



INFANCIA Y ADOLESCENCIA EN UN MUNDO EN CRISIS Y CAMBIO

THE PHENOMENON BINGE DRINKING IN WEST ANDALUSIA AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Dr. Isidro Marín Gutiérrez*, **Ramón González-Piñal Pacheco**** y **Manuel García Palomo *****

* Associated Teacher of the University of Huelva (Spain). ** Professor of SEPR-Lyon (France)

*** Professor of ESIC Business & Marketing School (Spain)

Dpto. Sociología y Trabajo Social. Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación. Pabellón III Despacho nº 19.

Campus de El Carmen. Av. Tres de Marzo, s/n 21007 Huelva (Spain)

Universidad de Huelva / University of Huelva. email: isidro.marin@dstso.uhu.es

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ABSTRACT

“Botellón” is a really relevant social phenomenon created by youth to be performed during week-end nights, which has become a conflict of interests among young and adult people. Speaking about “botellón” was really popular among most important Spanish medias, mainly when that starts disturbing neighbours. But besides it has been written a lot about this subject, information is not really concentrated. There are barely social studies dealing with the problem. So the main aim of this paper is to analyse keys which explain and give it sense, so compare it with similar researches. It has been created a survey to be applied in the main “botellón” area in Huelva, and the findings were compared to two similar studies developed under the same method which provided similar results.

EL FENÓMENO “BOTELLÓN” EN LA JUVENTUD DE ANDALUCÍA OCCIDENTAL.

RESUMEN

El botellón es un fenómeno social muy relevante iniciado por los jóvenes durante la noche de los fines de semana dando lugar a una lucha de intereses entre la juventud y el mundo adulto. Hablar de botellón se puso durante una época de moda en los medios de comunicación, principalmente cuando molestaba a los vecinos. Pero a pesar de que se ha escrito bastante sobre el tema, la información está muy dispersa. Apenas existen estudios sociales con respecto al tema. Así, el objetivo del presente artículo es con datos directos sobre el botellón en la ciudad de Huelva analizar los aspectos claves que lo explican y le dan sentido y compararlo con estudios similares. Se desarrolló



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un proceso de encuestación en la zona del botellón en la ciudad de Huelva y se comparó los resultados con dos estudios similares que desarrollaron la misma metodología y cuyos resultados fueron muy similares.

Palabras clave: botellón, alcohol, jóvenes, “binge drinking”, ocio nocturno

Key words: “botellon”, alcohol, young people, binge drinking, nightlife, leisure

INTRODUCTION

Abusive consumption of alcoholic drinks is the main problem of public health in industrialized societies. According to Maria Isabel Serrano González (2011), alcohol has been considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) as one of the most dangerous drugs for physic, mental and social health of people, even more dangerous than other substances like cocaine, synthetic stimulants, hallucinogens, heroin or cannabis derivatives (Berjano & Musitu, 1987). Alcohol is a substance which has a toxicity linked to its pharmacologic features, produces sensorial and motor alterations coming from its excessive ingestion, and which has a strong addictive capacity (Pons & Berjano, 1999).

According to different reviewed studies “botellón” could be defined as a social phenomenon which is characterized by young-people concentration in an open-space during weekend nights, which reference point is alcoholic drinks consumption in their free time (Baigorri & Fernández, 2004). This is a mass phenomenon which has been expanding and generalizing around Spanish geography and which appeared in The City of Huelva along the 90’s of the 20th Century (*El País* 1998/11/16).

When and how does the “botellón” begin? The beginnings of it could be placed in the Spanish 80’s, when takes place “liter bottle of beer” culture. At this time, small groups of young people used to share it in public gardens and streets (Baigorri & Fernández, 2004). It was a phenomenon which allowed youth consumed more alcohol for a cheaper price than it would cost in a bar. This phenomenon became quickly a ritual for meeting among them or for “preparing” themselves before an event like a concert. “Liter bottle of beer” and “route of bars” practices are becoming “botellón” culture since the 90’s. It’s just from 1996 when the phenomenon is getting impact and creating concern in the Spanish society.

“Botellón” phenomenon doesn’t have a certain start point but it has to be considered as a confluence of facts in different zones of the Spanish geography; it’s a space of fusion between tradition and modernity, a meeting point of youth, leisure and consumption of alcohol and illegal substances (Calafat, et al., 2005).

The course of the last twenty years in Spain, it has been produced a strong change in alcohol consumption habits as well as entertainment ways among young people. An “Anglo-Saxon” consumption pattern has been expanded characterized by hard alcohol consumption taken in strong amounts, in order to get them drink quickly (Calafat, 2007). This means that a leisure and entertainment style has been consolidating based on the axes weekend nights and drugs consumption (Calafat et al., 2004).

According to a report from The Andalusian Government called “Andalusian population when facing drugs XI” (FAADIS, 2009) 43% of people who are between 12 and 29 years old have participated at least one time in a “botellón” in the last 6 months: almost 10% confirmed that participate every weekend. That means huge consumption. This report says as well that boys more often than girls, and both girls and boys are between 16 and 20 years old. We have to focus our attention in minors, some of them show alcohol consumption patterns considered dangerous.



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Our research tries to analyze some data from “botellón” phenomenon in the city of Huelva but also to compare some findings with other researches about this which have used the same method to obtain the results. This method carries out through surveying youth when making “botellón”.

METHOD

The main aim of this research is to analyze alcohol consumption through “botellón” in the city of Huelva during the weekends, as well as reasons and contexts of this phenomenon. Also, we have tried to establish a typology among those present and to know to what extent alcohol consumption is a feature which defines some social groups.

Population subject of this study is every single person who goes out to make “botellón” in “El Muelle” area of Huelva. It was made a stratified proportional and not random sampling which Cohen and Manion (1990) called random simple sampling. With regard to sampling size from an universe of 600 persons, the prevision was 394 of them which guaranteed a confidence level of 95% and a sampling error of $\pm 3\%$. Taking the decision about data collection has been an important stage in the research planning.

Survey has been undoubtedly the most common and used technic in social research (Cohen & Manion, 1990). According to Hayman (1984) this popularity is linked to the apparent simplicity and direct nature of this method. Very often, survey is the main way in which it's possible to obtain opinions, know attitudes, receive suggestions to improve the instruction and achieve similar data (Hayman, 1984).

Concretely, information for this research was collected through a questionnaire designed by the team of experts which was in charge of the project, beginning from the aims of the study, considering the population to whom was addressed and also the former researches, instruments and tools about drugs. It was designed consecutive versions which were analyzing and reviewing by the group of experts up to decide the definitive version to apply.

Once decided the final design of the questionnaire, it was carried out the surveying process in “El Muelle” area of Huelva. It was carried out 14 going out to survey population subject of the study between 6th November 2010 until 12nd February 2011. Times in which youth were surveyed were between 11:40 pm and 4:30 am. It were collected 413 questionnaires, from which 394 were validated.

Every single analysis has been carried out through the program SPSS 18.0 for Microsoft Windows. It have been compared our results with two similar studies which used similar questionnaires and carried out surveying process in The Autonomous Region of Extremadura (Baigorri and Fernandez, 2004) and Malaga (Musitu & Bascones, 2006).

RESULTS

Sampling distribution of participants in “botellón” according to their sex is 57% in males and almost 43% in females. Therefore, there are more boys than girls. Participant's age is between 15 and 35, the average is 20,72 and the standard deviation is $\pm 3,748$. Within the interval ranged from 18 to 26 there are situated 71% of those present and participant frequency of under-18 is 21% of the entire sample. Therefore only the 7% corresponds to people who are from 26 to 35 years. Highest frequencies with regard to age are 22 and 18 years old. We should underline as well that people from 18 (usual age in Spain for getting the undergraduate level) and 24 (usual age to get the degree) represent 65% of the sampling.



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Table I: Sampling

Size	394 people from 15 to 35
Sex	57% males 43% females
Age	Average 20,72
Occupation	Work 24% Study 69'5%

We know that in areas where “botellón” is developed it's very possible to find minors but above all people from 18 to 24, the most of them undergraduate students which have adopted this way to get fun. Others are over than what we consider university ages, and we find as well a few people who are over 30 years old. With regard to employment situation of those polled 76% don't work and 24% of them are working. Therefore, we are in front of a young population in which the most of them are not integrated in the labor market.

Coexistence ways are important aspects to consider when assessing “botellón” phenomenon; they allow us to delimitate independency levels from familiar environment. This point can strongly determine parents influence both participation in this kind of parties at weekend nights and spending time in them. The most of participants in this research (80%) live in the familiar house, so parents are the mainly affected because of the nighttime activities of their sons and daughters, independently if parents agree or disagree young people usually get out and in the house to participate in the “botellón”. 12% of them live in shared flats, most of them students who are financially dependent on their parents. Only 4% declares that they live emancipated and 3% says that they live with their partner, so at least 7% of young people who participate in “botellón” are autonomous.

Table II: Coexistence, way towards “botellón” and y expense during “botellón”

Coexistence	With parents 80% Shared flats 12,4%
How she/he gets “botellón”	Walking 40,7% By car 49,3 %
Where he/she was before “botellón”	At home 78,1%
Time to get “botellón”	At 12 pm 29,4% of them are already there
Where she/he goes after “botellón”	Home 25,4% bars 10,4% Discotheques 61,3%
Average expense in “botellón”	Less than 6€ 46,7 %



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We note that 6% of the participants use public transportation system. Private transportation (above all car) is used by 49% of them, either by passenger or driver. Motorbike, either by passenger or pilot, is only used by 2% of them. However, if we consider both who uses public transportation or who goes walking, they represent together the 47%.

But for youth polled night doesn't end when "botellón" ending. A 25% of them go back home after it but 10% goes to pubs or most of them to discotheques (61%). Under-18 (62%) and secondary school students (49%) go back home earlier.

"Botellón" in Huelva usually begins late. Nobody gets the meeting point before 12 pm because roads at this time are opened for everybody else. Only the 7% of them gets "botellón" area before 12 pm, and when 12 pm is coming it looks like masses of young people are getting the place. A few minutes after midnight lot of young people get the place with bags of drinks. Around 12:30 pm the Municipal Police arrives and closes the area to traffic in order youth to occupy the place. At that moment, more than 50% of those polled declare that they have already got the "botellón". Night climax is produced at 1 am when 86% of those polled declare that they are already there. At this time, the "Puerto" area looks like to be crowded, but there are incoming people up to 2 am.

Up to 4:30, the Municipal Police of Huelva is leaving the road. A few minutes later municipal cleaning services appear, that means "botellón" ends unofficially. At 4 am there are no more of the 8% left together to plastic bags and empty bottles. Therefore, we could say that "botellón" takes from 2 to 4 hours, and there are not significant differences among boys and girls.

Almost 68% of those present in "botellón" participate at least one day per week. That means an average of 4 "botellón" per month, so for the most of participants drinking one night per week in "Muelle" area is a habit. 33% of those polled are considered regular performers of "botellón", they usually go more than 5 times per month or more than 2 times per week. It's important to underline on one hand that casual "botellón" performers are more girls (59%) than boys (41%); on the other, regular performers are 67% males and 33% females.

Actually, intensity in the participation is strongly linked to have a job or not. Among polled people, 70% of them are in an unemployed situation and 30% hold a job. In general, we can say that high school students do "botellón" really often (most of them more than 5 times per week). Profile of people who participate in a "botellón" more than 5 times per month is boy (67%), unemployed (70%), student (60%) from 22 to 35 years old (35%), studying at high school (43%) and living with their parents (87%).

"Botellón" and above all the rest of the night is expensive, but taking into consideration just the "botellón" we consider that it's cheap. According to our findings, 47% of those polled spend less than 5€, 38% spend from 5 to 8€ and 14% spend more than 10€. Average price for every single drink in Huelva is around 5€, therefore it looks like drinking outside is cheap. Women, youngers and secondary school students are who spend less money. Groups in which there are people who spend over 10€ per night are males (78) and people who are over 22 years old (49%).



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Table III: Kind of drink taken consumed during Huelva "botellón".

Product	Per cent
Beer	3%
Wines	2%
Water/juices/soft drink	6%
Spirits	1%
Cocktails	86%
Distillations	1%
Others	1%

But it's also true that every single relation or conversation takes place around drink, it's just because the ritual has been called "botellón"; even if there are so many kind of "botellón" practice, the most popular drink are cocktails which contain 750 ml. of spirit (whisky, gin, rum or vodka) and around 1.500 ml of soft drink; that means young people usually consume 13-dregrees-drink, which represents a similar alcohol content of most of wines but when drinking is apparently lighter. This kind of cocktail is what is drunk by 86% of those polled; next to them are whose drink no combined hard alcohol drinks, which are 1% of those polled. Beer is either so popular (3% of those polled), 1% drink liqueurs and similar drinks. Finally, there is a reduced group being represented by 6% of those polled composed by young people who have no alcohol drinks such juices, soft drinks or even water.

7% of those who participate in "botellón" in "Muelle" area don't consume cocktails; almost the 9% of them consume from 1 to 2 cocktails; 34% consume from 3 to 4 drinks; 29% consume from 5 to 6 cocktails; finally, 19% consumes more than 7 cocktails. Males are whose drink more in comparison with females. In fact there are more teetotalers among girls (59%) than among boys (41%); there are as well more heavy drinkers (those who consume more than 7 cocktails every single "botellón") among boys (77%) than among girls (23%). With regard to age, heavy drinkers use to be from 22 to 35 (40%); 31% of them are between 19 and 21; and finally, 29% are from 15 to 18 years old. Following considering this relevant typology of heavy drinkers, it's important to underline that 70% of them are not workers and 41% hold a high school qualification.

DISCUSSION

Comparing these results with those from a previous study in the Andalusian city of Malaga and with regard to transportation, we detect that 25% of young people get walking the "botellón", 27% of them make use of public transportation system and 42% go by private transportation (especially by car); on the other hand, in the Autonomous Region of Extremadura 50% of those polled get walking the "botellón" or by car (40%). These results in comparison with data we present in this paper show that young people in Huelva behave in a similar way than young people from Extremadura with regard to how they get the "botellón" (they usually get it by walking). On the other hand most of participants in "botellón" (78%) spent their time at home before going in. Almost 5% were having dinner in a restaurant, and just a few of them (almost 9%) had gone to a bar or pub. The rest of them (7%) were in other places like the house of somebody else, the university or around the street.

Regarding ways towards or from performing "botellón" in Malaga, there are 17% of them who go back home, 6% go to discotheques and 76% go to bars and pubs; with regard to findings in Extremadura, 10% go back home, 30% go to discotheques and 60% go to bars or pubs. Data from Huelva don't follow the same patterns because percentages are bigger with regard to going back



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home or to discotheques, are smaller with regard to continuing the night in bars. Answers to these variations have to do with age, concretely in order to answer the question “why do you go back home afterwards?” Young people from Huelva who practice “botellón” is younger than those from Malaga or Extremadura; in fact at least 25% of those who go to “botellón” go back home after it and don’t continue out enjoying the night. Another possible answer to explain these variations has to do with ending time of “botellón”; in Huelva it ends later than Malaga or Extremadura, so at this time bars and pubs are already closed. The only way to continue the night is going to a discotheque.

There are also significant differences when getting “botellón” area. 75% of young people who make it in Plasencia (Extremadura) are already drinking around 23:30; in Mérida (Extremadura), 50% meet together at midnight; finally in Cáceres (Extremadura), 60% of them start drinking at midnight as well. In the city of Malaga (Andalusia) “botellón” usually begins at 1 am¹². This means that “botellón” in Huelva starts at least 1 hour later than the other cities considered. Comparing “botellón” ending times in other cities, we realize that in Plasencia ends at 2 am; Mérida around 2:30 am; and Cáceres⁵ at 3:30 am. In Malaga it ends around 3 am. In Huelva, “botellón” ends much later than all those.

So there is no doubt that alcohol and drugs consumption takes part of the ritual, and all this process favors heavy consumption cases, being especially worrying its impact in minors, or compulsive alcohol consumption. It’s just because we have paid special attention in each single survey when asking for alcohol consumption aspects. And it’s important as well not neglect the complex and polyhedral character of “botellón” phenomenon.

“Botellón” represents a good place to chat, in fact there people talks a lot in comparison with what happens mostly in bars and discotheques for young people where music volume uses to be strong enough not to allow to have a conversation. On the other hand abusive alcohol consumption may represent important damages for physic health as well as social and psychological in individuals, families and communities. This is also a risk factor for the global health (Anderson, 2003).

The phenomenon of “botellón” presents mainly two problems. On one hand, is a public health problem, derivative from the abuse of alcoholic drinks, in addition at this moment there are many minors who are performing “botellón”, so risking to be involved in a health trouble. Youth don’t seem to have into consideration derivative problems from practicing “botellón”, and its negative effects for the day after. So it seems to be clear that the family is *omnirelevant* in preparing teenagers to face alcohol (Moreno, 2011). On the other hand, “botellón” is a problem of social coexistence as a consequence of noise, dirtiness or insecurity. Because of that, complaints are usual among people who live near from the “botellón” area, who see how the council or authorities are impotent fighting the problem because there is not clear legislation about it.

In Spain there is a wide acceptance and social tolerance with regard to alcohol and its consumption is a very deeply-rooted custom since thousands of years. This is an aspect to be considered since consumption patterns among adults are going to determine alcohol consumption among young people because its consumption reflects attitudes and practices from the most of adult society.

Such is the penetration of alcoholic production in Spanish society and permissiveness linked to its consumption that some people have rebelled complaining that it has just been taken the necessary measures and precautions against “botellón” when this phenomenon has disturbed neighbors who live next to them, forgetting consequences against the public health which are derivative from hard consumption or binge drinking reproduced every single weekend.

As a conclusion, we must say that no measure or precaution proposed to reduce alcohol consumption in young people and teenagers could be effective for itself if it’s not considered firstly public order as a conflict and secondly health conflict, so it’s absolutely necessary to develop previously prevention measures and following action measures.



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