"IF THERE IS NO ALCOHOL, THERE IS NO PARTY": SOCIAL PRESSURES, ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND SOCIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN NIGERIAN STUDENTS' PARTIES

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ABSTRACT

Alcohol consumption and its related problems are rising among Nigerian students, and factors such as social pressures to drink or drink more, social identity construction with heavy drinking, students' parties and other contextual factors contribute to these problems. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 31 male and female undergraduate students attending a Nigerian University, this study explores how students employ alcohol to construct social identity and develop social capital in party contexts. The findings show that for a social event to be 'qualified' as a 'party', alcohol must be served. While the brands of alcohol served in each party are associated with social class, the meanings attached to drinking in parties and drinking motives are fluid. The findings further show that entertaining guests with foreign and/or expensive alcoholic beverages confers a higher social status on the host than serving locally-made/ cheap brands. Also, the larger the quantity served, the higher the host is ranked on the social ladder. Consequently, young people employ the promise of sumptuous beverages to woo potential party attendees to their parties. Males are generally wooed because they will drink free and expensive alcohol while females tend to perceive the host as possessing a higher economic status; thus, they want to associate with him. At the same time, the ability to outdrink peers during gendered 'drinking games' is used to construct a range of social identities and to develop social capital. The use of alcohol to construct social identity and social pressure to drink among students should be addressed through health education and reorientation. Public health interventions that will reduce alcohol availability on and around campuses should also be implemented in Nigeria.

Keywords: Alcohol, gender, Nigeria, party, social capital, identity, students

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INTRODUCTION

Internationally, research conducted among young people (students and non-students) has shown the fluidity of meanings attached to their drinking. Generally, while regular use of alcohol has become an integral part of contemporary young people's leisure culture (Frederiksen, Bakke, & Dalum, 2012), heavy drinking, is particularly the lifestyle of many youths, especially university students (Peralta, 2007; Supski, Lindsay, & Tanner, 2017). Pre-loading (i.e., drinking before attending social events such as parties or going to a licensed venue (Clapp et al., 2008), drinking games (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2008) and other ritualistic drinking patterns in party contexts have been found to encourage drinking sprees among youths, in that alcohol is often consumed in most parties organised by them (Demant & Østergaard, 2007; Friese & Grube, 2014). In addition to being supplied with alcohol by party hosts, some guests bring alcohol to parties (Clapp et al., 2008; Friese & Grube, 2014). Thus, the more likely that the level of drinking and intoxication will increase because the higher the number of guests who come to parties with alcohol, the higher the rate of alcohol availability in such parties (Friese & Grube, 2014).

Furthermore, evidence shows that the context, in which a party is held, to a large extent, determines the availability of alcohol, the amount that is consumed and the level of intoxication (Clapp et al., 2008). For example, the level of drinking increases in parties organised in private places or bars other than those that are hosted in homes where young people live with their parents (Clapp et al., 2008; Friese & Grube, 2014). One of the reasons for this is because young people consume less alcohol at home than they do in party contexts (Demant & Østergaard, 2007). Drinking and level of intoxication have also been found to increase in themed parties than in non-themed events because alcohol is served free in the former (Clapp et al., 2008).

Alcohol's roles among young people (within and outside party spaces) are socially dynamic. For instance, purposeful drunkenness, which facilitates the transgression of traditional gender boundaries, is popular among many students who attend parties (Clapp et al., 2008; Demant, 2009; DuRant et al., 2008; Montemurro & McClure, 2005). Again, heavy drinking to the point of *being wasted* is a status conferral among some youths (de Visser, Wheeler, Abraham, & Smith, 2013) while others employ the consumption of large quantities of alcohol to develop social capital (Demant & Järvinen, 2011). According to Granfield and Cloud (1999), social capital is ''the social relations in which individuals are embedded and the resources that potentially flow from these relations''. Demant and Järvinen (2011, p.91) added that ''social capital should be understood both in terms of norms and resources''. For example, young people's alcohol consumption has a lot to do with the norms of the group to which they belong as well as the position they occupy in such groups. If for instance, the group accepts and normalises drinking and intoxication, members will not only drink alcohol, but some will engage in heavy drinking, particularly to maintain group norms and enhance social relations among network of friends.

Additionally, in social events like parties, drinking is used to ''overcome shyness, lower inhibitions, and to aid friendship and bonding processes'' (de Visser

et al., 2013, p.1466). Given that alcohol consumption performs the role of modern ritual, young people must engage in diverse ritualistic drinking practices for a get-together to ''become a party'' (Demant & Østergaard, 2007, p.524), and this is one of the reasons why some guests leave for other parties when alcohol is exhausted (Clapp et al., 2008).

Although most youths attend parties with the intention to drink, research has also shown that some of them may attend parties not only to consume alcohol, but also because partying provides them with the opportunity to accumulate social capital and expand their friendship networks (Demant & Østergaard, 2007; Friese & Grube, 2014). Despite that a few youths may not attend a party intending to drink (or drink heavily); the quest to develop social capital often provokes alcohol use (Demant & Järvinen, 2011). This is particularly because social capital influences alcohol consumption negatively (i.e., by inciting alcohol use; although it can also influence consumption positively by constraining lonely drinking) (Demant & Järvinen, 2011). Research conducted in Nigeria (Ibanga, Adetula, & Dagona, 2009) and elsewhere (Mäkelä & Maunu, 2016) have also shown that direct and indirect social pressure to drink and/or drink more alcohol is common among alcohol user, especially those in friendship network, but this often heightens heavy drinking and intoxication.

Sociologists argue that identities are socially constructed and not given (Giddens, 1991). That is, humans, in social interaction, make/enact the type of 'social badges' with which they want to be identified, and these badges include masculine and feminine gender identities. While several resources are employed to construct

social identities, evidence shows that alcohol (and other drugs) facilitates the *making* of masculine and feminine identities (Peralta, 2007), and social contexts such as parties serve as a platform to either enact or showcase such identities. For example, studies have revealed how men (Capraro, 2000; De Visser & Smith, 2007; Mullen, Watson, Swift, & Black, 2007) and women (Emslie, Hunt, & Lyons, 2015; Lyons & Willott, 2008; Rolfe, Orford, & Dalton, 2009) construct a range of identities with heavy and other (risky) drinking patterns. According to Courtenay's (2000, p.1385) relational theory of gender and health, this is particularly because ''health-related beliefs and behaviours, like other social practices that men and women engage in, are a means for demonstrating femininities and masculinities''.

In the Nigerian context, little is known about how contemporary youth leisure culture influences their drinking, and even less is known about how social contexts, especially partying and social pressures are associated with young people's alcohol (mis)use. What is known about alcohol consumption among Nigerian youths, especially students, is that they play drinking games and also use heavy drinking to construct gender identities (Dumbili & Williams, 2017a). Other factors that motivate their drinking include to attenuate sorrow, alleviate depression, and to boost their courage to deliver class seminars (Dumbili & Onyima, 2018). Given that Nigerian students engage in these drinking practices indicated above, alcohol-related problems such as accident and injuries (Abayomi, Onifade, Adelufosi, & Akinhanmi, 2013), alcohol use disorders (Adewuya et al., 2007), alcohol-facilitated rape (Dumbili & Williams,

2017b) and other sexual risk behaviours (Chikere & Mayowa, 2011) are common on campuses.

Despite that a few studies have shown why students drink and the consequences of their drinking, there is a dearth of studies regarding how social context contributes to these trajectories. Drawing on qualitative interviews with undergraduate students of a Nigerian university, this study begins to fill this gap. This paper aims to explore the role of alcohol in the construction of social identity and accumulation of social capital, and how Nigerian students' parties are implicated in these trajectories. This study is important as existing literature has indicated that alcohol misuse, especially among university students is a growing concern. Therefore, understanding the role social identity constructions in campus parties and accumulation of social capital play in students' drinking behaviours will help in the provision of holistic solutions to reduce the growing alcohol-related harms among contemporary Nigerian youths.

METHODS

The data were collected from a southeastern Nigerian university campus, between September and December 2013, after ethics approval was granted by the Nigerian University and the Brunel University London Ethics Board. The participants were recruited on campus through convenience sampling and snowballing approaches. On campus, I approached students and introduced the study to them. After rapport was established, the students were asked if they consumed alcohol. Following this, those who currently use alcohol (defined as having consumed

alcohol at least once in the last 30 days) were asked if they would consider participating in the study to share their experiences of alcohol use.

This convenient technique facilitated the recruitment of 26 (20 males and 6 females) participants while snowballing methods aided the recruitment of an additional three females and two males. Given that alcohol use among youths is a sensitive issue in Nigeria, and that young female drinkers are particularly stigmatised (Dumbili, 2015; Umunna, 1967), young females, are not easily accessible for such sensitive studies. Thus, reaching them through any channel that might expose their identity will hinder their participation. This was why the techniques indicated above were deemed necessary for the successful recruitment of female participants. While written informed consent was obtained from the participants, their identities have been replaced with pseudonyms in the ''results section''.

Interviews and data analysis

Drawing on social constructionism, which focuses on how people use language to achieve shared meaning-making(Burr, 2015), 31 in-depth interviews lasting 33-90 minutes were conducted with 22 male and nine female undergraduate students (aged 19-24 years), who were of legal drinking age (i.e. 18years and above). The participants were invited to share their views on whether or not they attend parties, whether or not they drink alcohol in social events like parties and how and why they drink in parties.

Following the permission of the participants, the interviews were recorded with a digital device. All but one of the participants was from the *Igbo* ethnic group, and this is particularly because

of admission policies in Nigeria, where universities have ''catchment areas'' and admission quotas. Therefore, gaining admission to a university within one's catchment area, where a particular ethnic group may predominate, is standard practice. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and a thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns of meaning in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Drawing on data-driven and theory-driven codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), the analyst/author initiated the analysis immediately after conducting the first interview. Notes taken during the interview were read many times, and the audio file was crosschecked for accuracy. This aided the identification of some new areas to explore further in the subsequent interviews. Again, it facilitated the development and recording of some tentative coding schemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Syed & Nelson, 2015) that were subsequently refined and utilized for the identification of nuanced patterns of meanings in the data (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013).

Next, the first interview was transcribed. As the audiotape was being transcribed, the initial extracts were manually categorised into broad themes and subthemes. This process was repeated for the subsequent six interviews. In order to ensure analytical rigor from the onset, the analyst's initial thoughts and ideas about coding were assessed (Syed & Nelson, 2015) by two senior academics (a professor and a senior lecturer who supervised the doctoral project from which this article was drafted), who read and commented on the interviews and the preliminary coding and analysis. When all 31 interviews had been transcribed, the transcripts were read several times and

crosschecked and reconciled with the audio recordings before being imported into NVivo 10 where the analysis was completed (Seale & Rivas, 2012). Following this, the patterns of meaning from the key themes (e.g., *alcohol makes a party, social pressures, drinking and the construction of gendered identity and lowering social inhibition*) that had been identified were recorded. These themes are presented in the ''results'' section.

RESULTS

The findings presented here show that most students' parties are held during weekends, although some, especially birthday parties, may be organised during weekdays. The analysis reveals that partying also increases towards the end of each academic session or at the end of the year. While the former is organised by the graduating students or their friendship networks (to bid their friends farewell), the latter is often put together by hostel residents to mark the end of the year. Most of these parties are held at off-campus hostels while others included hall, bar and hotel parties. Specifically, results regarding three themes: (1) *alcohol makes a party*; (2) *social pressures, drinking and the construction of gendered identity* and (3) *lowering social inhibition* are presented.

Alcohol Makes a Party

This theme outlines how serving alcohol is a sine qua non for a party to be held among students on this campus and how the interviewees perceived drinking to lighten up party environments, by boosting attendees' moods and sociality/sociability. The analysis shows that

alcohol is not only ubiquitous in students' parties, but drinking is seemingly compulsory for the following reasons. First, alcohol lightens up party environment, in that without drinking, **"people will not misbehave"**, which means that **"everywhere will become dull and boring"**. That is, intoxication is thought to facilitate banter and/or loss of control which increases partygoers' ability to socialise in parties. Second, both male and female participants reveal that alcohol must be available to have what can be called a party. For example:

Favour: Normally, we have seen that on this campus, any party without alcohol is like a child's play or no party at all…
Chisalum: …This is why always on campus, if there is no alcohol, there is no party. A party without alcohol is no party because people will feel like nothing happened there.
Chioma: Most students are involved in parties, and alcohol is available everywhere [in parties].

On their own terms, alcohol must be available to have a "confirmed"[1] party and this is one factor which distinguishes what they called a "real party" and a "child's play". One of the insightful parts of the data is the way in which the interviewees highlighted that alcohol plays some important roles in students' parties not only on this campus, but on other Nigerian campuses:

Boniface: I am not talking about only on this campus, but in [other] schools [campuses]; it's something that [is common]. As we're students, it's kind of our lifestyle. If you are going to organise a "confirmed" party, alcohol will be there.

When he was asked to shed more light on why alcohol makes a *confirmed* party, he noted:

Boniface: It is because it's kind of the norm in schools [campuses]. You know, if there's no alcohol in a party [it is not always lively] but when there's alcohol, it becomes lively.

Just like many other male and female participants, Boniface indicated that consuming alcohol makes boys and girls to be **"kind of free"** not only to do things they have never done before, but also to **"do things that I don't think they would have done under normal circumstances"**. The analysis also shows some nuances regarding the role alcohol plays even before a party is held, especially during the publicity of an upcoming event. For instance, when inviting a friend (or other potential attendees) to a party, one serious persuasive point you will put forward to convince them to attend is that alcohol must be served, and it can be inferred from the analysis that the brands and quantity are often emphasized. Interestingly, the presence of alcohol not only increases the number of guests in each party, but the data also show that some attendees, especially boys either come to parties with alcohol or buy drinks if the quantities served are not enough:

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[1]   A common slang used among young Nigerians, which is associated with perfection, maturity or upper class belongingness (depending on the contexts of use).

Boniface: If you don't have alcohol in your party, it's most likely that there won't be a large turnout in that party. I've gone to a party where…boys brought their own drinks for themselves... You see stuff like that almost every time [where young men bring their drinks to parties].

Although as an offshoot of the southeastern Nigerian traditional leisure norms, alcohol is mainly supplied by the host(s) in these parties because it symbolises hospitality. Despite this, the above account has shown that some guests come to parties with alcohol. As the data revealed, it is clear that some men come to parties with alcohol (or buy their brands at party contexts) because of the relationship between brands and social identity in Nigeria (Obot, 2013). For instance, the analysis reveals the role brands (and their prices/origin) play in conferring status among Nigerian students on this campus. The interviewees indicated that drinking *foreign* or local brands in social contexts is markedly a point of departure for categorising a ''rich'' and ''poor'' student. This is serious, to the extent, that ''Foreign Extra Stout'' (a brand of Guinness stout) which is produced in Nigeria, is rated higher above other brands of stout just because it has the word- *foreign* attached to its name (i.e., it is mistakenly thought to be imported and superior to local products). Relatedly, despite the fact that the production of Heineken beer has been localised, it is still not only regarded as a foreign brand, but many Nigerians consider it to be superior to local brands. As such, it is associated with the upper class. Given that consuming Heineken confers status, some of the participants noted that men often change their brand to Heineken when they want to demonstrate their economic status to their peers in social contexts such as bars or parties.

To further demonstrate how the participants construct social identity with brands, I will draw on Chisalum's account- a female participant, in that it is a useful exemplar of how students venerate and fetishize expensive brands:

Chisalum: You cannot come to a party [and the host] serves the guests all these soft drinks like Limca and Goldspot [local brands]; it must be red-labels [foreign and expensive spirits/wines]... Even when we went to a picnic, some people actually brought out their life-savings to buy all these red-labels so that people will feel like [they are rich]…

The data also highlighted the role of alcohol in the construction of social identity, particularly among party hosts. This is because the host of a party accrues social capital, by boasting (via face-to-face) about how much has been spent in purchasing alcohol in a bid to increase the number of potential attendees:

Favour: If you are the one who is going to organise [host] the party, you'll boast about the amount of money you've spent on alcohol and the quantity of alcohol you've bought.

The act of boasting about the amount of money one has spent in purchasing different brands of alcohol appears to serve two important purposes. First, it is used to strengthen the confidence of the potential attendees, especially men to come to your parties because they will drink large quantities of free alcohol. Second,

it is used to portray one's socioeconomic status, in that it makes the potential attendees, especially women to see you as someone who is rich and/or generous; thus, they want to identify with you. When the party is eventually held, the actual quantity of alcohol that you served and the origin of the brands (i.e., whether it is local or foreign) become status conferral to the host, especially because the guests compare your party with others they had attended earlier. This, in turn, helps the host(s) to accumulate social capital and expand his/her network and influence.

Together, these accounts have revealed how inevitable alcohol is in students' party and the nuanced indispensable roles it plays for them. It is clear that while alcohol must be served in a party for such to qualify to be called a party, the taste of a brand is immaterial. Indeed, what matters to these students include: the origin of a brand (which is directly related to the price) and the quantity of such brands.

Social pressures, drinking and the construction of gendered identity

Under this theme, the data revealed some nuances regarding how drinking more than one's peers constituted having a great party, while drinking small amount or not drinking at all was seen as contravening party norms. In fact, the male participants demonstrated how they play male-dominated drinking games in party contexts because of the following reasons. First, drinking game connoisseurship confers social status on the winner. Thus, game playing is used to demonstrate the superiority of one's masculinity, and party contexts appeared to be a perfect 'theatre' for such displays. Second, those who play games consume more quantity

of free alcohol, especially because it is required of the host(s) to provide the resources (e.g., alcohol) for a game to take place. Also, the analysis shows that every party attendee is expected to drink alcohol, and one of the implications of refusing a drink, especially among the male participants, is that it attracts negative sanction, in the form of distrust: **"if you don't drink alcohol, I can't trust you"**. As the accounts below indicate, the quest to avoid negative sanctions engenders ''drinking to belong'', where most people either drank to impress their peers or to maintain their membership of friendship networks:

> **Edulim: Most people drink to impress their friends…**
> **Kelechi: The more you drink, the more you keep those your friends that drink.**

Similarly, the accounts of the female participants show that some of them drink to maintain group norms. The analysis reveals that girls pressure their peers to drink, when they refuse to accept the offer to drink. In addition to drinking to satisfy their friends or not to be different from their peers in social gatherings such as a party, some participate in social drinking just to avoid name-calling. For example:

> **Patience: Your friends can actually make you want to have a feel of alcohol... Most times they tend to 'embarrass' you if you don't drink… Even among girls, they will be like ah, what is your problem? Come-on, take this drink for once! Like you gonna feel cool; it'll make you go high and stuff like that. Then you will be like, let me satisfy them by having a taste of it…**

Pretty: If…you say that you want to drink malt [non-alcoholic drink], people [peers] will look at you like, you don't belong [to their class], or that you don't know what is happening [you are not fashionable].

Not only is social exclusion or loss of social capital used as a punishment for not drinking among the participants, the male participants in particular also noted that some seemingly harsher sanctions might be applied:

Chike: Normally, your friends will always make a jest of you if you don't take alcohol because this is one of the behaviour patterns that is expected in this environment. It's expected that if you are a ''real man'', you should be into alcohol; you should participate in some kind of [tough] activities of which alcohol is one of them. So if boys see a guy who is not into alcohol at all, they'll see him as being less than a man, and that's why they normally refer to them as a 'dull man' [not fashionable]. So instead of allowing yourself to be mocked by your friends, some boys will actually decide just to drink.
Larry: If you don't drink alcohol, then it means you are not man enough…
Fred: As in, many of them do say that if you don't take beer, you are not a boy.

Still on the association between alcohol and masculinity, other male participants shed light on how the quest to maintain masculine identity contributes to the reasons why men drink alcohol in social contexts such as parties. For instance, Jacob revealed that **''guys drink to maintain their ego''**, and this was buttressed by other participants. For example:

Chijioke: We don't hang out at home but in bars or parties, and when you go to such places, you will definitely have to drink alcohol…

Interviewer: Can you say a little more on why one must drink alcohol in such places?

Chijioke: Drinking is like a test of manhood; if you don't consume alcohol, you are ''dulling'' [not smart or fashionable]... So if you want to meet up with the expectation of your friends, in order not to let them down, you have to consume [alcohol] as much as they are consuming. I have tried it, I have decided to take non-alcoholic beverages but you know; there is this look they'll give you. Most of them will feel ashamed [that you are taking a soft drink], and they will be like: why are you drinking a soft drink? Are you a woman or a girl? I just feel it is this manly thing for you to consume alcohol. I think most people do it to impress or to feel among.

Interestingly, the data revealed that instead of abstaining from drinking and suffer the social consequences, many youths would prefer to drink, but this can result in other health-related consequences:

Dozie: I went out with some friends to a birthday party, and there was this girl I knew; she has never had alcohol before, but just because other girls there were holding Smirnoff Ice [flavoured spirit] on their hands, she had to join them to drink and she… ended up messy.

From these accounts, it is clear that factors such as peer pressure and the belief

in the use of drinking to construct superior masculinity facilitate alcohol use in parties among students. As the analysis shows, instead of positioning themselves to be mocked by friends, the interviewees often decided to consume alcohol, but this facilitates negative social capital (Demant & Järvinen, 2011).

Lowering social inhibition

The analysis also shows that in these parties, alcohol is perceived to boost strength and confidence so that young people can dance and as well do things they would ordinarily not do when they are sober:

> **Patience: Alcohol makes me high; it makes me do things that I can't normally do because I am a shy person.**
> **Agatha: You know at times when I want to dance very well and not be tired, I take alcohol.**
> **Chimanda: ...I like drinking when there is a party going on. It can make me dance and feel relaxed...**

Among the male participants, alcohol is also used to enhance performance in parties while dancing:

> **Chijioke: Most times, if I go to a party, I don't really dance but once I take alcohol I can dance. Let me say that it helps me to do away with shyness so that I can do those things that I can't really do [without alcohol].**
> **Boniface: You can see someone who has never danced before, but when he takes one, two or even three bottles [of beer], he'll start dancing.**

Drinking not only enhances the male participants' ability to dance, but it is also used to lower inhibition. Indeed, the data show that men who may not be bold enough to initiate a sexual relationship with females dare to do so under the influence:

> **Buchi: When you drink alcohol, you will be able to do something you can't do before. For example, maybe you want to approach a girl and you don't have the confidence, but when you take alcohol, it makes you feel like you have the confidence. It removes that shame on you that makes you feel like if I go, the girl may say no...**
> **Boniface: There are cases of a guy who possesses low self-esteem when it comes to talking to girls, but when he takes alcohol, he'll have confidence to meet any girl and talk to her.**

When most people become inebriated, ''boundaries for *normative* behaviours are dissolved'' (Demant & Østergaard, 2007, p.524). As the accounts below show, intoxication facilitates timeout for women to initiate relationships with men in party contexts:

> **Pretty: Okay, like I said earlier, in a party, when you just want to talk or express yourself, you'll take alcohol or when you are feeling too shy 'to do something' [talk to a male] you'll take alcohol, and it makes you bold.**
> **Agatha: ...I know that there is a kind of courage alcohol gives. That is why I used that statement: 'that you do extraordinary things when you are drunk'. There are some things that on a normal day you can't tell someone. For example, on a normal day, you can't tell [a male] that I love you, but when you drink, you'll see yourself**

telling somebody [a male] that I love you.

Nigeria is a patriarchal society; thus, it is not normative for women who are seen as the sexual gatekeepers to initiate sexual relationships with men because such is regarded as transgressing gender boundaries, but it appears that drinking helps some of the female participants to navigate around this social inhibition.

Together, these accounts have highlighted how alcohol facilitates the ability to let one's guard down, and thus inhibits young people's self-consciousness, to the extent that they engage in activities they would not engage in when they sober up.

DISCUSSION

The study contributes to, and develops extant literature on the role of social contexts in young people's drinking behaviours, particularly in Nigeria and Africa more generally. The study suggests that partying is ubiquitous on and around this campus, especially at off-campus contexts, and that alcohol is central to student parties. It was highlighted that students often used direct means of publicity, in the form of face-to-face and/or word-of-mouth means to invite potential attendees to their parties. That most parties are held at off-campus sites and that the marketing and publicity strategies involved the use of word-of-mouth support Clapp et al.'s (2008) study.

Despite the fact that the result regarding publicity supports previous research, it also develops extant literature. This is because if you invite a friend to a party, one important point you will employ to persuade him/her to attend is the promise that alcohol must be available, and in large quantity. Relatedly, it was found that alcohol must be served for individuals to accept that they had gone partying. That is, drinking in these parties is not only expected, but it is generally accepted and publicized. That alcohol must be drunk for a social event to be seen as a party lends credence to previous research (Demant & Østergaard, 2007), but one of the insightful aspects of the finding of this current study, is that young people are pressured to drink to appear sociable and acceptable among peers. Given that drinkers are often considered to be more sociable than non-drinkers (de Visser et al., 2013), this may be one of the reasons why the interviewees in this current study accept to drink (or drink more than they had planned).

In these festal assemblies, alcohol performed a number of social roles. First, it supports pleasurable party experience. That is, drinking is perceived to increase partygoers' fun, especially because intoxicated guests exhibit behaviours that are not only normative and expected in party contexts, but are also a source of entertainment for guests. Second, alcohol facilitates timeout, in that it is used to boost confidence to initiate sexual relationships. Because of the pharmacological capacity of alcohol to affect human body (Zakhari, 2006), excessive consumption often results in loss of control and transgression of sociocultural boundaries (Dumbili, 2015; Peralta, 2008), and this is played out in this study, where young people, especially females initiate a relationship under the influence of alcohol. As indicated earlier, Nigeria is a patriarchal society where women act as sexual gatekeepers, and sexual intercourse among unmarried youths is equally taboo

in south-eastern Nigeria (see Dumbili & Williams, 2017b). Thus, the act of initiating sexual relationship among young people not only breaches the traditional social/sexual norms, but the use of alcohol to embolden oneself before engaging in such acts further shows how intoxication encourages the transgression of traditional boundaries and heightens risky behaviours.

Elsewhere, research shows that alcohol consumption is associated with reputations (i.e., it confers status, e.g., image and reputation- a mature man) among young people (de Visser et al., 2013). In the current study, the results reveal that alcohol is a resource for the social construction of a range of social and/or gender identities. For example, the brand that the host uses to entertain the guests is a status conferral, which in turn, helps him/her to accrue/develop social capital. Given that identities are socially made, *and* not given (Giddens, 1991), interviewees demonstrated how they use party spaces to *make* the kind of identities they want to be known by, and diverse brands of alcoholic beverages serve as perfect resources for *making* such identities. The analysis shows that these young Nigerians were more concerned with where a brand originated from, and/or how expensive it is. This is because consuming a foreign and/or expensive brand conferred social status on the consumer.

That alcohol performed a myriad of social functions for these young people resonates with the fact that in most Nigerian communities, alcohol is an indispensable resource for enacting friendship and facilitating social cohesion (Ibanga, Adetula, & Dagona, 2009). As such, it is often served in most social gatherings. For example, in the traditional era, individuals, especially

males drank locally-made alcoholic beverages during community meetings and festivals with a single 'calabash cup' after the eldest male had performed libation (Oshodin, 1995). This act of drinking from a single cup not only helped in unifying the members of each community, it also boosted trust and dispelled suspicions (i.e., the use of a single cup makes it difficult to poison another person (Oshodin, 1995)). Irrespective of the ubiquity of this ritualistic social drinking, young people were not permitted to drink because alcohol was seen as a mark of being an elder (Oshodin, 1995). Young people were only allowed to drink on festive days (that happened in most cases, once in a year). Again, in such festivals, they were guided by elders who monitored the quantity they consumed, in that intoxication was taboo (Oshodin, 1995). In this study, it was obvious that young people, especially the males engaged in drinking just to maintain masculine pride. That young men on this campus drink alcohol and associated drinking with superior masculinity not only deviate from the tradition leisure norms of south-eastern Nigeria (Umunna, 1967), but it also shows that the globalization of the culture of intoxication is becoming pervasive.

Research conducted elsewhere shows that the more a party is attended by guests, the higher alcohol is supplied from multiple sources (i.e., by the host and guests (Friese & Grube, 2014)). In this light, it could be argued that guests in these Nigerian parties are most likely to consume large quantities of alcohol for the following reasons. First, the host of each party strives to encourage a large turnout in their parties by providing alcohol, in that such is associated with social/economic capital. Second, some guests

bring alcohol to parties, especially because of the association between brands, social status and social capital (i.e., if the host fails to supply the brand some guests drink, they may opt for their brands or buy expensive brands to show off and/or develop social capital). This is especially because Nigerian party spaces are like a 'theatre', where individuals portray their *economic capital* to peers, which facilitates the accruement of social capital. Put another way, social capital as "norms and resources" facilitates certain actions and inhibits others (Demant & Järvinen, 2011, p.91); thus, heavy drinking to gain friends (social capital) and or to *do gender* will likely increase when youths coalesce in these campus parties.

The study has some notable limitations. First, while it reported the data collected from a small sample, the number of women included was particularly few (although as indicated above, this was as result of the difficulties in recruiting willing female participants). Relatedly, the study reported data that were elicited via self-reporting. As such, future studies should consider using ethnographic methods to explore students' lived experience, especially how social contexts such as parties and other leisure spaces facilitate alcohol use among youths. Third, the data were elicited from a university campus located in one geographical region of the country and also among the people of similar socio-cultural beliefs. Given that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic/cultural entity, studies should be conducted on other campuses in other parts of Nigeria. Irrespective of these shortcomings, the study has highlighted the dynamic roles alcohol plays for Nigerian students in party contexts and adds depth to our understanding of how social contexts and situations encourage the culture of intoxication and the transgression of traditional leisure boundaries.

A number of implications can also be derived from the study. First, there is a need to address the use of alcohol to construct gender/social identity, and/or to facilitate timeout from traditional gender roles and expectations among Nigerian students through health education because these drinking patterns encourage heavy drinking and risky sexual behaviours. Evidenced-based interventions that will cast light on the risks associated with these drinking patterns/motives should be designed and implemented on Nigerian campuses. This will likely change the belief that drinking is associated with superior masculinity, and as well dispel the belief that alcohol emboldens individuals to initiate sexual relationships. Again, there is a need for public health interventions, especially those that will reduce alcohol availability on and around campuses. Relatedly, reorientation of Nigerian students should be encouraged. This will help to change the view that without serving and/or consuming alcohol, a party cannot be held. Relatedly, the association of brands with prestige has to be changed by health educators through proper reorientation. This might help to reduce the unhealthy competitions that manifest in using diverse tactics to woo potential attendees to parties because of alcohol. This is especially because such encourages negative social capital, where alcohol becomes the primary focus of each party, and attendees are pressured to drink or drink above their limits.

That some of these parties are held on alcohol sale outlets that are strategically located on and around this campus suggests that they may be increased alcohol availability, easy access and heavy

drinking among party attendees. Thus, there is a need for the University authority in collaboration with the community to implement measures that will regulate these outlets, especially as the Nigerian government has failed to implement WHO-favoured alcohol control policies in the country (World Health Organization, 2018). In sum, social contexts such as parties facilitate heavy drinking, which may result in more alcohol-related problems among Nigerian students.

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