

Research Article

Discussion Topics During Parties and Alcohol Consumption Types and Contents in Kupang City

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Received: 13 April 2025; Manuscript No: JDAR-25-160235; **Editor assigned:** 15 April 2025; PreQC No: JDAR-25-160235 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 29 April 2025; QC No: JDAR-25-160235; **Revised:** 06 May 2025; Manuscript No: JDAR-25-160235 (R); **Published:** 2 June 2025; DOI: 10.4303/JDAR/236425

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Abstract

A party is a gathering for eating, drinking, or celebrating, which can serve as an opportunity for various social interactions. At a party, communication with other guests naturally takes place. Alcoholic beverages can be one of the elements that strengthen such interactions. In Kupang City, drinking alcohol holds a unique meaning for its community, shaped by various discussions among drinkers during the party. Research was conducted at several parties in Kupang City during the pandemic. The research used a mixed-method explanatory sequential approach, specifically analytical observation, with a cross-sectional institutional-based design. The sample included 35 party venues. The findings showed that political and economic issues were the most frequently discussed topics during the parties. Additionally, other discussion topics included the economy, health during the pandemic, religion, education, and other subjects such as romance and family, which could potentially lead to conflicts. This is because people under the influence of alcohol tend to share their stories more openly and honestly.

Keywords: Alcohol; Party; Drinking

Introduction

According to the Indonesian Dictionary, a party is a gathering for eating and drinking (rejoicing, etc.) or a celebration. A party is a social event aimed at celebration and recreation, which can be religious or seasonal in nature. To some extent, parties are also associated with personal and family events as a commemoration or celebration of special occasions in life. Parties provide an opportunity for various social interactions, depending on how participants understand the appropriate behavior for the event. Thus, parties have the potential to reinforce cultural standards and/or counterculture.

Alcohol (C_2H_5OH) is a liquid obtained from the fermentation of carbohydrates by yeast, characterized as transparent and colorless, easily mobile and volatile, and mixable with water, ether, and chloroform [1]. This organic compound contains a hydroxyl group ($-OH$) attached to a carbon atom, hydrogen, or another carbon atom. By substituting OH for H in CH_4 , methanol (CH_3OH) is obtained [1,2].

Alcoholic beverages are widely consumed around the world and have been a part of culture and tradition for centuries. Traditionally, this habit is very popular in various countries, such as England, France, and Germany [3]. However, alcohol consumption increases the risk of various diseases and can even lead to death [4]. Based on scientific analysis related to the effects of alcohol on public health in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), excessive alcohol consumption has caused numerous serious health problems [5-12].

The most commonly known immediate effect of alcohol consumption is intoxication. Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can result in nausea and vomiting. Binge drinking (alcohol binges) and chronic alcohol consumption can lead to life-threatening illnesses, such as:

Brain damage

Long-term binge drinking, more than four times a month, can cause permanent brain damage. It may also lead to serious mental disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia. Regular binge drinking signals the brain to develop alcohol dependency, causing individuals to become alcoholics.

Heart disease

The amount of alcohol consumed can affect blood pressure. Drinking three or more glasses of alcohol at one time can temporarily increase blood pressure. However, habitual alcohol consumption can increase the risk of long-term hypertension.

Hypertension

Hypertension increases the risk of diseases such as heart attacks, strokes, congestive heart failure, and chronic kidney failure. Excessive alcohol levels can weaken heart muscles, impacting the lungs, liver, brain, and other organs.

Additionally, binge drinking can result in abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias) and sudden death.

Cancer

As a carcinogenic compound, alcohol can easily affect areas around the head, neck, and throat. Binge drinking increases the risk of developing certain types of cancer, including oral, throat, esophageal, liver, and breast cancer. Drinking alcohol regularly in large quantities, combined with smoking, can increase the risk of oral and throat cancer by 80% in men and 65% in women.

Lung problems

Vomiting due to excessive alcohol consumption may lead to choking if the vomit obstructs the airway. Residue may also be inhaled into the lungs, which can be fatal. Consuming excessive amounts of alcohol increases the likelihood of developing lung infections, lung collapse, and pneumonia.

Liver disorders

In excessive quantities, alcohol acts as a toxin to the body, particularly when consumed in a short period. Initially, alcohol can cause fat accumulation in the liver. Continued binge drinking leads to liver inflammation and alcoholic hepatitis, which can result in liver failure and death. This habit can also cause scarring and permanent liver damage. Liver cirrhosis may develop, and the risk of liver cancer increases. Women are more susceptible to the negative effects of alcohol on liver health.

Stomach and digestive system issues

Cysts in the stomach and intestines, as well as internal bleeding, can occur when alcohol is consumed excessively. Alcohol-induced stomach inflammation or gastritis hinders the smooth digestion of food and essential nutrients. At the same time, it increases the risk of stomach and colon cancer. Chronic binge drinking can also cause inflammation of the pancreas, leading to symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, fever, weight loss, and even death.

Alcohol poisoning

Blood alcohol levels turn toxic when alcohol consumption exceeds the body's tolerance. This can lead to confusion, unresponsiveness, shortness of breath, unconsciousness, or even coma. During alcohol consumption, the liver works to filter toxins from the blood. Instead of processing food residues, the body prioritizes filtering alcohol because it is absorbed into the bloodstream more quickly. However, the liver can only process a limited amount of alcohol at a time: one unit of alcohol (equivalent to 1 bottle of beer, 330 ml, or 80 ml of red wine with 13% alcohol content) per hour. If more than two units are consumed in one hour, the liver's workload increases as additional drinks are consumed. The faster alcohol is consumed, the higher the blood alcohol levels become.

Aside from the aforementioned diseases, alcohol also af-

fects the central nervous system, slowing respiration and heart rate, increasing the risk of seizures, and causing hypothermia (a significant drop in body temperature). Additionally, alcohol disrupts a person's vomiting reflex. This is why handling vomiting caused by fainting after alcohol consumption is one of the six basic first aid skills that must be mastered. Even when someone faints, the alcohol level in their blood continues to rise. Extreme alcohol poisoning can lead to coma and even death. The illegal blood alcohol concentration limit for drivers worldwide is 0.08%. However, Indonesia currently does not have regulations that set legal blood alcohol concentration limits.

Methodology

The study was conducted at several parties in Kupang City during the pandemic. The period lasted from May 2023 to June 2024. The research employed a mixed-method explanatory sequential approach, specifically analytical observation, with an institutional-based cross-sectional design. The sample included 35 party venues, determined using the Slovin formula.

Results and Discussion

Parties, based on their types, can be categorized into three:

Formal Parties

Formal parties are structured and require thorough preparation and careful planning. Preparations may include the event, format, timing, invitations, and decorations. Formal parties are further divided into two types:

State formal parties: These are hosted by the head of state to entertain government officials or foreign dignitaries. Such events are related to governmental, political, economic, and socio-cultural matters. The food served is tailored to the guests. For instance, if the guests are Indonesian, traditional Indonesian cuisine is served. If the guests are from abroad, the menu combines Indonesian and international dishes.

Private formal parties: These are organized by an individual or a family to commemorate a special and formal event, such as a wedding. The menu usually includes dishes traditionally served at similar events in the region where the celebration occurs.

Informal Parties

Informal parties are organized by the host to commemorate a personal event that brings happiness to those involved. Some people consider this type of celebration optional. Examples of informal parties include:

Birth celebration party: A party to celebrate the birth of a baby.

Aqiqah party: A thanksgiving celebration held by Muslims for a newborn baby on the seventh day after birth, involving meals made from young goats.

Thanksgiving party: A party held to celebrate and give thanks for a notable event, such as success, happiness, or good health. The menu is typically simple, depending on the host's resources.

Charity event party: An open party that anyone can attend, provided they have an invitation. Invitations can be purchased, gifted, or directly given. The goal of this party is often to raise funds for charity, such as orphanages or disaster relief.

Casual parties: These are gatherings characterized by a relaxed and familial atmosphere. Guests usually include close friends and family members. Commonly, these parties involve entertainment and games prepared by the host. Examples include birthday parties for children or teenagers (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1: Types, Quantities, Time, Locations, and Attendance at Parties in Kupang City in 2024.

| No | Type of Party | Quantity | Time and Venue | Number of Attendees |
|----|--|----------|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Wedding Parties | 12 | 8 held in the daytime from 10 AM to 2 PM WITA at home | 300 to 600 people |
| | | | 5 held in the daytime from 10 AM to 2 PM WITA at places of worship | 250 to 500 people |
| | | | 11 held in the evening from 7 PM to 8 PM WITA at home | 250 to 300 people |
| 2 | Birthday Parties | 6 | 6 held in the evening from 5 PM to 9 PM WITA at home | 75 to 125 people |
| 3 | Graduation Thanksgiving Parties | 5 | Held from 7 PM to 11 PM WITA at home | 250 to 350 people |
| 4 | First Communion and Confirmation Parties | 14 | 6 held from 5 PM to 9 PM WITA at home | 200 to 300 people |
| | | | 9 held from 7 PM to 11 PM WITA at home | 250 to 350 people |
| 5 | Engagement Parties | 8 | Held from 3 PM to 11 PM WITA at home | 250 to 300 people |
| 6 | Promotion Thanksgiving Parties | 2 | Held from 7 PM to 11 PM WITA at home | 300 to 400 people |
| 7 | Traditional Ceremonial Parties | 1 | Held from 7 PM to 11 PM WITA at home | 350 to 500 people |

Table 2: Types, Content, Quantity, Prices, and Types of Alcoholic Beverages Consumed at Parties in Kupang City in 2024.

| No | Beverage Name | Alcohol Content | Consumption Quantity | Price per Package | Packaging Type |
|----|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Sopi | 40% | 20 liters | IDR 50,000/750 mL | Recycled mineral water bottles |
| 2 | Beer | 5% | 15 liters | Standard factory pricing | Standard factory packaging |
| 3 | Wine | 13–25% | 8 liters | Standard factory pricing | Standard factory packaging |
| 4 | Moke | 40% | 20 liters | IDR 60,000/750 mL | Recycled mineral water bottles |
| 5 | Laru | 15% | 40 liters | IDR 20,000/1.5 liters | Recycled mineral water bottles |
| 6 | Branded Alcoholic Drinks | 30–45% | 15 liters | IDR 75,000–1.5 million | Standard factory packaging |
| 7 | Others | | | | |

The alcohol consumption rate in rural areas is 0.61 liters per capita, while in urban areas it is 0.23 liters per capita. There are three categories of alcoholic beverages:

- Category A: Ethanol content of 1%–5%
- Category B: Ethanol content of 5%–20%
- Category C: Ethanol content of 20%–50%

Ethanol itself is a psychoactive substance that, when consumed, can impair consciousness in the human body [13].

Sopi is one type of alcohol commonly consumed in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) during celebrations. The term “Sopi” originates from the Dutch word Zoopje, which means liquid alcohol. In the Flores region, specifically in Aimere District, Ngada Regency, NTT, there is a producer of Sopi considered the best in Indonesia. It is even labeled with the initials “BM,” short for Bakar Menyala (Flaming Burn). Moreover, this traditional alcoholic drink from eastern Indonesia is known by two names. Some people call it Sopi, while others refer to it as Moke. Essentially, both are the same—a high-alcohol beverage derived from the lontar palm tree. The difference lies in their distillation process: Moke is distilled using clay pots, with the vapor channeled through bamboo tubes, while Sopi is distilled using barrels connected to pipes.

Research shows that Sopi is the second most consumed alcoholic beverage at parties in Kupang City, with an average consumption of 20 liters. The high consumption rate is due to its easy availability and affordability. Sopi is classified as a Class C alcoholic drink, with an alcohol content of approximately 30%.

Moke is another traditional drink from NTT that is often found at parties. It contains a high alcohol content of about 40%. It is typically consumed communally in a circle, a local tradition. Various NTT snacks and dishes often accompany Moke, such as sour fish soup (lepeng ikan kuah asam), grilled fish, goat soup, boiled or grilled bananas, and sambal made from lemon or tomato. Gatherings are often held outdoors, such as on the beach, in yards, or under trees. Moke is considered a traditional drink and is a must-have during traditional ceremonies. It is easy to find and sold at roadside stalls for around Rp30,000–Rp35,000.

Laru is another traditional drink resulting from the fermentation of sugar water using the Laru tree root. First, the Laru root is soaked in sugar water. Over time, gas bubbles begin to form. When the bubbles gradually disappear, the fermentation process is complete. Most of the sugar content has been converted by the *Pichia anomala* yeast into ethanol, CO₂ gas, and organic acids. Laru has an alcohol content of over 15%. It has a yellowish-brown color, is liquid, and has a fresh sweet-sour taste with a slightly fizzy sensation. Over time, Laru's taste becomes more sour. At parties, Laru is the most consumed beverage due to its low price and easy availability at roadside stalls in Naimata Subdistrict. Laru is classified as a Class B alcoholic drink because it contains 6.4% alcohol.

Wine, beer, and other branded alcoholic beverages are less commonly consumed because they are expensive and rarely provided by party hosts. Such drinks are typically found at celebrations of individuals with middle to upper economic status (Table 3).

Table 3: Discussion topics and duration at parties in kupang city, 2024.

| No | Discussion Topics | Duration |
|----|---------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Politics and War | 4 to 5 hours |
| 2 | Economy | 4 to 5 hours |
| 3 | Health and COVID-19 | 2 hours |
| 4 | Religion | 3 to 4 hours |
| 5 | Education | 2 hours |
| 6 | Other Topics | 3 to 4 hours |

Discussions under the influence of alcohol vary depending on the people involved and the events happening at the time of the party. Research findings indicate that political and economic issues are the most discussed topics during parties. These topics are frequently reported in the media and are often discussed in workplaces, making them naturally engaging [14–17].

Commonly discussed subjects include:

Future concerns: Topics such as family troubles, Indonesian politics, complex college assignments, or regional cultural issues.

Peer conversations while intoxicated: These often involve

trending political conflicts (e.g., debates about COVID-19 and vaccines). Another example is heated arguments about football matches, where intoxicated individuals may act like analysts.

Personal struggles: Discussions often revolve around bad days, breakups, or family problems. Alcohol consumption often leads to more open and honest storytelling.

Conflict and miscommunication: Alcohol-induced discussions may delve too deeply into sensitive topics, such as parents' jobs or ex-partners. This can lead to arguments or even fights if someone feels uncomfortable or offended by what is shared (Table 4).

Based on the Table 4, 53 respondents (53%) prefer buying from stores, believing that the authenticity of the alcohol is better guaranteed despite the higher price. Meanwhile, 27 respondents (27%) choose to buy from distilleries because it is cheaper, even though the packaging may not meet standards and cleanliness might be questionable. Finally, 20 respondents (20%) opt to buy from local sellers to support the local economy and because it is easier to obtain.

Discussion

Indonesia is rich in culture and local wisdom. This diversity can be integrated into communication, particularly through discussions that occur during celebrations while consuming alcohol. However, globalization has caused shifts in cultural values and local wisdom, necessitating efforts to reconstruct these values and foster learning environments that explore and integrate cultural values. For this reason, an ethnoscience approach to education is recommended.

Changes in communication patterns are evident in various social gatherings. Parties, in particular, serve as venues to express joy through dancing (such as ballroom dances), consuming alcohol, and discussing current or past events. Party guests often find happiness in sharing knowledge and experiences through discussions with other attendees. After the main event concludes, guests usually relax and consume the alcohol provided by the host.

Kupang City, as the capital of the province, experiences similar trends. Almost every celebration, whether a wedding, funeral, ordination, birthday, or promotion thanksgiving, includes alcoholic beverages. This lifestyle has become a habit passed down through generations and is considered a cultural tradition.

The issue surrounding alcohol consumption does not lie in whether it is permitted or prohibited. The focus is on factors such as who consumes it, where, when, under what conditions, and in what quantities. In Mokona society, particularly among men of various ages, imported alcohol is routinely consumed with the intent of intoxication. Similarly, excessive consumption is common in

Kupang City, demonstrating that alcohol consumption has become ingrained in the city's culture.

Alcohol consumption during parties in Kupang holds symbolic meaning, shaped by discussions among drinkers. Alcohol is consumed communally, with guests sitting in a circle. Alcohol and a variety of meat dishes are placed in the center, and a designated person, called the Bandar, pours drinks into glasses, which are then passed around. Discussions emerge as alcohol circulates, often conducted in local or Indonesian languages, depending on the context of the party and the participants. One individual typically introduces a topic, sparking active participation and exchanges of opinions as alcohol consumption increases. This practice of drinking during parties is generally agreed upon by the host and guests and is conducted collectively with mutual consent.

Conclusion

Parties are categorized into formal and informal events. Formal parties require thorough preparation and precise planning, while informal ones are hosted to commemorate personal events. Informal parties are further divided into Birth Celebrations, Thanksgiving Parties, Recreational Gatherings, and Ordinary Parties.

Discussions during parties under the influence of alcohol vary based on the participants and ongoing events. Research shows that politics and economics are the most discussed topics, as they are frequently covered by television and newspapers and are popular workplace conversations.

One of the most common discussion topics involves personal hardships, such as breakups or family issues. Alcohol consumption often encourages openness and honesty, making such topics prevalent. However, disagreements—especially regarding politics and economics—frequently arise as participants share their opinions based on different sources. Discussions typically conclude when the alcohol runs out or when the party ends, after which guests take their leave.

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