Drinking Patterns and Their Outcomes in Thailand

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Thailand
In general, Thai people drink alcohol in many occasions with different reasons:-

- for fun in ceremonies, festivals; Songkran (Thai New Year), wedding, birthday, graduation, funeral, etc.
- for good health, appetizers before meals,
- for reducing stress or trouble, etc.

The beginning of drinking patterns:

- About 80% of population, Thai people are farmers in agriculture in rural areas
- They grow rice and made local alcohol from distilled rice called “Sura Kao” (White alcohol) which can be used for herbal drinks or “Ya Dong” for releasing from pain or tired of work
- Even labors who worked in industry in urban areas, they also drank Sura kao or Ya Dong for the same reasons.
The Popularity of Drinking Alcohol

- 1782  Chinese migrants to Thailand produced & sold alcoholic beverage that made drinking more popular with alcohol business.

- 1994  More drinkers at 33 % of total population in which young drinkers at the age of 20 years, teenage and female involved in drinking alcohol rise up from 14 % to 50 %.

- 2000 – 2009  Liquor and beer are almost equal quantities.
The survey was carried out in 2001, 2003, 2007

The objectives were to estimate the number of people in Thailand who ever used substances, including alcohol, tobacco & some prescription drugs in their lifetime, in the last year and 30 days prior to survey and their types of use.

Multistage sampling scheme, all residents aged 12-65 years who live in household for more than three months, in Bangkok & 29 provinces of 11,348 households, 2,744 in municipality and 7,356 in the non-municipality.

The respondents were 26,633 (male 11,983-45%, female 14,650-55%) which account for 0.67% of the total Thai aged 12-65 years in 2007.

Of these 2,084 were from Bangkok, 9,329, 4,654, 7,404 and 3,161 were from central, northern, northeastern and southern regions respectively.

(Source: Assanangkornchai S, Perngparn U, Sirivongse na Ayudthya A., 2008)
Patterns of alcohol consumption

- 29,418,170 people of 12-65 years (63%) were abstainers.
- Eight million men (41%), More than 20 million women (80%)
- Most of these abstainers were the age group of 12-25 years (about 3 million men or 67%)
- About 3,659,367 people (7.8%) were ex-drinkers who had stopped drinking for more than one year.
- Southern region had the highest rate of abstention.
  - 56% of men never drank alcohol in their lifetime.
- Bangkok
  - prevalence of current drinking, ex-drinking, and binge drinking were highest in Bangkok,
- North, northeast
  - rate of current drinking similar to Bangkok
  - but the rate in women was highest in the north.
In Songkran Festival: Thai New Year (13-15th April)

- **Drinking alcohol for making more fun is so common behaviors of Thai people.**
- **Problems occurred:**
  - “Drunk but drive” make more road accidents
  - In April 11-16, 2009 there were accidents;
    - 3,977 accidents less than last year 266 accidents or 6.27 %,
    - 373 persons dead, more than last year 5 persons or 1.36 %,
    - 4,332 persons pain. Less than last year 471 person or 9.81 %

- **The government have proposed an alcohol ban between April which appears to ban the sale of booze at shops and bars to counter the deaths on the roads and degenerate behaviours.**


(Kom-Chad- Luek, 19/4/2009, n. 11,14)
Average Daily Consumption

- 34.38 gram for men
- 12.98 gram for women
- Men aged 25-44 years drank highest amount of alcohol per day
- Men aged 45-65 years drank lowest amount of alcohol per day
- Women aged 45-65 years drank higher amount of alcohol per day than the younger age group.
‘Tri-level’ methods to determine drinking patterns

1. the Amount and Frequency of drinking and
2. the Alcohol Use Disorders and
3. Associated Disabilities to diagnose alcohol dependence and harmful drinking was used.

| • Median alcohol intake was 75 and 49 g/drinking day in the alcohol-dependent and |
| • harmful or hazardous groups 25 days/month and |
| • 10 days/month respectively. |
Drinking patterns of Gender:

1. Female Drinkers

- Employed workers in industrial society for certain money and time.

- Less education and industrial skills lead to work maladjustment and domestic violence because of loosing consciousness when get drunk.

- A trend of family problems, female drinkers raised up because of stress and quarrels with husbands or mothers in-law at 33.2%.
2. Male Drinkers

- Increasing like other countries in South East Asia, at 45.6%.

- Preventive strategies have been hampered to identify current patterns related to alcohol consumption.

- Types of drinkers
  1) alcohol-dependent subjects.
  2) hazardous or harmful drinkers.
  3) abstainers or light drinkers.
3. Young drinkers

6 expectancy factors were extracted:

1. Social, physical and mental pleasure
2. Careless concern
3. Sexual attraction and enhancement
4. Aggression
5. Power and general positive transformation
6. A practice against Buddhism.
Drinking Patterns and Their Outcomes

1. Drinking alone was more common in the alcohol-dependent group (67%)

2. Harmful or hazardous drinkers typically drank with friends (58%)

3. Infrequent drinkers drank only at social functions (61%)

(Sawitri Assanankornchai, John B. Saunders and Katerine M. Cojgrave, 1999).
Popularity of alcoholic beverages

1. White spirits
2. Whiskey
3. Medical alcohol
4. Homemade alcohol and wine

For young people

1. Fruit cocktails (alcopops)
2. Ready-to-Drink alcohol (RTD)

Wines are invariably priced high.
Stronger drinks like whisk(e)y, gin, vodka are quite cheap altogether.
Most supermarkets will sell wines and spirits.
Beers and mostly local brand alcohol is available at 7-Elevens (prices are about 20% higher than at supermarkets though).
Thai brandy (sometimes called whisky or rum) is actually quite tasty and very cheap.
Alcohol-related problems and consequences

- Men have higher rate than women
- The top three problems are
  - Feeling guilty or remorse after drinking (15.7%)
  - Financial problems (15.3%)
  - Health problems (13.5%)
- Women
  - Health problems (9.6%)
  - Guilt or remorse after drinking (9.0%)
  - Lowest affirmative responses were loss of employment (1.8% in men, 0.3% in women)
The “Standard Drink” : Consensus / Conflict

- There is no proper definition. It depends on many different factors such as gender, age, body, status, roles and functions, etc.

- The “Standard Drink” of alcohol may be defined as one-half ounce of absolute alcohol (100% v/v of alcohol), roughly 12 grams of ethanol. (some research in some area in Thailand.)
Situations of alcohol consumption in population

Alcohol consumption can be defined into two ways;

1) **negative ways**,  
   alcohol as a drink which hazardous and harmful human body and nerves.

2) **positive ways**  
   alcohol use as a symbol of culture, tradition, recreation derived from ways of life in families, communities and society.
In summary of Drinking situations

1. Alcohol production and consumption are on the rise and very rapid in most recent years.

2. Diseases and injuries related to alcohol consumption have been rising.

3. Both numbers of drinkers and amount of alcohol are also increased.

4. Alcohol is the most frequently used brain depressant.

5. Excessive consumption of alcohol is a major public health concern.
Recommendations for alcohol policy & harm reduction:

- Drinking responsibly must be encouraged for all groups of drinkers to reduce risk problems.
- Self-regulation and public-consciousness for all people should be trained.
- Preventive policies of harmful drinking to health, economic and social relationship in families, communities should be considered by related GO & NGO.
- Drinking patterns in local communities hardly be changed until they are aware of what is good or bad drinking patterns.
- People should choose drinking patterns that not harm themselves and the others for better quality of life.