

CSSR Research Proposal

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1 Introduction

In Western Europe alcohol is a commonly used medium for exhilaration. However, it is also known as a (if not *the most harmful*) drug (Nutt, King, and Phillips 2010), be it because of its toxic nature itself or the indirect consequences: The consumption of alcoholic beverages may on the one hand lead to behavioural changes and violent acts, as has been indicated by numerous studies (see e.g. Parker 1993; Nielsen and Jr. 2003; Stolle, Sack, and Thomasius 2009; Sønderlund et al. 2014). On the other hand alcohol, if consumed regularly and over a longer period of time, does severe damage to individuals' health. It is therefore a policy concern not only to identify reasons and motivation for excessive alcohol consumption but also to develop measures to tackle this problem.

It is the aim of this paper to analyse both mentioned dimensions of the *challenge alcohol*. Using the example of all German federal states and time series data for different age groups from 2000 to 2014, we will [1] analyse the possible connection between medical diagnoses of alcohol misuse and possibly explanatory socioeconomic factors like gender, age, unemployment rate, education level, and regional economic performance. For this, we will take both short-term and long-term medical consequences of alcohol misuse into account by examining hospital health records on acute alcohol intoxication as well as on alcoholic liver disease. Besides the socio-economic factors mentioned above, we will [2] test the effect of recent policy measures on the German state level on alcohol consumption. The two cases we are going to examine are [a] the ban on alcohol night sales introduced in 2010 in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg and [b] the prohibition of alcohol consumption in vehicles and stations of public transport in the federal city state of Hamburg, introduced in 2011.

With this approach, we aim to present an analysis that offers insights into both possible causes for alcohol misuse as well as the efficiency of policy measures designed to counter excessive drinking.

2 Data Sources and Methodology

Our research health data stems from German hospital diagnosis statistics from 2004 to 2013, obtained via the Federal Office of Statistics *Destatis*. They are archived and available for download at the Statistische Bibliothek. The data covers the number of fully inpatient hospital patients with mental and behavioural disorders due to acute alcohol intoxication per German state and year.

The crime data is obtained from criminal statistics published by the German Federal Criminal Police Office and covers the corresponding time period from 2004 to 2013. It captures the number of reported violent crimes under the influence of alcohol per German state and year.

Our empirical strategy relies on the difference in difference approach. For the Baden-Wuerttemberg case of night alcohol sale ban, other German states will be used as control group. In the Hamburg case of prohibited alcohol consumption in vehicles and stations of public transport, the state of Berlin will serve as a control group, as it is sensible to chose a city state of similar size and characteristics instead of a rural state.

3 Related Literature

Our research proposal is inspired by the work of Marcus and Siedler (2015) who analysed “*The Effect of a Ban on Late-Night Off-premise Alcohol Sales on Alcohol-Related Hospital Stays in Germany*”. They find that the introduction of the alcohol night sales ban reduces alcohol-related hospitalizations among adolescents and young adults by about seven percent. In our analysis, we will not only try to replicate their work with the publicly available data sets. We are also going to build upon it – by differentiate between short-term and longer-term effects. The focus on socio-economic explanatory factors like economic performance for the alcohol abuse as such is based upon research done by e.g. Popovici and French (2013) and Ettner (1997). Focusing on the United States, the two studies found inconsistent results: While one sees “a positive and significant effect of unemployment on drinking behaviors and the findings are robust to numerous sensitivity tests” (Popovici and French 2013) the other argues that “non-employment significantly reduces both alcohol consumption and dependence symptoms, probably due to an income effect.” (Ettner 1997) For the German case, Henkel (2000) finds a negative correlation between economic situation and alcohol and nicotine consumption.

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