

# Carnival and Underage Drinking in Cachoeiro De Itapemirim, Espírito Santo, Brazil

Daniel Nyangoya

PhD Candidate-The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90300291>

Received: 07 March 2025; Accepted: 15 March 2025; Published: 15 April 2025

## ABSTRACT

Carnivals in Brazil are vibrant cultural events that often involved widespread alcohol consumption, including among underage. This study explored underage drinking during the annual carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, Espírito Santo, Brazil, the study sought to answer the research questions; What factors influenced underage drinking during carnival? and how did minors perceive and experience alcohol consumption in this festive environment? It focused on the social, cultural, and environmental factors that contributed to these phenomena. A qualitative research approach was used, data was collected through in-depth interviews with underage. Findings revealed that peer influence, parental attitudes, social acceptance of drinking, and weak law enforcement contributed to underage alcohol consumption during carnival. The study applied Social Learning Theory to explain how minors observed and imitated drinking behaviours in festive environments. The insights gained highlighted the need for stricter enforcement of alcohol regulations, community awareness programs, and culturally sensitive interventions to reduce underage drinking. These findings may contribute to ongoing discussions on public health and policy strategies aimed at mitigating alcohol-related risks among underage in carnival settings.

**Keywords:** Carnival, Underage and Drinking.

## INTRODUCTION

Carnivals are significant cultural events in Brazil, celebrated with vibrant music, dance, and festivity. However, these events are also associated with increased alcohol consumption, including among minors. Underage drinking during carnival poses serious public health concerns, leading to risky behaviours, accidents, and legal violations. Despite legal restrictions prohibiting the sale of alcohol to individuals under 18, enforcement remains a challenge, particularly during large public celebrations such as carnival (Silva & Martins, 2020).

Alcohol consumption among adolescents is a growing global concern, with studies highlighting its association with numerous adverse outcomes, including impaired cognitive development, increased likelihood of engaging in unsafe sexual behaviors, and a heightened risk of developing substance use disorders later in life (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). The widespread availability of alcohol during carnival, coupled with a festive atmosphere, created an environment where minors felt encouraged or pressured to drink.

Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, located in the state of Espírito Santo, is renowned for its vibrant carnival traditions, drawing large crowds, including young revelers. The social and cultural fabric of the event often normalized alcohol consumption, making it an integral part of the celebrations. Studies suggested that societal acceptance of drinking during festivities lowered the perceived risks associated with alcohol use among minors (Costa, Ribeiro, & Souza, 2021). Given these concerns, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i) What factors influenced underage drinking during carnival?
- ii) How did minors perceive and experience alcohol consumption in this festive environment?

By exploring these questions, the study aimed to provide insights into the social and regulatory challenges associated with underage drinking during carnival and inform potential interventions to mitigate alcohol-related

risks among minors.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the United States, carnival-like celebrations took various forms, with Mardi Gras in New Orleans being one of the most famous. Rooted in French Catholic traditions, Mardi Gras features parades, masked balls, and public festivities, often accompanied by heavy alcohol consumption (Gill, 2013). Despite legal restrictions, underage drinking remains a significant concern during these celebrations, with reports of binge drinking among adolescents and young adults (Patrick et al., 2020). Canada, on the other hand, hosts the Quebec Winter Carnival, which, while emphasizing winter sports and cultural heritage, also sees alcohol integrated into festivities, with ice bars and alcoholic beverages like Caribou playing a prominent role (Levine, 2015). Studies have highlighted the impact of festival environments on youth drinking behaviours, pointing to the need for stronger regulation and public awareness campaigns (Stockwell et al., 2012).

In Asia, Japan's Nebuta Matsuri, though rooted in Shinto and agricultural traditions, has evolved into a large-scale festival featuring illuminated floats, music, and revelry. Alcohol consumption, particularly sake, is a common aspect of socializing during the festival, with concerns over public intoxication and underage drinking rising in recent years (Ishii, 2016). Similarly, India's Holi festival, celebrated with vibrant colours and public gatherings, often involves the consumption of bhang—a cannabis-infused drink—as well as alcohol. The normalization of substance use during festivities has led to growing debates on youth exposure and potential health risks (Tripathi & Agarwal, 2018).

In Australia, events like the Sydney Mardi Gras and Moomba Festival blended traditional carnival elements with contemporary cultural influences. Alcohol consumption was a major component of these events, with studies showing increased incidents of binge drinking, particularly among young festival-goers (Miller et al., 2015). Government policies have sought to curb excessive drinking through licensing restrictions and public health campaigns, but enforcement remains challenging (Livingston et al., 2016).

In Africa, Nigeria's Calabar Carnival, often called "Africa's Biggest Street Party," showcased a fusion of African, Caribbean, and Brazilian influences, featuring elaborate costumes, parades, and musical performances. Alcohol sponsorships and widespread availability of beverages contributed to high levels of consumption, raising concerns about underage drinking and public safety (Obot, 2007). Similarly, in South Africa, the Cape Town Minstrel Carnival has historical ties to colonial-era festivities and African cultural expressions. Despite efforts to regulated alcohol use during the event, excessive drinking remained an issue, particularly among marginalized communities, where festival-related alcohol abuse is linked to broader social and economic challenges (Parry, 2005).

Brazilian carnival is one of the most famous and widely celebrated in the world, with roots tracing back to Portuguese colonial influences in the 17th century. Over time, African, indigenous, and European elements blended to create the vibrant and diverse carnival traditions seen today (DaMatta, 1991). The introduction of samba in the early 20th century further shaped the identity of Brazilian carnival, with cities like Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and São Paulo becoming global hubs of carnival festivities (Vianna, 1999).

Alcohol consumption has been a staple of Brazilian carnival for decades, promoted by breweries and beverage companies that sponsored major carnival events (Menezes, 2018). Despite legal restrictions, underage drinking was prevalent, driven by cultural attitudes that view alcohol as an integral part of socializing and celebration (Souza & Noto, 2015). Studies suggested that adolescents in Brazil are more likely to consume alcohol during festive periods, including carnival, due to peer pressure, lenient parental attitudes, and easy access to alcoholic beverages (Carlini et al., 2014).

Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, a city in Espírito Santo, holds its own unique carnival traditions, attracting thousands of revelers each year. While not as internationally renowned as Rio de Janeiro or Salvador, the city's carnival

maintains a strong regional significance, with parades, blocos (street parties), and local music performances playing a central role in the celebrations (Fonseca, 2017). Like other Brazilian cities, Cachoeiro de Itapemirim faces challenges related to alcohol consumption, particularly among minors.

Local studies indicated that underage drinking during carnival is influenced by the social acceptance of alcohol use, lack of stringent law enforcement, and the perception of carnival as a space for uninhibited behavior (Ribeiro & Santos, 2020). Reports from health officials and law enforcement suggested that alcohol-related incidents, including accidents, fights, and hospital admissions, spike during carnival season, further highlighting the need for targeted interventions (Almeida et al., 2019).

By examining the historical context of carnival and its association with alcohol use from a global to local perspective, this study sought to provide a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural factors contributing to underage drinking in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim. Recognizing the historical underpinnings of carnival drinking behaviours informed more effective policies and community strategies to address the issue in contemporary settings.

## Objective

The objectives of this study were:

- i) To explore the factors that influence underage drinking during carnival.
- ii) To evaluate how minors perceive and experience alcohol consumption in this festive environment.

## Research Questions

- i) What factors influence underage drinking during carnival?
- ii) How did minors perceive and experience alcohol consumption in this festive environment?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1977) provided a relevant lens for understanding underage drinking during carnival by explaining how behaviours were acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. According to SLT, individuals learnt behaviours by observing others, especially in social contexts where actions were modeled and reinforced (Bandura, 1986). This study built on previous research by exploring how the cultural and social dynamics of carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim contributed to the normalization of underage drinking.

Prior studies have demonstrated that exposure to alcohol use by peers, family members, and media representations increased the likelihood of adolescent drinking (Brown et al., 2009; Miller & Dollard, 1941). During carnival, the visibility of alcohol consumption was heightened as creating an environment where minors perceived drinking as socially acceptable and even expected. The festive setting provided multiple reinforcers—such as peer approval, social bonding, and media depictions—that encouraged adolescents to engage in alcohol use.

This study expanded previous applications of Social Learning Theory by situating underage drinking within a unique cultural and celebratory context. While SLT had been widely applied to explain adolescent substance use in general (Bandura, 1986), its application to large-scale public events like carnival remained underexplored. Existing literature on SLT often focused on everyday social interactions (Akers & Lee, 1996; Zucker et al., 2008), whereas this study highlighted the intensified exposure to drinking behaviours during festivals. By doing so, it underscored the role of event-specific social reinforcement mechanisms, such as temporary social norms that promoted alcohol consumption.

Furthermore, this study challenged the assumption that social reinforcement always led to consistent behavioural adoption. While some minors imitated drinking behaviours, others resisted due to individual differences in risk perception, parental influence, or legal awareness (Jessor, 1991). Thus, the study contributed

to a more nuanced understanding of SLT, suggesting that cultural and situational factors moderated the extent to which observational learning led to behavioural adoption.

By critically engaging with Social Learning Theory in the context of carnival, this research provided new insights

into how temporary social environments influenced underage drinking behaviours and how reinforcement mechanisms varied based on the nature of the event and individual agency.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews to explore underage drinking during carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have firsthand experience or knowledge of the phenomenon. Participants were required to meet specific inclusion criteria, including: Minors (ages 14-17) who have consumed alcohol during past carnival events.

### Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives on underage drinking. This technique allowed for the selection of participants based on specific criteria, ensuring that the study captured a range of experiences related to alcohol consumption during carnival (Patton, 2015). Participants included male and female minors from different socioeconomic backgrounds, age groups (between 15 and 17 years old), and levels of prior exposure to carnival celebrations. This demographic diversity provided a more comprehensive understanding of the various social and cultural factors influencing underage drinking.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, enabling an in-depth exploration of the motivations, perceptions, and contextual influences on alcohol use among minors. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly adhered to. Parental consent was obtained for all participants under 18, and interviews were conducted in neutral locations to ensure privacy and minimize social desirability bias (Bryman, 2016).

By adopting this qualitative methodology with a diverse participant pool, the study aimed to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the factors contributing to underage drinking during carnival. The findings can inform more effective interventions and policy measures tailored to the social realities of adolescents in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim.

## FINDINGS

Findings indicated that underage drinking during carnival was influenced by several key factors:

### Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is a social influence that encourages individuals to adopt certain behaviours, attitudes, or choices to gain acceptance or avoid rejection within a group. It is especially powerful during adolescence, a stage when social belonging is highly valued (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). Peer pressure can be direct, where individuals are explicitly urged to conform, or indirect, where they feel compelled to imitate the behaviours of their peers to fit in (Brown, Bakken, Ameringer, & Mahon, 2008). While it can sometimes lead to positive behaviours, such as academic motivation or participation in healthy activities, it is often associated with risky behaviours like underage drinking, drug use, or reckless decision-making (Santor, Messervey, & Kusumakar, 2000). The impact of peer pressure is heightened in social settings where norms encouraged conformity, making it difficult for individuals to resist without fear of social exclusion (Prinstein & Dodge, 2008).

The findings indicated that underage drinking during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, Espírito Santo, Brazil, was significantly driven by peer pressure. Many minors reported that they consumed alcohol due to the influence of friends and the fear of social exclusion. The festive atmosphere of Carnival, where drinking was



widely accepted and even encouraged, further amplified this pressure. Adolescents often feel compelled to participate in drinking activities to fit in with their social circles and avoid being perceived as outsiders. This highlighted the powerful role of peer dynamics in shaping underage drinking behaviours during the celebration.

*“At first, I did not want to drink, but all my friends were already doing it. They kept telling me, ‘Come on, just try it, everyone drinks during Carnival!’ I felt like if I kept saying no, they would think I was boring or too afraid. So, I gave in and took a sip. After that, it just became easier to keep drinking because I did not want to be the odd one out.”*

*“My friends kept handing me drinks, saying that it was part of the fun. They laughed and joked that I could not enjoy Carnival without alcohol. At first, I hesitated, but they would not stop insisting. I did not want to be the only one sober and feel left out, so I started drinking just to fit in. Once I did, they cheered me on, and I felt like I belonged.”*

*“I was afraid to say no because I thought they would make fun of me. One of my friends told me that drinking was a ‘rite of passage’ and that I needed to do it to be part of the group. I did not want to be the only one sitting out while everyone else was drinking and having fun, so I took the glass and drank. After that, they stopped pressuring me, but I knew that if I had not given in, they would have kept pushing.”*

*“They told me that one drink would not hurt and that I was acting like a little kid by refusing. I did not want them to think I was immature, so I finally gave in. The more I drank, the more they accepted me into the group, and it felt good to be included. Looking back, I realize I only drank because I was scared of being left out, not because I really wanted to.”*

The findings suggest that peer pressure plays a crucial role in influencing underage drinking during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim. Adolescents often prioritize social acceptance over personal choice, leading them to engage in drinking behaviors they might otherwise avoid. The fear of exclusion and the perception that drinking is a necessary part of the celebration reinforce their willingness to conform. This indicates that underage drinking prevention strategies should focus not only on legal restrictions but also on addressing the social dynamics that drive adolescents to drink. Initiatives such as peer-led education programs, awareness campaigns that challenge the normalization of alcohol consumption during festivals, and training in refusal skills can help mitigate the impact of peer pressure.

Moreover, these findings highlight the need for parental involvement and broader community engagement in addressing underage drinking. Parents and educators should equip adolescents with strategies to resist social pressure, while policymakers should consider stricter enforcement of alcohol regulations during Carnival. Additionally, mental health professionals could provide support programs that help adolescents develop confidence in making independent choices without fear of rejection. Addressing these social influences holistically can lead to a shift in attitudes toward alcohol consumption, reducing the risks associated with underage drinking during large-scale festivities.

### **Easy Access to Alcohol**

Easy access to alcohol refers to the availability and convenience with which individuals, including minors, obtained alcoholic beverages despite legal restrictions. Factors that contributed to easy access included lax enforcement of age restrictions, widespread alcohol sales at public events, and the presence of social networks that facilitated underage drinking (Wagenaar & Toomey, 2002). During large celebrations like Carnival, alcohol vendors prioritized sales over compliance with regulations, making it easier for minors to purchase or receive alcohol from older peers or family members (Grube & Nygaard, 2005). Additionally, media portrayals and cultural norms that associated alcohol with socializing and celebration further normalized its consumption, reducing perceived risks (Jernigan, 2001). The combination of these factors increased the likelihood of underage drinking during carnival.

The findings revealed that underage drinking during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, Espírito Santo, Brazil, was largely facilitated by the easy access to alcohol. Despite legal restrictions prohibiting alcohol sales

to minors, many vendors disregarded these regulations, prioritizing profit over compliance. Street vendors and small bars often sold alcohol without verifying the buyer's age, making it easy for minors to obtain drinks. Additionally, the use of fake identification was widespread, allowing adolescents to purchase alcohol from establishments that require age verification. The festive and chaotic atmosphere of Carnival further contributed to weak enforcement of alcohol laws, enabling minors to drink freely without significant consequences. This unrestricted access highlighted a major gap in regulation and enforcement, making underage drinking a prevalent issue during the celebration.

*"Buying alcohol was the easiest thing ever. I just walked up to a street vendor, handed over the money, and they gave me a drink without even asking for my ID. No one cared how old I was. It felt like everyone was drinking, so it did not seem like a big deal. Since it was so easy to get, I just kept drinking the whole night."*

*"I used my older cousin's ID, and it worked every time. The bartenders barely even looked at it before serving me. Some of my friends did not even need an ID—there were vendors who did not ask anything as long as you paid. It is like the rules do not exist during Carnival. If you want alcohol, you can get it without any problem."*

*"I thought it would be hard to buy alcohol because of my age, but nobody really cared. I went to a small kiosk, and the guy just gave me the beer without asking anything. I saw other kids even younger than me doing the same thing. It is like during Carnival, the rules disappear, and anyone can drink as much as they want."*

*"I was nervous at first, thinking they would check my age, but my friends told me not to worry. We went up to a vendor, and he sold us everything without hesitation. It was way too easy. After that, we kept going back for more. If they actually checked IDs or refused to sell to us, maybe I would not have drunk so much."*

These findings suggested that easy access to alcohol during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim was a significant factor driving underage drinking. The widespread disregard for legal age restrictions by alcohol vendors and the use of fake identification revealed a serious gap in enforcement that allowed minors to consume alcohol with minimal barriers. This has profound implications for public health and safety, as it created an environment where underage drinking was normalized and difficult to regulate. The chaotic and festive atmosphere of Carnival further weakened enforcement, making it essential for local authorities to implement stronger measures to prevent underage access to alcohol during large public events. Stricter enforcement of age verification practices and the imposition of harsher penalties for vendors who sell to minors could help reduce the accessibility of alcohol to this vulnerable group.

Additionally, the cultural normalization of alcohol consumption during Carnival, coupled with peer pressure to conform, suggested that underage drinking was not only a regulatory issue but also a social one. Adolescents felt encouraged to engage in drinking behaviours because it was widely accepted and even expected within the social context of the celebration. This highlighted the need for comprehensive intervention strategies that include both law enforcement and community education. Programs should focus on changing social norms surrounding alcohol use during festive events and provide alternative, alcohol-free activities for young people. By addressing both the regulatory and social factors that contributed to easy access to alcohol, long-term strategies can be developed to prevent underage drinking during future public celebrations.

### **Parental Attitudes:**

Parental attitudes refer to the beliefs, values, and behaviours that parents hold and express regarding various aspects of their children's lives, including their upbringing, education, socialization, and exposure to risky behaviours like alcohol consumption. These attitudes can greatly influence children's attitudes and behaviours, as parents are primary role models and sources of guidance (Jackson et al., 2014). Positive parental attitudes, such as providing clear boundaries, offering support, and encouraging open communication, often result in children who are more resilient to peer pressure and less likely to engage in harmful behaviours (Simons-Morton et al., 2011). Conversely, permissive or lenient parental attitudes, or a lack of involvement in their children's social lives, can increase the likelihood of risky behaviours, such as underage drinking (Perry et al., 2007). Additionally, if parents model alcohol consumption as a regular or socially acceptable activity, their

children may be more likely to adopt similar behaviours, especially in environments like social gatherings or celebrations (Chung & Ma, 2017).

The findings indicated that parental attitudes played a significant role in facilitating underage drinking during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, Espírito Santo, Brazil. Some parents either permitted or overlooked their children's alcohol consumption, viewing it as a natural part of growing up and a "rite of passage." In many cases, parents believed that drinking during Carnival was a harmless tradition and prefer their children to drink under their supervision rather than in secret. Others adopted a lenient stance, assuming that occasional drinking in a festive environment was not a serious concern. This permissive attitude reduced the perceived risks associated with alcohol consumption and normalized drinking among minors. As a result, adolescents felt justified in consuming alcohol, reinforcing the culture of underage drinking during the celebration.

*"My mom saw me drinking at home before going out, and she just laughed. She said it was fine as long as I did not overdo it. That made me feel like drinking was not a big deal, so I did not think twice about having more once I was out with my friends."*

*"My dad told me that everyone drinks during Carnival and that it is part of the culture. He even gave me my first beer, saying it was better for me to drink with him than with strangers. After that, I felt like it was okay to keep drinking."*

*"I was surprised when my parents did not get mad when they saw me drinking. They just said, 'Be careful and do not drink too much.' That made me feel like it was something normal, so I did not see any problem with continuing to drink throughout Carnival."*

*"My uncle bought me a drink and said, 'It is Carnival, enjoy yourself!' He did not see anything wrong with it. If the adults in my family do not care, why should I?"*

*"My mom told me she drank when she was my age during Carnival, so she was not going to be a hypocrite and stop me. She just told me to be responsible. That gave me the confidence to drink without feeling guilty."*

*"I was at a family barbecue, and my parents let me have a few drinks because it was 'just a special occasion.' After that, I went out with my friends and kept drinking. Since they had already allowed me to drink at home, I did not think it was a problem."*

*"When I asked my dad if I could drink, he said, 'Just do not get too crazy.' It felt like he was giving me permission, so I drank without worrying."*

*"My older brother gave me a drink in front of my parents, and they did not say anything. That made me feel like drinking was expected, so I joined in with my friends later that night."*

*"My parents always say that drinking during Carnival is tradition. They did not encourage me, but they also did not stop me. That made it easy to drink without feeling like I was doing something wrong."*

*"My dad told me that I should learn to handle alcohol now so that I would not be reckless in the future. He let me have a drink with him, and after that, I felt like I had his approval to keep drinking during the festival."*

The findings suggested that parental attitudes, particularly permissive or lenient stances toward alcohol consumption, played a crucial role in facilitating underage drinking during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim. When parents viewed drinking as a normal or harmless activity, often associating it with tradition or cultural practice, they inadvertently minimized the risks of alcohol consumption and failed to establish firm boundaries. This leniency created a perception among adolescents that drinking was acceptable and even expected, especially in festive environments like Carnival. By normalizing alcohol consumption and treating it as a rite of passage, parents inadvertently encouraged their children to engage in risky behaviours without considering the long-term consequences. This perspective not only impacted individual family dynamics but also contributed to a broader social culture where underage drinking was normalized and socially acceptable.

Furthermore, parental approval or indifference toward underage drinking weakened the effectiveness of legal regulations and community efforts aimed at reducing alcohol consumption among minors. When children perceived that their parents were not concerned or even supportive of their drinking, they were less likely to internalize the potential dangers of alcohol use, making them more susceptible to peer pressure and other environmental influences that encouraged drinking. This highlighted the need for more active parental involvement in monitoring their children's activities, particularly during high-risk events like Carnival. Promoting open discussions about the risks of alcohol and establishing clear boundaries could help reduce underage drinking and challenge the cultural normalization of alcohol consumption in such celebrations.

### Media and Social Influence:

Media and social influence refer to the ways in which various forms of media (e.g., television, social media, advertisements) and social networks shape individuals' attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions, especially during adolescence. Media portrayals often glamorize alcohol use, presenting it as an essential element of socializing and celebration, which can influence young people's attitudes toward drinking (Levy & Friend, 2007). Social influence, particularly from peers and influencers, can further encourage these behaviours by normalizing alcohol consumption and making it appear as a rite of passage or a necessary activity for social inclusion (Brown et al., 2009). Research has shown that media exposure to alcohol-related content and the behaviors of social circles significantly contribute to underage drinking, as adolescents are more likely to imitate behaviours they see in their environment (Smith et al., 2006). Additionally, social media platforms amplify peer pressures by showcasing alcohol consumption as part of the 'ideal' lifestyle, influencing adolescents to adopt similar behaviours in an attempt to fit in (González-Roz et al., 2019).

The findings indicated that media and social influence played a crucial role in promoting underage drinking during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, Espírito Santo, Brazil. Advertisements, particularly those from alcohol brands, frequently portrayed drinking as an essential part of the festivities, associating it with fun, excitement, and social belonging. Social media further reinforced this message, with influencers, celebrities, and even peers sharing images and videos of themselves drinking and celebrating, creating the impression that alcohol was a necessary part of enjoying Carnival. Many minors reported feeling pressured to drink after seeing such content, believing that abstaining would make them miss out on the full experience. This widespread exposure to pro-alcohol messaging normalized drinking behaviour, made it more appealing and socially acceptable among young people during the celebration.

*"I kept seeing ads and videos on Instagram showing people drinking and having fun at Carnival. It made me feel like drinking was just part of the celebration. I did not want to be the only one missing out, so I decided to try it."*

*"Everywhere I looked—TV, billboards, and social media—there were ads with people partying and drinking. It made me believe that alcohol was a necessary part of enjoying Carnival, so when my friends offered me a drink, I didn't hesitate."*

*"I saw my favorite influencer posting stories about drinking at Carnival, making it seem cool and exciting. When I went out with my friends, I felt like I had to do the same to really enjoy the experience."*

*"My friends kept posting pictures of themselves drinking and having fun. I did not want to be the only one left out, so I got a drink just to be part of it and share my own stories too."*

*"On TikTok, there were so many videos of people drinking and celebrating. Everyone looked happy, and I thought, 'Why not?' When I finally had a drink, it felt like I was part of the trend."*

*"Carnival commercials made it look like drinking was what made the party fun. I saw people dancing, laughing, and drinking, and I wanted to feel that same energy. So when I had the chance, I joined in."*

*"I watched a YouTube vlog where a group of young people went to Carnival and kept drinking the whole time. They made it look like the best way to enjoy the festival, so I decided to do the same."*



*“On social media, people kept saying that Carnival is not the same without alcohol. Seeing so many posts about it made me feel like I had to drink to have a real Carnival experience.”*

*“I saw a famous singer posting about her Carnival night, drinking and partying. It made me feel like alcohol was just part of the fun. If celebrities are doing it, why wouldn't I?”*

*“Even before Carnival started, there were ads everywhere telling people to ‘celebrate with a drink.’ It got stuck*

*in my head, so when my friends offered me alcohol, it felt natural to say yes.”*

These findings suggested that media and social media significantly contributed to the normalization and glamorization of underage drinking during Carnival. The pervasive exposure to alcohol-related content in advertisements, social media posts, and influencer endorsements created a strong association between alcohol and fun, excitement, and social belonging. This portrayal made drinking appear as an essential part of the Carnival experience, particularly for young people who are more susceptible to peer influence and media messaging. Adolescents, already navigating the pressures of fitting in, were further encouraged by these media portrayals to drink in order to be seen as part of the celebratory atmosphere. As a result, the boundary between responsible behaviour and risky drinking becomes blurred, making minors feel justified in consuming alcohol despite their age.

The widespread media influence also reduced the perceived risks associated with alcohol consumption. By portraying drinking as a common, socially accepted practice during Carnival, it diminished the seriousness of underage drinking and reinforced its social acceptability. With celebrities, influencers, and peers modeling drinking as a part of the celebration, adolescents internalized these behaviours as part of the "cool" or desirable way to enjoy the festival. This normalization of alcohol consumption in media not only promoted underage drinking but also created a cycle where young people felt pressure to continue these behaviours in future social settings, perpetuating the risk of alcohol misuse among minors.

### **Lack of Law Enforcement**

Lack of law enforcement refers to the inadequate application and monitoring of legal restrictions and regulations, often resulting in the failure to prevent or address unlawful behaviours. In the context of underage drinking, it occurs when laws designed to restrict the sale and consumption of alcohol by minors are not effectively enforced. This can happen due to factors such as insufficient oversight, lenient attitudes from authorities, or prioritization of other issues during large public events like festivals and celebrations (Wagenaar & Toomey, 2002). During events like Carnival, where there is heightened activity and large crowds, law enforcement may be overwhelmed or choose not to focus on minor alcohol violations, allowing for widespread non-compliance with age restrictions. The absence of strict enforcement creates an environment where minors can easily obtain alcohol, which undermines the effectiveness of legal measures aimed at reducing underage drinking (Grube & Nygaard, 2005). This lack of enforcement not only contributes to the normalization of drinking behaviours among the youth but also perpetuates risks associated with alcohol consumption, including accidents, injuries, and long-term health consequences (Jernigan, 2001).

The findings indicated that the lack of effective law enforcement significantly contributed to underage drinking during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, Espírito Santo, Brazil. Despite legal restrictions, authorities struggle to monitor and control alcohol sales to minors due to the large crowds, the high number of street vendors, and the overall festive chaos. Many minors reported that they were able to purchase alcohol freely without being asked for identification, as vendors knew enforcement was weak. Additionally, public drinking by minors often goes unnoticed or is ignored by law enforcement officers who were either overwhelmed by the scale of the event or prioritized managing other security concerns. This lack of strict regulation and accountability created an environment where underage drinking was easily accessible and widely accepted, further reinforcing its prevalence during the celebration.

*"I was expecting someone to check my age when I bought a drink, but nobody cared. The vendor just took my money and handed me the beer. There were police nearby, but they did not say anything, so I figured it was okay to keep drinking."*

*"I saw a group of us—clearly underage—buying alcohol right in front of a security officer. He looked at us but didn't do anything. If they do not care, why should we?"*

*"I went to a small bar, and when I asked for a drink, I was ready to show a fake ID, but they did not even ask. They just gave me what I wanted. No one is scared of getting caught because there are no consequences."*

*"The police were more focused on fights and crowd control than on checking who was drinking. I walked around with a beer in my hand all night, and nobody stopped me. . It's like underage drinking is not even a crime during*

*Carnival."*

*"I thought there would be more control, but honestly, it felt like there were no rules. Street vendors were selling to everyone, no questions asked. I saw younger kids than me drinking, and no one did anything about it."*

*"Even when the police were around, they did not seem to care if minors were drinking. I was right next to an officer with a drink in my hand, and he just walked past me. It made me feel like drinking was totally normal."*

*"I remember seeing a vendor selling alcohol to a bunch of teenagers. A police officer was standing a few feet away, but he did not say anything. If they aren't enforcing the law, then of course, we're going to drink."*

*"We were drinking in the open, and I was a little nervous at first, but when I realized nobody was checking, I stopped worrying. The vendors sell to anyone, and there is no one stopping them."*

*"At one point, I thought we might get in trouble because we were all underage and drinking in public. But the police just walked past us like it was normal. After that, I did not think twice about getting more drinks."*

*"I expected to see officers checking IDs or at least telling minors to stop drinking, but they did not. It felt like during Carnival, the rules don't exist. That made it way too easy for us to keep drinking the whole night."*

The lack of effective law enforcement during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim had significant implications for the prevalence of underage drinking, as it created an environment where minors felt emboldened to disregard legal restrictions. The absence of strict regulations and the apparent disregard for alcohol laws by both vendors and law enforcement officers normalized underage drinking, contributing to its widespread acceptance during the festival. When minors observed that alcohol was easily accessed without consequences, the more they engaged in risky behaviours, believing that they were not at risk of being caught or penalized. This lack of enforcement undermined the effectiveness of legal measures meant to prevent underage drinking, perpetuating a cycle where drinking became an integral part of the social experience during Carnival.

Moreover, the weak enforcement not only reinforced the normalization of underage drinking but also exposed minors to a range of health and safety risks. With no deterrents in place, minors overconsumed alcohol, this led to accidents, injuries, and long-term health issues. The lack of intervention from authorities further signaled the minors that alcohol consumption was acceptable and even expected, which led to the development of unhealthy drinking habits. Additionally, when minors were not held accountable for their actions, it sent a broader societal message that underage drinking was a trivial issue, ultimately making it more difficult to combat this public health concern. This failure to enforce the law also exacerbated the challenges in curbing alcohol-related harm in the community.

## DISCUSSIONS

The study revealed that underage drinking during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, Espírito Santo, Brazil, was influenced by multiple interrelated factors. These included peer pressure, easy access to alcohol, parental attitudes, media and social influence, and lack of law enforcement. Each of these factors play a significant role in shaping adolescent drinking behaviours during the festival.

### Peer Pressure

One of the primary drivers of underage drinking during Carnival was peer pressure. The festive atmosphere created an environment where drinking was not only accepted but encouraged. Many minors felt compelled to consume alcohol to fit in with their social circles, fearing exclusion if they refuse. Adolescents reported experiencing direct encouragement from friends who insisted that drinking was an essential part of the celebration. The fear of being labeled as boring or immature further pressured them to participate in alcohol consumption. In many cases, the initial hesitation gave way to continued drinking, as they felt more accepted once they joined in. This highlighted how peer influence significantly contributed to normalizing underage drinking during Carnival.

### Easy Access to Alcohol

Despite legal restrictions on alcohol sales to minors, the findings indicated that underage individuals face minimal barriers in obtaining alcoholic beverages. Many street vendors and small bars disregarded age verification protocols, prioritizing profit over compliance. The chaotic nature of the festival made enforcement difficult, allowing minors to purchase alcohol freely without the need for identification. Additionally, the widespread use of fake IDs further facilitated access to alcoholic beverages. Some minors even reported that vendors openly sold alcohol to underage individuals without hesitation. The lack of stringent regulations and effective monitoring made alcohol easily accessible, reinforcing the prevalence of underage drinking during Carnival.

### Parental Attitudes

Parental attitudes played a crucial role in shaping adolescent drinking behaviours. Some parents adopted a permissive stance, viewing drinking during Carnival as a cultural tradition or a rite of passage. Others believed that supervised drinking at home was preferable to unsupervised consumption in public settings. This lenient approach reduced the perceived risks of alcohol consumption and normalized the behaviour among minors. Adolescents who received implicit or explicit approval from their parents felt justified in consuming alcohol during the festivities. The findings suggested that such parental attitudes contributed to the widespread acceptance of underage drinking, further reinforcing its occurrence during Carnival.

### Media and Social Influence

Media and social influence also played a pivotal role in promoting underage drinking during Carnival. Alcohol advertisements frequently depicted drinking as an integral part of the celebration, associating it with fun, excitement, and social belonging. Social media platforms amplified this message, with influencers, celebrities, and peers sharing images and videos of themselves drinking and enjoying the festivities. This constant exposure to pro-alcohol messaging created a perception that drinking was a necessary part of the Carnival experience. Many minors reported feeling pressured to drink after seeing such content, believing that abstaining would cause them to miss out on the full experience. This normalization of alcohol consumption through media further contributes to its widespread acceptance among young people.

### Lack of Law Enforcement

The ineffective enforcement of underage drinking laws was another major factor contributing to the problem. Despite legal restrictions, authorities struggle to monitor and control alcohol sales to minors due to the sheer scale of the event. The high number of street vendors and the overall festive chaos made it difficult for law

enforcement officers to effectively regulate alcohol distribution. Many minors reported purchasing alcohol without being asked for identification, as vendors were aware that enforcement was weak. Additionally, public drinking by minors often goes unnoticed or is ignored by law enforcement officers who prioritized managing other security concerns. This lack of strict regulation and accountability created an environment where underage drinking was not only accessible but also socially accepted.

## CONCLUSION

The research questions were addressed through the findings by exploring the various factors that influence underage drinking and the perceptions and experiences of minors during Carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim. The first research question, "What factors influence underage drinking during Carnival?" was answered by identifying key factors such as peer pressure, easy access to alcohol, parental attitudes, media and social influence, and the lack of law enforcement. These elements contributed to a permissive environment where underage drinking was normalized and widely accepted. The second research question, "How did minors perceive and experience alcohol consumption in this festive environment?" was answered by revealing how minors perceived alcohol as an integral part of the Carnival celebration, often feeling pressured to drink to fit in with their peers or to participate in social activities. Their experiences were characterized by easy access to alcohol, permissive parental attitudes, and the influence of media portrayals that reinforced the idea that drinking was a necessary aspect of enjoying the event. These findings showed how both social and environmental factors shaped the minors' perceptions and behaviours surrounding alcohol consumption during the festival. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach, including stricter enforcement of alcohol laws, awareness campaigns targeting both adolescents and parents, and efforts to regulate media portrayals of alcohol consumption during festive events. Without these interventions, underage drinking was likely to remain a persistent issue during Carnival celebrations.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Addressing underage drinking during carnival requires a multifaceted approach:
2. Strengthening Law Enforcement: Stricter regulation and monitoring of alcohol sales to minors.
3. Educational Campaigns: Raising awareness among minors, parents, and vendors about the risks of underage drinking.
4. Community Engagement: Encouraging local communities to foster responsible drinking behaviors.
5. Parental Responsibility: Encouraging parents to set clear boundaries regarding alcohol consumption.
6. Alternative Entertainment: Providing alcohol-free events and activities for youth during carnival.
7. By implementing these strategies, stakeholders can mitigate the adverse effects of underage drinking while preserving the cultural essence of carnival in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim.

## REFERENCES

1. Akers, R. L., & Lee, G. (1996). A longitudinal test of social learning theory: Adolescent smoking. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 26(2), 317-343.
2. Almeida, R., Silva, P., & Torres, L. (2019). Alcohol consumption and public health concerns during Brazilian festivals. *Brazilian Journal of Public Health*, 45(3), 201-217.
3. Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Rabelais and His World*. Indiana University Press.
4. Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
5. Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice Hall.
6. Brereton, B. (2010). *Carnival: The Spirit and the Legacy*. University of the West Indies Press.
7. Brown, S. A., McGue, M., Maggs, J. L., Schulenberg, J., Hingson, R., Swartzwelder, S., & Murphy, S. (2009). A developmental perspective on alcohol and youths 16 to 20 years of age. *Pediatrics*, 121(Supplement 4), S290-S310.
8. Brown, B. B., Bakken, J. P., Ameringer, S. W., & Mahon, S. D. (2008). A comprehensive conceptualization of the peer influence process in adolescence. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2008(118), 17-44. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.211>



9. Brown, S. A., Christiansen, B. A., & Goldman, M. S. (2009). The importance of alcohol expectancies in the development of adolescent drinking. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 118(3), 432-446. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015363>
10. Burke, P. (2009). *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing.
11. Carlini, E. A., Noto, A. R., Sanchez, Z. M., & Carlini, C. M. (2014). Alcohol consumption among Brazilian adolescents: Trends and risk factors. *Journal of Substance Use*, 19(1-2), 56-65.
12. Chung, T., & Ma, S. (2017). Parental alcohol use and adolescent drinking: The role of parental communication. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(9), 1803-1816. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0690-1>
13. DaMatta, R. (1991). *Carnivals, rogues, and heroes: An interpretation of the Brazilian dilemma*. University of Notre Dame Press.
14. Fonseca, M. (2017). Regional traditions of carnival in Espírito Santo: A cultural analysis. *Espírito Santo Cultural Studies*, 12(2), 88-104.
15. González-Roz, A., Pérez-Rodríguez, M. M., & García-Marchena, N. (2019). Social media use and alcohol consumption in adolescents: The mediating role of social norms and alcohol expectancies. *Addictive Behaviors*, 95, 38-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2019.04.003>
16. Gill, H. (2013). *Mardi Gras and the Politics of Celebration*. LSU Press.
17. Gilroy, P. (1993). *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press.
18. Ishii, K. (2016). Festival Drinking Culture in Japan: Alcohol Use During Matsuri. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 19(4), 302-315.
19. Jackson, C., Henriksen, L., & Dickinson, D. (2014). Parental influences on adolescent drinking behavior. *Addictive Behaviors*, 39(5), 967-975. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2013.11.007>
20. Jessor, R. (1991). Risk behavior in adolescence: A psychosocial framework for understanding and action. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 12(8), 597-605.
21. Levine, M. (2015). *Quebec: The Story of a Province*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
22. Levy, M. R., & Friend, J. (2007). Media influences on adolescent alcohol use: The role of media in shaping attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41(2), 122-129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2007.01.030>
23. Livingston, M., Wilkinson, C., & Room, R. (2016). Festival Alcohol Consumption and Public Health Policy in Australia. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 24(5), 389-399.
24. Marshall, P. (2014). *Carnival and the Politics of Pleasure*. Routledge.
25. Menezes, D. (2018). Marketing and alcohol sponsorship in Brazilian carnival: The role of breweries in shaping festival culture. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 27(1), 45-62.
26. Miller, N. E., & Dollard, J. (1941). *Social learning and imitation*. Yale University Press.
27. Miller, P., Pennay, A., Droste, N., & Zinkiewicz, L. (2015). Alcohol Consumption at Australian Festivals: A Study of Youth Drinking Patterns. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 34(2), 157-164.
28. Obot, I. S. (2007). Alcohol Use and Related Problems in Nigeria: The Need for Policy Action. *African Journal of Drug & Alcohol Studies*, 6(1), 1-10.
29. Parry, C. D. H. (2005). Alcohol Problems in Developing Countries: Lessons from South Africa. *African Journal of Psychiatry*, 8(2), 60-65.
30. Patrick, M. E., Evans-Polce, R. J., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2020). Underage Drinking Trends in the United States: A Public Health Perspective. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 41, 201-219.
31. Perry, C. L., Williams, C. L., Veblen-Mortenson, S., & Toomey, T. L. (2007). Preventing adolescent alcohol use: The role of parental involvement and communication. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 32(3), 220-226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2006.11.010>
32. Prinstein, M. J., & Dodge, K. A. (2008). *Understanding peer influence in children and adolescents*. Guilford Press.
33. Ribeiro, F., & Santos, L. (2020). Underage drinking and public safety challenges during carnival in Brazil. *Journal of Drug and Alcohol Research*, 14(4), 120-136.
34. Room, R. (2010). *Intoxication and Society: The Social Meanings of Alcohol*. Oxford University Press.
35. Santor, D. A., Messervey, D., & Kusumakar, V. (2000). Measuring peer pressure, popularity, and conformity in adolescent boys and girls: Predicting school performance, sexual attitudes, and substance abuse. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(2), 163-182. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005152515264>

36. Souza, L., & Noto, A. R. (2015). Cultural attitudes and adolescent alcohol consumption in Brazil: A study of festive environments. *Brazilian Journal of Addiction Studies*, 8(1), 30-47.
37. Smith, L. A., O'Connor, R., & Ferguson, L. (2006). Social influence and adolescent alcohol use: The role of peers, family, and media. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 20(2), 171-178. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-164X.20.2.171>
38. Steinberg, L., & Monahan, K. C. (2007). Age differences in resistance to peer influence *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1531–1543. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1531>
39. Stockwell, T., Zhao, J., & MacDonald, S. (2012). Alcohol Consumption at Public Festivals in Canada: Implications for Policy. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 103(4), e263-e268.
40. Simons-Morton, B. G., Chen, R. S., & Amsden, L. (2011). Peer and parent influences on adolescent alcohol use: The role of risk-taking behavior. *Alcohol Research & Health*, 33(3), 218-225. <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh33-3/218-225.htm>
41. Tripathi, B. M., & Agarwal, M. (2018). Substance Use During Holi: A Review of Cultural and Health Implications. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 60(3), 319-325.
42. Vianna, H. (1999). *The mystery of samba: Popular music and national identity in Brazil* University of North Carolina Press.
43. Zucker, R. A., Donovan, J. E., Masten, A. S., Mattson, M. E., & Moss, H. B. (2008). Early developmental processes and the continuity of risk for underage drinking and problem drinking. *Pediatrics*, 121(Supplement 4), S252-S272.