-esteem which in turn may make it difficult to resist peer pressure to engage in drinking behaviour. The association of low self-esteem and alcohol use among female adolescents has been pointed out in previous studies (Wild et al., 2004; Kumpulainen & Roine, 2002). McGee and Williams as well as Laflin and Weis (as cited in Mullan & NicGabhainn, 2002) proposed that adolescents with low self-esteem engage in drinking and other health risk behaviours because of their vulnerability to negative social and environmental influences such as peer pressure. Some participants mentioned this,

“Depends whether you have low self-esteem or high self-esteem. If you have a low self-esteem and you hang out with friends who use alcohol then you will drink but if you have high self-esteem and you know what you want in life, you won’t drink...”. FGD2P1

“They (friends) influence because when you have friends that drink alcohol they tell you a lot of stuff about alcohol, that it is fun and if you have low self-esteem you end up going with them to drink”. IIP1

With the evidence from the above quotations it can be suggested that high self-esteem can be a protective factor against peer pressure when it comes to alcohol use among females. Self-

esteem is therefore seen as protective against engaging in health risk behaviours including drinking (McGee & Williams, 2000).

4.4.2. Social influence by significant others

This section will explore the various ways in which the significant others, including peers, parents and celebrities influence on alcohol use among female adolescents.

Peers

Findings from the data pointed out that female learners mostly drink alcohol in the company of friends. Previous literature supports this finding as alcohol use by adolescents was found to occur in the company of peers (Barnes et al., 2007; Kloep et al., 2001).

“They are usually with their friends, it is always friends and I don’t think there are really serious circumstances that lead to drinking it is just peer pressure and they wanna do this, they jus wanna drink because everybody says it is cool”. IIP5

“often drink with friends, if you depend on your friends for support and love you will do all it takes to be part of them so if they drink alcohol then you will also drink”. FGDIP5

Participants also pointed out that peers play a major role in influencing female learners in engaging in risky behaviours like using alcohol.

“Peers do influence a lot when it comes to promiscuous behaviours like drinking alcohol...” FGDIP9

Many researchers agree that peers play a major role with regard to alcohol use among adolescents (Leteka, 2003; Ward & Snow, 2010; Ghuman et al., 2012). It has been suggested that peer groups become very important during the adolescence period, meaning that parental influence is to a large extent replaced by the influence of peers (Payne & Meyer Weitz, 2006).

Participants further elucidated that female learners drink alcohol in order to conform and fit in within a group of peers who use alcohol.

“... Most female learners are put under pressure by peers to use alcohol and because they want to fit in the group they end up drinking”. FGDIP9

“Uuhm peers ... for the sake of attachment with peers if you don’t take alcohol if it is a group of people who take alcohol then you don’t have that sense of belonging, you can not fit in sometimes you are regarded as if you are nobody if you are not taking alcohol you are behind you are not moving with the times ja”. IIP3

“Uuum, say for instance we are a group of 5 or more friends, female friends and I am the only one that don’t wanna drink they are gonna say why don’t you wanna drink, what is gonna happen, nothing is wrong and they gonna put pressure on me and I am gonna have to say ok I will join you”. IIP5

This confirms the findings of Leteka (2003) who cited that adolescents drink to please friends and also to gain a sense of belonging and to the findings of Onongha, (2012) who argued that the persuasive need to fit into and belong to a group of peers can be considered as a motivating factor in adolescent alcohol use. Literature also suggests that peer networks are important support mechanisms during the adolescent years and adolescents may go to a great length to maintain acceptance and status in the group (Department of Social Development, 2010).

The data suggests that female adolescents go to the extent of drinking alcohol so as to be identified as “cool” and be part of the “cool” groups in school. It is evident from the findings of this study that identity formation is crucial during high school. Female adolescents would do anything to conform, fit in and belong within a peer group so as to gain social status.

“They influence because friends ask you to drink alcohol with them and when you say no they say you are uncool and you cannot be part of them. So because you don’t want to lose your friends and because you don’t want your friends to think that you are uncool and you want to be part of the group you end up drinking”. IIP2

“I agree with Nonhle, especially if you are going to a new high school and you want to fit into that new school. Maybe you want to become friends with one of the cool groups and they use alcohol, you will want to fit into that group by using alcohol because if you don’t do what they do they will isolate you”. FGD2P2

The above quotations also suggest that some young females have positive images of peers who drink as they see them as “cool” and by drinking they are trying to project this desirable image. Research has shown that adolescents are motivated to drink so as to gain “respect” and “images” in social groups (IAS, 2010).

Reports of bullying or name calling were given by participants in this study. It was revealed that female learners who did not conform to the drinking behaviour of their peers were called names and this put pressure on them to start drinking so as to be part of a group of peers.

“Ja they will call you names, they will say ok you think you are better than others, so you will feel the pressure to drink alcohol so as to fit in that group”. FGD2P5

„They will call you “Nick Nax” good for nothing or useless.... laughing”. FGD2P4

It could therefore be suggested that non drinking peers are not accepted and respected by their drinking peers. This means that female learners who choose not to drink are pressurised to drink so as to gain respect from drinking peers. It is apparent that young people do not have the skills to go against peer pressure, which is why they end up drinking. Refusal skills which help adolescents overcome peer alcohol influence have been linked to lower levels of drinking among adolescents (Romo, 2004).

Other participants also mentioned that female learners also drink alcohol with their boyfriends. Participants mentioned that some female learners drink with the boys so that they can get free alcohol and also as a way to create a favourable impression on their boyfriends.

“With their friends and sometimes they have a tendency to seduce or flirt with boys so that they get free booze from the boys”. IIP2

“Boyfriends, there are some girls who drink to impress their boyfriends. Most of these girls are dating boys who drink so they also drink to impress them”. FGD1P6

It has been found in other studies that alcohol is important in helping young women to explore, develop and finish relationships with boys (Sheehan & Young, 2001).

Family

The family was identified as playing a significant role in influencing female learners to use alcohol. Participants identified several ways in which the family influences alcohol use i.e. through parental modelling and family celebrations and cultural practices.

Parental modelling

The influence of parents on their children's alcohol use behaviour was indicated by the participants as they mentioned that females are likely to drink alcohol because they see their parents drinking. It was therefore evident from the data that when female adolescents see their parents drink alcohol they perceive it as acceptable and are likely to model that behaviour. Various researches support the influential role of parents as role models and how their drinking practices influence the alcohol use behaviour of their children (Ghuman et al., 2012; Hoque & Ghuman, 2012; Onongha, 2012; Onya, Madu & Govender, 2005; Payne, 2008).

“Let us say if your parents drink like your mum, the child would say ok, why can't I drink if my mum drinks”. FGD2P2

“When your parents drink usually you see it as some kind of family thing you say it runs in the family to drink so usually you are more likely to drink”. IIP4

“...family can influence like if parents drink alcohol a lot then the child will also drink because they see their parents drink”. FGD1P5

A study of Hoque and Ghuman (2012) found that adolescents were more likely to drink alcohol when they reported that they had had often seen either of their parents drink or both.

Findings in this study indicate that young females also model that there are contexts where alcohol use is acceptable. Study participants said where alcohol forms part of the celebrations, this context might be influential in alcohol use behaviour among female learners. Participants mentioned that when female learners see their parents or elders using alcohol during celebrations, they are also likely to use it because they find it normal and believe that alcohol use is part of celebrating.

“They (parents) do influence like on celebrations or something they use alcohol and children are part of those celebrations so they are likely to drink alcohol because they have seen elders at home drinking during celebrations so they don't see anything wrong”. FGD2P10

“Parents also have an influence, they also promote drinking not knowing that they are promoting it. For example like Christmas and New year they celebrate and drink alcohol, they think it is okay, so when children are alone on Christmas and New Year, they go like we

are celebrating we are doing what our parents do when they are celebrating they have booze and everything". FGD2P7

These findings are similar to those of Malose (2004) who found that there is a strong link between drinking and celebrations especially among female adolescents. The study pointed out that adolescent females frequently used alcohol on occasions such as Good Friday, Christmas and New Year. Malose (2004) further argued that adolescents learn from older people that drinking is a source of entertainment to celebrate special events since alcohol forms part of celebrations like weddings, birthdays, tombstone unveilings and other traditional ceremonies which are part of the African culture.

Parenting practices

Female learners are also exposed to alcohol by their family members as they mentioned that adults send their children to buy alcohol and some of the children become curious to taste the alcohol. Sending children to buy alcohol has been identified in other studies as influencing their alcohol use since they become curious to taste it (Pama, 2009).

"Sometimes older people send children to buy alcohol for them. You find an adult saying "go and buy beer from the shops", obviously a child can drink that beer and then lie that the bottle fell and broke or something". FGD2P5

It emerged from the data that female adolescents who do not get attention from their parents are likely to use alcohol. Evidence from other studies points out that there is an association between the quantity and time parents spend with their adolescent children and their children's drinking behaviour and use of other drugs (Brook, Morojele, Pahl & Brook, 2006).

"They say because their parents are working a lot they don't get attention from home so they go out in the streets looking for people to give them attention and these people buy them alcohol". IIP1

Another participant elucidated that mother - daughter attachment is important during adolescence and if this attachment is not there a female learner who has low self-esteem can end up using alcohol. Adolescents are less likely to drink when they feel loved, valued and accepted (Barnes & Farrel, 1992). It can therefore be argued that young females need to gain acceptance and love from their parents in order to resist peer pressure. This is also supported by research which has found that adolescents whose emotional needs have not been met by

parents are likely to seek gratification from peers, a situation which may cause them to use drugs to be accepted by peers (Kizzia & Hagedorn, as cited in Changelwa, Ndurumo, Barasa & Poipoi, 2012).

“Females like attention from their moms they like to bond with their moms. If your mum doesn’t give you enough attention or doesn’t take recognition of you most of the time and if you have low self-esteem you end up drinking”. IIP1

The attachment of mothers to their daughters can therefore act as a protective factor against alcohol use. Literature states that substance abuse among adolescents is less likely to occur when their parents or primary care givers spend much time with them as this makes them feel that their parents or caregivers care about them (Morojele, Parry & Brook, 2009).

It seems that a permissive parenting style influences alcohol use among female adolescents. Participants mentioned that some parents do not care about their daughters and therefore allow their daughters to do anything they want e.g. like drinking alcohol and not sleep at home.

“There are some parents that also do not care about their children, I mean they let them do anything they want to do..... I mean some parents they allow their girls to do anything... like drink alcohol and not sleep at home”. FGD1P1

“A family with no rules where nobody cares about what the kids are doing can influence because they you can do what you want like drinking alcohol”. IIP3

Previous studies have shown that permissive parenting styles contribute to substance use among adolescents (Hawkins, Catalano, & Aurther, 2002).

Findings from the study showed that parents do not monitor their girls and this makes it easier for their children to use and abuse alcohol. Participants mentioned that female learners attend parties with friends possibly at “shebeens” (taverns), in communities etc. This is contrary to the findings of Webb et al. (2002) where adolescent females reported that parents monitor the behaviour of females more than males. Veal and Ross contend that parents tend to put much of their monitoring efforts to their daughters rather than sons, probably because of the norms of society which view girls as more vulnerable as well as the fear of them engaging in promiscuous sexual behaviour and having unplanned pregnancies (as cited in Payne, 2008). Parental monitoring has been recognised as having an important influence on

the behaviour of adolescents and has been linked to alcohol use and abuse prevention among adolescents (Perozzi, 2007).

“Usually parents allow their children to attend parties... and what they do not know is that their children drink alcohol at these parties”. FGD1P5

Literature suggests that adolescents are likely to drink alcohol at parties when they are with their peers rather than at home (Lundborg, 2007; White & Hayman, 2006). It may therefore be argued that parental monitoring of their female adolescents’ whereabouts and activities can be protective and reduces the chances of their children’s engagement in alcohol use. This is highlighted in a study by de Haan and Boljevac (2010) who found that adolescents who reported parental monitoring and support were less likely to have attempted using alcohol. Parental monitoring as a protective factor against substance abuse has also been highlighted by other researchers (Webb et al., 2002; Simoes, 2005a).

In a Dutch study it was found that overly strict alcohol use rules by parents prevented adolescents from drinking alcohol heavily and frequently (Van der Vorst, Engels, Meeus, Dekovic & Van Leeuwe, 2005). Other studies have pointed out that setting rules which restrict alcohol use during adolescence is most helpful when the rules are combined with high quality and frequent communication between parents and adolescents (Koning et al., 2012). It has been recommended that rules pertaining to alcohol use should be understandable and strongly enforced and that parents should also explain the reasoning behind the rules as well as show interest in the needs of their children and allow them to ask questions pertaining to the rules (ibid).

Celebrities

The findings show that female celebrities’ particularly international celebrities play a significant role in influencing female learners to drink alcohol. The participants said that female learners might perceive alcohol use by celebrities’ as fun, cool, glamorous and a “good thing” and therefore be likely to imitate this behaviour because they are their role models.

“Celebrities do influence because most female learners look at celebrities as role models, they kind of want to dress and do what their celebrity does like Rihanna the hairstyles she does so if they see them drink alcohol they will drink as well because they think it’s cool and

glamorous so they have that kind of influence because people do whatever they do”.
FGD2P6

“Lots of females have role models that are celebrities for example overseas celebrities like Rihanna, Lady Gaga and Beyonce and so they believe that they have to do what these role models or celebrities do and so if they see someone that they look up to drinking alcohol they think it is good so they end up drinking”. IIP1

“The celebrities have a big influence on the reality because it is gonna be cool or its gonna be fun when they are partying and drinking alcohol so we as the ordinary people will wanna be the like them”.IIP5

It also emerged from the data that the use of celebrities in alcohol media adverts has an influence on alcohol use among female adolescents. Evidence in literature points out that the association of role models depicted in media adverts for example sports people, people who are attractive, strong, enjoy life and have superior tastes, encourage drinking behaviour as people believe that imitating this behaviour makes one to be more like these “role models” (Freeman & Parry, 2006). Participants mentioned that,

“Ja, it does mostly influence because most teenagers or adolescents they want to associate with some big star on TV so whatever that big star is doing and most of them they do take alcohol so they want to be like that somebody so they will drink”. IIP3

“Media tells you what booze does and usually media shows celebrities drinking expensive booze so the female learners will want to buy the expensive booze because they saw a celebrity drinking it”IIP2.

Female adolescents therefore engage in risky behaviour specifically alcohol use in order to acquire an image or certain characteristics of celebrity images portrayed in the media.

4.4.3. Contextual factors

Media

Findings from the study revealed that female learners are exposed to alcohol adverts from various sources. As outlined above, radio, television (TV), film, and popular music are often identified as possible sources where the youth learn about alcohol and as potential influences

of their drinking problems (Grube, 2004). Upon being asked where they see alcohol adverts participants mentioned the following sources,

“On TV, sometimes on radio, magazines and newspapers” IIP2; IIP1; IIP5; IIP3; FGDP6.

“...and also from catalogues from shoprite, checkers, pick n pay. These catalogues even show you the price reductions”FGDP5

“You can also see the adverts on the billboards”. FGDP9

The data suggested that alcohol use is regularly or frequently advertised on TV thus exposing female learners to alcohol advertising. This seemed to make it easier for the participants to recall the adverts. Although participants mentioned various sources where they see alcohol adverts, it was evident from the discussions that the television was the most influential source. These findings are similar to those of Mathios et al. (1998) who found that alcohol use was portrayed on TV more frequently than the use of any food or drink.

“They come out almost every 5 minutes on TV usually when family is watching a soapy”. FGDIP5

“They show them on T.V more than any other advert”IIP1

“Because it comes out every news break, it always comes up almost at every ad break on TV”. IIP2

The frequency of exposure to media alcohol adverts is a concern as a number of studies have shown that exposing adolescents to alcohol advertising during very early adolescence can predict both the intention to drink and initiation of consumption (Anderson et al., 2009; Collins et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2007).

The media is viewed to portray alcohol use in a positive light and this seems to influence female learners to use alcohol.

“I think media adverts do influence alcohol use..... because of their message, they tell you good things about alcohol”.

“I think media adverts influence learners to drink whether male or female because they tell you all the good things about alcohol and as adolescents we want to experiment so you will want to taste the alcohol”. IIP1

Participants also mentioned that the message in the media adverts is that alcohol is cool, refreshing, relaxing and also helps one to become sociable and to enjoy the social event. Similarly McCreanor et al. (2008) reported that adolescents often enjoy alcohol advertising since they established a climate that alcohol is fun, cool, and exciting.

“I think the message in these adverts is that alcohol is good because they say “it’s cool and refreshing”, so they are saying if you want to be refreshed you should drink”. FGD2P9

“That alcohol is cheap and cool to drink”. FGD1P4

“The message is that we should drink they tell you that alcohol is refreshing so it makes you want to experiment”. FGD1P9

“Almost all of them tell you that it is not for people under the age of 18. Some tell you that alcohol is cool and refreshing things like that”. IIP2

“Ok, the castle one I think a beer after work is kind of relaxing...” IIP5

“For example the castle one there is a guy like after drinking the castle he will be dancing and so I think it shows that after drinking you become sociable, you become high and you enjoy”. IIP4

Participants were able to give specific examples of alcohol adverts, images and phrases which they remembered from the alcohol adverts. It emerged during the discussions that participants remembered and liked the alcohol adverts because they find them humorous. The liking of specific elements e.g humour, animation and popular music in alcohol adverts contributes to the likeability of these adverts as well as effectiveness of adverts indicated by the intentions to buy the specific product and brand of alcohol being promoted by the advert (Chen et al., 2005).

“There is something about these adverts that is catching, they are just hilarious”. FGD2P10

“Because they are funny hahaha (laughing)”. FGD2P5

“The savannah one is funny and it is crazy”. FGD2P1

“Because they are funny, they always crack me up”. FGD1P4

Perceived media influence

The messages and images about alcohol shown in alcohol adverts seem to contribute to the “craving” for alcohol among female adolescents. Participants mentioned that the messages and the images about alcohol from the media made them to crave for alcohol.

“They encourage because they make you crave for alcohol because of the message”.
FGD1P3

“... you know when female adolescents see someone drinking alcohol and they see it again on T.V they end up craving for it”. IIP1

It can therefore be interpreted that frequent exposure to alcohol media adverts can predict individual consumption of alcohol among female learners.

The use of females in alcohol adverts was mentioned as encouraging female learners to drink alcohol as the adverts portray drinking by females as socially acceptable and can help a female to attract males.

“Ja, seeing females in these alcohol adverts tell us that females can drink alcohol and there is no problem”. FGD2P8

“Yes they do..... Uuhm, one of the adverts actually has got a lady dressed so nicely which Vuyo had to look at and he got attracted to that lady and there was alcohol involved so obviously females will start to think ok, fine it’s cool so I should associate with guys drinking and dress nicely so that I can attract cool guys like Vuyo”. IIP3

Advertising has been found to be appealing to girls by making females who drink appear to be sexy and to have fun (Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2003). Participants in the study had similar views, they mentioned that the use of sexy females who are drinking alcohol and dancing in media adverts encourages female learners to use alcohol. Alcohol use by females in these media adverts thus reinforces the view that drinking is part of enjoying and having fun.

“Adverts on TV can encourage because some of them show sexy ladies at a club dancing and drinking alcohol, so if a girl sees a female in the advert drinking alcohol they will think it is a cool thing to do and they can drink alcohol because of that”. FGD2P2

“Yes they do..... because in some of the adverts there are females drinking for example the one on..... can’t remember (pause).... I don’t know but it has a song that says do you wanna party or whatever there are females drinking and dancing so I think it does influence”. IIP4

During our discussions about media adverts, participants felt that the adverts are only about brand promotion since they portray alcohol drinking as a positive experience and rarely do they show viewers the hazards of using alcohol. These findings are similar to those of Atkinson, Elliot, Bellis, and Sumnall, (2011) who reported that media presented selective images of alcohol use, as they leave out certain aspects of drinking like hangovers. It has been suggested that this creates an “unrealistic account of drinking as in, reality, alcohol use is associated with negative effects” (Atkinson et al., 2011, p.32)

I don’t know, I don’t understand why they do them (media adverts) because they do not have a message. They are just trying to promote their brands and it is for those who drink alcohol...”. FGD2P8

“The adverts only show the positive side of alcohol that it cools you down and makes you relax but they do not show the negative side of alcohol”. FGD1P3

“...they advertise the good parts of drinking as in when you drink alcohol you become high, you become sociable and whatever but like they don’t advertise the after effects of drinking alcohol”. IIP3

However participants were able to recall the message about the legal age of purchasing alcohol which is part of the alcohol media adverts. This suggests that media adverts with warnings seem to be successful in creating awareness about the legal age of purchasing alcohol. It is however interesting to note that although the media adverts specify that alcohol should not be sold to persons under the age of 18, this message does not inhibit female adolescents from buying and using alcohol. It was evident from the data that the images and positive messages about alcohol are attractive to the female learners and likely to facilitate their alcohol use.

“Even on T.V, ja, even if it is written not for children under the age of 18 learners do not take note of that message after having heard of all the good things the adverts say about alcohol”. FGD2P7

“ ok, they (adverts) do say that it is not to be taken by people under the age of 18 and all that but the way they advertise they make it look like it is something good and obviously females will be attracted and will feel like taking it. The message they portray and the way they do it they actually speak different languages”. IIP3

“On these adverts even if it is written no under 18 adolescents do not take that seriously, the message is that we should drink”. FGD1P2

The above discussion about the media has shown that the media has great influence in the lives of the female learners. Female learners are exposed to a variety of alcohol information and images through various sources of media. According to the participants this exposure encourages female learners to use alcohol.

4.5. Legislation and alcohol accessibility

As outlined above it was evident from the findings that learners have knowledge about the South African Liquor Act no 59 of 2003 which prohibits the selling of alcohol to persons under the age of 18. Upon being asked what the law says about drinking for people under 18 they mentioned the following,

“It is not allowed, it is illegal to sell alcohol to someone under 18 but then they do it”. FGD2P6

“That alcohol should not be sold to people under 18”. IIP2

Participants agreed that the **context** or **environment** they live in has an influence on alcohol use and abuse among female learners. The following responses were given when they were asked if they felt that the environment they live in influences the use and abuse of alcohol among female learners

“Yes, I think it does. In our communities it is easy to get alcohol and most people even females drink so as female learners we find it normal to drink and even smoke”. IIP1

“ Where we live people believe in tradition, like after a funeral people have to meet and drink, after big events people have separate parties where they drink so children

will be looking at these things so we are encouraged to use alcohol at an early age”.

IIP5

“In our community its cheap and easy to get alcohol, there are many tarverns, shebeens and as girls there are “drinking spots” where we know that if I go there I will find guys to buy alcohol for me, so ja I think environment influences”. IIP3

“There are factories here that make liquor, lots of sales where liquor is cheap, lots of shebeens, all over so it is just easy to get alcohol in this community”. IIP4

From the above quotations it is evident that various factors in the environment play a role in influencing female learners to use alcohol. These factors include easy availability of alcohol and community traditions. Previous studies have also pointed out evidence of the contextual or environmental influence on risk cognitions including both risk images and willingness e.g. adolescents raised in environments where drugs are common are likely to develop more favourable risk images (Gerrard et al., 2008).

Further evidence of influence of context is explored below.

Availability and accessibility of alcohol

It was however clear from the findings that alcohol is easily available and accessible to female learners in their communities. Purchasing of alcohol when underage does not seem to be a problem in their communities. When participants were asked where female learners get alcohol from, they mentioned both legal and illegal alcohol outlets. Evidence continues to show that both legal and illegal substances are available to many youths in South Africa (Morojele et al., 2009).

“Bottle stores, tuck shops and taverns”. FGD2P8

“Shebeens, clubs”. IIP1

“Buy from shops like Shoprite, Pick and Pay etc”. FGD1P7

The high availability and accessibility of alcohol has been identified as contributing to binge drinking among South African youth (Ramsoomar & Morojele, 2012).

Ways in which female learners access alcohol

The young females talked about various strategies they use to access alcohol. Some of the strategies are more planned, these range from buying alcohol themselves through combining money with friends, sleeping with men, hiding it, and disguising it with their bodies or in their clothes, asking adults to buy for them from shops and also getting it from parents. From the discussions it was evident that female adolescents tried all means to obtain alcohol, although some of the methods used are risky. This confirms the findings of Phillips (2008) who found in his study that being under the legal age to purchase alcohol, did not deter female adolescents from obtaining it.

(a) Combining money to buy alcohol

One of the methods used to obtain alcohol is through combining their money. Participants elucidated that as part of their plans to use alcohol, female learners pool their money with their peers to enable them to have enough to buy alcohol.

“they plan, there is what we call “schemes” where we contribute money and buy alcohol”.
FGD1P4

“Most of the times they do plan I am always with them when they plan they are like where are going to sit, when , how much are we going to contribute say for instance each and everybody gives R30 and they gonna buy this and they gonna buy that so that is how they plan”. IIP5

(b) Disguising with their bodies

Participants also mentioned that other female adolescents use their “big bodies” as a disguise to buy alcohol.

“Big bodies can also act as a disguise like myself as you can see I am big I can go to any place and buy alcohol now no one can tell that I am 15 because of my body”. FGD1P1

I don’t think so because even when you are not 18 or above 18 and you may look a bit older they gonna help you buy alcohol same like if you wanna go to a club you jus have to look like you are older they won’t ask for your ID. IIP5

(c) Dating older men

Participants reported that female learners also obtain alcohol from “sugar daddies” or older men in exchange for sex. It has been pointed out in other studies that exchanging alcohol or gifts for sex is a common practice between young women and older men (Mataure et al., as cited in Kalichman, Simbayi, Kaufman, Cain & Jooste, 2007). Engaging in sexual relationships with older men puts female adolescents at risk of acquiring HIV. This is due to the power differences created by age as well as sexual experience, which may make it difficult for female adolescents to negotiate condom use (Miller, Clark & Moore, 1997).

“Some date older men who will just take them out and buy booze in order for that older men to get one of the girls to sleep with them”. FGD2P3

“Where we live females drink a lot, female learners use older men to buy them alcohol. These older men These older men buy alcohol and clothes for the girl and her friends but I don’t like that”. IIP2

“... sugar daddies also buy alcohol for the girls. In our community there are guys known as “amarhuzu” or some will know them as money makers they have a lot of money and they have places where they hang out so some girls go to those places when they want money, clothes and alcohol and these money makers buy the alcohol for them. These guys attract a lot of girls”. FGD1P2

(d) Adults as accomplices

Participants also highlighted that adults also help the learners to access alcohol by buying it for them. It has been found in other studies that the usual sources of alcohol for learners are friends, older siblings, and older people contacted outside of shops (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2009).

“Some ask or send adults to buy for them and some dress up like older people and enter shebeens and taverns to buy alcohol”. IIP2

“Children under 18 also ask adults to buy alcohol for them and they do”. FGD1P7

(e) Other participants also highlighted that female learners can also obtain alcohol from their parents.

“Some of them get alcohol from their homes some of their parents drink like for example the girl that I described above her mother drinks so ja she can drink with her mom or friends..... from home and they go and they go and buy from the shops”. IIP4

“From peers or boyfriends and some from their parents”

Research has shown that some parents give their children alcohol as they believe that if they don't supply their children with alcohol, their children will access the alcohol from somewhere else (Ward, Snow, Munro, Graham & Dickson-Swift, 2006).

Participants in the study further mentioned that the South African Liquor Act no 59 of 2003 is not operational. They pointed out that, the evidence of this is seen by the high number of people under the age of 18 who are able to buy and use alcohol.

“I think as we said this law is not working at all many children under 18 are drinking alcohol and can still buy alcohol, it is just some law on paper”. FGD2P10

“A lot of children are drinking alcohol so I don't think it is working”. IIP1

Participants also revealed that there are outlets which sell alcohol to learners even if they are wearing uniforms because to them it is only about business. It can therefore be suggested that adolescents are a great source of revenue for these alcohol outlets and because of this they don't adhere to the laws.

“In bottle stores and taverns they actually sell booze to learners wearing uniforms in order for them to get money”. FGD2P7

“Not at all because you find children under the age of 18 getting into shebeens, you find 6 year olds buying alcohol in shebeens so it is not operational nobody cares all people care about is making money”. IIP3

“Not working even if the government puts the age limit to 21 it will not work because there are people who sell alcohol to children who are under 18..... Ja, they do not care all they want at the end of the day is money”. FGD1P4

The above quotations highlight that underage drinking in South Africa still remains a problem even though there are laws against it. Although the age restriction in South Africa is known to be 18 and this message is usually on display in liquor stores and supermarkets and is even part of the content of alcohol adverts, there are however no good methods in place to

ensure that it is adhered to. This promotes easy and wide availability of alcohol across all genders, races and ages (Setlalentoa et al., 2010). Similarly, a review done in South Africa indicated that a large number of minors are drinking despite the efforts of the government to reduce alcohol availability to persons under the age of 18 by increasing alcohol taxes and legislating the registration of liquor outlets (Ramsoomar & Morojele, 2012). It has also been documented in the literature that lack of restrictions regarding access to alcohol such as the availability of alcohol everyday and anytime, promotes increased access to different types of alcoholic drinks which in turn promotes higher levels of drinking in many communities (NIAAA, 2007).

Participants felt that the culture of fear and silence among community members is contributing to the hindering of law enforcement against the selling of alcohol to persons under the age of 18. It emerged from the data that communities are aware of “shebeens” or taverns which sell alcohol to persons under the age of 18 but they do not take the necessary steps due to fear.

“People are not working together with the police, they know of taverns and shebeens where alcohol is sold to children but they do nothing about it”. FGD2P6

“People in the community don’t follow the law because they know that no one will complain about them. People are scared to complain or report”. IIP1

The above quotations show that community involvement is vital in the enforcement of the law that prohibits the selling of alcohol to adolescents.

Participants also offered various ways in which measures should be taken so as to make sure that the law against selling alcohol to persons under the age of 18 is operational. Participants mentioned that producing Identity documents when buying alcohol would help since the Identity document has a photo. They also mentioned that police should also patrol around areas where alcohol is sold.

“I think it should be uuhm ...pause.... I think it should be changed in a way..... They should make sure that when buying alcohol an individual should use an ID and the adverts on alcohol use should not encourage adolescents to drink. They should as well advertise when they advertise they should also use examples of the after effects of drinking alcohol”.

“...they should ask people to carry ID”s and see whether they are under 18 or 18 and above when they buy alcohol because as it is now anyone can go in these taverns and buy alcohol..... Yes because the ID has a photo of the person so they can see if you are 18 or not”.

“It is just there and it”s not.... pause... I think strict measures should be done for it to be implemented and for it to be operational because it just exists but no one is following it..... Maybe involve the police in the places that sell alcohol. Police should always be driving around those places that sell alcohol”.

4.6. Health and social consequences of alcohol use

Participants in the study seem to be aware of some of the health and social implications of alcohol use and abuse among female learners. This coincides with literature which states that alcohol use and abuse among females is associated with various harmful health and social consequences, many of them similar to those of males but others specific to women (ICAP, 2008).

According to various researchers, females are more likely to suffer from the harmful effects of alcohol than males. As highlighted previously, this is attributed to the fact that females have a higher percentage of body fat, lower body weight than males and less body water (NIAAA, 2011).

Health consequences

Other studies have shown a connection between alcohol use and risky sexual behaviour that could lead to unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STI”s) and HIV transmission (Wells, 2008). Alcohol is therefore one of the best predictors of sexual activities including risky sexual behaviours among teenagers since those who use alcohol are more likely to engage in unsafe sex with many partners than those who do not use alcohol (CASA, 2007).

Participants in the study reported that female adolescents who use alcohol are at a higher risk of practising **unsafe sex** when drunk and this makes them susceptible to **HIV**, and **sexually transmitted infections**.

“When you are drunk obviously you will not practise safe sex you can then be exposed to HIV no matter what because even in shebeens girls who drink in shebeens when they are drunk they sleep with anyone and the following day they don’t know who they slept with”. FGD2P2

“Yes I am, uuhm, I think when adolescents drink most of them ja, like when they drink they lose control and they end up having sleeping with guys sometimes without protection and this will cause them to be HIV positive and to have sexually transmitted infections”. IIP4

“I think HIV can also be linked to alcohol because if a female learner is drunk men can take advantage of them and they can sleep with anyone as in have sex and not know the following day who they slept with, obviously the men will not use condoms”. FGD1P9

“Yes, HIV, you can get raped when you are drunk and you don’t know who raped you maybe that person is HIV positive and you can also get STI’s”. IIP2

“true the girl can also get STI’s when they have unprotected sex because they are drunk they won’t know what is happening to them”. FGD1P10

A majority of the participants mentioned **teenage pregnancy** as a consequence of drinking alcohol among female learners.

“Teenage pregnancy, ja girls who drink have high chances of becoming pregnant because they are likely to have unprotected sex when drunk, they can’t control themselves, I mean they are easily taken advantage of, guys will take advantage of that ...”. FGD1P3

“They can get pregnant and don’t know who the father of the child is”. FGD2P8

“Let me think ok, I think ja... pregnancy is one of the implications of drinking alcohol”. IIP4

It has been pointed out in previous studies that drinking is strongly associated with sexual abuse and risky sexual behaviours, including unsafe sex and having many sexual partners (Morojele et al., 2006; Kalichman et al., 2007). The use of alcohol and other drugs is reported to reduce inhibitions among adolescents and safer sex negotiation skills, thus increasing their susceptibility to engage in risky sexual behaviour (Morojele et al., 2006). It therefore seems that alcohol use, risky sexual practises and HIV have a complex relationship and that alcohol use is one of the biggest contributors to the increasing rates of HIV. This calls for special attention as these female adolescents are the leaders of tomorrow and statistics show that they

are among the hardest hit by the epidemic. Engaging in unprotected sex is also associated with unplanned pregnancies (Pludderman, Flisher, Mathews & Carney, 2005; NIAAA, 2003).

It emerged from the data that female learners who use alcohol are not only exposed to risky sexual activities but also to smoking and other drugs. The following remarks were made by participants,

“Well, I know someone she is not my friend, she doesn’t go a day without a cider, she even smokes. I think she is having problems. She is miserable she uses alcohol and smoking to forget her problems”. FGD2P6

“I also know someone, this girl and her friends even use other drugs, they even go further in order to get alcohol, sleeping with men in order to get money so that they can buy alcohol, even going to parties if they are in parties they have to be picked by some men so that this person buys them alcohol”. FGD2P1

Alcohol use among female adolescents thus exposes them to multiple risks. Literature suggests that there is a link between adolescent alcohol use with a number of health risk behaviours including sexual behaviours, cigarette smoking, and illegal drug use (Grunbaum et al., 2004).

Participants also mentioned **foetal alcohol syndrome** as one of the effects of alcohol abuse.

“Yes, when they are pregnant and they drink child can be affected”. FGD2P6

“Alcohol can also affect an unborn baby if the mother drinks when she is pregnant”. FGD1P4

The findings support literature that females who drink alcohol during pregnancy are in danger of giving birth to children with both mental and physical challenges. The child can be born with neurocognitive deficiencies, resulting in lack of intelligence, behaviour problems, poor decision making or judgement, and difficulties in undertaking daily tasks (Mkosi et al., 2008).

Study participants also showed general awareness that alcohol use can cause problems to the **liver**.

“I have heard about the liver problems ja... ”.

“I heard that alcohol can cause liver disease”.

This correlates with research indicating that females who drink are more likely to develop alcoholic hepatitis which is liver inflammation than males who drink the same amount of alcohol. Alcoholic hepatitis can lead to liver cirrhosis (NIAAA, 2011).

Alcohol poisoning was also mentioned as a health implication of alcohol use among females. Alcohol poisoning is one of the negative health outcomes of excessive alcohol consumption (Naimi, 2003).

“Alcohol poisoning and rape..... uuhm, say when a guy wants you and you don’t he is gonna try anything to get you so they can poison your drink”. IIP5

“Female learners can be drugged, you know when you are drunk your alcohol can be poisoned like drugs can be put in your alcohol. There are even porn videos of some girls being shown around community, all this happens when they are drunk”. FGDIP1

It has been mentioned in literature that underage drinking can cause a range of consequences like death from alcohol poisoning (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2007).

Reduced fertility has been mentioned in the literature as one of the harmful consequences of drinking in females (Nolen- Hoeksema, 2004). One participant mentioned this as a health implication for females who use alcohol.

“....also fertility for females can be affected...”IIP3

Social consequences

The consequences of alcohol are not only limited to individual female learners but also to their families, friends, and society at large. Participants mentioned various social implications of alcohol.

There has been growing evidence of alcohols’ role in commission of crimes resulting in arrests (WHO, 2007). **Criminal offences** such as stealing and prostitution were mentioned as some of the implications of alcohol use and abuse among female learners.

“Stealing, if you are now addicted to it you can end up stealing your mothers’ money”. IIP1

“Alcohol can increase crime rate, it can cause learners to steal because they are not working and they want money to buy alcohol”. FGD1P5

“They can be taken advantage of and uuhm all that leading to low self-esteem and leading to maybe crimes like prostitution to get money to buy alcohol so they end up losing focus...”. IIP3

It is quite clear from the above quotations that female learners can opt for criminal activities as a way of getting money to buy alcohol.

It became evident from the discussions with participants that female learners who drink are more vulnerable to **sexual violence**. In a Cape Town study, it was found that learners who had used alcohol were more likely to have been exposed to sexual violence than those who had not consumed alcohol (King, Flisher, Noubary, Reece, Marais & Lombard, 2004). Gang rape which is one of the most conspicuous forms of violence was mentioned by participants in the study as one of the risks associated with drinking among female learners. Rape stands out to be one of the most severe and frequently reported criminal activity perpetrated against children in South Africa (King et al., 2004). Participants pointed out that man easily take advantage of the female learners when they are in drunken state and easily rape them.

“They can get raped because they will be drunk and maybe they are at a club and are drunk and boy starts to seduce them and they fall for it, the boy can take you to a room and take advantage of you and call his friends and they rape the girl and when they go to the hospital they find that they are HIV positive”. IIP2

“When drunk you can’t do anything, can’t take control of your own body so men can take advantage of you..... maybe you are drinking with boys and they promise to take you home then they don’t but rape you”. IIP1

“Girls can be gang raped when they are drunk, so alcohol can increase the rate of rape cases”. FGD1P8

This confirms the findings of Mohler- Kuo, Dowdall, Koss and Wechsler, (2004) who found that 72% of the rape cases took place while women were intoxicated. Hingson et al., (2005) also argued that drinking by those who are under aged has a chance of increasing their risk of being sexually and physically assaulted. Alcohol places adolescents at a higher risk of being

raped because it is socially acceptable and also reduces inhibitions compared to other drugs (King et al., 2004).

It also emerged from the study that close family members can also get female learners drunk so that they can abuse them sexually.

“Yes, maybe your uncle wants to rape you and they give you alcohol so that they get you drunk and when you are drunk they rape you and you do not know what happened to you”.
IIP2

It also emerged from the data that **aggression and violence** are some of the effects of alcohol use among female adolescents.

“Yes I am, like when someone drinks they become aggressive and violent”. IIP4

Research suggests that young people who drink are more likely to be involved in violent and aggressive behaviour (Romo, 2004). According to Armstrong et al. (2011), females are not only in danger of being injured intentionally or unintentionally, they are also increasingly identified as responsible for alcohol fuelled violence.

Another participant also revealed that female learners who use and abuse alcohol and become mothers, are likely to become **irresponsible mothers**. This has previously been highlighted by Mulaudzi, who pointed out that alcohol use can impair one’s functioning as a parent (as cited in Freeman & Parry, 2006). It can be suggested based on the findings that being a young mother who uses alcohol can put the child at risk. From the discussion it emerged that young mothers who use alcohol are likely to become irresponsible parents because they are immature to take good care of their children and they also might neglect their children so as to spend time with their friends.

“They become irresponsible parents like if they have children at a young age, they can’t take good care of the baby because they are still children themselves and they still want to hang out with their friends”. FGDIP1

Dropping out of school emerged as a social implication of alcohol use by female learners. One participant in the study mentioned that female learners may fail to focus at school and therefore drop out due to alcohol use and abuse. This confirms the findings of Morojele, Parry, Ziervogel and Robertson (2001) who found a strong link between dropping out of school, binge drinking and low academic aspiration.

“Some may even drop out of school because of alcohol, can’t focus”. FGD1P2

Another participant mentioned that female learners who use alcohol can face **problems with their parents** who can be against their daughters’ use of alcohol.

“... I think they can have problems with parents if they don’t know about it..... Some parents don’t like the idea that their daughters use alcohol, they are always against it”. IIP5

This is supported by other studies which found that long term frequent alcohol abuse results in psychosocial dysfunction such as parent child relationship deterioration. Learners who use drugs are likely to have strained relationships with parents (USAID, 2006).

4.7. Perceptions of personal risk

Perceived vulnerability is a component of the Prototype/Willingness model and it refers to the perceptions of personal risk that is the likelihood that one will experience the negative consequences of engaging in risk behaviour. Participants mentioned that female high school learners do not consider the risks they face when they use alcohol. The following was mentioned upon being asked whether female adolescents consider the risks involved before they drink,

“I think they don’t and if they do they overlook it”. IIP4

“ah ah aa, no they do not”. IIP2

“I do not think so”. IIP5, IIP1, IIP4

Some participants elucidated that female adolescents do not consider the risks altogether because to them it is cool and fashionable to drink. These findings support the literature on the perceived risk construct of Prototype/Willingness model (Gerrard et al., 2008). Adolescents tend to process risk information in a shallow manner, as they focus more on the immediate benefits than on the losses and seem not to consider long term consequences (Loewenstein et al., 2001).

Research has also shown that the decision to drink is influenced more by the perceived benefits of drinking than by the perceived dangers (Morojele et al., 2004). This was also highlighted by the participants,

“Not at all, It is all good to them everything is cool hahaha”. FGD2P5

“I don’t think learners consider these risks because usually they think it is cool and fashionable to drink alcohol and they don’t think of the risks”. FGD1P2

However other participants felt that female adolescents do consider the risks of using alcohol but because of the stress they might be going through they think drinking is the solution.

“Somehow they do but I don’t think they really consider it an effect most of them they say I will jus drink to a certain extent and then I will stop but the moment you start you will never stop”. IIP3

“Others do but because of the circumstances they would rather ease the stress and have the strength”. FGD2P9

Findings from the data also revealed that female adolescents do not believe they can be affected by any of risks associated with alcohol. Participants mentioned the following,

“No, I don’t think so they look at other people who have been drinking so they say she has been doing it all along she is fine so I can drink and I will be fine”. IIP3

“Some of them don’t, some jus say why will I be affected I can drink, I have drunk before and nothing has happened to me so that is how they react”. IIP5

“I don’t think so because all they do is drink they do not put into consideration what they are doing, they do it for fun”. IIP2

“I don’t think so.... Considering that they still continue to take alcohol even after they have been told that it can affect them I don’t think they believe that they can be affected”. IIP4

“I don’t think they believe that alcohol can affect them, It is all about experimenting, want to taste and see how it feels like to drink. So I don’t think female adolescents think of effects when they drink”. FGD2P1

These findings concur with those of Graham, Ward, Munro, Snow, and Ellis (2006) who found that adolescents perceive themselves as “invincible” i.e. they think that it won’t happen to them and see “drinking as a game”. Similarly Weinstein established that adolescents are likely to have an unrealistic optimism which means that they believe that they can escape the dangers of some risky activities more so than others (as cited in Gerrard et al., 2008).

Despite the understanding of the health and social implications of alcohol use, female adolescents plan to use alcohol.

4.8. Alcohol use decision making

Decision making around alcohol use among female adolescents is both planned and unplanned. The planning of using alcohol among female learners concurs with the reasoned path of the Prototype/Willingness model approach which reflects that for some adolescents risk behaviour is planned even at a young age (Webb, Baer, Getz & McKelvey, 1996; Gerrard et al., 2008). Upon being asked whether alcohol use among female learners is planned, participants mentioned the following,

“Yes definitely, because they tell each other before time that guys we gonna do stuff like that, buy that and that and drink this and this, so it is planned”. IIP2

“Yes they do plan”. IIP1

“Yes, it is planned”. FGD2P2

The above quotations show that alcohol use among female learners is planned and intentional.

Findings gathered in this study also show that alcohol use is part of the planned activities during school events. Research participants in this study narrated how female learners made plans to buy and use alcohol during these school events.

“Yes, like my friends if there is a school visiting, they put money together and go buy booze”. FGD2P5

“Even if there is a school trip, they buy other stuff and keep money aside for alcohol”. FGD2P3

In a study by Pama (2009) it was found that drugs such as dagga, alcohol and cigarettes are normally used by learners in school premises and that these drugs are used by learners especially in the morning before school, lunch time and during extra mural activities e.g. school shows and sporting activities. It can therefore be interpreted that the school environment plays a part in adolescent risk behaviour. The school activities can be considered as some of the circumstances that offer female learners the freedom and opportunity to make

use of alcohol. This raises concerns of monitoring and control in the school environment and during school activities.

Findings from the study also showed that female learners are also likely to plan to use alcohol during weekends and on occasions such as Christmas. Female learners were reported to put aside money so as to drink alcohol almost on a daily basis during the Christmas holidays. The reasons for drinking during this season are to have fun, enjoy and also for mood changing (Malose, 2004).

“Like on weekends and occasions like Christmas female learners plan that they are gonna be drinking booze, like for Christmas holidays you can find girls drinking every day. Ja, so all this is planned, money is put aside for that”. FGD1P10

“Yes they do plan... Like towards festive season they all put in money to buy alcohol”. IIP1

“We sit down and plan that this weekend we are going to drink and then we contribute money to buy the alcohol”. FGD1P7

However it should also be mentioned that some participants felt that female adolescents do not plan to use alcohol but find themselves in situations that make it easy to drink. This concurs with the social reaction path of the Prototype/Willingness model which states that engaging in risk behaviour among adolescents is not intentional or planned and that adolescents often find themselves in situations that do not demand but make it easy to engage in risk behaviours (Gerrard et al., 2008).

“No, most of them they don’t(plan) they just find themselves in situations where they end up drinking... Like parties and clubs”. IIP4

“... but some don’t plan they just find themselves in the situation”. IIP3

It is therefore imperative to note that when adolescents face such circumstances their decision making to drink is not reasoned but is rather determined by their willingness to engage in the behaviour.

4.9. Chapter summary

This chapter has focused on the findings of the study. The findings of the study were presented using themes and were discussed in relation to the literature as well as use of

supporting extracts from the interview transcripts. The next chapter will present the conclusion of the study and recommendations suggested.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The findings of the study were presented and discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter will focus on the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

The aim of the study was to provide a deeper understanding of alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners. As outlined in the methodology chapter this was done using a qualitative approach with two focus group discussions (N=20) and five individual semi-structured interviews with Grade 9 female learners. Based on the findings and discussions of the study the following conclusions can be made.

5.2. Conclusion

The findings of the study suggest that nowadays, many female adolescents are using alcohol, a behaviour which has traditionally been accepted for males but not for females. It was apparent that there are still some stereotypes attached to females who use alcohol. Various individual, social and contextual factors were identified as contributing to drinking among female high school learners. These factors include the age of onset, low self-esteem, influence of significant others e.g. parents, peers, celebrities and other family members, media influence through alcohol adverts especially through television, easy availability and accessibility of alcohol, as well as the lack of law enforcement pertaining to the sales of alcohol to minors. Protective factors also became apparent and these include parental monitoring, high self-esteem and good mother- daughter attachment.

The study also indicated that female adolescents generally hold negative views about their peers who use alcohol, which is intriguing since it is the same behaviour they seem to imitate. However various positive perceptions why female adolescents use alcohol were also mentioned. Participants mentioned that alcohol use among female adolescents is perceived as fun, “cool” and glamorous, “Western”, synonymous of an adult status and used as a coping mechanism when faced with difficulties. While it was evident from the study that female adolescents have a general knowledge of most of the health and social implications of

alcohol, most of them believe that they cannot be affected and still continue to plan to use alcohol, typical age related way of arguing.

The Prototype/Willingness model was useful in providing understanding of alcohol use among female learners. Applying and adapting this model helped in capturing detailed insights on the process of decision making involved in drinking among female learners. Through the application of the model it was evident from the findings of the study that there are two pathways to female learners alcohol use i.e. the decision making to use alcohol among female learners is reasoned (planned or intentional) and that sometimes it is not planned or unintended, but is triggered by situations which are risk conducive for female learners to drink. The model was also useful in showing the role of images or prototypes in female adolescents' drinking. The findings of the study showed that female learners held negative images of peers who drink. It was however evident that risk images from alcohol adverts have an influence on female adolescents' willingness to drink. A construct of the Prototype/Willingness model, „perceived vulnerability“ was also useful in assessing whether female learners consider the risks of using alcohol before they drink.

Although the study findings cannot be generalised to all adolescent female learners, most of the findings are in support of the literature. However, the deeper insight into the topic proved some suggestions for local interventions to prevent the use and abuse of alcohol by adolescent females.

5.3. Recommendations for interventions directed at alcohol use by adolescent females

There is need for health promoting schools in the Western Cape Province. It is recommended that the Department of Education, Department of Health, policy makers together with the school principals, teachers, parents, learners and other stakeholders create and support health promoting schools in the Western Cape Province. This can be done by using a holistic approach which seeks to provide services and activities in the school and communities to enhance the health and wellbeing of the learners and members of school community.

The following school related interventions are therefore recommended and can be incorporated in the school life skills program which should be driven by learners and teachers for ownership and sustainability of the program.

5.3.1. School related interventions

- It is important to address alcohol use during the primary school years as the female learners start using alcohol before the age of 12. A greater awareness of the consequences of alcohol use may help learners to delay the initiation of drinking thus reducing alcohol use and abuse in the adolescent and later years. However, these interventions need to be continued into the high school years.
- Intervention strategies, sensitive to gender difference, should be designed with the participation of the learners to ensure sustainability of the program and encourage learner ownership. Programmes should aim at equipping female learners with insight, decision making skills, skills to resist alcohol use, knowledge about alcohol and its implications as well as aim at instilling positive values, changing perceptions, attitudes and beliefs which are believed to have an influence on risky behaviours like alcohol use. Intervention strategies should aim at improving the self-esteem of females. Many health education specialists are of the view that improving self-esteem of young people helps them to resist negative peer pressure and thus decreasing the likelihood of being involved in health compromising behaviours (Colquhoun, 1997).
- Active learning through the use of group discussions and role play activities should be used as strategies in the school program designed to curb alcohol use among female learners. These are effective in ensuring that learners participate and engage with information that they would have gained from the teachers. Existing evidence also shows that learning is promoted when learners work regularly and productively with other learners (Edwards 1998). Group discussions may encourage learners to reflect on what they know and therefore encourage active participation. Role playing activities would allow the learners to go through a step by step guided process on how to apply different skills e.g. how to resist negative peer pressure.
- Trained female peer educators selected by learners themselves should also be involved in intervention strategies. Training of female peer educators will help to make sure that they give other peers unbiased information which is accurate. It has been established in the literature that peer education is cost effective and it can effectively influence the knowledge and attitudes of learners since young people are

strongly influenced by the attitudes and behaviours of their peers (UNAIDS, 1999; Youth Peer Education Network, 2005).

- Female learners should also be given workshops on how to cope with stress. They should be equipped with effective coping strategies e.g. accommodative coping which involves efforts to adjust to the circumstances mainly through the use of cognitive methods of reframing, acceptance or by diverting their attention from the stressful situation by thinking positively or doing constructive activities (Compas et al., 2001; Walker, Smith, Garber & Van Slyke, 1997).
- Learners should also be taught how to critically assess media presentations about alcohol.
- Female role models or celebrities could play an important role in alcohol use interventions targeting female adolescents. The significant influence of role models with whom adolescents identify would be able to engage adolescents on topics such as alcohol use and abuse.

This study also recommends that monitoring and control strategies in schools be strengthened. It was evident from the findings that school activities for example school trips are used as opportunities by female learners to use alcohol. This raises concerns of monitoring and control in the school environment and during school activities. The Department of Basic Education should urgently look into this.

5.3.2. Interventions for parents

- Parents should be an important target audience of interventions for the female learners. Workshops for parents on alcohol use and its implications as well as the importance of good parent-child relations are needed. For example parents should be encouraged to spend time talking to their daughters about life skills including alcohol use and its implications.
- They should openly express their love and support and care to their daughters so as to boost their self-esteem which will help them to fight negative peer pressure and will make be it easier for them to communicate about anything with their parents.
- Parents should also be encouraged to be aware of their daughters' whereabouts and activities at all times.
- Parents should be made aware of their significant influence as role models and be encouraged to be respectable role models to their daughters.

5.3.3. Interventions for Communities

- It emerged from the data that alcohol is easily available and accessible to female learners in their communities. This study thus recommends high community participation to curb alcohol use among female learners.
- This can be done by first educating communities on the Liquor Act no 59 of 2003 and urging them to report any taverns, shebeens or liquor outlets that are not complying with the law, especially those selling alcohol to persons below the age of 18.
- Collaboration between the local South African Police Services (SAPS) and the communities is vital in curbing alcohol use among adolescents in general. Police should ensure proper monitoring to control the sales of alcohol to adolescents. Adolescents should also be encouraged to take part in these community efforts to fight alcohol use by adolescents, they should be encouraged to report anyone selling alcohol to them or their peers because they are aware of the people who sell alcohol to them.
- Awareness campaigns about the risks of alcohol use, especially among learners should also be conducted in communities. It should be highlighted that being an accomplice to adolescents in gaining access to alcohol, is wrong and is as good as destroying their future. The use of community action programmes is supported by Parry (2001) who contends that these interventions do not only help in disseminating information to community members, but also help to change their norms, values, attitudes about alcohol and drug use in general.

5.4. Recommendations targeting Policy makers

- It is recommended that alcohol use among female learners should be given priority by policy makers since this has a huge impact on the future generation and the South Africa society as a whole.
- Policy makers, health specialists, social workers, adolescents, parents, NGO's, government, media people, and those involved in alcohol industry i.e farmers, tarvern owners, shebeen owners and other liquor outlet owners should engage in consultative processes in the formulation of policies regarding alcohol use among children.

- Participants in the study reported that South African Liquor Act no 59 of 2003 is not operational since some alcohol outlets still sell alcohol to persons under the age of 18. This calls for policy makers to invest more effort in the enforcement of the legislation framework and the evaluation and research to produce evidence about the effectiveness of the policies. Policy makers should constantly monitor and evaluate the policies and laws pertaining to young people e.g. alcohol sales to minors. Stricter control and law enforcement in this regard is required as the legal consequences, combined with information from researchers, and the support of parents and other stakeholders should advocate and lobby for the banning of alcohol adverts especially those that are targeting and appealing to children and adolescents.
- Greater dialogue or discussions between various stakeholders (health specialists, social workers, policy makers, adolescents, parents, NGO's, government, media people, and those involved in alcohol industry etc.) need to be facilitated to provide innovative health promoting media based campaigns to counteract the negative health related messages accessed through the media.

5.5. Recommendations for future research

- It was evident from the study findings that the problem of alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners poses a serious threat not only to the learners but to the society at large. It is therefore recommended that this problem be given great attention by researchers and the government. Researchers should conduct more qualitative studies among larger samples ***involving a number of high schools in the Western Cape*** so as to be able to build stronger knowledge base for generalised interventions.
- Furthermore it is recommended that future research in the Western Cape province could also include female adolescents between the ages of 12 – 17 years whether in or out of school. This will help to gain wider knowledge about the problem from all adolescents and help design intervention suitable for all age groups.
- The government should provide ongoing support to researchers focusing on alcohol use and abuse among adolescents in the province.

5.6. Chapter summary

This chapter presented the conclusion and recommendations for the study. Various strategies aimed at curbing the local alcohol use among female adolescents have been highlighted in this chapter.

The detrimental consequence of alcohol use and abuse among female adolescents cannot be ignored and call urgently for all stakeholders to unite to better protect adolescents against alcohol use and abuse.

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Appendix 1

Letter to School Principal

University of KwaZulu-Natal

School of Psychology

Private Bag X540001

Durban

4000

12 September 2011

The Principal

Dear Sir

RE: Alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners: A qualitative approach

I am a student doing my Masters degree in Health Promotion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College). In order to fulfill the requirements for the completion of my postgraduate degree, I am conducting research on alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners in Western Cape. My supervisor for this project is Professor Anna Meyer-Weitz. The increasing levels and more frequent use of alcohol among females especially those in younger age groups have been noted with concern worldwide. The aim of the study is to provide a qualitative understanding of alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners in Western Cape. The specific objectives of the study are,

- To explore factors contributing to female adolescents alcohol use and abuse.
- To understand the role played by peers, family and environmental factors in female adolescents' alcohol use and abuse.

- To explore the role played by media in influencing female adolescents' use and abuse of alcohol.
- To understand female adolescents' perceptions of the risks associated with alcohol use and abuse.

The targeted population for the study are grade 9 female learners. I am requesting permission to conduct this study at your institution. I will forward you the final version of the research proposal as soon as all amendments have been effected. Upon completion of the study I undertake to provide you with a copy of the dissertation. Please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or myself if you have any further queries concerning this subject.

Yours faithfully,

Ms. Thokozani Hlomani

Cell: 0737558720

211556732

Prof. Anna Meyer-Weitz

Telephone: 031-2607618 Facsimile: 031-2602618

(Supervisor)

Appendix 2

University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethical Clearance Letter



Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag 454001
DURBAN, 4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 8350
Fax No: +27 31 260 1609
research@ukzn.ac.za

22 December 2011

Mrs Tl Hlomani (211556732)
School of Psychology

Dear Mrs Hlomani


PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/1339/011M
PROJECT TITLE: Alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners in Wellington: A qualitative approach

In response to your application dated 12 October 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.
PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully


.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc: Supervisor – Prof Anne Meyer-Weitz
cc: Ms Swan der Westhuizen

Appendix 3

Learner consent forms

University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal

School of Psychology

Private Bag X540001

Durban

4000

16 September 2011

Dear Learner,

I am a student, doing my Masters degree in Health Promotion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My study seeks to provide a qualitative understanding of alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners. The study will explore factors contributing to female adolescents' use and abuse of alcohol, as well as understanding the role played by peers, family, environment and media in influencing the use and abuse of alcohol among female adolescents.

Your participation in this study would be much appreciated. If you do choose to volunteer, you will take part in a focus group discussion with 6 to 10 other female learners, where they will discuss topics relating to alcohol use and abuse among female learners, as well as the role of peers, family and media influence in alcohol use. Although the discussion will be tape-recorded, all of the information will be strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. You will not be required to reveal any personal information and will remain completely anonymous as your name will not be recorded at any stage. The principal, teachers, and parents will not have any access to the information you give. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any stage should you wish to do so.

Your contribution in participating in a focus group discussion and discussing these topics honestly and truthfully will be of great help in adding new insights to the body of knowledge and in designing interventions for female learners.

A copy of the final report will be made available to the principal of your school. You can contact him should you be interested to read it.

The arrangements concerning when and where the study is to take place will be communicated to you when they have been finalized, should you choose to contribute to the research. Each focus group discussion will take about one hour.

Please fill in the attached form if you have decided to participate, and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries regarding the study.

Best wishes

Thokozani Hlomani

Title of research study:

Alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners: A qualitative approach

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS:

I (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand and consent to the tape recording of the focus group discussion in which I am a willing and voluntary participant. I am aware that this discussion will be both anonymous and confidential, and that I will not be identified in any way in the finished dissertation.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire, and that this will not result in any form of disadvantage.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

Please tear off and keep for future reference

Researcher: Ms. Thokozani Hlomani

0737558720

Supervisor: Prof. Anna Meyer-Weitz

School of Psychology

University of Kwazulu-Natal

(031) 260 7618

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

THANK YOU

Appendix 4

Consent form for individual interview

University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal

School of Psychology

Private Bag X540001

Durban

4000

16 September 2011

Dear Learner,

Study Topic: Alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners: A qualitative approach

I am Thokozani Hlomani working with Professor Anna Meyer-Weitz from the University of KwaZulu-Natal on a study to understand the use of **alcohol use among female high school learners**. The study will explore factors contributing to female adolescents use and abuse of alcohol, as well as understanding the role played by peers, family, environment and media in influencing the use and abuse of alcohol among female adolescents.

Your participation in this study would be much appreciated. If you do choose to volunteer, you will take part in an individual interview, where you will discuss topics relating to alcohol use and abuse among female learners, as well as the role of peers, family and media influence in alcohol use. Although the discussion will be tape-recorded, all of the information will be strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. You will not be required to reveal any personal information and will remain completely anonymous as your name will not be recorded at any stage. The principal, teachers, and parents will not have any

access to the information you give. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any stage should you wish to do so.

Your contribution in participating in an interview, and discussing these topics honestly and truthfully will be of great help in adding new insights to the body of knowledge and in designing interventions for female adolescents.

I will make a copy of the final research report available to the principal of your school so that you will have access to it if you are interested in reading it.

The arrangements concerning when and where the study is to take place will be communicated to you when they have been finalized, should you choose to contribute to the research. Each interview will take about half an hour.

In case you want to withdraw information given after the interview, or if you would like to have more information about the study, you can call me on 0737558720 (Ms Thokozani Hlomani- Nyawasha) or Prof Anna Meyer Weitz on 031-260 7618. Further information about the study can also be obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal by contacting: Ms Phumelele Ximba, Tel: 031 260 3587; Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Please fill in the attached form if you have decided to participate.

Best wishes

Thokozani Hlomani

Please fill and sign the section below and tear off this section to keep for future reference

PARTICIPANT’S FORMALISATION OF CONSENT:

I (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand and consent to the tape recording of the interview in which I am a willing and voluntary participant. I am aware that this discussion will be both anonymous and confidential, and that I will not be identified in any way in the finished dissertation.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire, and that this will not result in any form of disadvantage.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

Appendix 5

Interview schedule

Topic: Alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners: A qualitative approach

NB: One interview schedule was used to guide the focus group discussions and individual interviews.

Introduction for focus group discussions

Good afternoon and welcome to our session today. My name is Thokozani Hlomani and I am working with Professor Anna Meyer Weitz from the University of KwaZulu Natal on a project on **alcohol use and abuse on female high school learners**. Thank you for volunteering to be part of this study which seeks to explore factors contributing to alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners.

For this session we will be discussing your different views about alcohol use and abuse among female adolescents and before we start I would like us to take note of the following:

- This session will be tape recorded so that I do not miss any important points.
- I will be guiding the whole session, by asking questions and listening but will not be contributing anything during the conversations.
- Please feel free to speak out your views and note that there are no wrong answers.
- Respect for one another is important in this discussion, I will therefore recommend that one person should speak at a time so that we maintain order.
- I will ensure that all information discussed here is kept confidential. For this session we will use your first names but when I write my final report you will be given fake names.
- Information will be used for research purposes alone and raw data will be kept safely for five years according to the research policy of the university after which it will be destroyed.
- I believe that this study will contribute in designing interventions for females with regard to alcohol use and also to add to the body of knowledge.
- If you are not willing to discuss any aspect during the discussion for whatever reason please feel free to indicate this to me.

- Maximum participation from all of you is encouraged, I would therefore like to hear from all of you because your different views can contribute a lot in this study. If I feel that one of you is sharing a lot I may ask her to let others talk.

Introduction for individual interviews

Good afternoon and welcome to our session today. My name is Thokozani Hlomani and I am working with Professor Anna Meyer Weitz from the University of KwaZulu- Natal on a

project on **alcohol use and abuse on female high school learners**. Thank you for volunteering to be part of this study which seeks to explore factors contributing to alcohol use and abuse among female high school learners.

For this session we will be discussing your views about alcohol use and abuse among female adolescents and before we start I would like us to take note of the following:

- This session will be tape recorded so that I do not miss any important points.
- I will be guiding the whole session, by asking questions and listening but will not be contributing anything during the conversation.
- Please feel free to speak out your views and note that there are no wrong answers.
- I will ensure that all information discussed here is kept confidential. For this session we will use your first name but when I write my final report you will be given a fake name.
- Information will be used for research purposes alone and raw data will be kept safely for five years according to the research policy of the university after which it will be destroyed.
- I believe that this study will contribute in designing interventions for females with regard to alcohol use and also to add to the body of knowledge.
- If you are not willing to discuss any aspect during the interview for whatever reason please feel free to indicate this to me.

Interview schedule

1. Research shows that many adolescent females are using alcohol nowadays. What do you think about that?

- What do people in the community think about female learners who drink
- What do your friends think about other female learners who drink
- At what age do females start to drink?
- What are the circumstances and who are they often with when they drink?
- Do they plan to use alcohol?
- Can you describe for me a typical female who uses alcohol? You don't need to mention names.
- Where do they get alcohol from?
- What does the law say about drinking for people under 18? Is this law operational?
- What do you think about the law?

2. How do you think the following can influence females to use alcohol?

- Peers
- Family
- Circumstances/Situation
- Media/Celebrities

3. What kind of risks do female adolescents face when they use alcohol?

- Are you aware of any health consequences of alcohol?
- Are you aware of any social consequences of alcohol?
- Are there any other effects that you know of?

- Do you think female adolescents consider these risks before they drink?
- Do you think female adolescents believe they can be affected by any of these risks

4. How do you perceive media adverts with regard to alcohol?

- Tell me about any alcohol advert that you remember
- Why do you remember that advert
- What is the message in these adverts
- Where do you see these adverts? TV /Radio/Internet
- Do you think these adverts encourage females to use alcohol? If yes how?

5. Is there anything else you can tell me about alcohol use and abuse among females?

Appendix 6

Excerpts of individual interview

This appendix consists one of the individual interviews conducted with one female learner from a high school in the Western Cape Province.

I= Interviewee

R= Respondent

I: Thank you for being part of the research, I am going to ask you some questions, please feel free to respond in whatever way. I am going to start with a general question, (pause), um, research shows that many adolescent females are using alcohol nowadays. What do you think about that?

R: It's true many adolescent females are using alcohol. You can see like many films have got female teenagers using alcohol and even media like radio and TV they talk about alcohol and adolescents.

I: What do people in the community think about female learners who drink?

R: People in the community think that female learners who drink have no morals and they are loose and uuhm they don't have a future.

I: What do you mean by loose?

R: By being loose like they are easily taken advantage of or they are easily tempted by other people to take alcohol like people who are legally allowed to take alcohol so you find maybe 30 year old men tempting them to take alcohol so that they can sleep with them and in turn they get money from the men ja.

I: What do your friends think about female learners who drink?

R: Some think it's cool and it's part of growing up and part of changes in culture otherwise some think it is not good because it may affect the way you will concentrate on your studies.

I: You talked about being cool why do they think it is cool about drinking?

R: Uuum some think it is cool in the sense that uuhm, because the media shows it as something that is ok so people are moving with times, culture is more westernised now so drinking alcohol is ok from the way it is portrayed in the western countries through media then it is fine to drink.

I: At what age do the female learners start to drink?

R: Mostly they start at the age of 12/ 13 as soon as they leave primary school they go to high school then they start drinking.

I: Why do you think they start drinking when they go to high school?

R: Uuhm I think it's because at high school you meet new friends and some of them will be drinking alcohol and because you want to fit and be part of the group you end up drinking. I don't know but also when adolescents enter high school they also think they are now mature and can do what they want ja ... we all think like that anyway.

I: What are the circumstances and who are they often with?

R: Most of the times they are with their male peers and uuhm if not their male peers they will be with uuhm, their old boyfriends like over the age of 18 some also will be with their parents like mothers and grandmothers.

I: Ok, what are the circumstances that lead them to drink?

R: Uuhm peer pressure and uuhm daily pressures of life the problems they face in life they think alcohol is the solution.

I: What kind of problems?

R: Shortage of money maybe they are poor at home and not having just a source of income so maybe they meet a guy an older men who is drinking and then for them if they associate with that person because he is drinking and they can also get some money.

I: Anything else

R: Stress, they think alcohol relieves stress.

I: Do they plan to use alcohol?

R: Uuhm, some do plan because if they see maybe their parents or any member of family they will think it is normal it is a way of living so they will be knowing that at that age I will also start doing what my family is doing but some don't plan they just find themselves in the situation.

I: Ok, can you describe for me a typical female who use alcohol? You don't need to mention names.

R: Uuhm a typical female who uses alcohol ok, 1, she will be confident, and uuhm talks too much and uuhm the way she dresses, she dresses like what they call an up tight girl.

I: What kind of a girl is that?

R: Up tight girl or up class girl ok, when it comes to teenagers an uptight girl is someone who wears uuhm uuhm labels or expensive clothing.

I: Where do they get alcohol from?

R: From peers or boyfriends and some from their parents.

I: What does the law say about drinking for people under the age of 18?

R: The law prohibits people under 18 from drinking

I: Is this law operational?

R: Not at all because you find children under the age of 18 getting into shebeens, you find 6 year olds buying alcohol in shebeens so it is not operational nobody cares all people care about is making money.

I: So what do you think about this law?

R: It is just there and it's not.... pause... I think strict measures should be done for it to be implemented and for it to be operational because it just exists but no one is following it.

I: What kind of strict measures?

R: Maybe involve the police in the places that sell alcohol. Police should always be driving around those places that sell alcohol.

I: How do you think the following can influence females to use alcohol?

Peers

R: Uuhm peers ... for the sake of attachment with peers if you don't take alcohol if it is a group of people who take alcohol then you don't have that sense of belonging, you can not fit

in sometimes you are regarded as if you are nobody if you are not taking alcohol you are behind you are not moving with the times ja.

I: How can family influence females to use alcohol?

R: A family with no rules where nobody cares about what the kids are doing can influence because they you can do what you want like drinking alcohol.

I: Circumstances or situation?

R: Uuhm, if people do not have proper sources of support in terms of income and when they are stressed they might think maybe alcohol is the only solution.

I: Media/ Celebrities

R: Ja, it does mostly influence because most teenagers or adolescents they want to associate with some big star on TV so whatever that big star is doing and most of them they do take alcohol so they want to be like that somebody so they will drink.

I: What kind of risks do female adolescents face when they use alcohol? Are you aware of any health consequences of alcohol?

R: Yes, kidney problems, also fertility for females can be affected and also I just know of somebody who died recently because they discovered they had acids in their stomach because of alcohol, constant taking of alcohol.

I: Are you aware of any social consequences?

R: People who take alcohol especially females when they are maybe with their other female friends who don't take alcohol they are seen as inappropriate in society as if they don't think they have got no values so they are actually judged because of that.

I: Are there any other effects that you know of?

R: They can be taken advantage of and uuhm all that leading to low self esteem and leading to maybe crimes like prostitution to get money to buy alcohol so they end up losing focus.

I: Taken advantage of? by who, how?

R: They can be taken advantage of by males when they are drunk and they can be sexually abused.

I: Do you think female adolescents consider these risks before they drink?

R: Somehow they do but I don't think they really consider it an effect most of them they say I will jus drink to a certain extent and then I will stop but the moment you start you will never stop.

I: Do you think they believe they can be affected?

R: No, I don't think so they look at other people who have been drinking so they say she has been doing it all along she is fine so I can drink and I will be fine.

I: Ok, how do you perceive media adverts with regard to alcohol?

R: The message that they say is uuhm.... pause... ok, they do say that it is not to be taken by people under the age of 18 and all that but the way they advertise they make it look like it is something good and obviously females will be attracted and will feel like taking it. The message they potray and the way they do it they actually speak different languages.

I: Can you tell me of any advert that you remember?

R: I like the hunters" one, ok no, you know the Vuyo one? In the hunters dry there is this cool guy and Vuyo the cool guy he is cool because of the alcohol ja, because of the hunters dry whatever it is.

I: Why do remember this advert?

R: I think I just noticed that for I think for 3 of the hunters dry advert I noticed that they use this one guy Vuyo and it makes me wonder why they use the same person.

I: Anything else that makes you remember this advert?

R. Uuhm, I think the advert is shown almost daily on TV.

I: What is the message in these adverts?

R: The message is that the guy is cool because he is taking Hunters.

I: Where do you see these adverts? TV/Radio/ Internet

R: TV

I: Ok, do you think these adverts encourage females to use alcohol?

R: Yes it does

I: How?

R: Uuhm, one of the adverts actually has got a lady dressed so nicely which Vuyo had to look at and he got attracted to that lady and there was alcohol involved so obviously females will start to think ok, fine it's cool so I should associate with guys drinking and dress nicely so that I can attract cool guys like Vuyo.

I: Alcohol use is also seen as a sign of independence. What do you think about this statement?

R: I don't think it is true

I: Why do you say that?

R: It doesn't show a sign of independence and I don't think it is seen as a sign of independence. Uuum, from my point of view I think it's seen as a sign of lack of control and uuhm basically like you can't control yourself and you think alcohol can give you direction so it's not actually independence.

I: Is there anything else you can tell me about alcohol use and abuse among females.

R: It's not like females are abused by people that they don't know but it's also people that they drink with who end up abusing them

I: What kind of abuse are you talking about?

R: Physical, verbal, sexual and emotional and also ja think that's it

I: Okay thank you very much for participating in the study.

Appendix 7

Excerpt for focus group discussion

This appendix consists one of the focus group discussions conducted with a group of female learners from a high school in the Western Cape Province.

M= Moderator

P=Participant

M: Ok, guys my first question goes like this (pauses) research shows that many adolescent females are using alcohol nowadays. What do you think?

P1: That is true guys there is even a saying that says girls used to cook like their mothers now they drink like their fathers (other participants laugh).

M: huh meaning

P6: It means that in the past girls were known to be doing house work with their mothers but now they drink a lot like their fathers.

P3: Long back drinking alcohol was not for girls, girls were expected to stick to female roles for example doing house work but now they spend much time drinking alcohol which has always been seen as a male thing.

P1: Many female adolescents are drinking alcohol nowadays that is true.

M: Moving on, what do people in the community think about female learners who drink?

P5: Some people in the community are against it

P4: and well some are not, I mean most people even females in our community drink so who would give a fuss even if a female learner drinks alcohol.

M: Going back to P5 why exactly are some community members against female learners drinking alcohol?

P5: Because they are afraid of what will happen to the learner when they are drunk, a lot can happen to them.

M: Like what?

P10: They can be raped.

P2: Some they say it just does not seem right for a female to drink alcohol and if you drink alcohol they say you lose respect and dignity.

M: What do your friends think about female learners who drink?

P3: My friends are against it

P7: Me and my friends drink so we definitely think it is cool

M: Cool?

P7: yep! we just do it for fun

P6: That is true most female learners think it is cool to drink alcohol.

M: So at what age do females start to drink?

P1:12

P9: around 13- 14 years

P8: some even start at 9 years, there are some adults who give beer to their children.

M: Okay that takes me to my next question that says what are the circumstances that lead the female learners to start using alcohol and who are they often with when they drink?

P5: often drink with friends, if you depend on your friends for support and love you will do all it takes to be part of them so if they drink alcohol then you will also drink.

P6: Boyfriends, there are some girls who drink to impress their boyfriends. Most of these girls are dating boys who drink so they also drink to impress them.

P9: Some female learners drink because they have stress, they can be having problems at home or school and because they have no one to talk to about their problems they drink alcohol. Most of the times they drink with friends.

M: Do the female learners who drink plan to use alcohol?

P2: Yes, it is planned

P4: they plan, there is what we call "schemes" where we contribute money and buy alcohol.

P7: We sit down and plan that this weekend we are going to drink and then we contribute money to buy the alcohol.

P10: Like on weekends and occasions like Christmas female learners plan that they are gonna be drinking booze, like for Christmas holidays you can find girls drinking everyday. Ja, so all this is planned, money is put aside for that.

M: So you all agree that it is planned

(All participants say yes)

M: Can you describe for me a typical female who uses alcohol? You don't have to mention names

P6: They do not concentrate on their school work especially on Fridays and Mondays (other participants laugh) I am serious guys it is like on Fridays they will be already planning where and who they will be drinking with and on Mondays its hangover.

P2: You are right they also seem disrupted on such days

M: What do some of you have to say?

P5: hmm some of the female learners who drink have got scars on their faces, they like fighting.

M: really!

P5: some of them seem as if they have got issues as if something is bothering them they are just aggressive they like fighting.

M: Where do the female learners that drink get the alcohol from?

P10: from taverns and shebeens

P7: buy from shops like shoprite, pick and pay etc

P4: also buy from liquor stores

P2: sugar daddies also buy alcohol for the girls. In our community there are guys known as "amarhuzu" or some will know them as money makers they have a lot of money and they have places where they hang out so some girls go to those places when they want money,

clothes and alcohol and these money makers buy the alcohol for them. These guys attract a lot of girls.

P1: Some girls also lie to their parents, that there is money wanted at school and when they get the money they buy alcohol from the taverns and shebeens.

M: Ok, but what does the law say about drinking for people under 18? Is this law operational?

P3: The law says that alcohol should not be sold to people under the age of 18

P2: This law is not operational at all because children under 18 can still access alcohol.

P6: It is evident that this law is not working because we see many children under 18 drinking

M: What then do you think about this law?

P4: Not working even if the government puts the age limit to 21 it will not work because there are people who sell alcohol to children who are under 18.

M: Do you mean to tell me that even if they see that you are under 18 there are some people who still sell alcohol to children under 18?.

P4: Ja, they do not care all they want at the end of the day is money.

P7: Children under 18 also ask adults to buy alcohol for them and they do.

P1: Big bodies can also act as a disguise like myself as you can see I am big I can go to any place and buy alcohol now no one can tell that I am 15 because of my body.

M: Moving on, how do you think the following can influence females to use alcohol?

M: Peers

P9: Peers do influence a lot when it comes to promiscuous behaviours like drinking alcohol

M: How?

P9: Most female learners are put under pressure by peers to use alcohol and because they want to fit in the group they end up drinking.

P10: Some friends say you are stupid if you do not drink

P5: Friends can also tell you all the wrong things like, if you want to relieve stress drink alcohol or that alcohol makes you feel good things like that.

P4: I agree with P9 you get a sense of belonging in a group if you drink with your friends

M: Family?

P5: family can influence like if parents drink alcohol a lot then the child will also drink because they see their parents drink.

P1: there are some parents that also do not care about their children, I mean they let them do anything they want to do

P2: Yea, you guys are right there are some who are not strict (pauses)

M: Who?

P1: I mean some parents they allow their girls to do anything.

M: anything like what?

P1: like drink alcohol and not sleep at home

M: Circumstances/situations (pause) how do they influence a female learner to use alcohol?

P3: There are female learners who drink alcohol because they are poor at home

M: Ok, how does being poor at home influence one to drink alcohol?

P3: Some girls who are from poor families go to places where alcohol is sold to look for men who will give them money, so they end up drinking alcohol and these men sleep with them and give them money.

P3: At times situation at home influences one to drink alcohol

M: What kind of situation?

P3: If a girl is being abused (verbally, emotionally / even physically) at home they can end up drinking alcohol so as to cope with the abuse.

P5: Parties can also influence female learners to drink alcohol

M: How?

P5: Usually parents allow their children to have parties at home or even allow them to attend parties at friends' places and what they do not know is that their children drink alcohol at these parties.

M: Ok, and where will be the parents when these parties are taking place?

P4: At times they will not be there and in some cases they will not know that there is alcohol.

P1: Usually there is no party without alcohol

P6: No alcohol no vibe (other participants laugh) that is what people say

M: And what does that mean?

P6: You can not throw a party without alcohol, alcohol makes the party fun and lively.

P1: If you are at a party and you are shy and you drink alcohol it drives away the shyness and you can dance and do anything because of the alcohol.

M: How do you perceive media adverts with regard to alcohol?

P2: Do you mean the ones that come out on TV?

M: I am talking about any alcohol advert that you know of

P2: I think media adverts do influence alcohol use

M: How do they influence/ what makes you say that?

P2: Because of their message, they tell you good things about alcohol.

M: Can you tell me of any alcohol advert that you remember?

P4: Are those Jack Russels? no they are mine then it says savanna, It's dry but you can drink it. The advert is for savanna

P10: Vuyo sees things that other people can't see, where he gets his inspiration from I have no idea hahaha this one is for Hansa Pilsner.

P3: Amstel lager, you feel good on the inside.

P7: Carling black label, Champions drink responsible.

P8: There is the Saaz Hop one advertising Hansa Pilsner

M: What makes you remember these adverts?

P4: Because they are funny, they always crack me up.

P5: They come out almost every 5 minutes on TV usually when family is watching a soapy.

P7: Yeah, you know the way the adverts come out it is as if they know that everyone is watching a soapy and they keep showing the adverts.

M: What is the message in these adverts?

P9: The message is that we should drink they tell you that alcohol is refreshing so it makes you want to experiment.

P4: That alcohol is cheap and cool to drink

P3: The adverts only show the positive side of alcohol that it cools you down and makes you relax but they do not show the negative side of alcohol.

P2: On these adverts even if it is written no under 18 adolescents do not take that seriously, the message is that we should drink

M: Where do you see these adverts?

P6: TV and radio

P5: and also from catalogues from shoprite, checkers, pick n pay. These catalogues even show you the price reductions

P9: You can also see the adverts on the billboards

M: Do you think these adverts encourage females to use alcohol? If yes how?

P6: Yes, they encourage. These adverts should be banned

P3: They encourage because they make you crave for alcohol because of the message.

M: Are you aware of any health consequences of alcohol?

P8: I heard that alcohol can cause liver disease

P5: and also brain problems

P9: I think HIV can also be linked to alcohol because if a female learner is drunk men can take advantage of them and they can sleep with anyone as in have sex and not know the following day who they slept with, obviously the men will not use condoms.

P10: true the girl can also get STI's when they have unprotected sex because they are drunk they won't know what is happening to them.

P4: Alcohol can also affect an unborn baby if the mother drinks when she is pregnant.

M: Any social consequences of alcohol that you know of?

P5: Alcohol can increase crime rate, it can cause learners to steal because they are not working and they want money to buy alcohol.

P3: Alcohol can make the female learners not to respect their parents, teachers and other people in the society.

P8: Girls can be gang raped when they are drunk, so alcohol can increase the rate of rape cases.

(others start whispering)

M: Ok girls is there something that I need to know

P4:She just reminded us of a girl who was gang raped when she was drunk and later on killed, her body was found the next day and it was terrible... eish.....

P7: they even put an alcohol bottle in her vagina

M: Besides the ones that you guys have mentioned are there any other effects that you know of?

P3: Teenage pregnancy, ja girls who drink have high chances of becoming pregnant because they are likely to have unprotected sex when drunk, they can't control themselves, I mean they are easily taken advantage of, guys will take advantage of that as my friend said.

P2: Some may even drop out of school because of alcohol, can't focus

P1: They become irresponsible parents like if they have children at a young age, they can't take good care of the baby because they are still children themselves and they still want to hang out with their friends.

P1: Female learners can be drugged, you know when you are drunk your alcohol can be poisoned like drugs can be put in your alcohol. There are even porn videos of some girls being shown around community, all this happens when they are drunk.

M: So tell me something do you think female learners consider these risks before they drink?

P3: No they do not (silence)

M: and what do others say

P2: I don't think learners consider these risks because usually they think it is cool and fashionable to drink alcohol and they don't think of the risks.

They all nod their heads in agreement

M: Moving on girls, alcohol is seen as a sign of independence among females? What do you think about this statement?

P6: The statement is not true because if you are independent you can do things on your own and not depend on anyone, but some of the girls who drink ask for money from boyfriends or have to sleep with men to get alcohol or money to buy some things they want.

P9: To me it's not independence but what I can say, uuuuh a sign of being desperate for attention or love because some girls drink because of problems at home.

P5: I agree with these guys but as teenagers at times when we see our friends drink alcohol we do think they are independent, they can do what they want no one tells them what to do.

P1: Ja true and you can even want to drink because you think your friend is independent.

M: Anything else?

Silence

M: Ok, thank you very much girls for participating in this study.