

***Alcohol Abuse and Risky Sexual Behavior among the indigenous college students in Shillong, India.***

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***Introduction:***

Compared to the rest of the Country, the North East of India is a region plagued by myriad of problems: insurgency, xenophobia against outsiders, corruption, poverty, illiteracy, drug and substance use, especially against youths, alcoholism, high rate of HIV and AIDS infection etc. Among the seven north eastern states, some are predominantly Christian, where Christianity is practiced by most of the people. With pressure from the church and other socio-religious organizations, three states Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram have been declared as “Dry states” where sale of alcohol is prohibited by law. Out of these states, Nagaland and Manipur have been ravaged by decades of insurgency and secessionist activities. The resultant effect has had an huge impact on growth of quality educational institutes, especially those imparting colleges and higher educational to the multitudes to students who pass out from schools every year. Comparatively, Meghalaya or more specifically its capital Shillong has been relatively peaceful in the North East. Shillong, which was capital of the erstwhile-undivided state of Assam, was chosen by the Britishers as an ideal place for education of their children, because of its similarity, especially the climate and topography, with the British Isles. Infact, the early missionaries who came in from England, Wales and Scotland found the similarity so striking that they nicknamed Shillong “Scotland of the East”. So from later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century educational institutions run by missionaries, from Britain and Ireland, were established which stand like beacons even today after hundred of years. Thus, no city in the North East of India can claim to have so many schools and colleges where students from other states flock to get admitted each year. Moreover, since the Eastern Hill University (NEHU) is located in Shillong, those pursuing for both undergraduate and Post-graduate studies from neighboring states also find it convenient to come to Shillong.

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The migrant students in Shillong contribute a lot to the local economy, but they also bring with them certain behavioral ills and cultural trends, which has a negative impact on their students life. These students come from societies where drinking or consumption of alcohol is a part of their tradition, folklore and culture, but conversely their states are “dry states” where selling of alcohol is banned. This “contradiction” has its bearing on them the moment they come to Shillong which is a “wet state”, where alcohol of any make and price is available in every nook and corner. Besides liquor shops, there are innumerable bars dotting the Shillong landscape which offers a veritable attraction, may be even cultural shock to these students. Coupled with the fact that, most of these students stay in hostels, or rented houses or as paying guest far from the prying eyes of their parents and may have easy access to alcohol and girls, in a society where mixing between the two sexes is often not considered a taboo and “dating” is a “fun thing to do” and often encouraged by peers and elders. The lethal brew of unhindered and unrestrained access to alcohol and women is such a heady concoction that teenage or pre-marital sex is a natural progression, often with disastrous consequences.

### **Rational of the study**

As no through study has been conducted on alcohol abuse and risky sexual behavior among then migrant and non-migrant college students studying in Shillong, it is pertinent that such a study should be undertaken especially in the light of the fact that a substantial number of migrant students come from states such as Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram where in the absence of alcohol, they turn to using drugs, such as heroin, marijuana, cannabis etc as well as medicinal drugs such as spamoproxivon, corex etc, just to get “high”. Moreover, sharing of syringes and needles among drug users is a common affair which accentuates the high degree of risk involved in causal sex, when Manipur, and to some extent Nagaland, have a quite a large number of HIV positive and full blown AIDS cases mainly among youth. These “high risk of category” of migrant students, poses an added threat to their partners, with whom they engage in causal sex, thus unwittingly and may be at times, deliberately infecting their partners. Another more important aspect of the study would be look into the rise of teenage pregnancies and unwed mothers, most of whom are yet to pass out from college, all victims of causal sexual activity after one of those “party sessions” where alcohol and passion flows unhindered. This type of decadent activity, which is not approved by most, but which continues unabated in the absence of any parental control, needs to be studied and investigated in-depth, as it has debilitating and crippling effect on the social and family equilibrium and mores. Lastly, since alcohol is available in plenty, migrant students end up splendid their parent’s hard earned money on it, often ending up as a full

fledged alcoholics and patients with their liver cirrhosis, wasting their precious years. This aspect also needs to be studied and looked into in detail. A full-fledged and a wholistic study of all the aspects mentioned above could act as a guide, which will be immense help to future scholars and researchers.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

1. To study the perceptions regarding alcoholism and risky sexual behavior in Shillong.
2. To study the behavioral differences between alcohol consumption and sexual behavior among the college students.
3. To examine the factors effecting the alcohol consumption on risky sexual behavior in the study population.

### ***Methodology***

***Study area:*** The present study has been undertaken among the college students in Shillong. Shillong has the head quarter of the North Eastern Hill University as well as many educational institutions run by missionaries, from Britain and Scotland. Perhaps, no city can claim to have so many schools and colleges where students from other states flock to get admitted each year. But on the other hand, Shillong, which is a wet state, provides innumerable liquor bars dotting the landscape, which offers a veritable attraction, where alcohol of any make and price is available in every nook and corner. Coupled with the fact that most of the students live in rented house or as paying guest far from their parents prying eyes and have easy access to alcohol and the companion of opposite sex, the matter deserves concern. This was the rational behind selecting Shillong and conducting such a study among college going students.

***Sampling procedure:*** Four out of fifteen colleges have been selected, purposively, which were found to have the larger proportion of migrant- students. After the selection of colleges, list of second and final year students of Arts, Science and Commerce stream had been collected, out of which from each college, students were selected randomly. In all, the sample comprises of 200 students.

***Data collection tools:*** Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used for data collection. Semi-structured self-administered questionnaire was used in order to get the quantitative data and to supplement the quantitative information six case studies have been conducted

### ***Some Findings***

1. Migrant students are more religious in terms of; frequent visits to religious places and frequency of daily praying than non-migrant students

2. Majority of the students (90 percent) were found to consume alcohol, occasional.
3. A higher proportion of non-migrant students have found to consume alcohol ever than the migrant students.
4. Majority of the students whose father /mother consume alcohol, have also themselves consumed alcohol ever.
5. However, irrespective of their migratory status- students whose father/mother does not consume alcohol-form the leading proportion among ever consumers of alcohol.
6. Bars and restaurants followed by friend's houses have been found most common places, where both migrants and non-migrants go for liquor consumption.
7. Mean age of alcohol consumption is higher for migrant students- indicates such initiation after coming to Shillong.
8. Never consumers of alcohol between both migrant and non-migrant students have found to pray more than once in a day-perhaps indicates the higher level of religiosity lowers the consumption of alcohol.
9. Migrant students have found to be influenced more in proportion by Shillong's westernized environment than the non-migrant students.
10. Irrespective of their alcohol consumption status, majority of both migrant and non-migrant students have found to perceive that easy availability of alcohol in Shillong influences the consumption behavior of the students.
11. Experience of sex is more among non-Christian students than their Christian counterparts.
12. Experience of sex is more common among higher age group students (25-29 yrs) and among permanent settlers.
13. Sex partners for majority of both the migrant and non-migrant students are found to be their boyfriends/girlfriends.
14. While for non-migrant students, most commonplace for sex is their own house, migrant students have sex in their friend's house mostly.
15. Migrant students experience sex with different partner's more than non-migrant students.
16. Male students experienced more unknown sex than female students.
17. Both migrant and non-migrant students, who have had sex, mostly receive better monthly living than their counterparts.
18. Religiosity of an individual does not have impact on sexual activities.

19. Both the migrant and non-migrant students believe that risky behavior among students in Shillong is increasing mainly due to three reasons; lack of parental guidance, peer pressure and influence of movies.
20. All the students who experienced sex even have experienced such after consuming alcohol.
21. Many of the students stated that they loose senses after taking alcohol.
22. Qualitative data reveals that migrant students are involved in risky sexual behavior as compared to non-migrant students.
23. Students from Nagaland are perhaps the highest consumers of alcohol.

*There is increasing tendency to adapt behaviour and life style based on certain compulsion such as peer pressure, society pressure immediating so-called "alien life styles".*

Logistics Regression has done for the consumption of alcohol with their background characteristics and was found that the science background students are drinking alcohol more than the Arts background students. And the parent's occupation also significant with the student's consumption of alcohols. The another logistics regression was the ever had sex with their background characteristics this also found that type of subject they have study, Religion of the student and occupation of the parents are significant variables. It means the science background students are consumption of alcohol as well as the sexual behavior was found that 95 and 99 percent level of significance respectively. The parent's occupation also had significant with the consumption of alcohol, and ever had sex. It implies that the higher the socio-economic background of the study leads to consumption of alcohol and sexual behavior in the study population. The study found that the relationship between consumption of alcohol and sexual behavior was that there exist strong positive sign i.e., all the students who experienced sex ever have experienced such after consuming alcohol.