

# The effects of alcohol consumption in Thai society

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research; The effects of alcohol in Thai society, is to study alcohol-related behaviors in Thai citizens and how this action affects their lives on daily basis, to learn about the withdrawal process, to suggest preventions to decrease alcoholic habits and to support life improvement of the residents who reside in Saodiew Subdistrict, Nhonghong District Burirum Province. The founding results regarding habitant's alcohol behavior suggest that 100% of those people were former drinkers, 60% initially started drinking when they were under the age of twenties.

A motive of attempt the first alcohol consuming is socialization and a personal desire. Alcohol-related behaviors lead to health problems such as hypertension, alcoholism, and vehicle accidents, that could also result in the absence in workplace, family arguments, aggressive actions like; destroying objects in houses, fighting with neighbors. However, after discussing about the problems and solution, there were some helpful activities created in order to help drinkers' reduce their alcoholic habits, for example, the village have granted several activities such as a campaign to prevent alcohol problems, a project called Sila 5 Village, severself organisation according to the village constitution or Thammanoon choomchon, a course for alcohol withdrawal guideline, Buddhism teachings, which can be applied in our everyday life, and activities to establish relationships in the village. The alcohol withdrawal practices and the principle improvement of people includes 1) Buddhist practices (The Five Percepts) 2) Health principles 3) Local supports from temples institution, the village, Local Administrative Organization and 4) activities for village relation. Those four items mentioned are positively influential in people's alcohol habits; they help improve health conditions and quality of life.

**Keywords :** the effects of alcohol consumption, alcohol withdrawal, Buddhist Practices

## Introduction

Nowadays, our world has always been involved with constant evolutions and developments. There are plenty of changes in term of economics, societies, politics, technology improvements and so on. Those changes somehow have a great impact on how Thai people live their lives,

they also allow Thai people to re-create and construct life practices in order to conform global changes. However, some actions might not give the positive results due to the changes. To illustrate, Thai people are likely to get infected by incommunicable disease such as smoking, drinking, energy drink consumption, unhealthy diets, obesity, being overweighed, so on and so forth. There are possibilities that in a near future, the incommunicable illnesses may high up its levels into some other disease, which are more complicated and hazardous such as Stroke, Heart Disease, High blood pressure, Diabetes etc. The health problems mentioned are the consequences of ill-usage intoxicants. At present, the United States of American, Canada, Norway, and United Kingdom see the importance of citizens' wellbeing and they are constantly looking for new solutions to cope with these incommunicable sicknesses. Moreover, excessive alcohol consumption can cause negative results, for example, if someone has a hangover, or temporary sickness from drinking alcohol, they would not be able to be responsible for their duties at work. They can also cause harms to other people. This report discusses physical illness of excessive drinker in the next section. A serious outcome of alcohol consumption is a severe injury from a car accident. People should bear in mind that the measured amount of alcohol concentration in the blood will decrease the capability of body movements, which can generate narcosis and indecisive opinions and decisions, therefore, drinkers tend to have unexpected incidents such as car accidents.

In Thailand, it was found that incommunicable disease is a silent disaster, which negatively causes a great deal depletion of Thai citizens. The number of patients suffering from Diabetes, Stroke, High blood pleasure and Heart disease, have been consistently increased. The symptoms itself also intensify day-by-day, the consequence of those illnesses, therefore, by no means, lead to deaths. Worl Healt Organization (WHO) suggests that the solution of incommunicable diseases is to have evidence-based practices. They are included 4 factors, 1) The adjustment of environment that helps distant people from the disease 2) The adjustment of behaviors and way of life 3) The encouragement of raising awareness by the village principles 4) The protection and disease control, in order to lessen the risk of being sick, to minimize negative effects of the illness, to prevent disability from complication diseases, to prolong lives of the patients. This factor alone, can reduce medical fees in a long term.

Alcoholic drink can cause tremendous amount of problems, which are associated with health conditions, domestic issues in family, vehicle accidents, and crimes. They also destroy economically and socially overall image of the nation. In order to control alcohol consumption of the citizens, and reduce the negative effects in term of Economics, emotions, and spirits, there should be some means to promote people's heaths; constructing a strong awareness of the disadvantage of alcohol and, abstaining the youths from drinking. The effects of alcohol drinking, apart from physical

problems, is Cirrhosis, liver cancer or heart disease. Moreover, there is also mental illness that stems from drink too much alcohol.

The environment of where the people reside in can also indicates negative behaviors and outcomes, such as the loss of asset from the accidents, family problems, bad health condition, crime and the absence at work.

In Saodiew sub-district, Nhonghong district Burirum province, there are various kinds of Buddhist activities such as religious ceremony, which can be held occasionally at the house or at the temple. However, these religious practices have always been involved with alcoholic drinks. To solve the problem, the abbot of Nayao temple, Asst. Prof. Prakrupriyatkitthamrong, together with the committee, who are also abbots from other temples, Subdistrict Headman, Village Headman, Assistant Village Headman, Member of the Subdistrict Council and principles of every school, granted a meeting in order to discuss about the alcohol issues in the religious events. They came up with many campaigns to practically reduce any alcohol consumption in religious events. This also generated a certain awareness in other village, that people from neighbor village has adopted the campaign and applied successfully as well.

In Saodiew sub-district, Nhonghong district Burirum province can be addressed as a significant role model regarding their distribution for minimizing alcoholic actions. Especially, in Nayao temple. For example, in Nayao temple, alcoholic consumption is strictly prohibited both inside and outside the temple.

Alcoholic effects and problems mentioned above drew the author's intention to initiate doing this research. However, the author scoped the dimension of this report, to focus more about the effects of Alcohol drinking in Thai people's everyday life. In doing so, the author's expectation is to find the way to diminish violence within family institution, vehicle accidents, and other problems, which are caused by alcohol consumption in order to improve Thai citizens' way of life.

## Purposes

1. To study alcoholic behaviors of Thai people
2. To study the effects of alcohol consumption in Thai society
3. To study an alcohol withdrawal procedure and life developments of villagers who live in Saodiew sub-district, Nhonghong district Burirum province

## Methodology

The research *The effects of alcohol consumption in Thai society* was conducted by the methods of documentary research, qualitative research, and quantitative research, which is also involved with mixed methodology research.

1) Documentary study, in this method, the author studied and collected a great deal of relevant documents needed such as Tripitaka, exegesis,

books, researches, reports, meeting minutes, and other evidences, which are related to the concept of alcohol withdrawal. Moreover, this research also studied Five Percepts in Buddhism in order to explore more about the methods to reduce alcohol consumption.

2) Quantitative Research was involved with action research, which allowed the author to take actions in a real environment in order to improve the process of alcohol withdrawal in the village. The author also became a member of Sila 5 Village project and had an opportunity to collect information from monks, village headmen, government and private representatives, in total 21 persons. They were regarded as representatives of the targeted group people. Purposive sampling method was conducted relatively to the significance of the research, which can be summarized as followwas

## Results

### 1. Alcoholic condition of the representative samples.

According to the survey of 150 participants, which contained males 69.34 %, 46.66% is at the age of 31 – 40 years old, 64% of participants worked as farmers, 78.66% has families with more than three members. Moreover, 60% of the representatives were former drinkers and 60% started drinking when they were under 20 years old. The incident that had them attempt the first try was the fact that they were curious about how did it taste like, and what was the effect of it. Rice whiskey was found the majority liquor of their first try. During the interviews and some conversation with monks, village headmen, government and private representatives, it was discovered that alcoholic habits of people in the village costing a lot of money.

Activities	Number of participants	Expenses for buy alcohol
Funeral	200	56,000 Baht
House-blessing ceremony	150	40,000 Baht
Wedding ceremony	200	60,000 Baht
Religious ceremony	350-500	30,000-50,000 Baht
Party	30-50	15,000 Baht
Expenses for buy a alcohol per month	1 (Adult)	2,000 Baht

The record of a conversation with the leaders of the village, March 25, 2014

The alcohol-related situation in Saodiew sub-district, Nhonghong district Burirum province, costing a highly amount of money, is one of the social values that is quite difficult to wear away from the society. Nevertheless, all the leaders are still working at their best in order to solve this alcohol problem.

## **2. Reasons for drinking alcohol**

### **1) Curiosity to try**

It is an instinct of human beings that they always want to try something, which they have never tried or experienced before, especially among teenagers. They see alcoholic use as a part of the normal teenage experience that is; new, fun and excited. They also see their parents or other adults enjoy drinking as something normal.

### **2) Friend encouragement**

Sometimes when ones are urged by their friends to try alcohol, it is not easy for them to say no, especially when those people want to fit in in the community. They do not dare to reject the invitation; moreover, some people think that drinking is an important element to unitize the friendship.

### **3) The ability to produce liquor by oneself.**

Some family has their business, which is involved with producing alcoholic drinks, rice whiskey. Therefore, alcohol consumption takes part in their life unavoidably.

### **4) The idea that alcohol is legal.**

Many people have a wrong perception of alcohol, for example, they think that alcohol is legal. Unlike any other substance abuse such amphetamine that is strong prohibited by law and can be considered as crime, hence, the amount of alcohol consumption level is higher than other substance abuse.

### **5) Social value and traditional belief**

Since in the past, alcohol drinks have been seen as a symbol of cerebration, even in religious events in Buddhist realm. For example, in House-blessing ceremony, wedding, ordination ceremony, and funeral, the host of the occasion often prepares alcohol drink for the guests. Therefore, for those people who were born and raised in this society see that drinking alcohol is socially acceptable and normal.

### **6) The belief that liquor can represent power of male**

In many societies, it is quite usual that men always drink and partake in substance use. In doing so, it shows that men in the society are courage, powerful and admirable. Hence, people tend to believe that drinking could make them dominant and outstanding in the community and family institution.

### **7) Tension**

One of the reason of drinking alcohol is they believe that drinking can relieve stress and minimize the pain in some sickness after harvesting. Moreover, the effect of liquor is known for a temporary treatment that can bring the drinkers joys and relaxation. So, drinking for reliving stress has

become a reason that people continue drinking.

8) Marketing strategies and commercial.

Recently, there are a lot of distributions and promotions from the merchandise, for example, buy 1 beer get 1 soda for free or buy 1 liquor get 1 liquor, in both a small and big market. This strategy of marketing works successfully that it has a long-term effect in encouraging people to drink continuously.

### **3. The effects of alcohol consumption in Thai society**

According to a meeting and a conduction of in-depth interview, the author discovered the details of alcoholic effects in Thai society as follows

1. The effects of alcohol consumption on individuals and family, as stated in a group interview, they share some similarities.

1) The major problems, which are caused by drinking, are hangover, nauseous and can get angry easily.

2) Health problems such as gastritis, physical injury, and cirrhosis.

3) Mental health crisis such as depression, suicidal thought, and physical harms of others.

4) Family argument

5) Economic issues, it is mostly because of a redundant amount of money that is spent on buying alcohol. Sometimes, too much alcoholic expense can lead to being in debt.

6) The most problems found in the society is, verbally poor behaviors such as yelling, hurting people, being rude, and being aggressive.

2. The effects of alcohol consumption in the village, according to a group interview, it was found that, in Nonghong district, there was some patients suffering from chronic illness in total 1,384 people. As matter of fact, the majority of those people were elderly. Small quarrels amongst drinkers occurred from time to time. Crime took place approximately 7 – 9 cases a year. Also, there were cases that the government has taken a fully responsibility, such as substance abuse, vehicle accidents, and drunk driving.

### **4. Alcohol withdrawal procedures and life-quality development of the villagers in Saodiew subdistrict, Nonghong district, Burirum Province.**

After studying causes and problems of alcohol consumption, as well as the effects and behaviors, working with the leaders and headmen in a district level, the author discovered that monks, the leaders and the villagers have a strong attempt to get rid of alcohol drinking in the community. The methods include;

1) Campaign for supporting alcoholic withdrawal

2) Participation of Sila 5 Village project

3) Setting a policy and managing it in accordance with Community Charter

4) A course for educating and rasing awareness of the disadvantges of alcoholic drinks

5) Buddhism teaches

6) Activity of Community Relation

7) Evaluations and results

Each procedure is associated with Buddhism practices and local knowledge selected partially in order to meet the purpose of alcohol withdrawal principles. After following those schemes, the tendency of alcohol consumption has been declined. Additionally, the main purpose of this study is to see the improvement of the residents' lives, to perceive that 350 people in the community pragmatically gain some knowledge and be able to understand the disadvantages of drinking alcohol, also to be able to adapt Buddhism practices to apply to their lives on daily basis. On acting upon the alcohol-related project of withdrawal, the temples and community initiated certain procedures.

1. Conducting educational sessions, for example, this process provides proper knowledge of alcohol-related facts, job consultation, local regulations, sufficiency economy strategies and Buddhism principles.

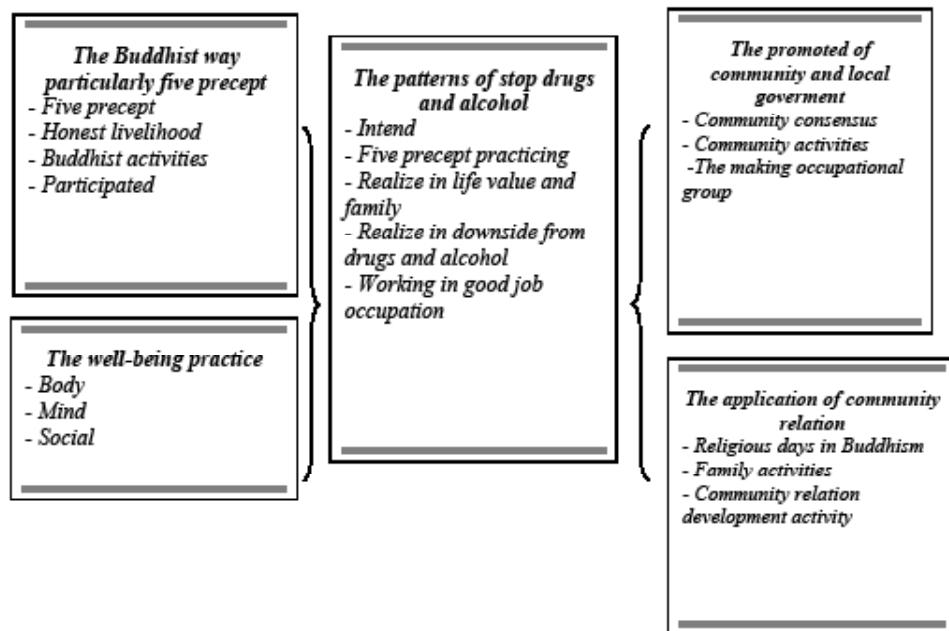
2. Undertaking a practical session, this, includes chant routine, praying, meditation in different gestures, toleration training, public relations, rhetoric skills and the ability to abstain a desire for drinking.

3. Community relation practices, such as imposing a policy by having the leaders of each village apply to their administrative districts. Some of the policy is the activity to support morality and virtue, action for public interest, primary health care service, movements against substance abuse, and other religious activities.

Successful results of these procedures vary in different dimension, for example, the residents tend to have better knowledge about negative effects of the alcohol and the leaders finally pay important roles in convincing their people to lessen their alcoholic habits, in their everyday lives and in Buddhism events. Moreover, it can also be set as community regulation in the village.

## **5. Procedures and guidance for alcohol withdrawal and life-quality development of the residents in Saodiew subdistrict, Nonghonh district, Burirum province.**

According to the outcomes of the process, we perceive that those methods are associated highly with Buddhism principles and concepts, such as Sila 5 Village project. Being a part in this project allows the villagers to be more aware of the drinking effects. Eventually, people would resign for this kind of habit.



The results are also found effectively positive, which can be summarized as follows;

1) Buddhism practices (the Five Percepts) and Buddhism lifestyle. The residents adopted various kinds of Buddhism principles in order to help them abstaining from intoxicants like alcohol. Moreover, monks were encouraged to work and people were supported to join occasional religious events such as Buddhist holy days, Visakabucha day, the Buddhist lent day, and the end of Buddhist lent day.

2) Health principles practices. Such as maintaining a healthy life mentally and physically, promoting a development of one's life in order to have a better quality of life, reducing alcohol-related behaviors would help in this part.

3) Local Administrative Organization's supports. The department has set regulations, community constitution, which is relative to Buddhism principles encouragement that the provincial government is responsible for. As well as, the support on occupation and the strength of the community

4) Activities for community relations such as the celebration of the Auspicious of His Majesty the King's Birthday, national days, and other community improved events. The leaders' propose of granting the events as such are to promote a unity of the residents.

## Discussion

According to what this research has found, the amount of alcohol

consumption amongst adults and teenagers in this village is in a high level, therefore, there is various of negative effects; financial issues, daily routines activities, and work life. The results of this study are relative to Swanee Sangartit's research, discussing about predictable factors lead to a consumption of substance abuses among teenagers. It was found that young participants in this study had more risky behaviors in term of taking intoxicants than other teenagers. 66.89 % and 55.45 % of the participants were suffering from chronic illness.

The causes of obtaining substance abuse such as smoking, drinking and drug addiction is sex relationship in the family, and friends support. Meanwhile, Sirinut Suguntha and et al studied about behaviors of alcohol consumption of Chiangmai residents. The results were found that the majority of drinkers was males, whose ages were about 18-60 years old and 93.3% taking alcohol drinks of socialization. Their first try took place in festivals, or religious events.

The effects of alcohol consumption, 45.5% of drinkers, once encountered vehicle accidents, and 35.3% admitted that they were physically harmed. Also, 63.7% of the participants regarded drinking was a waste-of-money behaviors, 48.7% said drinking help relieving stress. Additionally, there was majority of participant, who were not likely to stop consuming alcoholic drink, though, they know that such a behavior was terribly dreadful and could lead to many unfavorable outcomes.

The problems, obstacles, and alcohol withdrawal procedures as follows;

1) At present, alcohol consumption rate has been raising drastically, especially amongst teenagers whose ages are under 20 years old. This brings to a great deal of drawbacks in their health and life quality.

2) Alcohol supplementary prepared for festivals and religious events, which is socially considered as one of the social value. As a result, it can be seen as a hard work to drop down this action entirely.

3) Alcohol accessibility is mighty convenient. In the village, the merchandisers are encouraged to sell alcohol by the manufactured company. They are offered a lot of promotions and good deals. Therefore, it benefits greatly for the costumers.

4) There is a liquor and rice whiskey company in the village, so it is easy to buy alcoholic drinks.

5) Although, being aware and realize the disadvantages of alcohol consuming such as High blood pressure disease and other negative actions like being in unconscious state, fights and arguments, accident proneness, people in the village still drink alcohol.

#### Solutions of alcohol-related problems

1) Parents should be role models for their children. To illustrate, they should not display such a behavior like consuming alcohol in front of their kids. Alcohol consumption within family can be a huge impact on how the youth make decision on drinking.

2) Young people should be cultivated and educated about the skill

of self-control, and the awareness of alcohol-related damaging effects. Being able to stay conscious and know what is right will be prevention for imitative behaviors of family members, who consume alcohol drinks. Additionally, young people will also be able to make better decision when they encounter alcohol-related occasions.

3) Family agreement should be taken up. If each family member set domestic rules; alcohol consumption is strictly prohibited among every family members. The amount of this intoxicated use will be decreased. If this rule is applied in real situation, it will strengthen alcohol withdrawal campaign and make it more effective.

4) Building a foundation of a strong healthy family can be a good protection against risky alcoholic behaviors. To illustrate, if family members are happy and get along well, they will tend to solve problem and go through a hard times together without depending on alcohol-related use.

5) Alcohol withdrawal should be applied and supplemented in every organization in other area.

6) All residents should be part of the alcohol withdrawal procedures. In doing so, it will help finding practical methods for better outcomes regarding the reduction of alcoholic behaviors found in festivals and religious events.

7) All organizations should perform and make more efforts in order to lessen the use of alcoholic beverages. Organization should corporately create campaign, which is involved with a skill of self-control, communication skill, and promotion of healthy relationship in family

## Suggestion

1) Community and temples should further this research in order to apply the results to other Buddhist organizations, villages, or communities. They can join Sila 5 Village project and also form their own relevant methods themselves.

2) Government sector, local administrative organization and others associations should sustain this research, or even supplement the study in relation to what they have done, especially the section for raising awareness of the alcohol-related effects

3) Temples, educational institutions and community should publicize guidebooks or small alcohol-effect document to promote alcohol withdrawal.

4) Researchers and scholars should study this subject, specifically, about ongoing results of Sila 5 Village project in other areas, for the benefits of associated organizations. Moreover, the improvement of community activity should be acted upon; there should be practices that related to Buddhist principles.

5) There should be the study of alcohol-related effects in provincial areas of Thailand. This is, for learning more about similarities, in-depth

information, and the updates of the procedures.

6) There should be the study of the effects of alcohol consumption in young Thai people or working-aged group of people. In order to see the differences that can lead to development of better and worthier life.

7) There should be the study of alcoholic effects in festivals, important days and other events in Thailand.

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