

# Exposure to liquor ads 'encourages young people'

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**THE** fight against alcohol abuse among the country's youth is being hampered by persuasive and appealing alcohol advertising bombarding young people.

A study by Soul City Institute for Social Justice researcher Lebohlang Letseka also found that taverns and drinking outlets were often located within a 500m radius from schools, in contravention of the law.

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The youth, people and alcohol advertising study found that young people reported frequently witnessing and experiencing alcohol related sexual health risks in their communities.

The risky behaviour included unprotected and unplanned sex, transactional sex and sexual assault among others. Ramafoko said the burden of alcohol harm far outweighed the revenue the country made from liquor.

"What advertising has done is to normalise drinking, in fact it is such a

norm that there is no function whether we cry because somebody has died or we are happy because there is a birth celebration or wedding we must drink to show our emotion whether sad or happy," Ramafoko

"The alcohol industry is really hell-bent at making sure they are not regulated although all the research points to the fact that self regulation has not worked anyway else in the world and you will also see that the messages that they want to promote suggest that it is

the individual that has something wrong if they drink too much not recognising that it is a drug that has not been controlled," Ramafoko said.

Ramafoko dismissed the argument that regulating alcohol will result in revenue loss as baseless.

She said the fight against alcohol advertising was not different to tobacco and sugar regulation.

Deputy director of the South African Medical Research Council's Tobacco and Other Drug Research Unit, Prof

Neo Morrojele, said the International Alcohol Control Study found adolescents had a high rate of exposure to alcohol advertising in Tshwane.

In addition, young people who had already started drinking reported more exposure to advertisements than those who had not initiated drinking.

The youth people and alcohol advertising study was conducted in a rural village in Mpumalanga and a township in Gauteng.

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