CHASE SA
Collaboration for Harm Reduction and Alcohol Safety in the Environment in Southern Africa

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UNDERSTANDING LICENSED AND UNLICENSED LIQUOR OUTLETS: A CRITICAL STEP TOWARD EVIDENCE-BASED REGULATION

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Abstract:

Background:
Regulating alcohol availability is one of the World Health Organization's "best buys" for reducing alcohol-related harm. However, policy efforts have largely focused on licensed outlets, overlooking the role of unlicensed liquor traders. This sub-study forms part of the UK NIHR-funded Collaboration for Harm Reduction and Alcohol Safety in the Environment in Southern Africa (CHASE-SA). Its objective is to examine the retail alcohol environment by comparing licensed and unlicensed liquor outlets across ten dimensions: (i) types of products sold, (ii) packaging sizes, (iii) pricing structures, (iv) trading hours and days, (v) consumption context (on-site, off-site, or both), (vi) sales practices involving minors, (vii) promotional strategies, (viii) estimated weekly turnover, (ix) proximity to vulnerable populations, and (x) staff training practices.

Methods:
We are conducting a cross-sectional study across six sites in two South African provinces. At each site, 20 liquor outlets—both licensed and unlicensed—will be selected using parameter-based convenience sampling, informed by prior outlet mapping exercises. Trained interviewers will administer structured surveys with liquor traders at selected outlets between September and December 2025.

Anticipated Analysis:
Comparative analysis will be undertaken across the seven dimensions, with logistic regression used to identify key factors distinguishing licensed from unlicensed outlets.

Conclusion:
Findings from this study could potentially inform recommendations for policy and practice aimed at more effectively managing alcohol availability, particularly in underserved or informal contexts. By incorporating insights from both licensed and unlicensed outlets, the study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive and evidence-based regulatory

framework.

Topic: Physical and virtual availability policies; e.g. trading hours, licensing processes, online purchase

Keywords: Alcohol availability, Licensed outlets, Unlicensed outlets