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Socio-Religious Issues in Alcoholic Consumption among Christian in Selected Orthodox Churches in Surulere Lagos Government, Lagos State

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ABSTRACT

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The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine Christian knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour on alcohol consumption in Nigeria, with a focus on members of selected Orthodox churches in Surulere Local Government of Lagos State. The study utilised a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data, utilising structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys to gather insights from church members. Participants were drawn from Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and Catholic churches. A total of 188 Orthodox Christians were interviewed, and 180 respondents completed the study questionnaire. Results showed that respondents between the ages of 22-67 years were interviewed. The mean age was 36.07% years, Sd +/- 7 years, 60% were married and 20% were single. The majority (60.5%) were male, 65% adults. It also shows that 37.8% have spent between 5-6 years in their local churches, and 58% have served in different capacities. The biblical position, health, and social knowledge about alcohol consumption are very high among the respondents. About 67.2% supported Christian can consume alcohol, and 67.8% believed it can affect their spiritual life. However, 39.4% reacted as very inappropriate to serve alcohol at church functions. The majority (69%) consume due to stress, in the party, among friends but believe it has to be in moderation. It was concluded that though the Bible has not specifically ruled against alcohol consumption but to be with all moderation.

Keywords: Alcoholic Consumption, Christianity, Lagos State, Nigeria, Socio-Religious Issues

Introduction

Alcohol, commonly known as ethanol, is a depressant substance found in beverages such as beer, wine, and distilled spirits (Collins & Kirouac, 2013). It is one of the oldest and most commonly used recreational substances, inducing "drunkenness," pleasure, decreased anxiety, enhanced sociability, drowsiness, and sensory impairment. Alcohol has both acute and long-term negative consequences. Short-term side effects include cognition impairment (Bruha, et al, 2012), dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and hangover-like symptoms (Brust, 2010). Addiction can cause alcohol use disorder, dependency, and withdrawal. The long-term repercussions include liver and brain damage, as well as an increased risk of cancer. These effects are more pronounced when used in excess or often. Some dangers may arise even with little or moderate intake. In severe circumstances, excessive alcohol consumption might result in loss of consciousness or even death. Drinking alcohol in moderation lowers the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, dementia, and gallstones, among other illnesses (Standridge, et al, 2004). By lowering stress and despair and raising happiness and euphoria, it can also enhance psychological well-being. Moderate alcohol usage may also enhance cognitive function (Baum-Baicker, 1985). Additionally, it can enhance cardiovascular health by raising high-density lipoprotein levels. Moderate alcohol use can improve social relationships by encouraging greater sharing and discussion.

Christianity, as a diverse religious faith, encompasses a spectrum of beliefs, traditions, and denominations, each contributing unique viewpoints on the appropriateness, permissibility, and implications of alcohol consumption. The Holy Bible, as the foundational text of Christianity, contains narratives, teachings, and references to alcohol, presenting a rich tapestry of insights that have been interpreted and applied diversely across Christian denominations and cultures. However, there are many arguments for and against consumption or level of alcohol consumption (Ansker, 2014). The history of Christianity reveals an evolving relationship with alcohol, marked by periods of prohibition, temperance movements, and varying degrees of acceptance or rejection of alcoholic beverages (McCracken, 2013). From the temperance movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries to contemporary debates within Christian communities, the attitudes toward alcohol have remained dynamic, influenced by cultural, theological, and societal factors.

Moreover, theological considerations are pivotal in shaping Christian perspectives on alcohol. Different theological interpretations of biblical passages, such as Jesus turning water into wine at the Wedding at Cana of Galilee or the warnings against drunkenness, have led to varying stances on the morality and moderation of alcohol consumption within Christian teachings (Wine, 2023). Contemporary society presents new challenges and contexts for understanding the relationship between Christianity and alcohol. Issues

such as alcoholism, substance abuse, societal norms, and cultural shifts necessitate a nuanced examination of how Christian principles and teachings intersect with the modern consumption of alcohol. It also describes the social effects of drinking. Alcohol use may have a financial impact on society through higher medical expenditures, decreased productivity, and legal fees. Accidents, injuries, and violence linked to alcohol consumption are among the health repercussions, as are health issues brought on by alcohol.

Alcohol drinking is a contentious issue in Christianity, with ongoing theological, ethical, and social debates. The research aims to explore the link between Christianity and alcohol usage, focusing on biblical allusions, historical viewpoints, and attitudes. It also explores theological and ethical conflicts, the impact of Christian institutions on views, and possible consensus or disagreement within Christianity. The lack of thorough research makes it difficult to understand how teachings and practices influence individual behaviours and group norms. The study aims to provide a more in-depth explanation and recommendations for dealing with this area of Christian life and ethics.

Statement of the Problem

The use of alcohol among Christians, particularly in Orthodox churches, is a contentious issue with social, ethical, and theological implications. Some groups advocate for total abstinence, while others tolerate moderate consumption. Despite these differing views, churchgoers continue to drink alcohol due to various social, cultural, and individual factors. The discrepancy between Christian teachings and actual drinking patterns is a significant issue, as individual drinking patterns often do not align with denominational standards. Alcohol use also has socio-religious implications, impacting social obligations, church community norms, and spiritual life. The lack of comprehensive studies on how Christian teachings influence attitudes and actions around alcohol consumption makes this issue even more challenging.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine the socio-religious issues surrounding alcohol consumption among Christians in selected Orthodox churches in Surulere, Lagos State. The specific objectives include:

1. To examine the biblical and theological perspectives on alcohol consumption among Orthodox Christians.
2. To assess the level of knowledge and awareness of church members regarding the effects of alcohol consumption on religious beliefs, health, and society.

3. To analyze the attitudes and behaviors of Christians towards alcohol consumption, including denominational differences in views and practices.
4. To investigate the influence of religious teachings and church doctrines on individual alcohol consumption habits.
5. To identify the social and cultural factors that contribute to alcohol use among Christians despite religious teachings.
6. To explore the implications of alcohol consumption on Christian spirituality, church functions, and community life.
7. To provide recommendations for addressing alcohol-related issues within Christian communities while balancing religious beliefs and public health concerns.

7 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the biblical and theological perspectives on alcohol consumption among Orthodox Christians?
2. How knowledgeable are church members about the effects of alcohol consumption on their religious beliefs, health, and society?
3. What are the attitudes and behaviors of Christians towards alcohol consumption, and how do they vary across different denominations?
4. How do religious teachings and church doctrines influence individual alcohol consumption habits?
5. What social and cultural factors contribute to alcohol use among Christians despite religious teachings?
6. What are the implications of alcohol consumption on Christian spirituality, church functions, and community life?
7. What strategies can be implemented to address alcohol-related issues within Christian communities while maintaining religious principles and promoting public health?

Conceptual Framework

The scientific word for a variety of compounds created when hydrogen and oxygen atoms join with carbon atoms is alcohol. All alcoholic beverages include ethanol, a particular little molecule that has an impact on the body each time it is consumed. The pattern of alcohol consumption on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis can be used to determine whether it is moderate or excessive drinking, with more than eight drinks per week for women and fifteen drinks per week for men indicating excessive or heavy drinking, or five or more standard drinks in a single day (de Menezes, 2013). Less than 1.5 litres of

wine or less than 3.5 litres of beer¹ and other alcoholic drinks, or less than 450 millilitres of spirits per week³, is considered moderate drinking, which is one drink or less in a day for women or two drinks or less in a day for men (Gormley, 2022).

In philosophy, there are differing philosophical opinions on alcohol usage; some think it is neither good nor evil, while others advise against it. According to Slingerland, alcohol may assist people in overcoming social obstacles, including establishing trust and reducing stress (Beilby, 2021), whereas Aristotle advocates moderation and hazardous excessive usage. According to Nietzsche, alcohol should be completely avoided as it depletes emotional and intellectual energy. While some philosophers think alcohol is immoral and can have negative effects, others think it can be used for good and enjoyed in moderation (Nicholls, 2009).

Sociologically, media exposure has a big impact on alcohol use, which is a social phenomena driven by institutions, values, and social conventions. Alcohol usage may be influenced by social environments such as the home, workplace, school, and community, as well as by social institutions like as universities. Alcohol intake is also influenced by cultural background (Tvarozkova, 2015), with immigrants being more likely to abuse it. Sociologists think that diagnosing alcoholism is frequently subjective and see it as a sign of social deviance (Sudhinaraset, et al, 2016). In general, institutions, cultural background, and social conventions all influence how much alcohol is consumed.

In psychology, drinking alcohol can have both beneficial and detrimental psychological consequences. Depression, anxiety, poor judgement, memory loss, learning disabilities, dementia, and social issues can all result from heavy drinking (Mosel, 2024). However, moderate alcohol use can boost mood, lower stress levels, and enhance cognitive function (Baum-Baicker, 1985). Drinking alcohol might make you jittery, anxious, and sick. On the other hand, moderate alcohol use may enhance mood and problem-solving skills, making it an essential component of a healthy lifestyle.

Biologically, alcohol is a poisonous chemical that has many detrimental biological effects on the heart, brain, and other organs. It impairs the brain's communication channels, which makes it challenging to think, move, and regulate speech, memory, balance, and judgement. Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome (WKS), a brain illness that causes forgetfulness, disorientation, and vision issues, as well as mental health issues including sadness and anxiety, might result from it. Alcohol abuse can harm the heart and result in excessive blood pressure, arrhythmias, stroke, and cardiomyopathy. Alcohol causes at least seven different forms of cancer, including bowel and breast cancer, making it a Group 1 carcinogen. Ion transfer across cell membranes, energy metabolism, and neurotransmitter function are further impacts that may result in serious brain damage and raise the risk of some malignancies.

Theoretical Framework

The expectancy theory of alcohol consumption is a psychological paradigm that proposes that people's beliefs about the consequence of their actions impact their behaviour. It implies that individuals who expect pleasant effects from alcohol are more inclined to drink, whilst those who predict negative outcomes are less likely (Goldman, et al, 1999). People may assume that consuming alcohol would promote social contact or relieve stress, but those who believe it will help reduce negative emotions such as anxiety or despair are more inclined to use alcohol. The idea has been supported by research on university students, teenagers, and those suffering from alcohol abuse. For example, college students who are more convinced that alcohol hinders condom usage drink more and engage in more unsafe sex (Santaguida, et al, 2023).

¹⁹ The social learning theory of alcoholism proposes that people learn to drink alcohol via observation and social interaction. This theory can aid in understanding and treating alcohol addiction by emphasising the importance of monitoring others, expectancies, reinforcement, and modelling. Seeing others partake in addictive behaviours, like smoking or gambling, may make them appear appealing. This is known as modelling. Conversely, reinforcement is the negative reinforcement that fortifies the behaviour and increases the likelihood of repeat (Marcovitz, et al, 2020). On the other hand, observational learning entails witnessing others receive rewards for engaging in compulsive behaviour. Children raised in houses with heavy alcohol usage, as well as those exposed to alcohol through TV shows, films, or podcasts, are more prone to develop alcohol issues. Recovery from alcoholism can entail learning via peer modelling of abstinence, as well as rehab and treatments that challenge expectations and perceived standards for peer-drinking behaviour (Cronce & Larimer, 2013).

Religious Framework

Alcohol consumption is regarded "haram" or banned in Islam. The Qur'an, hadith, and sunna all agree that alcohol is banned because it is addicting and contradicts Islamic norms of self-control and responsibility (Alhashimi, et al, 2018). Some Muslims avoid alcohol, consider it a sin to work in a restaurant or attend parties where alcohol is offered. Some imams emphasise accepting and forgiving individuals who use alcohol, thinking that God's forgiveness is greater than human sins (Michalak, 2009). Some people believe in understanding others and giving them second opportunities.

Buddhists avoid alcohol because it has the potential to create carelessness and obscure the mind, impeding progress along the Noble Eightfold Path (Assanangkornchai, 2002). Alcohol can impair mental clarity, cause unpleasant behaviour, and violate pledges. The repercussions of drinking in this life carry over into subsequent incarnations. Beliefs

concerning the permissibility of alcohol differ across schools and teachers, and some traditions broaden the prohibition on intoxicants to include other narcotics. Some spiritual beliefs use wine into ceremonies to signify the Buddha's blessings and the nectar of immortality (Scheuemann, 2017). Some recommend incorporating mindfulness into the process of drinking, such as asking why one desires to drink and dealing with urges in a healthy way.

Religious convictions, social conventions, and cultural views all have an impact on Yoruba alcohol usage in Nigeria (Asekun, 2022). Given that alcohol is seen as a component of African culture and religion, African traditional religious and customs like hosting guests and honouring ancestors have been said to encourage its use. Alcohol is drunk on weekends as well as at festivities, rites, funerals, and other special events (Nwosu, et al, 2022). In rural Yoruba regions, women's drinking status is correlated with their religious views, indicating that Africans drink because of their cultural and religious history. In Yorubaland, excessive and uncontrolled alcohol use can result in health issues like illness, mental health issues, disability, and even death (Mamman, et al, 2002). For this reason, traditionalists are prohibited from drinking. Thus, it is essential that the Yoruba people comprehend and control their alcohol use (Nwagu, et al, 2017).

Different Christian denominations hold different opinions on drinking. Both Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism often permit moderate alcohol use, which is frequently included in sacred rituals and ceremonies (Heath, 2000). Moderate alcohol use is normal and not usually linked to shame or moral failure (Pianalto, 2011). While Pentecostal and Protestant evangelical churches promote complete abstinence by citing Isaiah 5:11; Proverbs 23:21, 29-30, and 33; Titus 2:3; and Ephesians 5:18. This discrepancy has a big impact on people's beliefs and actions around alcohol. Medical knowledge and religious teachings about the body, health, and morality have an impact on Christians' health awareness about alcohol usage. The strong belief held by evangelical Christians that the **body is the temple of the Holy Spirit** may persuade adherents to refrain from alcohol in order to preserve physical cleanliness (Jenkins, 2005). When it comes to determining individual eating habits, health concerns typically take precedence over other factors. Nonetheless, Christians' decisions about alcohol use are also heavily influenced by moral considerations and well-informed choices. Research indicates that Christians are frequently impacted by moral connotations rather than just health-related information, and that moral implications might occasionally take precedence over scientific health information in Christian communities' health education programs (Jankowski et al., 2014).

Research Methodology

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⁶ The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of Christians regarding alcohol consumption. The methodology included the following components:

Research Design

² The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data, including structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys, to comprehensively analyze the issue.

Study Population and Sample Size

The study examined Orthodox Christian churches in Surulere, Lagos State, including Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and Catholic denominations, with 188 participants interviewed and 180 respondents completing a questionnaire.

Sampling Technique

A snowball sampling technique was employed to select participants. This method ensured that informed consent and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process.

Data Collection Methods

1. Structured Questionnaires: Used to gather quantitative data on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding alcohol consumption.
2. Interviews and Focus Group Discussions: Conducted with selected church members to gain deeper insights into their perceptions and experiences.
3. Field Survey: Conducted to collect demographic and denominational data on respondents.

Data Analysis

The study utilized descriptive statistics for quantitative data analysis, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative responses from interviews and focus groups, presenting findings using charts, and graphs.

¹³**Ethical Considerations**

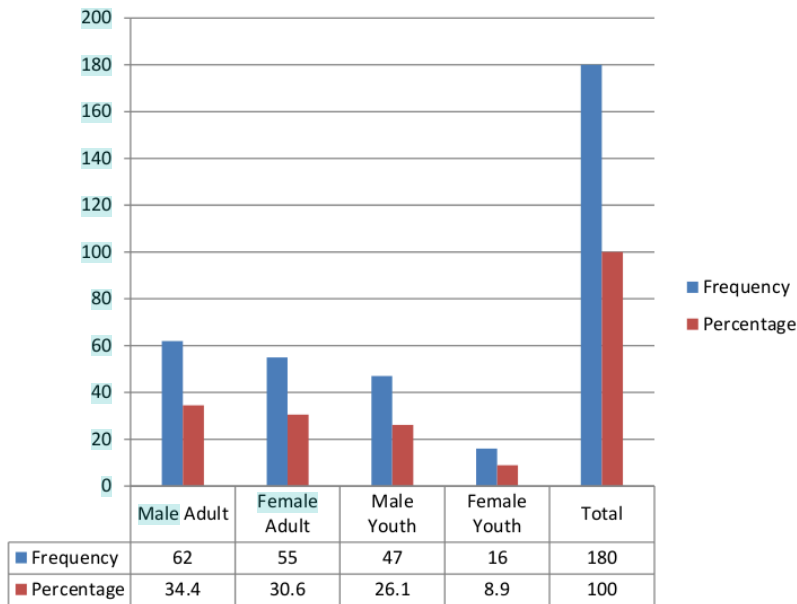
Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, ensuring informed consent and confidentiality of participants. The study adhered to research ethics protocols in handling sensitive religious and personal issues related to alcohol consumption.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The study questionnaire, which asked about the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of Christians from Orthodox churches in the Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State on alcohol consumption, was completed by 180 people. Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and Catholic mainstream congregations comprised the sample of responses.

Section 1: Research Demography

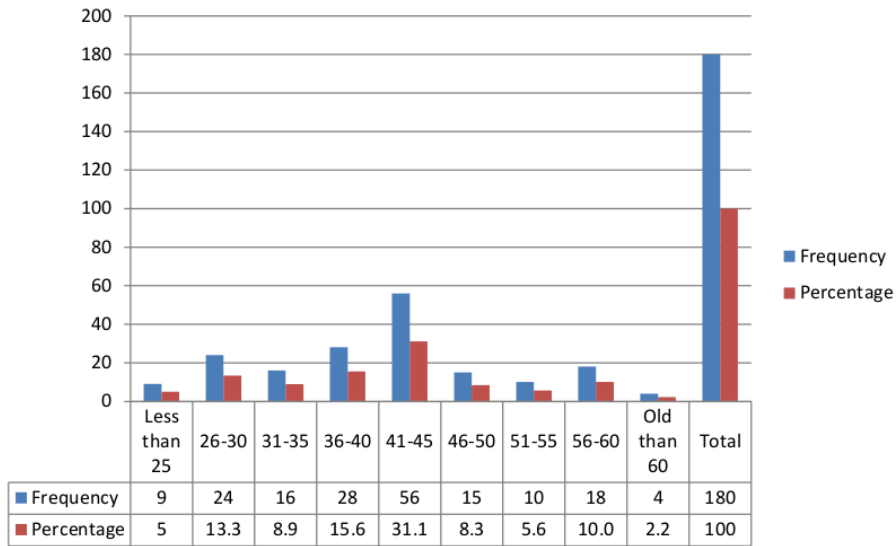
Chart 1: Gender



Source: Field survey, 2024

The respondents' gender is shown in Chart 1: In the sample population, there were 62 (34.4%) male adults, 55 (30.5%) female adults, 47 (26.1%) male youths, and 16 (8.8%) female youth responders. Males used 32.7 litres of alcohol per capita in 2016, while females consumed 12.2 litres. Nigerians drank the most alcohol in Africa in 2019—more than 13 litres per person (Conway, 2020; Abiona, 2019).

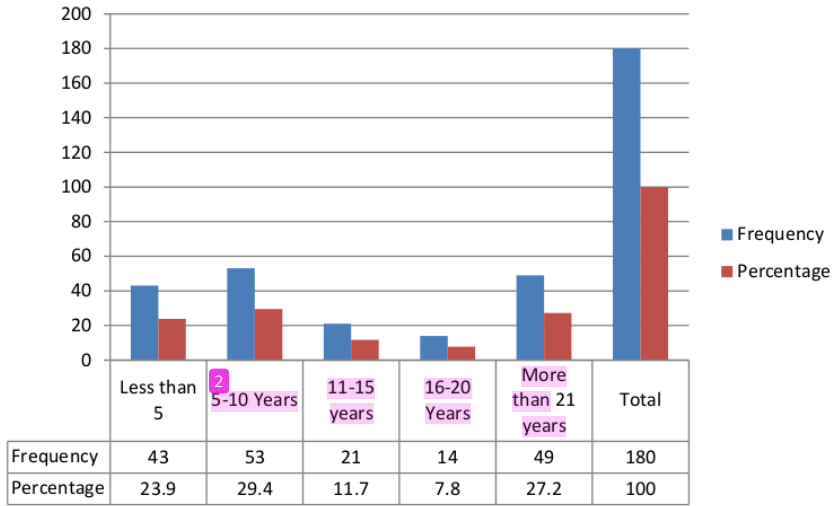
Chart 2: Age



Source: Field survey, 2024

The respondents' age is revealed in Chart 2: In the sample population, there were 9 (5%) less than 25 years old, 24 (13.3%) between ages 26-30, 16 (8.9%) between ages 31-35, 28 (15.6%) between ages 36-40, 56 (31.1%) between ages 41-45, 15 (8.3%) between ages 46-50, 10 (5.6%) between ages 51-55, 18 (10%) between ages 56-60, and 4 (2.2%) older than 60 respondents. With 3.78 litres of pure alcohol drunk per person aged 15 or older in 2020, Nigeria has one of the highest rates of alcohol consumption in Africa. This does not, however, include illicit and locally made alcoholic beverages. Less than one in five 16–17 year old reported drinking in 2023, compared to 1 in 100 12–13 year old (SAMHSA, 2023; Abiona, 2019).

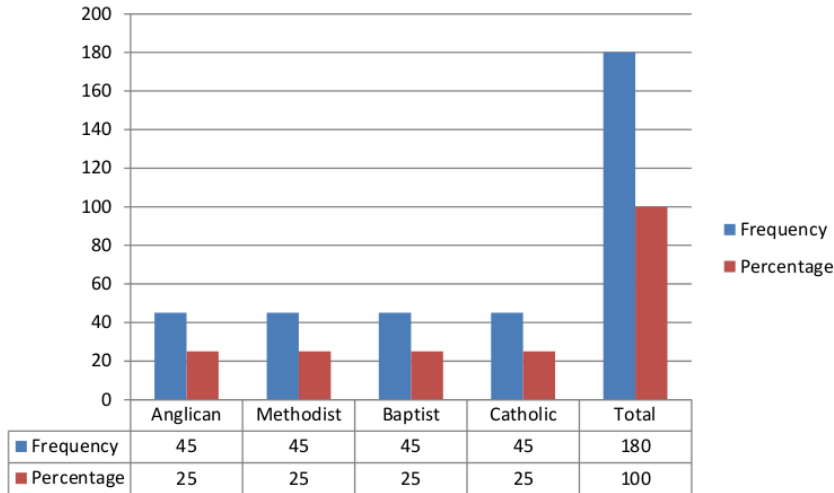
Chart 3: Duration of Church Membership and Attendance



Source: Field survey, 2024

The respondent's views on the number of years that they have worshipped in the selected parishes are shown in chart 3: In the sample population, there were 43 (23.9%) less than 5 years of church membership, 53 (29.4%) that have been members between 5–10 years, 21 (11.7%) that have been members between 11–15 years, 14 (7.8%) that have been members between 16–20 years, and 49 (27.2%) that have been members for more than 21 years.

Chart 4: Denominational Distribution of Respondents

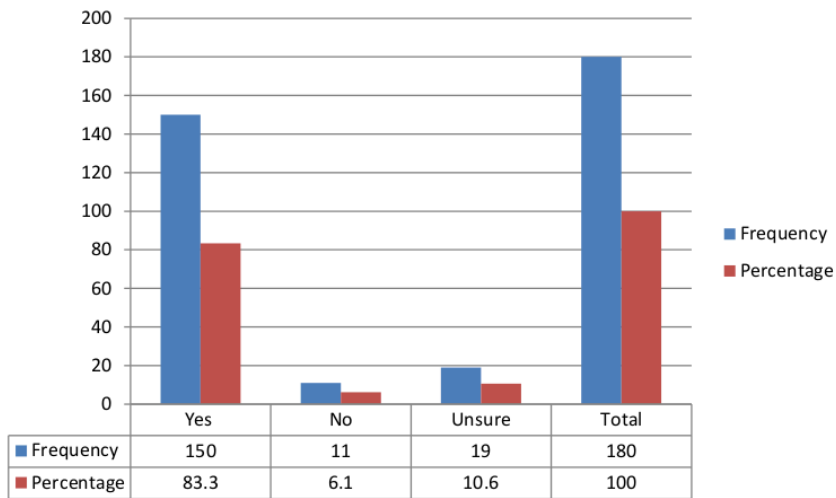


Source: Field survey, 2024

Chart 4 displays the respondents' denominational breakdown. There were 45 (25%) Anglicans, 45 (25%) Methodists, 45 (25%) Baptists, and 45 (25%) Catholics in the sample population. The Anglican population in Nigeria is estimated to be around 20 million people (McKinnon, 2015). The World Christian Database estimates 22 million Anglicans in Nigeria in 2015, but some argue these estimates are unlikely to be accurate (MuKinnon, 2021), while the Methodist Church Nigeria has about 5 million people. According to the Nigerian Baptist Convention's (NBC) 2023 census, there were 8,925,000 members and 14,523 churches. The Catholic population in Nigeria, representing 10-15% of the entire populace, is estimated to range from 20 to 32 million individuals (Lasserre, 2024).

Section B: Level of Member’s Knowledge, Attitude and practices of Alcohol Consumption in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos.

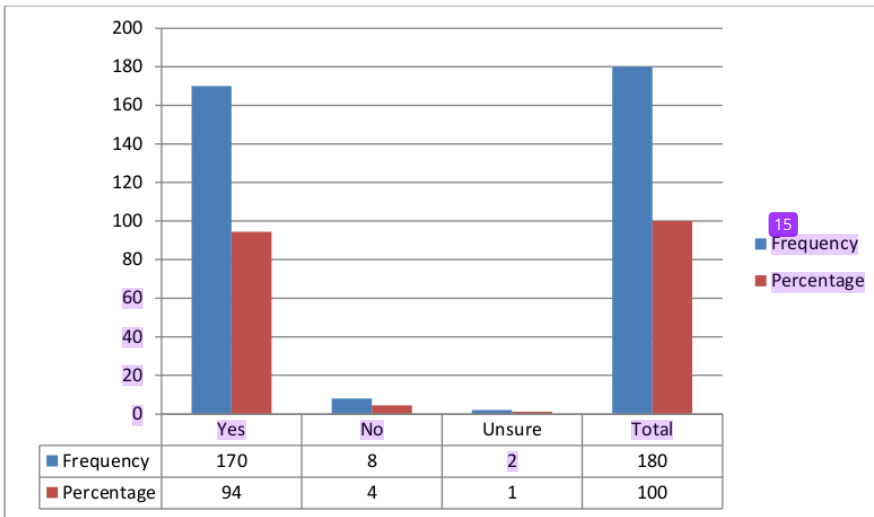
Chart 5: Alcohol and its consumption remain controversial among Christians in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State.



Source: Field survey, 2024

The respondents' opinions about whether alcohol and its usage are still debatable among Christians in Lagos State's Surulere Local Government Area are displayed in Chart 5. 19 (10.6%) were undecided, 11 (6.1%) disagreed, and 150 (83.3%) agreed that it is still contentious.

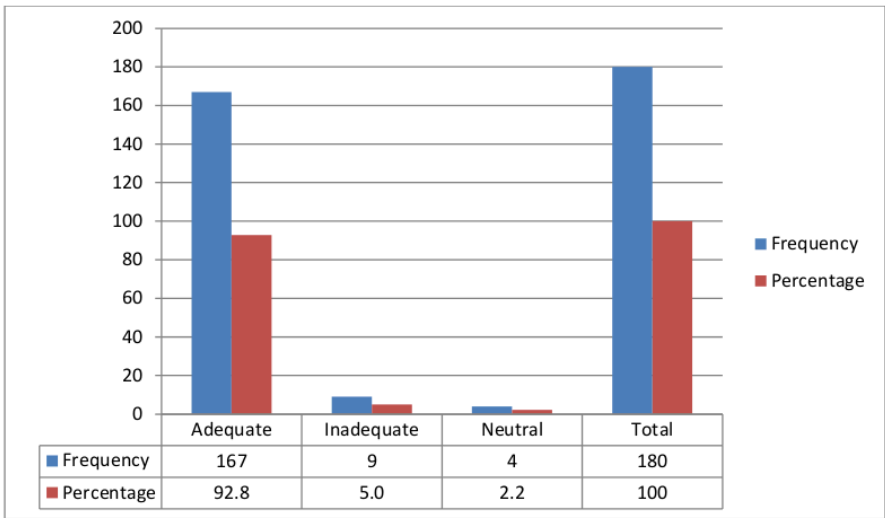
Chart 6: Are you aware of your denomination's position on alcohol consumption?



Source: Field survey, 2024

The respondents' degree of awareness and understanding of their denomination's stance on the consumption of alcohol is displayed in Chart 6. Of those surveyed, 170 (94%) said they knew their denomination's theological position on alcohol use, 8 (4%) disagreed, and 2 (1%) were not sure.

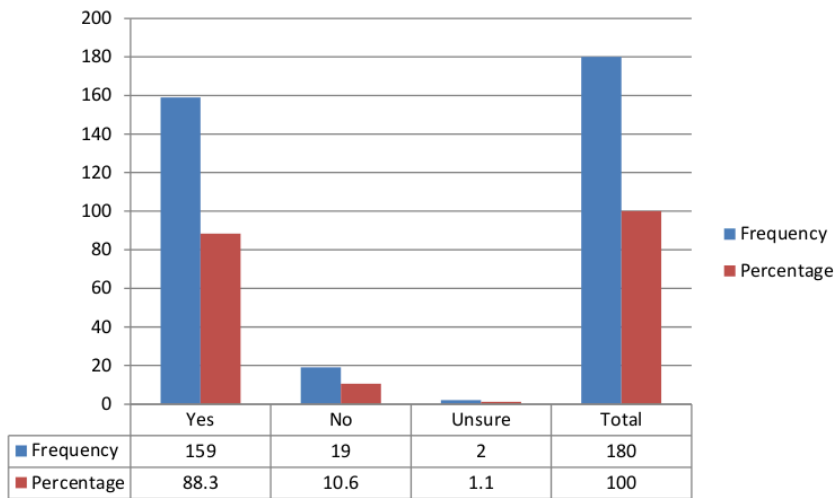
Chart 7: Are you aware of the impacts of alcohol consumption on religious beliefs, health status, and society?



Source: Field survey, 2024

According to chart 7, the following is the degree of knowledge and awareness on how consumption of alcohol affects society, health, and religious beliefs: 167 (92.8%) respondents said they understood the impacts of alcohol intake on their social, religious, and health lives well enough; 9 (5%) said they didn't understand the effects of alcohol consumption well enough; and 4 (2.2%) weren't sure.

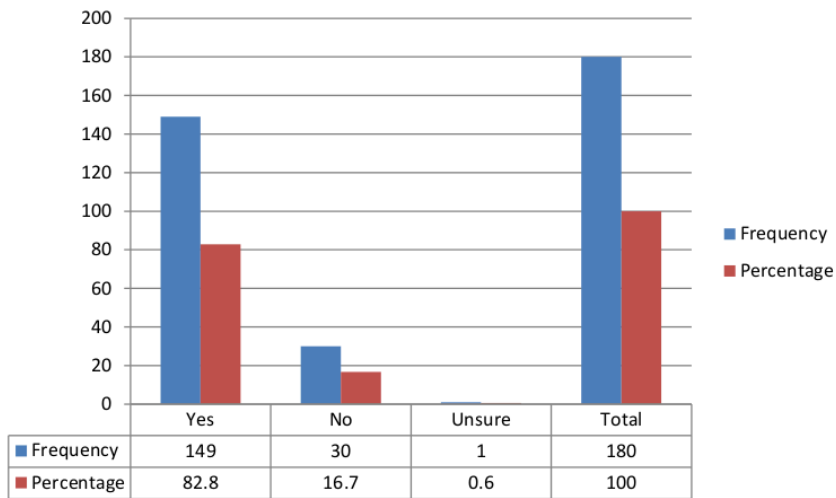
Chart 8: Are you familiar with biblical verses that either endorse or condemn alcohol consumption, as well as those that advocate for abstinence?



Source: Field survey, 2024

Char 8 reveals that 159 (88.3%) respondents are familiar with biblical verses that either endorse or condemn alcohol consumption, 19 (10.6%) claimed that they are not aware of necessary biblical passages that talk about alcohol and its consumption, while 2 (1.1%) were unsure. Some respondents believed that the Bible encouraged moderate alcohol use, citing verses such as Ecclesiastes 9:7, Psalm 104:15, Proverbs 31:6, and 1 Timothy 5:23. Others, however, maintain that Ephesians 5:18 encourages being filled with the Spirit rather than being wasted on wine. While Titus 2:3 denounces being addicted to drink, Galatians 5:19–21 lists wicked behaviours including alcohol intoxication and orgies.

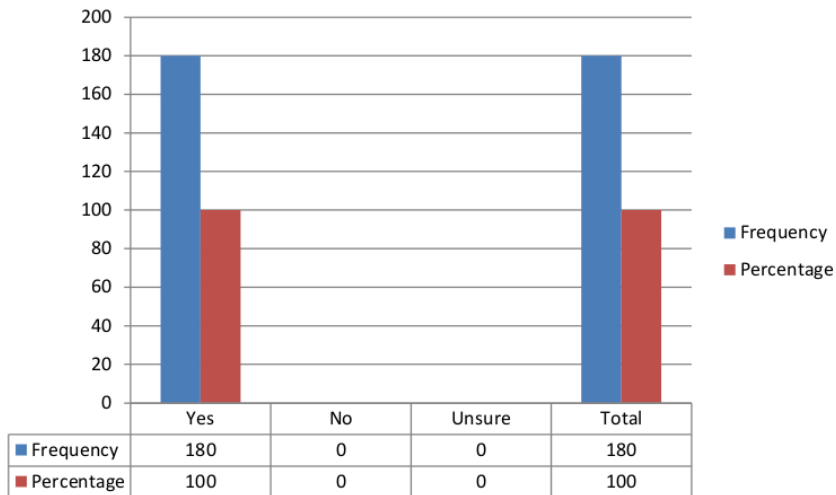
Chart 9: It's good to drink alcohol in moderation.



Source: Field survey, 2024

In Chart 9, 149 (82.8%) of the respondents said that moderate alcohol use is beneficial, 30 (16.7%) disagreed, and 1 (0.6%) was not sure. The respondents agree that a moderate amount of alcohol can lower the risk of heart disease, stroke, and heart failure; lower the risk of type 2 diabetes; improve blood pressure; prevent blood clots; raise cholesterol; lower the risk of gallstones; improve cognitive function; lower stress levels; and increase happiness, euphoria, and conviviality, among other health and psychological benefits. Moderate drinking, however, can also have detrimental consequences on one's general physical and financial well-being, including greater sadness, lower self-consciousness, and increased socialising.

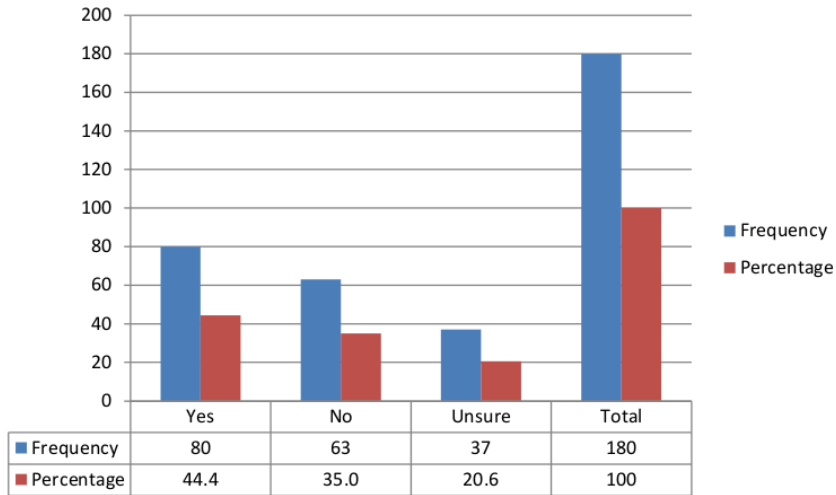
Chart 10: There is great danger in excessive alcohol consumption.



Source: Field survey, 2024

Chart 10 reveals that all the respondents, that is, 180 (100%) of the total sampling population believe that there is great danger in excessive alcohol consumption. The 17 respondents reported that physical harm, aggression, alcohol poisoning, overdose, cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease, liver disease, stroke, weakened immunity, mental health disorders, learning disabilities, memory problems, miscarriage, and stillbirth are just a few of the health concerns that can arise from excessive alcohol use.

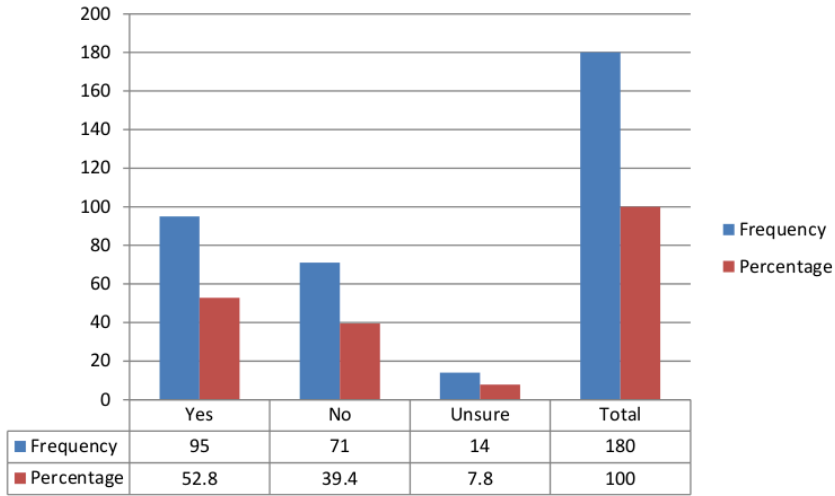
Chart 11: There is alcohol in Holy Communion wine.



Source: Field survey, 2024

Chart 11 shows that 80 (44.4%) believe that there is alcohol in Holy Communion wine, 63 (35%) claimed that there is no alcohol in Holy Communion wine, and 37 (20.6%) were unsure. The majority of the respondents believe that Holy Communion wine is usually prepared from grapes and is alcoholic. It is crimson, sweet, and contains no more than 18% alcohol. Additionally, it was reported that fermented wine was solely used in pre-Christian Jewish religious observances, that fermented wine was mixed with water, and that both the East and the West recognized fermented grape wine as acceptable in the Communion. Additionally, it was said that the alcohol in communion wine had no effect on the spread of infectious illnesses. However, there is no proof that sharing a communion cup spreads any disease, and using a towel to wipe the cup's lip between communicants can help prevent the spread of bacteria.

Chart 12: There is alcohol in the wine that Jesus turned water into.



Source: Field survey, 2024

In chart 12, 95 (52.8%) respondents believe that there is alcohol in the wine that Jesus turned water into, 71 (39.4%) disagreed, while 14 (7.8%) were unsure. Watson and other biblical scholars argued that the Bible's "wine" is alcoholic and that it is very difficult to preserve unfermented grape juice. According to Watson's article "Wine," no non-fermented beverage is referred to as wine; all wine referenced in the Bible is fermented grape juice with an alcohol component (Watson, 2013). While Hasty believes that both fermented and unfermented drinks are referred to as "wine" in the Bible. Isa 65:8 describes wine as a gift from God rather than a narcotic or intoxicant. According to Isa 16:10, wine is a Mediterranean nonalcoholic beverage that is a source of delight and a cool substitute for water. The Lord recounts how the city was destroyed in Lam 2:11–12, with babies and children fainting in the streets and pleading for bread and drink. These wines were a pleasant, delightful substitute for water; they were neither intoxicating nor impairing judgment (Hasty, 2016).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study reveal significant insights into the socio-religious issues surrounding alcohol consumption among Christians in selected Orthodox churches in Surulere, Lagos State. The key discussions are as follows:

The study revealed that 88.3% of respondents were familiar with biblical verses that support, condemn, or advocate moderation in alcohol consumption. However, denominational stances varied, with Anglicans and Catholics generally accepting moderate consumption, while Methodists and Baptists leaned towards stricter abstinence. Over 92% of respondents acknowledged the religious, health, and social implications of excessive alcohol consumption, including health risks like liver disease, heart conditions, and addiction, as well as its impact on spiritual and social well-being. Despite this knowledge, personal choices and cultural influences still significantly influenced drinking behaviors. 83.3% of respondents agreed that alcohol consumption remains a controversial issue among Christians in Surulere. 67.2% supported the idea that Christians can consume alcohol in moderation, while 67.8% believed it could affect their spiritual life. Notably, 69% of respondents admitted to consuming alcohol but mostly in social settings such as parties and gatherings with friends, emphasizing the importance of moderation. 39.4% found it inappropriate to serve alcohol at church functions, indicating a level of caution when mixing faith-based gatherings with alcohol consumption. 94% of respondents were aware of their denomination's official stance on alcohol consumption, yet actual drinking behaviors did not always align with church teachings. Many respondents acknowledged that pastoral guidance and church teachings influence their attitudes but do not always determine their personal choices. This discrepancy suggests that while religious beliefs play a role, other factors like peer influence, social environment, and stress contribute to alcohol consumption.

The study found that alcohol consumption among Christians was often influenced by stress relief (69%), socialization, and cultural norms. Nigerian culture and Yoruba traditions, in particular, play a role in normalizing alcohol use during celebrations, funerals, and other social events. Even in religious settings, some respondents distinguished between drinking for enjoyment and drinking to excess, indicating a complex relationship between faith and cultural habits. 44.4% believed that Holy Communion wine contains alcohol, while 35% believed it does not, and 20.6% were unsure. There was also division over whether the wine Jesus turned from water at the Wedding at Cana contained alcohol, with 52.8% believing it did, 39.4% disagreeing, and 7.8% uncertain. These differences highlight the interpretational diversity within Christianity regarding alcohol references in scripture. The study draws attention to the possible harm that alcohol use may do to spiritual lives, such as eroding moral self-

control, influencing church attendance, and establishing a double standard in religious doctrine. Despite its relationship with relaxation and social bonding, it urges for churches to provide more explicit instruction that takes into account cultural factors and individual autonomy.

The findings demonstrate that alcohol consumption in Christian theology and practice is characterized by complexity and diversity. The biblical material presents both affirmations and warnings. Texts such as Psalm 104:14–15 and Ecclesiastes 9:7 portray wine as a gift that contributes to human joy, while Proverbs 20:1 and Isaiah 5:11 condemn drunkenness as destructive. In the New Testament, John 2:1–11 records Jesus' use of wine at a wedding celebration, and 1 Timothy 5:23 refers to its medicinal value. At the same time, Ephesians 5:18 and Galatians 5:19–21 present strong cautions against excess. These findings suggest that the biblical witness cannot be reduced to a single perspective but reflects both positive and negative dimensions. This duality provides the foundation for two main theological models: abstinence and moderation (Heath, 2000; McCracken, 2013).

Doctrinal and ecclesiological findings indicate denominational variation shaped by theological heritage and historical experience. The Catholic and Anglican traditions generally support moderate consumption, particularly because of the sacramental use of wine in the Eucharist. In contrast, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, and African Independent Churches promote abstinence, often in continuity with temperance movements that associated alcohol with moral and social decline (Nicholls, 2009; Jankowski et al., 2014). Church canons on leadership emphasize sobriety (1 Tim. 3:3), underlining the relationship between alcohol, ministerial credibility, and ecclesial integrity. The question of communion wine continues to be a point of denominational divergence, with some churches adopting non-alcoholic substitutes.

From the perspective of ethical and moral theology, the findings confirm that multiple approaches are employed. Virtue ethics prioritizes temperance as a balanced use of alcohol, while deontological reasoning associates abstinence with the body's status as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19–20). Consequentialist approaches focus on the social impact of drinking, including both positive outcomes, such as celebration and community bonding, and negative consequences, such as violence and family breakdown (Baum-Baicker, 1985). Pauline teaching on responsibility toward weaker believers (Rom. 14:13–23; 1 Cor. 8:9–13) emphasizes the communal and relational dimension of decision-making in this area.

The missiological findings highlight that alcohol use has direct implications for Christian witness, particularly in Nigeria's plural religious context. Islamic prohibition of alcohol

creates a contrast with Christian diversity on the subject, sometimes raising questions about Christian credibility (Alhashimi et al., 2018). Within the church, alcohol misuse by clergy or members undermines evangelistic outreach and public trust. At the same time, churches recognize the need for pastoral responses that include rehabilitation, counseling, and care for those struggling with dependency (Marcovitz et al., 2020).

In the African context, alcohol use is closely connected with cultural practices of hospitality, rituals, and community celebrations (Asekun, 2022). While these practices affirm social cohesion, uncontrolled drinking has resulted in health and social problems, including family instability (Mamman et al., 2002). African theological perspectives emphasize that ethical decisions are communal rather than individual, and excessive alcohol consumption is understood as disrupting community harmony (Nwagu et al., 2017). The findings suggest the need for a contextual ethic that acknowledges the cultural place of alcohol but subjects it to Christian principles of self-control, stewardship, and the sanctity of life.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The study reveals that while Christians generally understand the negative effects of alcohol consumption, their interpretation of acceptable use varies among denominations. Attitudes towards alcohol also vary, with some denominations holding more conservative views and others adopting a more liberal stance. The actual practices of alcohol consumption among Christians do not always align with stated beliefs or community norms, suggesting the influence of external social and cultural factors and personal choice. Religious beliefs significantly influence attitudes and practices regarding alcohol, but this influence is mediated by pastoral guidance, community pressures, and individual spiritual convictions. The stronger the alignment between personal faith convictions and denominational teachings, the more likely individuals are to adhere to conservative consumption practices. The findings suggest the need for nuanced approaches in pastoral care and health education, focusing on clear, context-sensitive guidelines to help congregants make informed decisions about alcohol use. The study emphasises the necessity of continuous debate regarding alcohol use within Christian communities and the responsibility of religious leaders to initiate discussions that consider doctrinal teachings and community health.

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