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Role of commercial determinants of health in use of alcohol in Nepal: An exploratory qualitative study

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Commercial Determinants of Health

- The private sector activities that affect people's health, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively. (1)
- The systems, practices, and pathways through which commercial actors drive health and equity. (2)



1. Commercial determinants of health. (2023, March 21). <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/commercial-determinants-of-health>
2. Gilmore AB, Fabbri A, Baum F, Bertscher A, Bondy K, Chang HJ, et al. Defining and conceptualising the commercial determinants of health. Vol. 401, *The Lancet*. Elsevier B.V.; 2023. p. 1194–213.

Effects of Commercial Determinants of Health

Risk factors

- Smoking
- Air pollution
- Alcohol use
- Obesity
- Physical inactivity

Health outcomes

- Communicable diseases
- Non-communicable diseases
- Epidemics
- Injuries on roads and from weapons
- Violence
- Mental health conditions

Study objectives

General Objective

To explore the role of commercial determinants of health in the use of alcohol in Nepal.

Specific Objectives

- To document the existing policies and practices related to alcohol use in Nepal.
- To explore the influence of alcohol industries in the use of alcohol in Nepal.
- To explore the understanding of policymakers regarding contribution of commercial determinants in use of alcohol in Nepal.

Methodology

28 Key Informant Interviews



14 from Government bodies



7 from Civil Society



7 from Alcohol businesses



Transcription of the recorded audio and notes

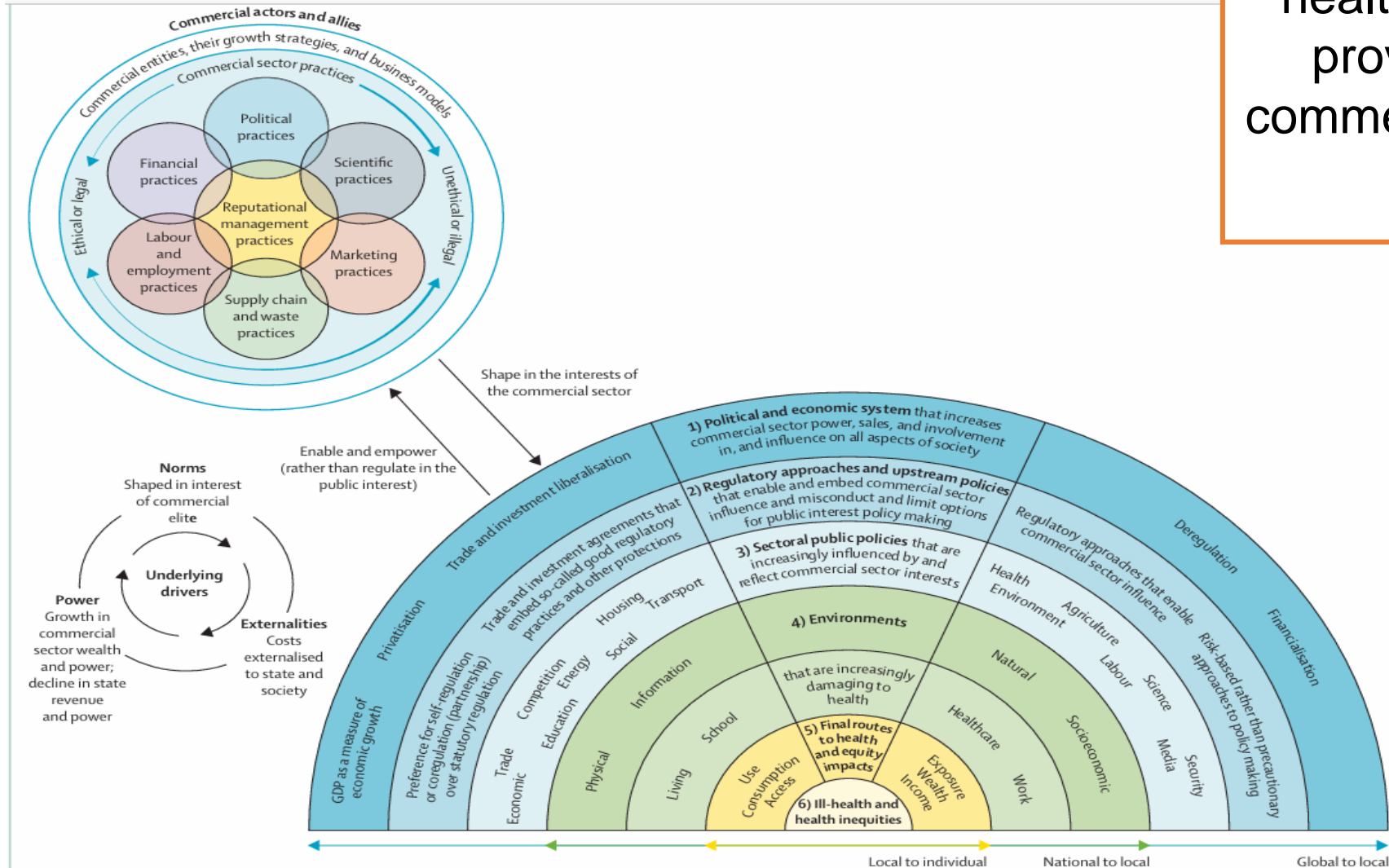


Framework analysis



Analytical Framework

Lancet series on commercial determinants of health published in 2023 provided the model of commercial determinants of health



Results

Categorized in two sections

1

Commercial sector practices

Political practices
Scientific practices
Marketing practices
Supply chain and waste practices
Labor and employment practices
Financial practices
Reputational management practices

2

Determinants of health subsystem

Politico-economic system
Sectoral public policies
Environmental factors
Individual factors
Impacts

Political Practices

- Participants shared about the presence of influence of large alcohol industries in policy making and activists revealed about even being threatened by alcohol industries for speaking against them.

We never know when the large industries influence people in what way. We have to be alert. Even when they say no to something now, it might change in the evening the same day due to influence.



P5, Ministry of Health and Population

Political Practices

We even get threatened. For example: News media X alone used to publish advertisement of more than Rs 30 crores.....When we had filed case, they didn't even take our interviews, they did not even publish our news.



P15, Consumer rights activist

It is so by nature. This is why we need a replacement of leadership. They will make policies in their favor.



P20, Parliamentarian,
member of Education
and Health committee

Scientific Practices

- Participants shared about non-compliance of alcohol industries with the set standards. Industries claimed their products to be good for health. Participants compared the health harm of alcohol with that of tobacco, making it seem less severe.

Last year, the department destroyed large amount of T... beer because it was found that the production procedure was not following the standards.



P6, Department of Commerce, supplies and consumer protection

Scientific Practices

What I think is, alcohol does not have much negative effect on health. We have also done research. If someone is ill and have illness related to the liver kidney, I cannot say anything about that person. But a healthy person must drink one peg everyday.



P10, Managing Director of distillery 1

It is medicine if you consume it in right amount. Mr..... used to say that he consumed daily. He lived for 103, 104 years healthily, right?



P25, CEO of distillery 2

Alcohol is not as toxic as tobacco. Lab reports say that alcohol is a consumable product. Because tobacco is not good for health, health risk tax is there.



P12, Inland Revenue Department

Marketing Practices

- Participants shared about the marketing and advertisement strategies used by alcohol industries.

Yes, A... beer declared 1 lakh per six and certain amount per run.....We asked them what are you doing? They said, we are just supporting. So, we did not take any action on that. Advertising is just a group of creative people. They bring such new ideas that sometimes make it difficult for regulators like us. Smartness like these may arise in people. But we never know. I have no answer (laughs)



P4, Advertisement board

Marketing Practices

We went on a program to control alcohol and there was written C... brand name in tea mats.



P14, National Health Education, Information and Communication Centre

We can use different kinds of platforms. For example: there are influencers who have liked our products. They also help us through social media, TikTok, Facebook.



P25, CEO of a distillery

Yes. I went to Qatar to watch world cup 2022. They gave us package of Rs 7 lakhs. I had bought their products worth Rs 4 crores.



P26, Alcohol wholesale distributor

Supply Chain and Waste Practices

- Participants talked about supply process of alcohol and waste management throughout the supply chain.

There is vaporization process for the management of waste. Other waste like if the glasses get broken, we send it to India, Firozabaad. They are sent to the company. We send the cartons to the kabadiwala.



P10, Managing director of a distillery

In villages, I see piles of beer bottles.....We cannot speak anything else. We just understand that people consume a lot of beer when we travel to some places (chuckles).....It does not seem like waste is managed.



P17, Ministry of Health and Population

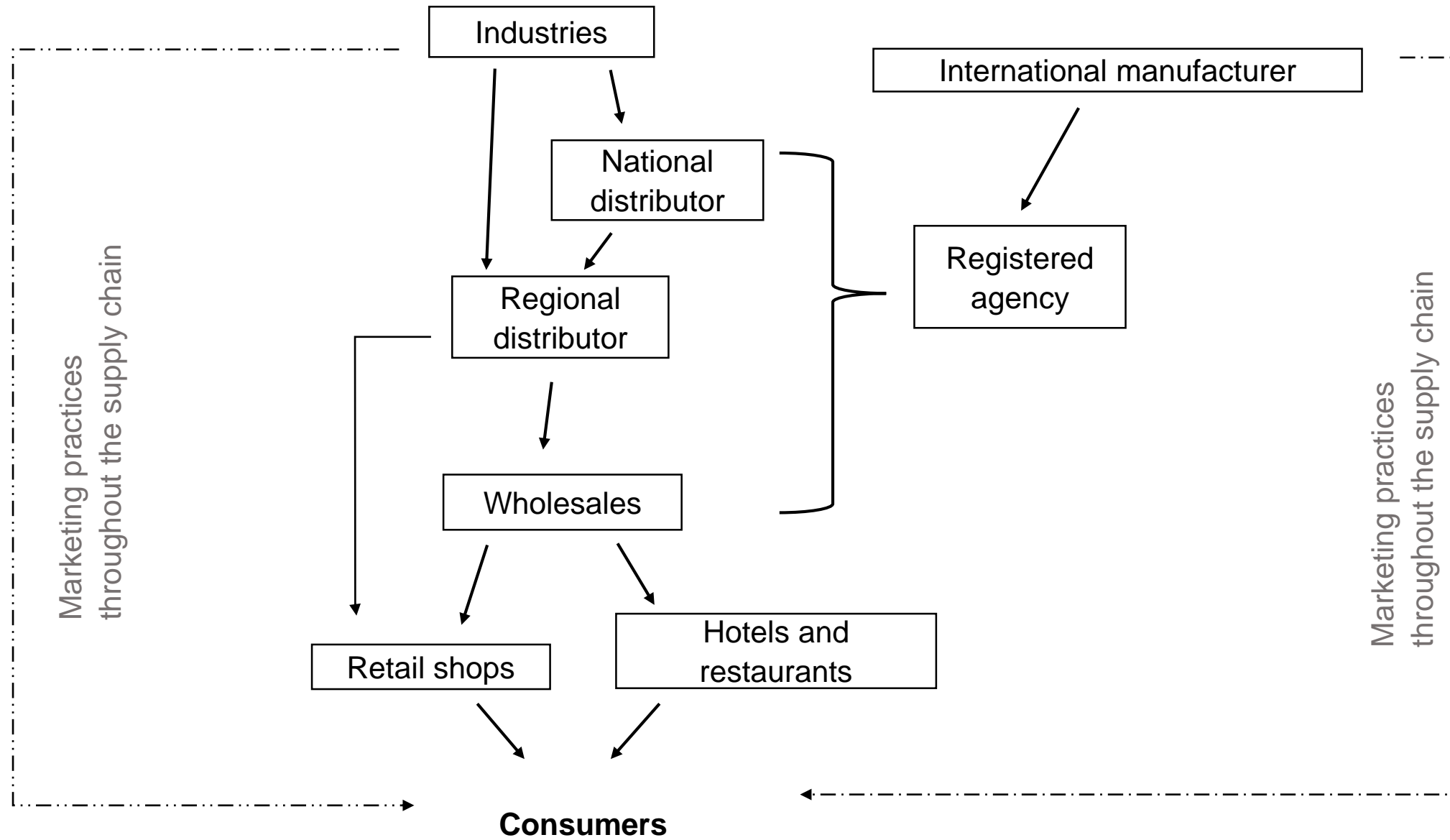


Figure: Supply chain of alcohol

Labor and Employment Practices

- Participants shared about the regulations for labour practices and existing research gap in this issue.

.....they are free to choose their staffs. Next, whoever works with them, once they start working, labour act will be applicable. Another big issue is, health and safety. It is there in the labour act. The health and safety provisions under labour act should be met by the industry.



P8, Department of Industries

There is a lot to do in occupational health and safety and in case of alcohol industries, the need is even more.



P17, Ministry of Health and Population

Financial Practices

- Respondents talked about efforts from the government side to ensure that the industries follow financial rules strictly.

They do follow the rules. They must follow it. To see if they have followed rules or not, we are monitoring.....Compliance can never be 100% throughout the world. But, we make them comply in case of non-compliance. The way for compliance is penalizing them, we have process for that.



P18, Inland Revenue Department



P11, Former secretary, Ministry of Finance

The production done by the factory, is observed by the excise duty officer and then paste the excise duty sticker. After that only the product gets released.

Reputational Management Practices

- Study participants talked about various strategies done by alcohol industries to maintain their good reputation.

I cannot say their name. A reputed journalist's wedding was organized by an alcohol company. The person themselves told me that. There are such cases. Somehow, the industries are doing this so that their practices of misuse of law will not come in the media.



P13, Health journalist

Some alcohol industries have assisted in sports, distributed t shirts and supported in many ways. As a result, they get certain percentage of tax exemption. So, they invest in their field of interest.



P6, Department of Commerce, Supplies and Consumer protection

Politico-Economic System

- Study participants talked about the priority of the nation to finances over public health, and the constitutional rights that further shaped policies.

Doing businesses is their legal right, make income through it is their constitutional right. Within that too, if they pay tax legally and establish their business, that will be biased if we restrict them.



P18, Inland Revenue Department

The industries pay tax, they have established industries according to the rules and regulations and provided employment to thousands of people. Vehicles are running to distribute those products and drivers are getting works. Shopkeepers are making their families living selling that product. Whole economy is driven by it. So, it's not that easy to close them.



P27, Multilateral Development Agency

Sectoral Public Policies

- Study participants shared about the gaps in existing policies and their implementation

When we talk about the rules and regulations related to alcohol, they are formulated from industries' perspectives rather than health perspective. Isn't it? There is liquor act 2031. It has talked about import, production.....The matter relating to health is not much seen in that act as far as I know.



P9, Provincial Health Directorate, Bagmati

Sometimes there are debates on whether liquor act is needed or not because excise duty act is there to address the issues. It is sometimes said to incorporate everything in excise duty act and dismiss liquor act.



P18, Inland Revenue Department

Environmental Factors

- Study participants talked about the easy availability of alcohol, lack of restrictions, and increasing acceptance of alcohol in the society.

There is a shop nearby and here is one. Another person may again come and open another liquor shop if they find an empty shutter here. Right?

Not only in liquor business but any other business, there is no such system.



P1, Retail alcohol seller

Environmental Factors

One had sang a song, 'dui bottle tinpane, char bottle chhyang; pirati laaunalaai nagara na lyang'.This seems simple but for a young person, it excites and make them want to drink alcohol while singing.



P7, Consumer rights activist

Is there any place where a person cannot go because they consumed alcohol? For instance, airport? They can consume alcohol even in plane. There is no such place prohibited by the law. .

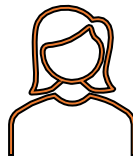


P18, Inland Revenue Department

Individual Factors

- Participants shared about the individual factors such as age, sex, financial status of the consumer, and also the price of the product might change their alcohol consumption behavior.

Usually people come after 4 pm. Usually adults come.



P23, Retail alcohol seller

Earlier, people used to consume international imported brands. Now, middle class are shifting to cheaper alcohol. They are addicted. So, they have to consume. It is their habit so they consume but due to economy slow down, there is no transaction of land, properties, shares, ... so they are consuming cheaper alcohol.



P28, Alcohol distributor

Impacts

- Participants talked about the health impacts of alcohol, along with the financial and social issues. They also mentioned that it can lead to gender-based violence.

More than 95% of alcohol advertisements use women while men consume more alcohol than women.....they are doing gender violence somehow. Alcohol is presented connecting it with women.

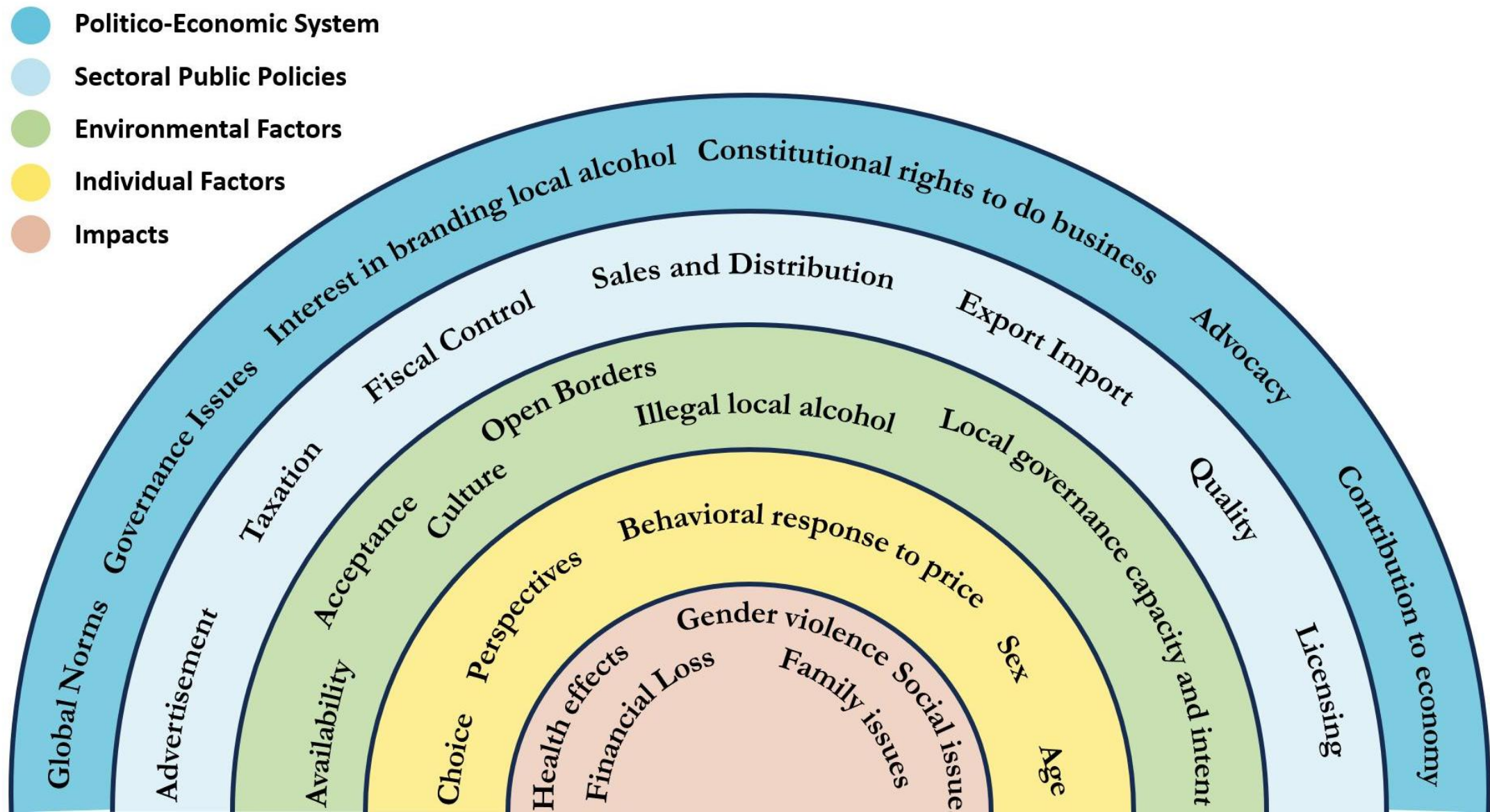


P13, Health Journalist

Nepal government collected around Rs 25 arba tax from imported drinks. But, if we see the health impact by drinking the imported alcohol, 25 arba should be multiplied 10 times.



P11, Former Secretary, Ministry of Finance



Modified determinants of health subsystem in Nepal, with a focus on alcohol

Conclusion

- All participants agreed on the role of commercial determinants of health in use of alcohol in Nepal.
- None of the participants denied the effect of alcohol in human health, including those involved in production chain.
- The findings revealed gap in policy implementation and underscored the importance of intersectoral coordination for policy formulation and implementation.

“It is time for a paradigm shift. Public health cannot and will not improve without action on the commercial determinants of health, from the local to global level. New forms of public health governance are needed.”



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, 2023

Experts call for action on the commercial determinants of health and health equity https://www.who.int/news/item/24-03-2023-experts-call-for-action-on-the-commercial-determinants-of-health-and-health-equity?utm_source=chatgpt.com



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