



RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIAL DRINKERS THRIVE IN THEIR COMMUNITY AS PER MEDICAL SCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

The study investigates the dual impact of alcohol consumption on health and social dynamics, challenging its traditional characterization solely as a health risk. By combining data from questionnaire-based studies, pub observations, and a national survey conducted by CAMRA, the research reveals that moderate alcohol consumption in communal settings fosters social engagement, strengthens community trust, and expands support networks. Drawing inspiration from Dr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan's Madhushala, the analysis aligns philosophical insights on alcohol's unifying potential with scientific findings on its ability to enhance social bonding through endorphin activation. While acknowledging alcohol's risks, including addiction and health complications such as cardiovascular diseases and liver damage, the paper emphasizes its potential to improve emotional well-being and interpersonal trust. Comparative analyses across cultural contexts—ranging from alcohol-prohibitive regions in India to celebratory cultures like Ireland—offer a nuanced perspective on its societal implications, including effects on productivity, crime rates, and happiness indices. The findings advocate for a balanced view of alcohol consumption, highlighting its potential to enhance social cohesion when moderated and contextualized within informed community practices. This research contributes to ongoing discussions on alcohol's role in shaping individual health and societal structures, encouraging further interdisciplinary exploration of its multifaceted impacts.

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Introduction:-

Although most studies emphasize the health risks associated with alcohol consumption, some researchers are investigating its potential role in fostering social cohesion, given its historical significance in human social interactions. Expanding on this perspective, they pose intriguing questions: does alcohol-fueled socialization help communities thrive or lead to their decline? Do such communities see greater workplace productivity, or does it suffer instead?

To explore these questions, researchers analyzed data from three distinct sources: a questionnaire-based survey of pub patrons, observational studies of social interactions in pubs, and a national survey conducted by the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). The findings suggest that individuals who regularly visit a "local" pub experience a stronger sense of social connection, higher contentment, and greater trust within their communities. Conversely, those without a regular pub reported smaller social networks and lower levels of community engagement and trust.

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Dr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan's 1935 literary masterpiece *Madhushala* offers a timeless reflection on the social aspects of alcohol. The book eloquently portrays alcohol as a unifying element, transcending barriers of caste, creed, and religion to foster friendships and communal harmony. Many themes in *Madhushala* align remarkably well with modern scientific insights into the social benefits of moderate drinking.

Figure 1 illustrates the outcomes of moderate alcohol consumption, prompting a reconsideration of policies on alcohol distribution and advertising. By promoting moderation, society could potentially harness alcohol's positive effects to enhance social happiness and community well-being.

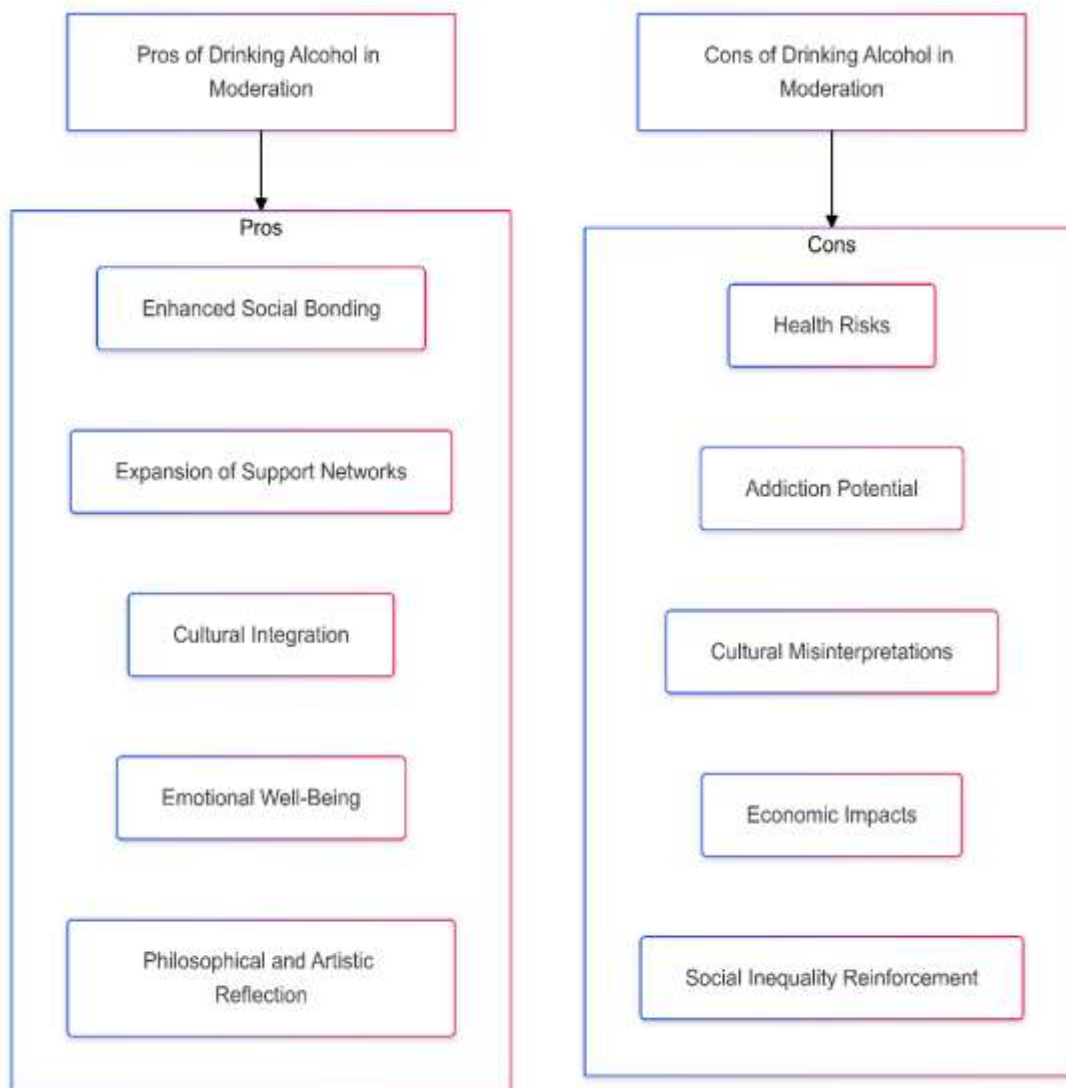


Figure 1:- Pros and cons of drinking alcohol in moderation.

Despite extensive research on the misuse of alcohol, little effort has been directed toward understanding why it became a universally accepted practice. The traditional view centers on its hedonistic appeal, but we suggest that alcohol's adoption is rooted in its social benefits, which enhance both health and interpersonal bonding. By integrating data from a national survey with insights from in-depth behavioral and observational studies, we reveal that social drinkers often maintain larger, more reliable networks of friends for emotional and practical support. They also report a stronger sense of community engagement and trust.

Alcohol's capacity to activate the endorphin system may explain its role in strengthening social connections, akin to other communal activities such as laughter, singing, and dancing, which are known to reinforce interpersonal relationships.

Expanding this analysis, a comparative study could be conducted to explore alcohol's societal impact in countries where it is prohibited, consumed minimally, or celebrated culturally—such as in Ireland. This examination could shed light on the relationship between alcohol consumption, social dynamics, and its broader effects on economic and community well-being.

Literature Review:-

When analyzing the influence of alcohol consumption on individuals and communities—be it during social gatherings, parties, or as part of cultural practices—it becomes evident that while alcohol poses health risks, it also offers potential benefits. This analysis reflects on historical patterns in human civilization, current societal issues, and future challenges. Madhushala, written by Dr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan, provides a valuable lens for this exploration, offering perspectives that support a nuanced understanding of alcohol's role.

For instance, in several Indian states, alcohol is legally banned for consumption and trade, necessitating a reevaluation of its perceived merits and drawbacks. Educating the public and adopting frameworks that present alcohol as a beverage for relaxation and social bonding, rather than misuse, could offer a balanced approach. A comparative study focusing on the Indian context and contrasting it with cultures like those in England or Ireland—where alcohol consumption and societal attitudes vary significantly—can help analyze its impact on productivity, crime rates, and happiness indices. By using alcohol consumption as a derivative factor, this study aims to determine whether it is inherently detrimental to health or if specific circumstances, such as untreated psychological conditions, exacerbate its negative effects.

The central goal of this paper is to examine the health risks and potential advantages of alcohol consumption while addressing the challenges of excessive use (Alcohol Res Health, 2000; Dunbar, R.I.M., 2017). The following data highlights the scope of problematic drinking:

- **7.4% of Americans**—roughly 14 million people—meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol misuse or alcoholism (Grant et al., 1994).
- Nearly **50% of American adults** are connected to someone who is or has been an alcoholic (Dawson and Grant, 1998).
- **One in four children** under 18 in the U.S. lives in a household impacted by alcohol addiction or dependence (Grant, 2000).

Alcohol consumption affects not only drinkers' health and well-being but also the lives of those around them. The research presented here incorporates diverse perspectives to better understand alcohol's risks and benefits. These insights aim to assist health professionals in offering sound advice, support community efforts to mitigate harm, and empower individuals to make informed decisions about drinking.

Scientific evidence has long established the adverse effects of excessive alcohol use on multiple organ systems, contributing to conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, liver cirrhosis, and fetal anomalies. It also elevates the likelihood of aggression, accidents, and injuries while harming job productivity, family relationships, and academic performance.

However, epidemiological studies over the past two decades have highlighted a link between moderate alcohol consumption and a lower risk of coronary heart disease (CHD)—the leading cause of death in developed countries (Chadwick and Goode, 1998; Criqui, 1996a,b; Zakhari, 1997). Cardiovascular diseases claim more American lives than any other illness category. Studies across populations—including men in the UK (Doll et al., 1994), Germany (Keil et al., 1997), Japan (Kitamura et al., 1998), and over 85,000 American women in the Nurses' Health Study (Fuchs et al., 1995)—consistently suggest that moderate alcohol consumption reduces CHD-related mortality risks.

Nonetheless, definitions of "moderate drinking" vary across studies. Meta-analyses on alcohol use and stroke risk indicate that while both hemorrhagic and ischemic strokes share similar risk patterns, frequent drinking significantly elevates stroke risk, particularly among women (English et al., 1995).

Defining a Drink

In the U.S., a standard drink contains 0.5 ounces (15 grams) of alcohol, equivalent to:

- 12 oz (355 mL) of beer,
- 5 oz (148 mL) of wine, or
- 1.5 oz (44 mL) of 80-proof distilled spirits.

Despite extensive data on alcohol misuse and the prevailing notion that its primary appeal is hedonistic, the reasons for its widespread acceptance remain largely unexplored. We argue that alcohol's popularity stems from its positive effects on social bonding and health. Combining national survey data with detailed behavioral and observational studies, we demonstrate that social drinkers enjoy larger, more reliable support networks and greater engagement with their communities. Alcohol's ability to stimulate the endorphin system parallels the effects of other bonding activities like laughter, singing, and dancing (Dunbar, R.I.M., 2017).

Alcohol's Role in Society

The behavior and lifestyle of regular drinkers merit examination to assess their work performance, economic contributions, and societal impact. Comparing their achievements across various fields reveals that they often thrive socially and maintain a rich lifestyle, echoing sentiments expressed in Dr. H.R. Bachchan's *Madhushala*. By analyzing these dimensions, we can better understand the duality of alcohol's impact—both as a societal challenge and as a tool for fostering social connections.

Discussion:-

Let's sort Let's focus our discussion on a few key points:

1. Limiting Alcohol Consumption

Moderate alcohol consumption is defined as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. Alcohol-related disorders include binge drinking, heavy drinking, and alcoholism.

In the United States, a standard drink contains approximately 14 grams of pure alcohol. This is equivalent to: 12 ounces (355 mL) of beer, 5 ounces (150 mL) of wine, or 1.5 ounces (45 mL) of distilled spirits.

2. Direct Benefits of Alcohol Consumption

As explored in earlier discussions, moderate alcohol consumption can strengthen social connections, increase emotional awareness, and promote mental resilience, particularly for those dealing with stress. Additionally, it may offer certain health benefits, such as improving cardiovascular and respiratory function and alleviating some medical conditions when consumed responsibly.

Alcohol also contributes to social bonding by enhancing psychological well-being and fostering close relationships, which are essential for building strong social networks. Similar to laughter, singing, dancing, and storytelling, moderate alcohol use triggers the endorphin system, promoting communal social cohesion rather than merely one-on-one connections (Dunbar et al., 2012; Tarr et al., 2015, 2016; Pearce et al., 2015; Dunbar et al., 2016).

3. Indirect Benefits of Alcohol Consumption

Moderate alcohol intake has been associated with higher life expectancy, improved happiness levels, and a more balanced lifestyle. These indirect benefits will be explored in greater detail in subsequent sections.

4. Direct Harms and Misuse of Alcohol

While moderate alcohol consumption is safe for most people, excessive or chronic use can lead to serious physical and mental health problems, including:

Cardiovascular Issues: Heart diseases are the leading cause of death in the U.S., and alcohol-related hypertension (high blood pressure) significantly increases the risk of ischemic and hemorrhagic strokes.

Liver Damage: Alcohol abuse is a major contributor to liver diseases in the U.S., including inflammation (alcoholic hepatitis) and cirrhosis (progressive liver scarring). The risk of liver disease escalates sharply with increased alcohol intake (Edwards et al., 1994).

Health Risks for Specific Groups: Certain populations, including individuals with medical conditions and pregnant women, should avoid alcohol entirely.

5. Risks of Alcohol Addiction

Like other addictive substances, alcohol exerts a strong influence on the brain, creating feelings of pleasure and suppressing negative emotions. This can lead some individuals to drink repeatedly, even when it adversely affects their health and well-being. Research shows that while alcohol may temporarily ease emotional discomfort, habitual drinking to manage stress often worsens negative emotions between drinking episodes.

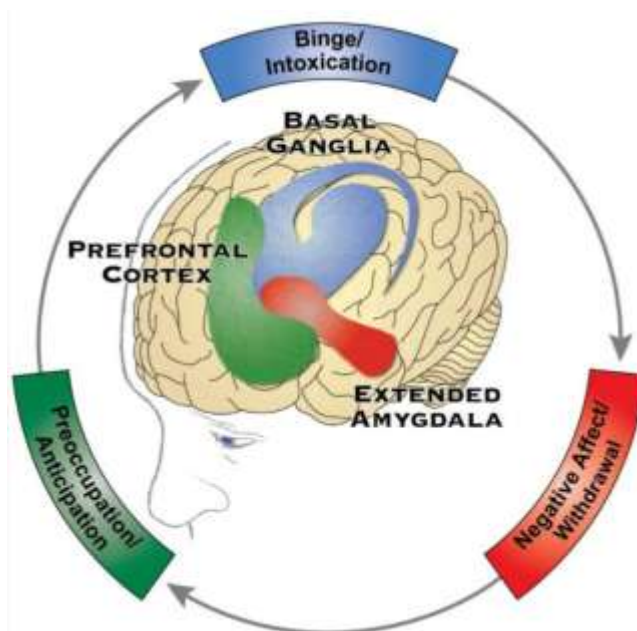


Figure 2:- Emotional impact of excessive alcohol consumption.

6. Finding ways to consume alcohol as a social drinker and NOT addiction
7. Effect of alcohol on the community. We can illustrate the drinkers' and non-drinkers' communities as two different identities. For example, a community in Ireland that drinks regularly vs. a community in India that never drinks. And compare their lifestyle assuming the same level of education and finance. Further, we compare their performance at work, social and economic contribution, etc.
8. Comparing the character 'A regular drinker of alcohol' in the book *Madhushala* (Dr. Bachchan, 1935) to the real world and proving that the character is still sober, rational, and can thrive in society. Comparing the charm of a bar or pub with the outside world makes life beautiful.

Conclusion:-

'*Madhushala*' by Dr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan and '*Meri Madhushala*' by Prabhat Kumar have defined some characteristics of the regular drinker of alcohol. These books aim to prove that despite physical and mental hazards, some fine characteristics of drinkers make them ideal for those seeking ultimate pleasure. Nondrinkers may try to learn to be happy about nothing, go tension-free, and lead a stress-free life even if they are having huge difficulties. This whole analysis will also let us know the optimum dose of alcohol that can be prescribed to a normal person so that he can optimize his happiness without experiencing any ill effects. For states like Gujarat and Bihar, in India, it can be a lesson that we should only aim to harvest the positive effect of drinking alcohol (only if one is rich and healthy), if, however, the effect is negative, better don't drink. Hence, the character 'drinker of alcohol' is to be tested on many parameters, and assertions that they can thrive in society is to be made. It is pure science in the domains of sociology, psychology, medical science, and statistics.

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