

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Effect of Alcohol Consumption on Nutrition Status and Dietary Practices in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of alcohol consumption on nutritional status and dietary practices among alcoholics in Kiambu County, Kenya. The objectives of this study were to determine alcohol consumption, assess dietary practices among consumers, and explore socioeconomic factors influencing alcohol use. The researcher used a descriptive cross-sectional survey conducted among 84 respondents. Snowballing was used to obtain the alcoholics from three sub counties, Juja, Kiambu and Ruiru Sub Counties. Interview schedules were translated to Swahili to cater for the illiterate. Anthropometric and dietary assessment (food frequency questionnaire) were carried out. Ethical approval and authorization were obtained from Mount Kenya University, NACOSTI, and Kiambu County health offices. The respondent's participation was voluntary and the researcher assured them of confidentiality and anonymity. Data were analyzed using SPSS and presented in tables, charts and graphs. Anthropometric data was analyzed using the WHO BMI classification for adults. The results show that high alcohol consumption could be due to poverty, unemployment, and social pressures. 92% of the alcoholics had poor dietary practices, consuming starchy foods, vegetables and rarely took proteins. 76% consumed less than three food groups, attributing it to lack of money. Alcohol also served as a coping mechanism for stress for about 67% of the respondents. The study concludes that alcohol consumption has an effect on dietary practices of the alcoholics. 43% of the respondents had BMI below 18.5kg/m². Eighty two percent (82%) were involved in 'mjengo' that is manual building work which was not regularly available. The study recommends targeted campaigns among alcoholics to promote healthier eating, nutrition education programs to encourage balanced diets, and community-based initiatives focusing on financial literacy, job creation, and changing social norms among alcoholics.

Keywords: Alcohol, Dietary Practices, Nutrition Status, Morbidity