"We Drink for a Living": Exploring Alcohol Consumption, Drinking Behaviors, and Alcohol-related Problems among Entertainment (En') Girls in Thailand using AUDIT Screening Tool

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Abstract— Drinking alcohol is hazardous not just to the users, but also to their families and society as a whole. It also plays a contributing factor in many diseases and injuries. The aim of this study was to identify the alcohol consumption, drinking behaviors, and alcohol-related problems among entertainment (En') girls in Thailand using AUDIT screening tool. This study utilized a mixed methods study design, with 44 En' girls participating in the quantitative method and 9 En' girls participating in the qualitative method. For the quantitative portion, time-location sampling method was applied and a self-administered questionnaire with three sections (socio-demographic characteristics, work and drinking characteristics, and 10-items of self-reported AUDIT tool) was used via online Microsoft form. Descriptive analysis technique was applied and categorical data were presented with frequency and percentage. For the qualitative portion, a semi-structured questionnaire with exploring the reason for becoming an En' girl and their current situation was used via in-depth interview. A manual narrative analysis method was applied. About 22.3 % of En' girls had a drink containing alcohol 2-3 times a week while 54.5% had 10 or more standard drinks containing alcohol on a typical day. the overall AUDIT score ranged from moderate to high, indicating that En' girls were consuming harmful alcohol and were at risk of developing alcohol dependency (moderate-severe alcohol use disorder). It is important to prioritize health education programs in order to increase the awareness of En' girls regarding the potential health risks and hazards of drinking, including the establishment of alcohol-addiction treatment centers.

Keywords— Alcohol consumption, alcohol-related problems, AUDIT screening tool, drinking behavior, entertainment girls.

I. INTRODUCTION

Drinking alcohol has a harmful impact not only on the users, but also on their families and the entire society [1]. Alcohol is a psychoactive chemical with addictive characteristics that has been widely utilized in various cultures for ages [2]. The harmful consumption of alcohol is a contributing factor in over 200 diseases and injuries. Every year, harmful alcohol usage kills 3 million people worldwide and it accounts for 5.3% of all deaths. It is believed that small amounts of alcohol protect against mortality from all causes in broad populations is still debatable [3].

Total alcohol consumption per capita all around the world aged 15 and over increased from 5.7 liters in 2000 to 6.4 liters in 2016 [4]. Alcohol consumption can have both short-term and long-term detrimental effects on health, including an impact on memory, learning capacity, problem-solving abilities, cognitive flexibility, and the ability to inhibit impulses, as well as an increase in the risk of liver cirrhosis, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and liver cancer [5, 6].

Alcohol has become one of among the most widely used entertainment substances in the world [1]. Female entertainers are employed by entertainment businesses such as karaoke TV bars (KTV), beer pubs, and nightclubs, which serve as the primary locations where consumers engage flirty conversation, drinks, and sometimes sexual behavior as an exchange for money [7]. Women who work at places of entertainment face an increasing number of occupational risks [8]. Drinking alcohol practice among female entertainers is to both inspire customers to drink more and collect the money [9]. It is difficult to determine the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumed at work with absolute precision. It is projected that 62% of female entertainment workers consume alcohol every single day while working, and almost fifty percent of those who consume alcohol on a daily basis (49.9%) consume more than 55 units per week [10].

The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) is a widely used screening tool developed by the WHO to detect people who consume alcohol, engage in risky drinking behaviors, or have problems related to alcohol [11]. It additionally serves as a framework for intervention in the form of health education, counseling, or referral to assist potential consumers in discontinuing or reducing alcohol intake and thereby preventing or minimizing the adverse effects of drinking [12].

The term "En' girls," which is predominantly used in Thailand, refers to women who work in the nightlife industry. An En' girl's monthly pay is determined by the amount of drinks she consumes. Despite the fact that this type of workers may be found throughout the country, there is little literature about drinking consumption, behavior and related problems among Thai entertainment women.

II. OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to identify the alcohol consumption, drinking behaviors, and alcohol-related problems among entertainment (En') girls in Thailand using AUDIT screening tool.

III. METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods study was employed as the research design to allow for a comprehensive assessment of alcohol consumption among En' girls in Thailand in both quantitative and qualitative contexts. As En' girls are hard-to-reach population, this study used time-location sampling method [13]. The sample size was calculated using G-Power, and the overall sample size after accounting for a 10% dropout rate was 44. A Facebook group was created in order to recruit participants. A total of 44 En' girls in Bangkok, Thailand participated in this present study. For the quantitative method, a self-administered questionnaire was created using Microsoft form, and the link to answer the questionnaire was provided to Facebook group. A total of three sections were included as follows: 1) socio-demographic characteristics; 2) work and drinking characteristics; 3) 10-tiems of self-reported AUDIT tool. The descriptive analytical technique was utilized, and categorical variables were interpreted with frequency and percentage. Data analysis was done by using SPSS version 22. For qualitative method, a semi-structured questionnaire was used for in-depth interviews with a total of nine En' girls to obtain detailed information on their subjective experiences. The questionnaire included the reason for becoming an En' girl and their current situation. A manual narrative analysis method was applied.

Participants were informed of the study's objective and benefits, and they were assured of their anonymity, confidentiality, freedom to withdraw, and that their data would not be used for any other purpose. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Research Subjects, Health Sciences Group, Chulalongkorn University (No. 074/ 2022).

IV. RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

Table 1 reveals the socio-demographic characteristics of the En' girls, with 52.3% being under the age of 25. About 13.6% of En' girls were "married" or "divorced/separated," with 65.9% having a vocational certificate for education. Nearly two thirds of En' girls (72.7%) have no children.

Table 2 reveals work and drinking characteristics of the En' girls. About 36.4% of the participants became En' Girl when they were under age of 20. Half of the En' Girls (50.0%) drank 10-20 glasses per night. All En' Girls (100%) had health issues regardless of drinking. About 66% of En' Girls worked in nightclubs, bars, restaurants, karaoke bars, and lounges.

Tables 3 and 4 describe the result of AUDIT tool. About 22.3 % of En' girls had a drink containing alcohol 2-3 times a week while 54.5% had 10 or more standard drinks containing alcohol on a typical day. Approximately 75% of En' girls had six or more drinks on one occasion weekly. During the

previous year, 54.6% of En' girls did not require a drink in the morning to get them going after a heavy drinking session. About 45.5% of En' girls had been injured or caused injury to someone as a result of their drinking in the previous year.

TABLE 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the En' girls (n= 44)

Socio-demographic characteristics (n= 44)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
< 25	23	52.3
≥ 25	21	47.7
Mean ± SD (Min-Max)	25.3 ± 3.55 (19-32)	
Education		
Middle school	3	6.8
High school	9	20.5
Vocational certificate	29	65.9
Bachelor degree	3	6.8
Marital status		
Single	18	40.9
Married	3	6.8
Divorced/ Separated	3	6.8
Boyfriend/ partner	20	45.5
Having a child		
Yes	12	27.3
No	32	72.7

TABLE 2. Work and Drinking characteristics of the En' girls (n= 44)

Work and Drinking characteristics (n= 44)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age of becoming En' girl		
≤ 20	16	36.4
> 20	28	63.6
Mean ± SD (Min-Max)	22.3 ± 3.85 (14-30)	
Days of work per month		
Less than 7 days	14	31.9
Between 8 and 15 days	9	20.4
More than 15 days	21	47.7
Expected years to work from now on		
Less than 1 year	6	13.6
1 - 2 years	13	29.5
3 - 5 years	17	38.6
5 years and above	8	18.3
Amount of drinks per night (in glasses)		
less than 10	15	34.1
11 - 20 glasses	22	50.0
21 - 30	3	6.8
31 - 40	2	4.5
more than 41	2	4.6
Health issues regardless of drinking		
Yes	44	100.0
No	0	0.0
Work location		
Self-management: private En' girl	15	34.1
Clubs, bars, restaurants, karaoke bars and lounges	29	65.9
Source of information for knowledge regarding alcohol drinking		
Social media (Eg: Facebook)	13	29.5
Websites	20	45.5
Friends	2	4.5
Relatives	7	16.0
None	2	4.5

TABLE 3. AUDIT tool (n= 44)

AUDIT tool (n= 44)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?		
Never	0	0.0
Monthly or less often	2	4.5
2-3 times a week	10	22.3
2-4 times a month	2	4.5
More than 4 times per week	30	68.2
How many standard drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when drinking?		
1 or 2	5	11.4
3 or 4	4	9.1
5 or 6	8	18.2
7-9	3	6.8
10 or more	24	54.5
How often do you have six or more drinks on one occasion?		
Never	0	0.0
Less than monthly	2	4.5
Monthly	9	20.5
Weekly	33	75.0
Daily or almost daily	0	0.0
During the past year, how often have you found that you were unable to stop drinking once you had started?		
Never	4	9.1
Less than monthly	4	9.1
Monthly	4	9.1
Weekly	22	50.0
Daily or almost daily	10	22.7
During the past year, how often have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of drinking?		
Never	6	13.6
Less than monthly	6	13.6
Monthly	13	29.6
Weekly	18	41.0
Daily or almost daily	1	2.2

TABLE 4. AUDIT Tool (Contd.) (n=44)

AUDIT tool (n= 44)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
During the past year, how often have you needed a drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?		
Never	24	54.6
Less than monthly	6	13.6
Monthly	3	6.8
Weekly	8	18.2
Daily or almost daily	3	6.8
During the past year, how often have you experienced feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?		
Never	9	20.5
Less than monthly	7	15.9
Monthly	10	22.7
Weekly	15	34.1
Daily or almost daily	3	6.8
During the past year, how often have you been unable to remember what had happened the night before because you had been drinking?		
Never	12	27.3
Less than monthly	13	29.5
Monthly	9	20.5
Weekly	8	18.2
Daily or almost daily	2	4.5
Have you or someone else been injured as a result of your drinking?		
No	14	31.8
Yes, but not in the past year	10	22.7
Yes, during the past year	20	45.5
Has a relative, friend, doctor, or other health worker been concerned about your drinking, or suggested you cut back on drinking?		
No	13	29.5
Yes, but not in the past year	11	25.0
Yes, during the past year	20	45.5

Qualitative Findings

All respondents highlighted about importance of the appearance of the En' girls to attract the customers, then have more drinks and earn more money. One respondent's response is as follows: *"Because of my appearance, I have to put in a lot of effort to get customers, such as she had a large breast implant, wore a very short outfit, and so on. Fortunately, I know how to keep my customers entertained. This amounted to an average of 70 shots every night, omitting beers or other liquor given by clients, and earning at least 7,000 THB per night".* When asked why they became En' girls, all responses said it was because of the money and education status. One respondent's response is as follows: *"Being an En' girl was the simplest and quickest way for me to earn the largest amount of money due to my lower education status. It was extremely difficult for me to apply for a decent job with a big income or to start my own business".* When asked how they spent the money they earned from you, they all said they used it to support their families, for living expenses, cosmetics, and other items to attract customers, and to save to start their own business.

V. DISCUSSION

According to the findings of the present study, En' girls ranged in age from 19 to 32 years old, with an average of 25 years old, and the age at which they became En' girls was between 14 and 30. This finding is similar with the findings of Brody et al. [14], which discovered that the majority of entertainment girls are between the ages of 18 and 35. It could be because younger women are more sexually attractive because age is one of the determinants on sexual attraction, according to a study on sex variations in sexual attraction [15].

About half of the En' girls in this present study drank 11-20 glasses per night, which is considered binge drinking [16]. High-intensity alcohol usage has increased in recent years, particularly in social and situational aspects such as entertainment [17]. Binge drinking among En' girls in this study could be attributed to convincing customers to drink more so that they can earn more and perform better in social talk while entertaining. En' girls should be engaged with health education on alcohol consumption that the biological differences between men and women, which cause most women to absorb more alcohol and take longer to metabolize it, making them more susceptible to the long-term harmful health effects of alcohol than males [18].

According to the descriptive findings of the AUDIT screening test in this current study, the overall AUDIT score ranged from moderate to high, indicating that En' girls were consuming harmful alcohol and were at risk of developing alcohol dependency (moderate-severe alcohol use disorder) [19]. Women with alcohol use disorder (AUD) face more impediments to treatment and are less likely to receive it than males with AUD [20]. Women who undergo AUD treatment had more addiction and more severe psychosocial difficulties than men. As a result, it is critical to design a health education intervention and educate the En's girls on how to minimize their drinking consumption, improve their drinking behaviors,

and identify and manage alcohol-related problems as soon as possible.

Findings from the qualitative component indicate that education is vital for getting a career, and En' girls work in the entertainment sector owing to a lack of and lower education status in order to get a high-paying job and enjoy their lives. It can be said that education is strongly related to income and awareness of oneself of satisfaction [21, 22]. En's girls may be regarded a vulnerable group, and they should be prioritized for access to health services such as treatment for alcoholism, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study found that En' girls consumed excessive amounts of alcohol and were at danger of developing alcoholism. This information sounds the alarm for the development of a health education intervention program and its implementation among En' girls in order to control their alcohol consumption. Along with this intervention, it is vital to provide them with health services and social support as needed. The strength of this study is the first study among En' Girls to identify the alcohol consumption, drinking behaviors, and alcohol-related problems among En' girls in Thailand using AUDIT screening tool. However, there are some limitations, such as generalization limitations, an emphasis on descriptive findings, and no findings of factors influencing alcohol use, behaviors, and alcohol-related problems. Thailand's government authorities should prioritize health education programs aimed not only at the general population but also at vulnerable populations such as En' girls in order to increase their awareness of the potential health risks and hazards of drinking, including the establishment of alcohol-addiction treatment centers.

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