

EXPLORING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF YOUNG GOSKOLO -ALCOHOL ABUSERS ON ALCOHOL ABUSE IN JOS, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Alcoholism with its associated consequences is a global challenge. Information and education are effective in preventing alcoholism. Understanding the prior knowledge of alcoholics is critical to designing impactful information programs for reducing binge drinking. This research report therefore explored the prior knowledge of binge drinkers in a binge drinking endemic region of the Jos area in Nigeria. The methodology adopted for the study was grounded theory using a case study approach. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. Data collection was done through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 23 participants from four major flash points for drug and alcohol consumption in Jos Plateau State, Nigeria. The study's significance lies in its potential to contribute to the understanding of alcohol abuse from a social epistemology and ontology perspective, highlighting the importance of considering the prior knowledge of alcohol abusers in designing effective intervention strategies. The study's findings could inform the development of targeted prevention and intervention programs tailored to the needs and experiences of young alcohol abusers in the Jos metropolis. The study recommended that the Use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help abusers recognize inaccurate thinking patterns should be prioritized. Also, focuses on the dangers of supposed benefits associated with alcohol abuse (pain relief, warmth).

Keywords: Prior knowledge, Alcohol abusers, young people, Grounded theory, Case study, *Goskolo*, Social epistemology, Ontology, Experiential knowledge,

Introduction

Alcohol abuse remains a global health crisis, including in Plateau State, Nigeria, where the local brew *Goskolo* has emerged as a significant contributor to youth mortality and societal dysfunction. This study explored the prior knowledge

of *Goskolo* abusers to understand their misconceptions, thereby informing strategies for effective intervention and behaviour change. Globally, alcohol abuse ranks among the leading causes of mortality, with approximately 2.5 million alcohol-related deaths recorded annually (Lakhanpal & Agnihotri, 2007; UNDOC, 2007; INCB Report, 2018). Diseases like liver cirrhosis, liver cancer, hepatitis B and C, and HIV are often linked to alcohol and substance abuse (INCB Report, 2018). Locally, in Plateau State, *Goskolo* a highly potent alcoholic drink has become a silent killer, devastating communities with its health, social, and economic consequences.

Goskolo is a local brew with an alcohol content ranging from 29% to 32%, depending on its type—transparent, coloured, or the mixed variant called *Ogogoro*. It is often produced in unregulated environments, packaged in sachets or small containers, and consumed primarily by youths seeking euphoria. Tragically, there are no documented statistics on *Goskolo*-related deaths in Plateau State, and existing government policies fail to address this growing menace. Despite its widespread abuse, misconceptions about *Goskolo* hinder effective communication about its risks. Addressing these misconceptions requires a deeper understanding of the prior knowledge of *Goskolo* abusers.

Alcohol abuse, particularly the consumption of *Goskolo*, has dire health, social, and economic implications. Health issues include delayed sleep, heightened anxiety, impaired brain function, and long-term physical and mental health deterioration (INCB Report, 2018). Socially, *Goskolo* abuse contributes to juvenile delinquency, armed robbery, sexual assault, broken homes, and unwanted pregnancies. Economically, alcohol abuse diverts funds that could support development to rehabilitation and treatment efforts, costing the global economy \$249 billion annually (Manthey et-al,2021).

Theoretical Framework: Social Epistemology and Ontology

This research leverages Social Epistemology—how knowledge is acquired and shared—and Social Ontology—the nature of social interactions—to examine the prior knowledge of *Goskolo* abusers. Prior knowledge, shaped by cultural and social contexts, is critical for understanding how individuals perceive alcohol abuse. Recognizing this allows for the design of culturally relevant and effective interventions that can reduce *Goskolo* abuse.

Prior knowledge can be broken into three dimensions:

1. Experiential Knowledge: Insights from personal experiences.
2. Procedural Knowledge: Understanding the processes of alcohol use.

3. Expert Knowledge: Intuitive decision-making based on extended experience.

Understanding these dimensions helped identify gaps and misconceptions, providing a foundation for targeted communication strategies to reduce *Goskolo* abuse.

Researchers recognized prior knowledge as a multidimensional construct composed of familiarity, expertise, and experiential knowledge. This study examined prior knowledge through these three dimensions: Experiential Knowledge (gained through personal experience), Procedural Knowledge (knowing how to perform tasks), and Expert Knowledge (intuitive decision-making from extensive experience) (Rittle-Johnson & Durkin 2009).

Goskolo abusers' prior knowledge can also lead to information avoidance, where individuals consciously or unconsciously avoid information conflicting with their beliefs or values. Factors influencing information avoidance include cognitive dissonance, socio-cultural norms, benefits of knowledge seeking, and benefits of information seeking. Information avoidance has consequences, such as depriving individuals of valuable inputs for decision-making, promoting political polarization, and reinforcing media bias. This study uncovered *Goskolo* abusers' prior knowledge using the Chatman Theory of Normative Behavior, providing insights for effective communication strategies to address *Goskolo* abuse in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Alcohol abuse poses a major public health challenge, with *Goskolo* emerging as a key contributor to youth mortality and societal decay in Plateau State. Despite awareness campaigns about its dangers, *Goskolo* abuse persists, indicating that current strategies fail to resonate with the target population. Most of them are addicted to *Goskolo* because of the desire to be 'high' or transmute into a higher realm. *Goskolo* -alcohol is a silent killer which has sent many to their untimely graves, as communities seem to be helpless in curbing the trend.

Despite all the messages that are communicated on the consequences of *Goskolo*- alcohol abuse, it appears the objectives have not been achieved. To move forward, there is the need to address the problem from other perspectives such as prior knowledge of *Goskolo* abusers. Thus, this research was concerned with exploring the prior knowledge of young *Goskolo* abusers on alcohol abuse in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria- to understand what could be in the prior

knowledge of *Goskolo* -alcohol abusers that make the communications on *Goskolo* -alcohol difficult to comprehend.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to:

1. Ascertain the prior knowledge of alcohol abusers concerning *Goskolo*-alcohol abuse in *Goskolo* in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Literature review

Prior knowledge in a broad sense is stored knowledge and beliefs about the world that have been acquired by individuals. Prior knowledge affects information behaviour if the new information is inconsistent with the prior knowledge or beliefs. Prior knowledge therefore was researched to determine the true knowledge from the false knowledge. Gronbaek (2009) suggested that Prior knowledge is a function of learning true and false knowledge. This in the true sense of it can influence the decision-making style of individuals negatively or positively.

Abiona and Oladepo (2019) carried out a study on the prevalence and psychological correlates of alcohol use among Nigerian University students. They investigated the problem of alcohol use among young people as a serious public health concern. The study investigated the prevalence and psychological correlates of alcohol use among university students in Nigeria. A quantity method was employed for data collection. Findings suggest that there were significant differences in alcohol use across age groups and geographical locations. Self-efficacy, depression and life purpose significantly correlate with alcohol use. They concluded that the prevalence of alcohol use among university students remains high. A suggestion of more Evidence-base prevention and intervention programmes should be targeted at this population. Drawing from this study, it is clear that factors causing the abuse of alcohol are known through various research but effective ways of reducing alcohol have not been properly articulated.

Abudu (2008) on the other hand investigated the title Understanding Heavy Drinking Practices and Alcohol-Related Harms: The Live Experience of Nigerian Adolescents and Young Adults. A qualitative method was employed for the study. Findings suggest that participants were knowledgeable about the harms associated with heavy drinking. The findings suggest that prevention and intervention strategies will reduce heavy drinking by targeting the social norms of

heavy drinking. Though one of the issues of addressing alcohol abuse was suggested, the main issues were not deeply addressed such as understanding their knowledge of alcohol abuse.

Methodology

This research study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the prior knowledge of young *Goskolo* abusers in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. The research design was a case study, focusing on 23 participants selected through purposive sampling from four major flashpoints of *Goskolo* markets, namely Angwa, Rukuba, Kabong, Kugiya and Tudun Wada. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, allowing participants to share their experiences and perceptions about *Goskolo* abuse and its consequences.

The data analysis employed thematic content analysis, involving six phases: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. To ensure rigour, the study adhered to Silverman's standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility was achieved through presenting participants' views without bias, while transferability was ensured through detailed descriptions of the fieldwork setting. Dependability and conformability were maintained through transparent documentation of the research process and methodology, enabling reproducibility and verification.

Findings and Discussion

Prior knowledge of Youths in Jos Metropolis concerning (*Goskolo*) alcohol abuse

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>Prior knowledge of Youths in Jos Metropolis concerning (Goskolo) alcohol abuse</i>	<i>1. Goskolo types</i>	<i>1.Ogogoro</i>	<i>5</i>
		<i>2.Herbs</i>	
		<i>3.Brainded Goskolo</i>	<i>1</i>
		<i>4.Good Goskolo</i>	<i>2</i>
		<i>5.Bad Goskolo</i>	<i>1</i>
		<i>Group Total</i>	
	<i>2.Negative effect</i>	<i>1. Sickness</i>	<i>1</i>
		<i>2. Irresponsibility</i>	<i>10</i>

	<i>3. Intoxication</i>	
	Group Total	4
<i>3. Positive effects</i>	<i>1. Warmth</i>	
	<i>2. Relaxation</i>	2
	<i>Group Total</i>	
	<i>1. Colour type</i>	5
<i>4. Content of Goskolo</i>	<i>2. How it Tastes</i>	11
	<i>3. What makes up the ingredients</i>	1
	Group Total	2
		3
		2
		1
		1
		4
	Grand Total	28

Source: Field Analysis, 2024

This Table shows the general prior knowledge of *Goskolo* abusers in the Jos metropolis. The subthemes are categorized into four themes: 1. Types and *Goskolo* 2. Negative effects 3. Positive effect of *Goskolo* 4. Content composition of *Goskolo*.

Theme One: ‘Goskolo’ types:

Goskolo Types theme describes the narratives related to the Prior knowledge of *Goskolo* abusers on the various types of ‘Goskolo’ in existence in the Jos metropolis. Five sub-themes made up these themes, which include: 1. *Ogogoro* (5) 2. Herbs (1) 3. Branded ‘*Goskolo*’ (2) 4. Good ‘*Goskolo*’ (1) 5. Bad ‘*Goskolo*’ (1). The sub-themes are explained thus:

Ogogoro (Igbo type): This sub-theme emerged as a type of *Goskolo* consumed in Jos metropolis by young abusers. The participants in their narratives mentioned

that Oogoro is one of the major types or names considered to be *Goskolo* consumed by alcohol abusers in Jos metropolis, commonly produced by the Igbos. Participant 1 who is from Angwa Rukuba said *'We have two different types but the same,' we have that of Igbos and that of Yorubas. Yoruba own are in the form of herbs while Igbos own is deadly because it contains a high percentage of alcohol and they are divided into two blended and Oogoro.'* Another participant 5 who resides in Kabong/GadaBiu said *'I know Oogoro, jedi plus, Erujeje and Jacobs captain Jack'*.

Herbs (Yoruba type): This sub-category also emerges as a type of 'Goskolo' in the Jos metropolis. Herbs are another type of *Goskolo* known by participants. Participant 2 from Agwa Rukuba said... *'that of Yoruba's is called herbs; Yoruba's own are in the form of herbs.* Participant 8 confirms with this list of names of which some are considered as herb types *'I know of MC Blended, King Justice, Erujeje, Captain Jack, Club 7, Jedi Plus, Baby oku, Get Alert, Baby Carry Go, Ever Best, Regal, Dark sailor, Plastic, Aloma bitter, Action bitters, Quick action, Pepper soup, Monkey tail, Bitterroot, Dogoyaro, Soja roots.*

Branded 'Goskolo': Another sub-theme that emerged from the narratives of participants is Branded 'Goskolo'. Participants identified Branded 'Goskolo' as the most commonly found in shops. They are packaged in different containers such as sachets and bottles with different street names. Participant 2 said *Goskolo is of a different kind. But Oogoro is 'Goskolo' we have others like Swagga, Erujeje, Captain Jack, which is blended 'Goskolo' found in shops.* Participant 1 in Angwa Rukuba also said this *'.....they are divided into two branded and Oogoro. Branded include Swagga, Erujeje, and Regal. That of Yorubas include confirm, Action bitters, and Baby Oku.*

Good 'Goskolo': This sub-category also emerged from the narratives of participants as one of the types of *Goskolo* known in Jos metropolis. Participant 4 who is a Painter and Building Electrician said *'...the good is the branded one, like Erujeje, Captain Jack, they have NAFDAC nu*

Bad 'Goskolo': Bad *Goskolo* is considered one of the highly concentrated alcohols, sometimes it is made up of car battery water mixed with water. Participant 4 said this.... *the bad is the chemical like Oogoro ... 'they sometimes use raw battery water to make the Goskolo too'.*

Theme Two: Negative effects

Negative effects category (3) includes narratives related to the Prior Knowledge of alcohol abuser in Jos metropolis. It consists of three sub-themes: Sickness (4); Irresponsibility (2); Intoxication (5).

Sickness: These sub-themes consist of narratives related to the Prior knowledge of *Goskolo* abusers in the Jos metropolis with a frequency of (4). Sicknesses here are the symptoms and diseases that manifest due to consumption of *Goskolo*. One of the Participants, 14, a resident of Kugiyia said ... *'It gives people sickness like Tuberculosis (TB) because you share a cup with plenty of people'*. Similarly, Participant 5 gave this narrative thus "...*It damages our body.*" In the same vein Participant 1 said... *"I take "Confirm" and it makes me purge, that of Igbos make me feel headache'*. Participant 15 also indicated that *'...Ogogoro is killing'*.

Irresponsibility (2): These sub-themes also emerged as one of the Prior knowledge areas of abusers on '*Goskolo*'. To be irresponsible means so many things, in these narratives the participants identified misbehaviour and living a useless life as being 'Irresponsible'. One of the Participant number 4 said: *'...It also destroys people, makes you useless'*.

Intoxication: Intoxication (5) is a sub-theme that emerged as one of the Prior Knowledge of abusers on '*Goskolo*' in Jos metropolis. Participants indicated that consumption of '*Goskolo*' makes them go high. Participant 2 said *'.... If you take it you always feel charged someone like me, I don't like taking it always but due to too much thinking you will find yourself taking it always.'*

Theme Three: Positive effects

Positive effects category (3) includes narratives related to the Prior Knowledge of alcohol abusers in the Jos metropolis. It consists of two sub-themes: Warmth (1) and Relaxation (2).

Warmth: The warmth subcategory is related to the positive effects of '*Goskolo*' is a narrative from a Participant (1) which explains *Goskolo* as a substance which when taken helps in warming up the body system during cold weather, thus it is beneficial to the abuser. Participant 6 said this *'...It takes away the cold'' when one is feeling cold'*.

Relaxation: This is another sub-theme that emanated from the narratives of participants. Relaxation (2) explains the temporal relief a '*Goskolo*' abuser gets from its consumption; it serves as a stress reduction substance. One of the Participants 7 said *'... It makes me sleep well'.... It makes one forget his or her stress'* and another participant 8 said *'...makes you feel happy for some hours'*

Theme Four: Content of Guskolo

The content of *Guskolo* includes narratives related to the components that make up the drink called '*Guskolo*'. It consists of three sub-themes: Colour (2); How it Tastes (1); Ingredients (1).

Colour type: This sub-theme is explained from the following narratives by Participant 9 who said '..... *It is colourless*'.

Participant 10 said '*Ogogoro is the father of all that is, it has high quantity of alcohol and is very strong, it is white in colour ...Ogogoro is white in colour*'

How it tastes: This sub- theme is observed from the narratives of Participant13 '.... *Ogogoro is white, while the root is bitter. '..... Almost all of them taste bitter*

What makes up the ingredient: The ingredient sub-theme emerged from the narrative of participants as one of the contents of '*Guskolo*' described by abusers in Jos metropolis. Ingredients constitute the raw materials that are used for the production of '*Guskolo*'. This includes water, chemicals like Car battery water and alcohol. Participant 21 said '*...some they use raw battery water/water to make the Guskolo*'

Discussion

Types of Alcohol

Alcohol is categorized into three main types based on content: wine, spirits, and beer (Mandora, 2018). Spirits, including *Guskolo*, have high alcoholic content (20-50%) (American Academy of Family Physicians, 2017). In this research study, *Guskolo* abusers recognized two types: Bad *Guskolo*: High-concentration drinks made with harmful chemicals (e.g., car battery water), including Ogogoro and herbal *Guskolo*. The second is the Good *Guskolo*: Branded, packaged drinks with standard measurements, sold in shops. In a contrasting classification, scholars categorize alcohol as wine, spirit, and beer, but *Guskolo* abusers classify it as "bad" or "good" alcohol, contradicting traditional classification.

All types of *Guskolo* pose health risks due to high alcohol content, regardless of classification as "good" or "bad". Therefore, to reduce alcohol intake, it's essential to: Disabuse *Guskolo* abusers of the notion that there's a "good" alcohol. It is pertinent to emphasize that all alcohol is harmful, while accurate information about alcohol poisoning risks should be provided. Consequently, *Guskolo* abusers' perception of "good" and "bad" alcohol must be addressed to effectively reduce alcohol consumption and mitigate health risks.

Negative effects

The research highlights that *Goskolo* (a type of alcohol) abuse has significant negative effects on the body, including liver damage, headaches, tuberculosis, emaciation, heart problems, and even death. Despite being aware of these dangers, *Goskolo* abusers continue their harmful behaviour, possibly due to cognitive dissonance and the backfire effect, where conflicting information reinforces their beliefs. This persistence in abuse occurs even though they understand the risks, such as liver failure, cancer, and social irresponsibility, including the failure to meet responsibilities and engaging in dangerous behaviour.

Emphasizes should therefore be on the challenge of changing the behavior of *Goskolo* abusers, as they often dismiss negative health information, holding onto the belief that death is inevitable regardless of how it comes. To reduce *Goskolo* abuse, this research suggests that communication and intervention efforts should be empathetic, respectful, and non-confrontational. Information should be presented in a way that respects the abuser's views and avoids attacking or shaming them, as this approach may be more effective in promoting change.

Positive effects

Young *Goskolo* abusers believe that *Goskolo* consumption has positive effects, including providing warmth in cold weather, relaxation, and stress relief. They report that *Goskolo* helps them sleep well, feel happy temporarily, and forget their stress. Research supports this idea, suggesting that alcohol can reduce stress in certain people and circumstances (Sayette, 1999). Additionally, drinking is often used to dull the emotional pain and hardships of life.

However, it's crucial to note that these perceived positive effects are short-term and subjective, masking the long-term damage caused by alcohol consumption. *Goskolo* abusers' prior knowledge negatively influences their information behaviour, making them resistant to contrary information. To address this, information providers should sensitize young abusers to the dangers of using alcohol for warmth and stress relief and promote healthier alternatives. Encouraging them to face problems head-on, rather than using alcohol as an escape, is also essential. By addressing subjective knowledge and promoting factual information, interventions can effectively reduce *Goskolo* abuse and its harmful consequences.

Content composition

Young *Goskolo* abusers possess prior knowledge about the physical characteristics of *Goskolo*, including its colour (colourless or white for *Ogogoro*, coloured for branded versions), bitter taste, and burning sensation. However, they lack knowledge about the composition of *Goskolo*'s alcoholic content. The literature revealed three types of alcohol: isopropyl, methyl, and ethyl, with only ethyl being safe for human consumption (Sciencing, 2018).

Goskolo abusers' subjective experiences guided their understanding, focusing on colour, taste, and sensation rather than the toxic composition. This ignorance puts them at risk, as homemade *Goskolo* contains harmful methyl alcohol. To reduce alcohol abuse, information providers must educate abusers about the dangers of methyl alcohol and its effects. This knowledge gap highlights the need for targeted interventions addressing the specific misconceptions and lack of understanding among *Goskolo* abusers.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the major question of this research which explored the Prior knowledge of young *Goskolo*- abusers: Prior knowledge influenced the refusal of *Goskolo* abusers to accept information communicated to them by the various sources of information, NGO's, government and agencies. This is so because their prior Knowledge which is socially constructed raised to some misconceptions of good and bad *Goskolo*. Chatman's theory of normative behaviour gave explanations for this misconception. The understanding or awareness of the consequences but of the influence of social norms, social type, world view and information behaviour in the *Goskolo abusers'* small world, informed the non-use of information from information providers and communication officials. They therefore exhibited an attitude of selective distortion. That is interpreting information to support what *Goskolo* abusers believe in. An attitude of backfire effect was also exhibited by *Goskolo* abusers. 'Backfire effect is when a correction increases belief in the very misconception it is attempting to correct, and it is often used as a reason not to correct misinformation' (Swire-Thompson 2022). Some of the misconceptions are the fact that *Goskolo* helps in reducing their physical and psychological pains and that there is a good and bad *Goskolo*. *Goskolo* abusers' subjective experiences guided their understanding, focusing on colour, taste, and sensation rather than the toxic composition.

The following recommendations are proffered:

Communicate to binge drinkers based on standard alcohol classifications (Wine, Spirits, Beer); Focus on the dangers of "Goskolo" and the negative effects of binge drinking; Use visual aids like videos to communicate the consequences of alcohol abuse;

Another way that will help in reducing *Goskolo* abuse is to develop effective video communication modes to translate health messages

Use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help abusers recognize inaccurate thinking patterns. Focus on the dangers of supposed benefits associated with alcohol abuse (pain relief, warmth).

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