



Faculty of Social Sciences

**ACCULTURATION AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG
NIGERIAN STUDENTS IN KUCHING, SARAWAK**

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**ACCULTURATION AND ALCOHOL
CONSUMPTION AMONG NIGERIAN STUDENTS
IN KUCHING, SARAWAK**

GOD'SWILL ESECHIE

**This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Social Sciences
with Honours**

**Faculty of Social Sciences
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ABSTRACT

Acculturation is a general term use to describe cultural change or cultural shock, of people or person that are not of the same cultural background. There are numerous ways acculturation can affect or shape the life of people, but I choose to talk about alcohol consumption among Nigerian students in Kuching. I embarked on interviewing 10 Nigerian students studying in Kuching by using effective qualitative method such as semi-structured and in-depth interview. All my respondents are Nigerian male, and are second year students and above. In this study, the focus or main central issue is that alcohol, impacts negatively on students' academic performance. The more consumption of alcohol intake, more drastic impact it has on their academic performance. However, based on data collected, this study discovered that most of the respondents view the act of alcohol consumption differently. Some feel the intake of alcohol is to calm their nerves or relief them off stress, while other feel otherwise. Hence this study focuses on alcohol consumption among Nigerian students in Kuching and to reveal the real situation or reason why they partake in alcohol activities.

KEYWORDS: Alcohol consumption, Nigerian students, Acculturation and Academic performance.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to examine alcohol consumptions and its impact among Nigerian student specifically in Kuching, Sarawak. Nigerian policy in sending students oversees cultural change or acculturation. Further, this study will explore both the impact and outcome of alcohol consumption in relation to acculturation among Nigerian students in Kuching. The nature of this social activity varies from individuals depending on individual perspective and perception. The main purpose of this study is to analyze the various reasons or effect that acculturation plays in Nigerian student in relations to alcohol consumption and the various reasons and means by which the Nigerian students partake in this act. These debates as it may seem, varies from merits and demerits or as some may feel it varies from good to evil. So sit back and relax as I take you through the lives of Nigerian students in Kuching, Sarawak.

This research is focused, on young men of Nigerian nationality between the ages of 18 and above and who are legal students in institutes of higher learning which include private and public universities such as; Limkokwing, Swinburne and UNIMAS. (See Appendix 1) Only these universities mainly admit international students in Kuching.

0.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result, when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups (Powell, p. 149). According to Social Science Research Council (SSRC, 1954), acculturation was defined as “culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the processes of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors” (p. 974).

The acculturation process, therefore, is an interactive and continuous process that evolves in and through the communication of an immigrant with the new sociocultural environment. The acquired communication competence, in turn, reflects the degree of that of immigrant’s acculturation (Kim, p. 380). Berry (1980, p. 121) views acculturation as “adaptation, the reduction of conflict, which is conceptualized in three modes: adjustment, reaction, and withdrawal”. He advocates a three-phase course to acculturation: contact, conflict, and adaptation. Contact is a core concept to the acculturation process. The nature, permanence, purpose, and duration of contact contribute to acculturation phenomena. Berry stated that, “the least acculturation may take place where there is no purpose (contact is accidental), where trade is mutually desired, or where contact is short-lived; the greatest acculturation will take place where the purpose is a deliberate takeover of a society or of its skills or beliefs”.

At the heart of the interactive acculturation process lays the adaptations process linking strangers to the host cultural environment, this can lead to a strong peer influence that will encourage teens or adolescent to a bad or good behaviour. Birman (2002, p. 220) said, "Acquisition of competence by strangers is not only instrumental to all aspects of cultural adaptation but also indicative of the strangers' accomplished acculturation and thus, peer influence is taking place". In other words, the degree to which strangers adapt to the host culture depends on their personal and social communication processes especially whom they are being friends with. At the same time, the adaptive change that has already taken place is reflected in the stranger's behavior.

1.2.1 Nigerian Students in Kuching, Sarawak

Over the years, there have been numbers of Nigerian students studying in Kuching, Sarawak. In the year 2007, mark the era where lots of Nigerian students came to study in Kuching. I, God'swill on my part came to study in Kuching in the year 2008. At that point in time, there were a lot of Nigerian students in Kuching, particularly in Inti College, while I, was studying in Limkokwing University and a few in Swinburne. In the year 2008, there were only three Nigerian students in Limkokwing University which include me and two of my friends.

The Nigerian students in Kuching or majority the Nigerians in Kuching lived in Stampin, because most of them were in Inti College. At that time, only three colleges admitted Nigerian students which are Inti College, Limkokwing University, and Swinburne University. Nigerian students are sometimes seen

around in groups because of our socialization orientation back home in Nigeria.

Nigerian students in Kuching are not working; they are only full time students except few after graduation have the opportunity to work in Kuching while the other students are resourceful. Borneo Post October 1st 2011, in the article entitled *Nigerian Student in Kuching Celebrate Planting Trees*. To celebrate the Nigerian Independence day, the Nigerian students in Kuching took to the street for a humanitarian activity by planting trees. The student planted these trees to mark their 51st independence day and to express their thanks to the locals for their hospitality and for giving them an opportunity to pursue their studies in the city, as their theme for that year's celebration was; *"The Stride for excellence"*.

The students planted 33 trees at the old state legislature assembly (DUN) building in conjunction with Kuching city north commission (DBKU) environmental awareness programme. DBKU deputy director Jumaini at a press conference said there were 40 students each from, Unimas, Swinburne, Inti and Limkokwing and they planted different types of trees. Miss Margaret Ekisowei, Limkokwing lecturer said there were about 300 Nigerian students who were involved in the tree planting. This was so far the activity that the Nigerian students have engaged in, since their existence as students in Kuching.

In reference to the World Education Service (WES), after Morocco, Nigeria sends the most student overseers in the whole African continent. According to the data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), the UIS cumulate the

total number of Nigerian students abroad in 2010 at just under 39,000 yearly. Although various evidence from education watchers in Nigeria, suggest that the number is considerably higher, with many students taking up places at private institutions even in neighboring countries.

Over the years the requirements or policy for Nigerians to study overseas particularly in Malaysia includes:-

- (a) Valid passport (with at least 6 months validity).
- (b) Letter of acceptance/letter of admission from the University oversee
- (c) Entry clearance: Check on requirement at your local Malaysian Consulate or Embassy or High Commission well in advance of your departure.
- (d) Evidence of financial support (documents to show that you have enough money to allow you to complete your course or letter of scholarship award or bank statements, etc. (Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education, 2010).

Having all these documents with you will greatly ease your way through the customs and immigration clearance. This is during the pre-arrival stage. If you have all these documents complete, then you have fulfilled a step of coming to study oversea. Therefore after you have been cleared by the customs and have arrived at your designated university of your choice, there are other documents required of which include:-

(a) Personal bond fee is required by the Malaysian Immigration Department which is payable at your university when applying for a student visa. The fee varies from RM1500 to RM2000. This fee will be refunded when you have completed your studies. Although yearly, RM80 is required to be paid to renew your student visa, until completion of study, when the personal bond is given back to the student.

(b) A medical examination is compulsory for all local and international students in Malaysia. (Ibid)

At this stage, the Nigerian student has not only been granted full admission to the desired university, but also he or she will now start to experience a change known as cultural change or in effect known as acculturation. Cultural change is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modification, induced by an obliged culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. This is when the Nigerian student starts to feel the environment and perhaps makes friends with Malaysians or other international students. Students of higher learning are exposed to social activities because they are already young adults or better still adolescents, and they have the ability to decide for themselves. Some of the social problems that acculturation can deliver in my research is alcohol consumption. Acculturation can lead to so many occurrences and events, but during the course of this research, I will deliberate

on the challenges of acculturation in alcohol consumption among Nigerian students.

You might wonder why Nigerians come to Malaysia to study. Nigeria as a country has more than 160 million people, apart from that, the universities in Nigeria are inadequate because the entire university in Nigeria, cannot cater for the number of Nigerians going to universities. Moreover, Nigerian families have lots of children and family ranging from having even eight children and since there is a high competition in the labour market in Nigeria, every family wants to get at least a university degree in the family. Before in the 80's or 90's, Nigerians do go to countries like; Canada, United Kingdom, United States of America to study (they still do till present). However, because of studying over there is becoming more expensive, they decided to turn to a less cost university, which happens to be Malaysia, and still obtain a UK degree for with a lesser fee.

Therefore, one of the major reason Nigerians come to study in Malaysia is because, it is cheaper in terms of school fees, life expenses and Malaysia is growing and has reached some level of advancement. All this has attracted more Nigerians to come here to study. And in terms of major cultural difference, Malaysia has a complete different culture, when compared to Nigeria, in terms of food, clothing, and relationship with others. The only thing Nigeria may have in common with Malaysia is in terms of weather but every other thing is different. The food is different, that is why most Nigerian, when they first arrived here, the adaptation of Malaysia food could be an issue for some to tackle. Regardless of this, the aim of this study is to access the use of the effect acculturation has had on the Nigerian student academic performance

progress. This could and can be attributed to the freedom and peer influence. Basically, I very much agree it is as result of availability of money, since parents would send money for their up keeping and the freedom of doing whatever they want or like and since they probably have friends who drink, they may be lured to engage in the same activity as their peers.

0.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Ideally, acculturation should yield good and positive results as one is getting to know and become aware of other culture and learning something new. Unfortunately, alcohol becomes a problem faced by some Nigerian students in Kuching. Alcohol consumption affects academic performance and this has resulted in some poor performance. Aside from this, excess alcohol can lead to illegal activities such as; fighting, rape, sexual misconduct, accident and even broke pocket. This is not good for a student, who is supposed to achieve good academic performance. They assume is a way of socializing, releasing stress and tension that they encounter as foreign students and workload of their study, friends or girlfriend and even lecturers. Yet, the Nigerian student has little knowledge in this regards, on the ways to ease-off stress. There are various ways such as services of counsellor or perhaps a psychologist.

Some of the processes of alcohol is that, it depresses are heart rate, respiration, pulse, reaction time and coordination of muscles. Consumption has numerous attribute towards social vice and as an abuse substance. Since the abuse or excessive of its consumptions can lead to various social disorder. The

public health concern about alcohol consumption and associated risk behaviors in young people is increasing, especially among college students who, in some countries, appear to be at particularly high risk.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is the drinking pattern of alcohol among Nigerian students in Kuching Malaysia?
2. How does the local environment influence the Nigerian students drinking pattern?
3. What are the significant effects of alcohol on Nigerian student academic performance progress?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The general objective is to examine the influence of acculturation and alcohol consumption among Nigerian students. The specific objectives are:

1. To describe the patterns of alcohol consumption of Nigerian students in Kuching, Malaysia;
2. To explore the influence of local environment towards students drinking attitude;
3. To access the use of alcohol and its effect on students' academic performance progress.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

By conducting this study, we will better understand what acculturation is all about, the good and evil and the challenges of acculturation. We will also understand what it involves in the consumption of alcohol and how acculturation can influence the intake of alcohol. Since this research is focus on Nigerian student in Kuching, therefore important information will be further shed on the Nigerian students as regards acculturation and consumption of alcoholic beverages.

It is also important we know the behaviours of the student of higher learning when involved in alcohol consumption and also potential defects it can cause them and also how their parents who are sponsors or guardian can know about their children welfare since they are far from home. This will highlight important information as to how parents can guide and follow-up with their children when sent abroad to study.

Most people who partake in alcohol drinking say it makes them forget their problems and it gives them peace of mind. But careful consideration can attest to the fact that this feelings can only be temporary as such problems can still surface. So the significant of this study is therefore very important and necessary to give insight and exposure to things they probably they may have not known.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

Considering the nature of the study, there are several factors that constitute as limitations to the study. First and foremost, time constraint is a major factor that limits this study. As a common saying that time waits for no one. There was no adequate time for me to capture the entire Nigerian students in Sarawak because of the deadline stipulated for submission of the project.

Besides, the fact that this research mainly concentrated on Nigerian students in Kuching, it is very difficult to empirically explore the issue of acculturation and the Nigerian students in other part of Malaysia. Moreover, the respondents might feel reluctant in providing sufficient and accurate answer because of the sensitivity of the research in terms of alcohol consumption.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This section of the study will discuss some of the theories and the concept related to the research. This project will be slightly based on two theoretical areas: socialization and acculturation (assimilation) theory. Various people might have various reasons for partaking in alcohol consumption. Some may not agree with the fact that acculturation makes them partake in alcohol while others might agree. So therefore, socialization theory will be utilized because people do consume alcohol during socializing with friends or relatives or parties. Gardner and Stenberg (2005) indicated that adolescent risk behavior peer influence is often equated with peer pressure, which has a much more negative connotation: the poor youth who is pressured by his peers in to some kind of risk behavior: reckless driving, alcohol or substance use, unprotected sex, and minor criminality. Parents and peers are important influences during adolescence, and peers in particular, become increasingly important. According to University of Kansas Survey of Alcohol Use (1998), the effects of alcohol consumption in the long run include but are not limited to liver cirrhosis and other diseases, neurological disorders, cardiovascular damage, pancreatic disease, and fetal alcohol syndrome.

2.1 SOCIALIZATION

According to Perrino (2010), the major agents of socialization are family, school, peers, mass media, public opinion, work, volunteer groups, and religion or spirituality which exert external pressure on each of us. Each of us proceeds through life in a manner we often believe is under our immediate control or influence. Through the process of socialization, the hidden hand of social forces often beyond our control guides our lives. Further, Mead (2007) pointed out that socialization occurs since kindergarten to the higher level of school in which the impact is diverging affects from person to person, depending on their life circumstances.

Thus, the behaviour of drinking alcohol in this research will be explained by the theory of socialization. Berger and Luckmann (1999) said that there are primary and secondary socialization in which primary socialization is nurtured by the family and the secondary socialization show that one's behaviour is influenced by the culture of people from outside of his or her country. Primary socialization is the process of socialization through the relationship between a family either patriarchal or matriarchal family, nuclear family, or extended family. The secondary socialization is the process of socialization that is influenced by the relationship between peers, mass media, and school. Hence, alcohol consumption issue and the process of socialization interconnect each other because it is obviously seen that most male are involved in drinking alcohol. Other than that, this theory explains that people tend to be influenced by their peer groups in order to uphold their social status.

2.2 ACCULTURATION AND ASSIMILATION

Acculturation according to Amer (2005), “refers to as a phenomenon which results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”. He also went on to say that acculturation is the social interaction and communication styles that individuals adapts when interacting with a group of other cultures. Acculturation is therefore, “a process of cultural change that occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged, continuous, first-hand contact with each other”.

Berry (2005) also stated that, acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. At the group level, it involves changes in social structures and institutions and in cultural practices. At the individual level, it involves changes in a person’s behavioural repertoire. These cultural and psychological changes come about through a long-term process, sometimes taking years, sometimes generations, and sometimes centuries. Acculturation is a process of cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer-term psychological and socio-cultural adaptations between both groups. Cultural change is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modification induced by an compelled culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following

upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life.

In sum, the study aims to shed more light on the association between acculturation and alcohol consumption, to know the impact of alcohol consumption and its numerous attributes towards social vice and as an abuse substance. Since the abuse or excessive consumption of it can lead to various social disorders. The public health concern about alcohol consumption and associated risk behaviors in young people is increasing, especially among college students who, in some countries, appear to be at particularly high risk.

According to Liang (1994), assimilation is described as a “process of both acculturation which is also referred to as cultural assimilation, through which minority groups adopt the majority group’s cultural patterns, and structural assimilation, which is the development of affiliations between members of minority and majority groups”. This statement assumed that as immigrants become more familiar with mainstream culture, they become more likely to adopt its attitudes and values. Hence, in this case study, Nigerian students that immigrate in Malaysia may lose their cultural and socioeconomic distinctiveness, and blend into the “melting pot” of Malaysian society.

Peek (2006) based on his research in United States culture, the classic assimilation model suggests that assimilation should lead to positive outcomes for immigrants, an assumption that may have been the case for the European immigrants to whom the theory was originally applied. However, a central tenet of prior studies on Hispanic substance use is the belief that current mainstream U.S. culture expresses more favorable attitudes toward substance