

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN SRI LANKA: A CASE STUDY OF ANURADHAPURA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Alcohol consumption varies significantly across different regions worldwide, and has a long history in Sri Lanka, tracing back to ancient civilizations. This subject has been extensively explored owing to its potential health risks and broader societal impacts. Numerous factors, including demographic, psychological, social, economic, and environmental factors, contribute to alcohol consumption patterns. This study aimed to examine alcohol consumption trends in the Anuradhapura district while investigating the demographic and socioeconomic factors that may impact alcohol consumption. The study used the proportion of income allocated to alcohol consumption as the dependent variable and considered various independent variables, such as age, ethnicity, religion, education level, marital status, residential location, employment status, personal preference, and smoking behaviors. Data collection was conducted using primary sources in the Anuradhapura District of Sri Lanka. Primary data were collected from the Anuradhapura district using a purposive sample of 12 licensed alcohol outlets selected based on sales performance to represent both urban and rural areas. In total, 215 alcohol consumers were selected using snowball sampling. A multivariate regression model was used to identify the key factors influencing alcohol consumption. The analysis revealed that demographic and socioeconomic factors, including age, ethnicity, marital status, educational level, residential location, employment status, and personal preferences, significantly influenced alcohol consumption. In contrast, religion and smoking behavior did not have any substantial effect on consumption patterns. Furthermore, a negative correlation was identified between educational level and alcohol consumption, indicating that individuals with higher educational achievement consumed less alcohol. Higher levels of alcohol consumption were observed among unemployed and unmarried individuals of the Sinhalese ethnic group who practiced Buddhism. Furthermore, most consumers demonstrated a preference for malt and arracks. In the Anuradhapura district, alcohol consumption patterns fluctuated over time, largely influenced by price changes and seasonal demand, particularly during festive periods, such as April. Several factors have been identified as contributing to alcohol dependence, including peer pressure, curiosity, boredom, and adult influence. Reducing alcohol consumption remains a priority for many, with interventions, such as educational campaigns, career development opportunities, awareness programs, and meditation practices, showing promise in addressing this issue. In Sri Lanka, the government faced the challenge of balancing alcohol-related revenue generation with the need to address public health concerns. Prioritizing the reduction in alcohol consumption is essential to protect public health and promote societal well-being. A comprehensive evaluation of long-term consequences is necessary to achieve a sustainable balance between fostering economic growth and safeguarding public health.

Keywords: Alcohol consumption, multiple regression model, socio-economic factors