Urbanisation and Alcoholism: A Sociological Study of Mysuru city

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Abstract

Urbanization is a normal phenomenon in every society. As the population increases, the city extends its geographical area. With infrastructure development, migration increases from rural to urban areas, creating demand for job opportunities for all sections of society, thereby helping to expand the economy. The more the infrastructural development, the more expansion, opportunities, and economic activities arise. On the other hand, the connectivity and dependence between rural and urban areas have made people more accessible to an urban lifestyle. Hence, for their livelihood, they started to migrate towards urban areas. Compared to the rural difficulties, struggles, and challenges, urban life has become much easier and more comfortable. This tendency towards acceptance of an urban lifestyle, along with roots in rural traditions, has created a gap between new and old lifestyles due to ignorance and unawareness of new adaptations. This confusion led to many unhealthy practices, including alcoholism. This article studies the process of urbanization and its impact on alcoholism, especially in the Mysuru district. The study has adopted both primary and secondary data.

Keywords: Urbanization, Alcoholic, Alcoholism, Modernization, Addiction, De-addiction

Introduction

Urbanization represents a transition in people's lifestyles, shifting either gradually or rapidly from agricultural production to industrialized production, from domestic consumption to commercial consumption, and from simple to complex organizations. Infrastructure improvements and multiple professions change the entire spectrum of a place, attracting more people towards urban areas and consequently increasing production and services. The transformative nature of urbanization has become a global phenomenon reshaping the fabric of societies, influencing individual behaviours, and impacting community dynamics (Pacione, 2009). Mysuru, a city steeped in cultural richness and historical significance, is experiencing its metamorphosis as it undergoes rapid urbanization. This study endeavors to delve into the nuanced relationship between urbanization and the rising prevalence of alcoholism within the unique context of Mysuru city in Karnataka.

"The city is not a problem; it is a solution," says Jamie Lerner, architect and urban planner in Curitiba, Brazil. This quote raises awareness of our surroundings and what is happening around us, urging us to explore new trends for the future. Awareness of current happenings allows us to analyse and predict future trends, bridging the link between the present and future. Because the present is built upon the past or previous generation, it needs updates, new adaptations, and innovative modifications. Instead of making it a solution, we are complicating the complex environment in urban areas.

Urbanization brings forth a myriad of changes, from infrastructural developments to shifts in societal norms. As cities expand, opportunities and challenges arise simultaneously, and one of the challenges that have gained prominence is the potential link between urbanization and alcoholism. Recognizing the need to understand these complexities, this study explores how the urbanization process in Mysuru may be influencing alcohol consumption patterns and consequently the broader societal well-being. Towards the end of 2023, data related to the health and population of alcohol consumption and its impact in Karnataka deserves an update. Karnataka is one of the most drinking-friendly states in India. As sociologists, we are taught to observe the social phenomena that can arise out of alcoholism. It is not within our remit to suggest corrective measures to curb alcoholism but rather to handle the fallout of social issues. Our role as sociologists is to record the social impact phenomena and make an analysis based on the data obtained (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2006).

Urbanization and Alcoholism through a Sociological Lens

The rapid rise of cities worldwide has brought undeniable progress but also cast a shadow in the form of increased social problems, including alcoholism. While the link between urbanization and alcohol misuse is evident, attributing a direct causal relationship is complex, riddled with sociological nuances. This research delves into this intricate connection, exploring potential mechanisms and acknowledging the multifaceted nature of the issue.

One prominent sociological perspective highlights the role of urban stressors in influencing alcohol consumption. The fast-paced, competitive, and often impersonal nature of city life can lead to feelings of isolation, alienation, and chronic stress (Aneshensel, 2002). Individuals grappling with these challenges may turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism, seeking temporary relief from emotional burdens (Cooper et al., 2003). This phenomenon, known as stress-induced coping, suggests that urbanization, by creating stressful environments, might indirectly contribute to higher rates of alcohol misuse.

Urban environments also present unique social contexts that can influence drinking patterns. The sheer concentration of bars, pubs, and liquor stores in cities compared to rural areas increases accessibility and normalizes alcohol consumption (Greenfield et al., 2006). Additionally, certain social circles within urban spaces, particularly among young adults, might associate alcohol with leisure and social bonding, further reinforcing its presence in everyday life (Jackson et al., 2009). These social norms and cultural expectations surrounding alcohol can exert a powerful influence on individual behavior, potentially leading to increased consumption, particularly among vulnerable individuals.

A Multifaceted Approach

Addressing the issue of alcohol misuse in urban settings requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental factors. Public health interventions should focus on building resilience through stress management programs and fostering social support networks. Additionally, policies aimed at reducing alcohol accessibility, particularly in vulnerable communities, and promoting responsible drinking practices can play a crucial role in prevention efforts (World Health Organization, 2018).

The rise of cities has been a double-edged sword for humanity. While urbanization fosters

innovation and economic growth, it also presents significant challenges to public health. One such challenge is the well-documented link between urbanization and alcoholism. Sociologists have explored this complex relationship through various theories, offering insights into how the very factors that attract people to cities can also contribute to a troubling rise in alcohol abuse.

Social Disorganization and Anomie: A City Unmoored

One of the most prominent explanations lies in the concept of social disorganization, a theory championed by scholars like Robert Park. As societies urbanize rapidly, traditional social structures like close-knit communities often unravel. This disrupts the support networks and informal social control that once kept individuals anchored. In the anonymity of the city, feelings of isolation and alienation can take root. Sociologist Robert Merton noted this phenomenon, stating, "Rapid urbanization tends to break down the integrated social structure... [leading to] a situation where the norms no longer effectively regulate the behavior of individuals" (Merton, 1968). This breakdown of social structures can make alcohol a tempting escape mechanism, offering a sense of solace and connection in an otherwise impersonal environment.

Understanding the sociological connection between urbanization and alcoholism is not just an academic exercise. By delving into these factors, we can develop more effective strategies for prevention and treatment programs specifically tailored to the challenges faced by urban populations. This multifaceted approach, recognizing both the risks and potential support structures within cities, holds the key to mitigating the negative consequences of alcohol abuse in our increasingly urbanized world.

Literature Review

Agnieszka Bratek (2013) conducted a study involving 356 alcoholics from two distinct groups. The study concluded that alcoholics were less often raised in complete families, often had alcohol-dependent parents, and their parents were not caring, supportive, helpful, or dependable. The study's results led the researcher to conclude that family structure and parent-child relationships influence later alcohol dependence in children (Bratek, 2013).

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2011) reported that one in five adult Americans grew up with an alcoholic parent. Child and adolescent psychiatrists acknowledge that these individuals face a higher risk of emotional problems compared to children whose parents were non-alcoholic. In families where alcohol is consumed, children of alcoholics (CA) are four times more likely to regularly consume alcohol compared to other children. It has been reported that most children in such families experience some form of neglect, abuse, and various issues (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2011).

Brennan (1994) conducted a comparative and prospective study on 87 spouses of late-life problem drinkers. The respondents, who were spouses of late-life drinkers, reported poorer health-related and social functioning. They had more confidence in their cognitive coping strategies but faced more obstacles in sharing these strategies compared to an equal number (87) of spouses of non-problem drinkers. The researchers found a more stressful and less supportive context in alcoholic families. However, among the total sample, only 22 spouses of remitted problem drinkers showed improvement and sustained it in several areas over a year of follow-up. In contrast, 65 spouses of non-remitted partners continued to function poorly, reported less

supportive and less productive relationships with their partners, and escalated conflicts with children and other family members (Brennan, 1994).

Chandrashekhar (1998) conducted a cross-cultural comparison of alcohol consumption practices in India, Mexico, and Nigeria. This study revealed that definitions and practices of what is considered normal drinking vary significantly among different countries and even among different cultural groups within the same country. For example, while India is generally perceived as a dry country, drinking practices vary considerably among people living in the northern and southern regions, and among people of different castes in the same region. No universally applicable definition of alcohol dependency and drinking problems takes into account ethnic and cultural differences in drinking practices. Researchers, clinicians, and public health officials have been working to develop effective prevention measures and set expectations regarding alcohol consumption and its effects. Changes in drinking patterns often coincide with broad social and cultural changes within countries. A notable example of this is the significant change in drinking patterns observed among Mexican men who migrate to the United States. Changes in drinking practices often affect the appropriate approaches to the prevention and treatment of alcohol-related problems. The study suggests that focusing on women's drinking would be more relevant in Mexico and Nigeria than in India, where women generally do not drink. This focus could guide the development of prevention and treatment programs tailored to women's needs (Chandrashekhar, 1998).

Naik (2013) discussed the health and economic consequences of alcohol abuse in India. He has highlighted that heavy and chronic alcohol dependency is associated with severe health risks. Alcohol consumption has potentially caused about 61 different types of injuries, illnesses, or deaths. Binge drinking and prolonged alcohol use can have adverse effects on vital organs, resulting in several health disorders such as mental disorders, liver cirrhosis, pancreatitis, various types of cancer, and foetal damage among pregnant women who consume alcohol (Naik, 2013).

Evelyn Cohen Reis (1994) conducted a study examining the influence of anti-drug advertising on the attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and beliefs of young people, using various forms of media and educational activities. The study involved a conventional sample group of 837 male students from middle and high schools. The study found that 83% (95% confidence interval 80% to 86%) of students were exposed to anti-drug advertising. A majority of these students reported a positive impact of anti-drug advertisements: 92% (95% confidence interval, 89% to 95%) perceived an increase in their knowledge of drugs; 60% (95% confidence interval, 56% to 64%) felt they developed stronger beliefs about the dangers of drugs; 52% (95% confidence interval, 48% to 56%) developed more negative attitudes toward drug users; and 75% (95% confidence interval, 72% to 78%) reported that they had reduced, stopped, or been convinced never to initiate drug use. Multivariate analysis revealed that non-drug-using, urban, and younger students were most likely to perceive a deterrent impact on behaviour. The researchers concluded that anti-drug advertising was perceived to have a deterrent effect on self-reported substance use among this population of adolescents (Reis, 1994).

Urbanization in Mysuru City

Mysore, located in the southern part of the Indian state of Karnataka, holds a significant historical and cultural prominence. Nestled at the base of the Chamundi Hills, approximately 145 kilometres southwest of Bengaluru, Mysuru boasts a rich heritage as the former capital of the Kingdom of Mysore under the Wodeyar dynasty. Renowned for its majestic palaces, notably the iconic Mysuru Palace, the city is a magnet for tourists, especially during the traditional Hindu festival of Dasara. Mysuru is also celebrated for its diverse art forms, including the renowned Mysore style of painting, delectable Mysore Pak, and exquisite silk weaving traditions.

With a robust educational infrastructure anchored by institutions like the University of Mysore, the city has emerged as an educational hub. Moreover, Mysuru's economy reflects a blend of traditional and modern industries, including tourism, information technology, and manufacturing. Noteworthy developments in the information technology sector have attracted businesses and professionals, contributing to infrastructural advancements such as the expansion of the Mysore Airport, the development of ring roads, and the enhancement of public transport systems. Initiatives like smart city projects aim to harness technology for efficient governance and improved quality of life.

Despite its cultural allure and economic vibrancy, Mysuru faces challenges associated with rapid urbanization. Issues like traffic congestion, resource strain, and escalating housing costs necessitate sustainable urban planning strategies. As the city continues to evolve, investments in green spaces and public amenities are imperative to ensure inclusive and balanced growth.

Alcoholism in Mysuru City

The burgeoning urbanization of Mysuru, one of Karnataka's and India's fastest-growing cities, has brought about a host of socio-economic changes. The influx of immigrants, coupled with natural population growth, has led to the expansion of urban areas, driven primarily by improvements in infrastructure, job opportunities, education, and the establishment of industries, factories, and businesses. This expansion has necessitated the reclassification of villages into towns and cities, amplifying the demand for labor, particularly among the daily wage earners. Consequently, rural populations increasingly rely on urban centers for their needs, fostering a symbiotic relationship between rural and urban lifestyles and accelerating the pace of modernization.

The embrace of modernity has reshaped attitudes, behaviors, and consumption patterns, giving rise to both positive and negative impacts. While urbanization promises progress, it also brings forth challenges such as addiction to various substances, including alcohol. Accessibility and affordability, fueled by aggressive marketing strategies targeting diverse age groups, have exacerbated the prevalence of alcohol addiction, particularly among the working class. Furthermore, the cultural shift towards Western trends has normalized alcohol consumption, contributing to its increased prevalence.

Urbanization, characterized by a mechanical lifestyle, heightened competition, and long working hours, fosters a stressful environment conducive to substance abuse. Women's empowerment, while commendable, has introduced additional stressors as women increasingly participate in the workforce, challenging traditional societal norms. Moreover, the modern ethos

emphasizes leisure and indulgence, leading to a rise in celebratory events, outings, and visits to pubs and bars, particularly among urban dwellers.

According to 2020 data, In Mysore city there are 577 retail shops, 40 Social clubs, 240 hotels, 396 Bar and restaurants and 124 MSIL Shops were serving alcohol.

While alcohol consumption was once taboo, especially among children, it has now become more socially acceptable and visible. As social networks expand and exposure to alcohol-related activities increases, so does consumption. Even governmental policies, such as the licensing of liquor stores, contribute to the normalization of alcohol consumption, albeit for revenue generation purposes.

In summary, while urbanization offers opportunities for progress, it also poses challenges, including the proliferation of alcoholism. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that considers socio-economic factors, cultural shifts, and governmental policies aimed at promoting responsible alcohol consumption and mitigating addiction.

Methodology:

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. Quantitatively a representative sample survey was conducted using stratified random sampling, targeting diverse demographic groups across various neighbourhoods. The survey gathered data on alcohol consumption habits, perceptions of urbanization, and relevant sociodemographic information and qualitatively in-depth interviews and focus group discussions conducted with individuals struggling with alcoholism, recovering individuals, community leaders, and representatives of bars and liquor stores. These qualitative methods will provide deeper insights into lived experiences, motivations, and challenges related to alcohol use in an urban context. A structured questionnaire has been developed to assess alcohol consumption patterns, attitudes towards alcohol, and perceptions of urbanization's impact on individuals and communities. The questionnaire has been pre-tested for clarity and reliability, and distributed to respondents. A thematic guide was used to facilitate discussions within diverse focus groups, exploring shared experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to alcohol and urbanization. This outlines the approach for exploring the complex relationship between urbanization and alcoholism in Mysuru city. By employing a mixed-methods approach, considering ethical considerations, and acknowledging limitations, this study aims to provide valuable insights and contribute to informed responses to this critical issue. For the study, the Mysore city has been divided into four zones.

Zone 1: Centralized Activity District (CAD) and Heritage Zone

This zone encompasses the heart of Mysore, including the bustling Devaraja Market area, the iconic Mysore Palace complex, and the vibrant D. DevarajaUrs Road. This area is characterized by:

High foot traffic: Tourists and locals frequent this zone for shopping, sightseeing, and nightlife.

Mixed demographics: Residents, students, professionals, and tourists contribute to a diverse population.

Accessibility to alcohol: Restaurants, bars, and liquor stores are likely to be concentrated in this zone.

Zone 2: Planned Residential and Educational Hub

This zone comprises well-established planned residential areas like Saraswathipuram, Lakshmipuram, and Vijayanagar. It also includes educational institutions like the University of Mysore and Maharaja's College. This area is known for:

Established communities: Residents might have stronger social ties and community control.

Predominantly middle-class demographics: Socioeconomic factors could influence alcohol consumption patterns.

Limited accessibility to alcohol: Fewer establishments selling alcohol might be present compared to Zone 1.

Zone 3: Industrial and Peri-Urban Interface

This zone includes areas with significant industrial activity like Hebbal Industrial Area and some peri-urban pockets on the outskirts of Mysore. This zone is likely to have:

Working-class population: Job stress and shift work could be relevant factors.

Mixed residential and commercial settings: Drinking patterns might differ between residential areas and industrial zones.

Emerging urbanization: Peri-urban areas might be experiencing the initial effects of urbanization, potentially impacting alcohol use patterns.

Zone 4: Developing Residential and Commercial Areas

This zone encompasses relatively new residential developments like Bogadi, Alanahalli and surrounding areas of Ring Road. It might also include some upcoming commercial establishments. This zone is characterized by:

Heterogeneous population: A mix of established residents and newcomers might influence social dynamics.

Evolving community structures: Social control mechanisms might still be developing.

Varying accessibility to alcohol: Availability of alcohol outlets could depend on the specific location within the zone.

This zonal approach, informed by Mysore's city plan, provides a framework to explore the complex relationship between urbanization and alcoholism in the city. By examining these distinct areas, we tried to get valuable insights into the social and environmental factors that shape alcohol consumption patterns in Mysore's evolving urban landscape.

Results and Findings

This study investigates the potential link between urbanization and alcohol consumption patterns in Mysore, India. To ensure a representative sample of Mysore's residents, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. This method is particularly well-suited for this study because it guarantees proportional representation from various zones within the city and maintains randomness through random selection within each zone.

Stratified random sampling avoids the potential bias of simple random sampling, where certain zones might be underrepresented or overrepresented. In contrast, stratification ensures a balanced sample that reflects the heterogeneity of Mysore's urban landscape.

A well-defined allocation scheme and random selection techniques within each zone were used to achieve a representative sample of 200 participants struggling with alcohol addiction. This approach strengthens the study's internal validity, allowing for more robust inferences regarding the potential relationship between urbanization and alcohol consumption patterns in Mysore's distinct urban zones.

The data analysis revealed that a significant portion of the respondents resided in rural-urban fringe areas and were drawn to the urban lifestyle and its trends. The urban population exhibited a greater propensity towards adopting modern ways of life, often disregarding the potential consequences. This behavior resulted in various addictions, including alcohol abuse, which negatively impacted their health, relationships, and social roles.

The study acknowledges the multifaceted nature of alcohol consumption, recognizing various drinker categories such as social drinkers, alcoholics, and stress drinkers. It highlights the potential role that these categories play in disrupting social environments. Data suggests a correlation between alcohol consumption and crime rates in India. The analysis points towards a potential link between modernization and urbanization, where individuals experience negative consequences, including alcohol-related health problems, due to increased exposure to urban lifestyles.

The traditional rural lifestyle has significantly changed due to urbanization. Once characterized by agricultural fields, small populations, and a focus on tradition, these areas have witnessed a decline in agricultural activities and population size. This transformation is attributed to urbanization and migration patterns. The data suggests that urbanization significantly influences young people, who are particularly receptive to adopting new lifestyles. Furthermore, many rural areas rely on urban centers for essential services such as education, employment, and markets. This exposure, particularly among young people, is facilitated by advancements in transportation and communication technologies, including television, mobile phones, and the internet.

The study's sample population included a majority of respondents below 35 years old, with the highest percentage falling within the 26-35 age range. This indicates that a concerning proportion of individuals are developing addictions during their prime working years, potentially hindering their productivity. The data suggests a sequential progression from alcohol use to alcoholism, with various stages involved. Notably, individuals adapting to urban environments tend to adopt new practices and behaviors. The study found that 94.5% of the identified alcoholics were male, suggesting a greater susceptibility among this demographic within the context of urbanization.

The analysis revealed a positive correlation between the extent of urbanization and the prevalence of alcohol consumption. While education accessibility has improved in urban areas, some individuals become susceptible to the negative influences of urban life, potentially jeopardizing their educational pursuits. The data indicates that over half (54%) of the sample population had only completed secondary school education (PUC), while 30% had attained a 10th-grade education, and 12% had only reached the 8th-grade level. Early school dropout in rural areas is identified as a potential factor leading some young people to seek employment opportunities and potentially initiate alcohol use as a coping mechanism.

The data suggests a link between a lack of awareness and susceptibility to addiction. The majority of the participants had limited educational backgrounds, potentially hindering their understanding of the long-term consequences of alcohol consumption. Over half of the sample (more than 50%) had resided in the city for over ten years, highlighting the potential influence of prolonged exposure to urban environments.

Urbanization is a significant driver of social and cultural change, impacting lifestyles and practices. However, the influence extends beyond urban areas, with rural populations also experiencing transformations due to exposure to urban life. The majority of respondents did not attribute alcohol consumption solely to city dwellers, acknowledging its presence in both rural and urban settings. The study emphasizes that while the practice of alcohol consumption is not geographically restricted, prolonged exposure can lead to normalization. The data suggests a connection between the duration of urban residency and the likelihood of adopting riskier consumption patterns, with a majority (55%) identified as social drinkers and the remaining percentage consuming alcohol on various occasions.

Although only a small percentage (7.5%) were classified as alcoholics, the data suggests a potential for escalation among all categories of drinkers. The study highlights the tendency of individuals to downplay the severity of their addiction, despite potentially exhibiting regular consumption patterns. Rural migrants, despite being aware of the negative consequences, can still become entrapped in the cycle of alcohol abuse. As mentioned earlier, school dropouts may be forced to seek employment at a young age, potentially allocating a portion of their income towards alcohol purchases for recreational purposes

Conclusion

This study explores the link between urbanization and alcohol consumption in Mysore, India. It employed stratified random sampling to achieve a representative sample of 200 residents struggling with alcohol addiction.

The analysis revealed that urbanization influences residents, particularly young people. It found a correlation between the extent of urbanization and the prevalence of alcohol consumption.

Additionally, a lack of education and prolonged exposure to urban environments were identified as risk factors.

While the study acknowledges that alcohol consumption exists in both rural and urban areas, it suggests that urbanization may lead to a normalization of riskier consumption patterns. The data indicates a potential for escalation among all categories of drinkers.

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