

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF LIQUOR PROHIBITION IN BIHAR ON THE EFFICIENCY CRITERIA*Dr. Shivani Mohan***Dr. Manoranjan Kumar*****ABSTRACT**

The State of Bihar implemented a State wise liquor ban on manufacturing, possession, sale and consumption of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL), Foreign Made Foreign Liquor (FMFL) and Beer on April 5, 2016, through the “Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016” to empower women and control domestic violence faced by them due to excessive drinking. The present study is based on a critical analysis of the abovementioned legislation and its potential impact on the economy of Bihar. The impact analysis shall be based on data collected from different sources. The study will analyse the State’s economic capacity and its resources used towards effective implementation of the alcohol ban in the last four years. The study’s findings can help decide whether the abovementioned law is an economically efficient solution or not for a resource starved State like Bihar.

The study will also shed light on the unintended consequences of the Bihar alcohol prohibition policy on the socio-economic environment of the State. Consequently, based on the findings, the policymakers can understand the impact of the policy on revenue, social and other economic expenditures of the State government, employment and economic growth of Bihar. At this point, it is imperative to understand that the economic impact of prohibition policy cannot be undermined. In order to assess the full range of economic implications of the liquor ban policy, the government of Bihar needs to understand that the implementation should not evoke contradictory responses from policy targets. This will make the alcohol prohibition policy well-designed and help control spill-over effects and other externalities attached to it.

Keywords: Alcohol Ban, policy, socio-economic environment

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1. INTRODUCTION

A well-planned work produces good results, even in adverse condition

- Chanakya

Public policies are generally designed to achieve specific goals and objectives and are prepared to reach the intended beneficiaries. Some policies come in complex packages and may seem theoretically promising before implementation but may often result in unintended impacts and consequences. State of Bihar implemented State wise liquor ban on possession, sale and consumption of India Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL), Foreign Made Foreign Liquor (FMFL) and Beer with the strictest intensity on April 5, 2016, through the “Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016.” The penal provisions of the Act were very stringent, and the offences under the Excise Act were made non-compoundable as well as non-bailable.

The Act came into existence after the Chief Minister, Sri Nitish Kumar announced in one of his election campaigns on 26 November 2015 that alcohol would be banned in the State if re-elected. His intention to implement the law was to empower women and control domestic violence due to excessive drinking. However, opposition parties and most analysts refuted and dismissed this idea by saying that it was purely a political gimmick as it was the very same regime in which the sale of alcohol was promoted to a great extent. The government’s decision was based on the understanding that liquor prohibition policy shall improve the social and economic environment of the State even though it would adversely affect the State exchequer.

It was also presumed that as a result of this liquor ban policy, the households’ savings would increase and the spending on other essential goods like education, health would increase, which in turn would improve the quality of human resources. However, in 2018 the State government introduced some amendments to the law, making it less harsh and more flexible. The amendments *inter alia* intended to stop the misuse of law against innocent people and make the punishment proportionate to the crime. Accordingly, the fine was reduced from 1 lakh to 50,000 for the first-time offenders and the first offence under the provisions of the law were no longer a non-bailable offence.

Though the State government implemented the Act with all its might, there were many challenges in its effective enforcement. It is obvious that for its successful and effective implementation, the highly ambitious policy required immense cooperation and coordination amongst various departments like police and excise department and active cooperation and support from the government of the neighbouring States like Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

It is pertinent to mention here that the present alcohol ban policy is not the first of its kind. In 1970, Karpoori Thakur, the then Chief Minister of Bihar had enforced a complete ban on liquor. Unfortunately, it lasted for only a year.¹ The prohibition was withdrawn in the wake of increased corruption and bootlegging.² History is replete with examples of unsuccessful attempts by the governments to impose such liquor bans across the nation and even in foreign countries. The famous Volstead Act of 1920 of the United States can be seen as a benchmark where prohibition resulted in the establishment of organised crime and corruption and parallel illegal economy costing the poor people and the State exchequer heavily.³

Even in the context of India, the liquor bans in different States have been only partially successful. In this regard, it becomes imperative to discuss the experiences of different States across the country in implementing similar prohibitions. At present, there are four States namely Gujarat, Nagaland, Bihar, Mizoram and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, implementing complete prohibition. The State of Gujarat which was carved out of Bombay State in 1960, continues the ban on manufacture, storage, sale and consumption of alcohol.⁴ The State of Nagaland has also enforced a complete ban under the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1989. However, there are some restricted permits on consumption by foreigners and NRIs.⁵ In Mizoram, the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP) Act, 1995 banned the sale as well as consumption of alcohol across the State. However, in 2007 some amendments were made in the MLTP Act whereby permission was granted for

¹ Akshat Kaushal & Satyavrat Mishra, *Bihar's liquor ban is good politics, bad economics*, BUSINESS STANDARD (Dec.15, 2015), https://www.business-standard.com/article/politics/bihar-s-liquor-ban-is-good-politics-bad-economics-115120500786_1.html [hereinafter Kaushal, *Bihar's liquor ban*].

² India Today Web Desk, *what led to an early liquor ban in Bihar? Why did it fail earlier?*, INDIA TODAY (Apr. 6, 2016), <https://www.indiatoday.in/fyi/story/liquor-ban-bihar-nitish-kumar-dry-state-316617-2016-04-06>.

³ Ajoy Kumar, *Politics of Prohibition*, THE PIONEER (Oct.23, 2020), <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/columnists/politics-of-prohibition.html>.

⁴ *States with total and phase-wise prohibition of alcohol in India*, THE INDIAN EXPRESS (Apr. 6, 2016), <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/bihar-liquor-ban-states-having-total-prohibition-gujarat-kerala/>.

⁵ *A brief history of prohibition in India*, OPINDIA (Mar. 7, 2021, 6: 30 PM), <https://www.opindia.com/2017/04/a-brief-history-of-prohibition-in-india/>.

manufacturing wine from guavas and grapes.⁶ While States like Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala had done away with the prohibition on alcohol. It is commonly believed that such complete liquor prohibitions are never successful due to various factors: economics and economy being prime amongst them. The abovementioned States repealed the law because of rampant illegal sales, increased demand for alternative addictive substances and heavy loss of revenue to the State exchequer.

2. LIQUOR PROHIBITION AND ITS IMPACT ON REVENUE OF THE STATE

In 2015, when the Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Nitish Kumar announced the implementation of the new liquor ban policy from the financial year 2016, he was aware that the new excise policy would cost the State exchequer very dearly.⁷ But at that point in time, he was hardly concerned how the prohibition would affect the private individuals engaged with the sale, possession and consumption of liquor, their earnings and livelihoods. The decision to implement the contentious policy was based on the argument that there were significant private as well as social considerations that a complete ban alone could address. It would not be wrong to say that the ban intended to improve the quality of life of the people of Bihar, but directly and indirectly it has left the State grappling with falling revenues and rising spending. Bihar's estimated loss of excise duty of revenue was to the tune of 4000 crore rupees on account of the ban on sale of liquor.⁸ This budgeted estimate was for the year 2016-17 as per the economic survey of India.⁹

In Crores

Source of Revenue	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20

⁶ *Id.*

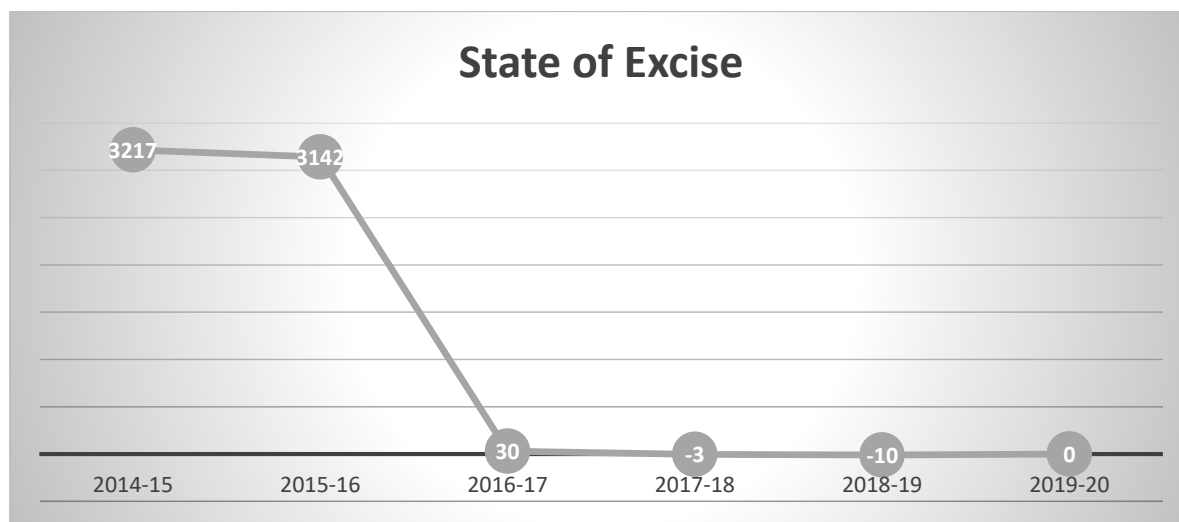
⁷ Satyavrat Mishra, *Bihar to ban liquor sale from April next year*, BUSINESS STANDARD (Nov. 27, 2015), https://www.business-standard.com/article/politics/alcohol-ban-in-bihar-from-april-2016-announces-cm-nitish-kumar-115112600538_1.html.

⁸ Anirban Guha Roy, *Liquor ban: Bihar govt will lose nearly Rs 4000 Crore revenue annually*, HINDUSTAN TIMES (April 6, 2016), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/patna/liquor-ban-bihar-govt-will-lose-nearly-rs-4000-crore-revenue-annually/story-OsP8jrE6fixaBgVQL2n2FK.html>.

⁹ India Spend & Aditi Phadnis, *Crime rate down in Bihar courtesy the liquor ban, but so is state's revenue*, BUSINESS STANDARD (Nov. 9, 2020) https://www.business-standard.com/article/elections/crime-rate-down-in-bihar-courtesy-the-liquor-ban-but-so-is-state-s-revenue-120110800764_1.html.

State of Excise	3217	3142	30	-3	-10	0
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Finance Accounts, Government of Bihar and State Government Budget



It is clear from the above data, that the quantum amount of revenue loss due to the liquor ban policy is considerable enough to adversely affect the growth rate as well as State spending on socio-economic and public welfare. Even after more than four years of its implementation, State government is yet to find out possible ways to make up the revenue loss. A close study of revenue raised by the State of Bihar clearly indicates that it decreased by 2.55 per cent from Rs. 23,742 crores in 2016-17 to 23,136.49 crore in 2017-18.¹⁰

Revenue Raised by the State of Bihar

(in Rs. Crore)

Particulars	2013-14	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
1. Tax Revenue	19,960	20750.23	25,449.18	23742.26	23,136.49
Percentage of Growth compared to the previous year					
	22.81	3.96	22.65	(-)6.71	(-)2.55
2. Non-Tax Revenue	1,544.83	1,557.98	2,185.64	2,403.11	3,506.74
Percentage of growth compared to the previous year					
	36.08	0.85	40.29	9.95	45.93

¹⁰ CAG, STATE FINANCES, GOVERNMENT OF BIHAR (2019) https://cag.gov.in/cag_old/content/report-no-1-2019-state-finances-government-bihar.

Total	21,505.51	22,308.21	27,634.82	26,145.37	26,643.23
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CAG Report on Revenue Sector, March 2018. (Government of Bihar)

A more detailed examination into the development expenditure done by the government of Bihar on social services, education and health demonstrates that after the implementation of the ban, expenditure on education dropped in 2017-18 over the four-year period, and expenditure on health remained less than the average of general category States.

Fiscal priority of the State during 2013-14 and 2017-18 (in per cent)

Fiscal Priority (%of GSDP)	Education/AE	Health/AE
General category States average 2013-14	17.20	4.50
Bihar's Average 2013-14	19.47	3.33
General category State average 2017-18	15.50	4.90
Bihar' Average 2017-18	18.85	4.69

Source: CAG Report 2019 on State of Finances, Government of Bihar.

A/E: Aggregate Expenditure

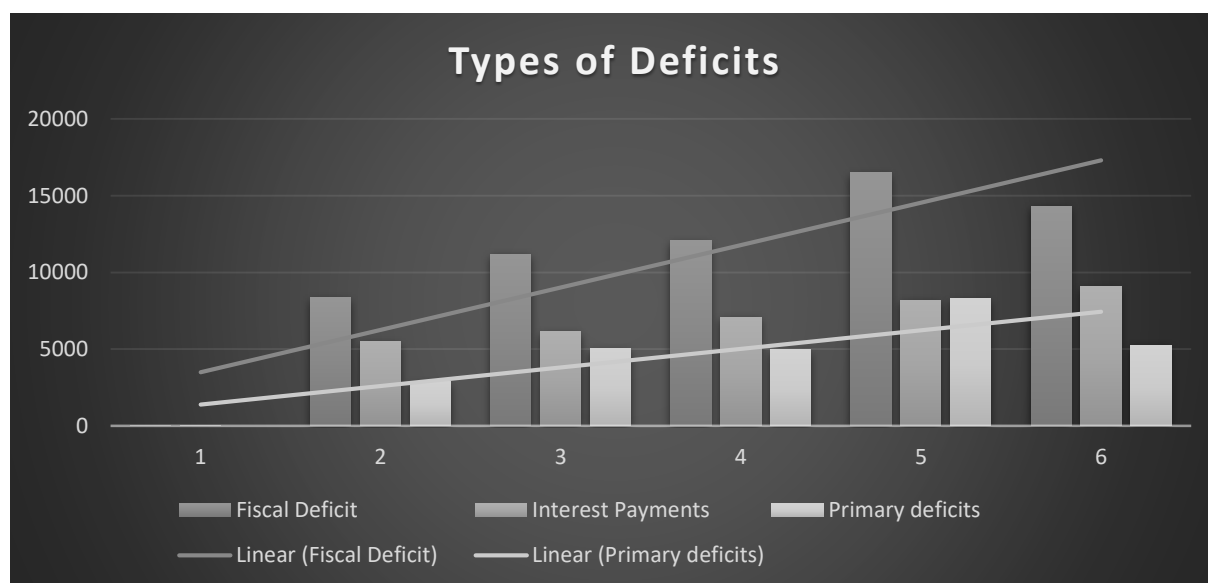
A closer review of the fiscal health of Bihar can be discussed with the help of the table given below:

(In crore)

Year	Non-Debt Receipt	Primary Expenditure	Fiscal Deficit	Interest Payments	Primary deficits
1	2	3	4	5	6 (4-5)
2013-14	68,934	71,826	8,352	5,460	2,892
2014-15	79,910	84,960	11,179	6,129	5,050
2015-16	96,142	1,01,105	12,061	7,098	4,963
2016-17	1,05,608	1,13,896	16,479	8,191	8,288
2017-18	1,17,469	1,22,720	14,305	9,054	5,251

CAG: State Finance Government of Bihar, 2019

Based on the report of CAG on the financial condition of Bihar 2019, it can be observed that the primary deficit of the State increased by 2,359 crores in just five years, indicating that non-debt receipts of the State were inadequate to meet the primary expenditure of the State.¹¹ Here it is important to mention that the State government's claim that the fiscal deficit was less than the budget estimate by 21.02% has to be corroborated with the fact that it was on account of the decrease in the revenue expenditure by 16.30 % and capital expenditure by 10.22% and not because of increase in revenue of the government.¹² This can be clear with the help of the chart given below:



The discussion would be incomplete if the recent opinion of the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) is not brought into the picture. The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) urged the Bihar government to withdraw the prohibition as smuggling and sale of illicit liquor and bootlegging has increased many folds.¹³ The organised illegal liquor cartel is further worsening the situation by selling liquor at a 400% premium causing huge financial loss to the State.¹⁴ The significant implication of

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² CAG, AUDIT REPORT (2019), https://cag.gov.in/uploads/download_audit_report/2019/Report_No_1_of_2019_State_Finances_Government_of_Bihar.pdf.

¹³ Smita Balram, *Liquor Body CIABC urges Bihar CM to withdraw prohibition just days after he reinforced strict enforcement of the law*, ECONOMICS TIMES (Dec.17, 2020) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/liquor/liquor-body-ciabc-urges-bihar-cm-to-withdraw-prohibition-just-days-after-he-reinforced-strict-enforcement-of-the-law/articleshow/79777172.cms?from=mdr>.

¹⁴ *Id.*

this prohibition is that besides perpetual loss to the State exchequer, State government's spending on other important social and economic sectors are also negatively affected.

3. IMPACT OF LIQUOR BAN ON RATE OF CRIME

There is always a strong relationship between economic growth and crime. A high rate of crime and violence imposes higher social and economic costs on the society. These costs magnify in the case of economically poor States with a weaker law and order condition. While the State government of Bihar may have implemented the ban on alcohol to control domestic violence faced by women due to excessive drinking of the male members, it also assured that alcohol-related crimes like public drunkenness and other disorderly conduct¹⁵ will come down to a great extent.

In this regard, it is significant to mention that the success of previous alcohol ban policies implemented in different States may be examined to assess the overall reduction in the rate of crime. In the case of Bihar, the result seems to be very paradoxical and maladjusted. The prohibition policy has discouraged domestic violence and other criminal activities but the reduction in crime has not brought about an overall positive impact on the social and economic environment. The expected social benefits from the present prohibition policy are not strong enough to offset the negative economic impacts on the State. The strongest expected social outcome of an increase in women empowerment by a reduction in domestic violence and thereby enhancing the human development situation is unclear and therefore debatable. Furthermore, there is no significant fall in the rate of poverty, income inequality and even unemployment. In fact, to look at the broader picture, the Indian Made Foreign Liquors industry (IMFL) claims that it supports livelihood and is a source of employment to approximately 35 lakh farming families across the nation.¹⁶ It also extends support to several ancillary industries like glass, tin, paper and plastic with a turnover between Rs 6000-7000 crore.¹⁷ In the case of Bihar, the liquor industry United Spirits (USL) confirmed that over

¹⁵ CHRISTOPHER CARPENTER, & CARLOS DOBKIN, ALCOHOL REGULATION AND CRIME. IN CONTROLLING CRIME: STRATEGIES AND TRADE-OFFS, 329 (Univ. Chicago Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Vinod Giri, *No to prohibition: Evidence from Indian experiments show that liquor ban does not lead to desired changes*, FINANCIAL EXPRESS (Feb. 20, 2020) <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/no-to-prohibition-evidence-from-indian-experiments-show-that-liquor-ban-does-not-lead-to-desired-changes/1873450/>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

500 employees directly lost their jobs due to the closure of bottling facilities after alcohol prohibition.¹⁸

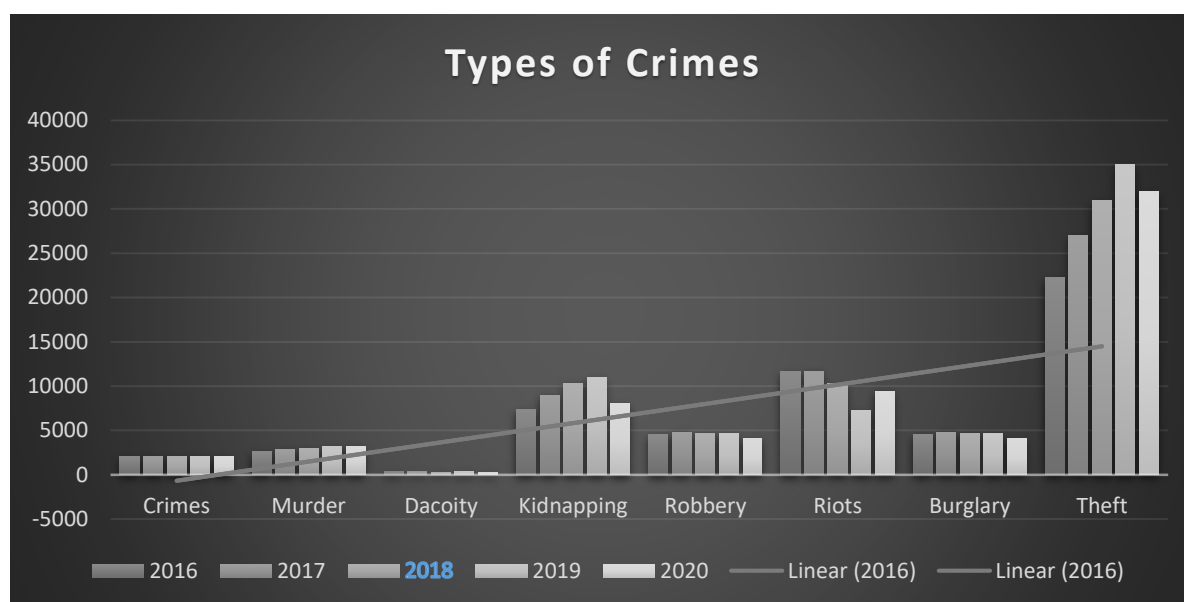
In the face of increased unemployment and income loss to the people involved in the liquor production sector, chances of them getting involved in allied activities like black marketing, bootlegging and engaging in criminal activities to meet their expenses also increases. The comparative crime data of Bihar from 2016 to 2019 prepared by the Bihar State police department¹⁹ does not show much of decreasing trend and significant impact on the rate of crime particularly non-violent crimes (Burglary and Theft). However, the prohibition had a negative impact on violent crimes (murder, dacoity, kidnapping, robbery, riots).

Crimes	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Murder	2581	2803	2933	3138	3149
Dacoity	349	325	278	391	222
Kidnapping	7324	8972	10310	10925	8004
Robbery	4511	4776	4612	4599	4031
Riots	11617	11698	10276	7262	9419
Burglary	4511	4776	4612	4599	4031
Theft	22228	27029	30915	34970	31971

Comparative Crime Data of Bihar from 2016-20.

¹⁸ *Over 500 job losses due to liquor ban in Bihar: United Spirits* ECONOMICS TIMES (Apr. 3, 2017), <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/liquor/over-500-job-losses-due-to-liquor-ban-in-bihar-united-spirits/articleshow/57973173.cms?from=mdr>.

¹⁹ BIHAR POLICE, CRIME DATA ACHIEVEMENTS (2020 <http://biharpolice.bih.nic.in/menuhome/CDA.htm>).



It is believed that one plausible cause of reduction in violent crime could be the increased police deployment for preventing the illegal sale of liquor. However, it is important to mention here that a quantitative assessment of the overall impact of prohibition on alcohol and reduction in crime would be difficult because of the challenges faced by the State in implementing a ban and controlling crime. The porous border of the State makes the task of uniform implementation a big challenge. Consequently, whatever significant reduction is noticed in the crime rate is much confined to the interior district of the State. Moreover, the long permeable international border shared with Nepal helps proliferate liquor shops across the State border by inviting tipplers, resulting in loss of revenue to Bihar and gain of revenue to Nepal.²⁰

However, there are some positive impacts of the above prohibition on drunk driving cases in Bihar. As per the Motor Vehicle Act 1988, drunk driving is considered a criminal offence.²¹ Section 185 of the act provides for the punishment of imprisonment or fine or both for the offence of drunken driving cases.²² According to the information received from the department of police of States/UTs, there is a steep fall in the number of road accidents under the drunken driving category since 2015. Within a period the implementation of prohibition

²⁰ Kaushal, *Bihar's liquor ban*, *supra* note 1.

²¹ PIB, GOI, ACCIDENTS DUE TO DRUNKEN DRIVING (July 4, 2019).

²² *Id.*

laws, the cases related to drunk driving and fatalities fell to 60% in 2016.²³ In fact, in the year 2019, when the entire nation's concern was to reduce road accidents and bring down road crashes on the highways, Bihar reported zero cases of drunk driving accidents. The details shared by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways are given below:

State	Road Accidents under drunken driving category 2015	Road Accidents under drunken driving category 2016	Road Accidents under drunken driving category 2017
Bihar	1457	593	0
Jharkhand	1518	543	801
Uttar Pradesh	2403	4633	3336
West Bengal	413	462	16

Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Road Transport & Highway



In the category of drunk driving cases, the steep fall in the number of cases from the very first year of policy implementation and then reaching the number zero needs to be applauded. In

²³ Dipak K Dash, *Bihar's liquor ban results in over 60% reduction in road deaths due to drunk driving*, THE ECONOMIC TIMES (Apr. 21, 2017) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bihars-liquor-ban-results-in-over-60-reduction-in-road-deaths-due-to-drunk-driving/articleshow/58293957.cms>.

terms of spill-overs associated with alcohol consumption like motor vehicle accidents and other violent crimes, present prohibition seems to be successful in controlling it.

4. COST OF ENFORCEMENT OF BAN AND THE RESULTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The success of the liquor prohibition policy in controlling crime and violence and in improving the social and economic environment accruing from a reduction in expenditure on alcohol can extend support to the worth of continuing this programme even at high financial costs. However, in the case of Bihar, this statement does not seem to be a strong argument. While it has definitely led to a reduction in open consumption of liquor, the administrative and economic costs of enforcement are substantially above the social gains resulting from the prohibition. According to one of the leading newspapers, prohibition has crippled the judicial administration to a great extent.²⁴ In fact, there are numerous litigations related to liquor cases and judicial administration, resulting in overcrowding of jails.²⁵

Within four years of its implementation, about 2.14 lakh cases have been registered, over 2.55 lakh people have been booked, and almost 1.67 lakh arrests have been made under the existing prohibition law.²⁶ Approximately 40,000 bail applications are pending in the High Court.²⁷ According to one of the records of police headquarters in Patna, out of 2,12,323 arrests made with respect to possession of illegal liquor between April 2016 to January 2020, only 19,500 were suppliers.²⁸ Most of the arrested were poor, unable to pay bail bond and are therefore languishing in jail. It is alleged that the manner in which arrests are made clearly indicates that it is biased in its approach.

It is relevant to highlight that the economic cost of enforcement definitely increases many folds, particularly if the State government diverts the limited police resources available for monitoring and enforcing the liquor ban rather than controlling overall crimes. This increases the probability of proliferation of other forms of organised crimes, causing law and order problems. On the point of social and other benefits accrued from prohibition on liquor, it should be kept in mind that in the presence of other alternative addictive the impact of

²⁴ Giri, *supra* note 16.

²⁵ Balram, *supra* note 13.

²⁶ Giri, *supra* note 16.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ Kumar *supra* note 3.

alcohol ban would be confined to the scarcity of only one alternative and nothing more. The fact is that there is a steep rise in the consumption of substance abuse like cannabis, inhalants, sedatives to opioids.²⁹ Many studies have confirmed that stringent prohibitions often trigger consumption of more hazardous substances and frequently give rise to hooch tragedy. In fact, just after four months of implementing the prohibition Act, 19 people died and six people lost their eyesight in Manjha block of the Gopalganj district of Bihar after consuming spurious liquor.³⁰

With a poor health machinery and infrastructure, the State government is finding it very difficult to deal with alcohol-related health complications like withdrawal symptoms and other psychological issues. The inadequate preparation in opening de-addiction centres and clinics, insufficient training of medical officers and personals, and lack of awareness programmes seem to adversely affect the benefits of the State's prohibition policy. Furthermore, getting admitted to de-addiction centres or rehabilitation centres is not getting much attention and support from the public because of the social stigma attached to it. The need of the hour is that there should be supportive initiatives from various corners of the society, including self-help groups and NGOs for prevention, treatment and care related to alcohol-induced disorders for affected families.

On the basis of the above cost-benefit analysis of the prohibition policy, it can be concluded that how well the ban has achieved the intended objective is yet to be ascertained. Laws and legal rules affect people in many ways. In a large complex society, one can be fairly certain that making or repealing laws will make some people better off and some worse off. The use of the economic efficiency criterion for judging or examining any legal rule helps us understand that it should result in economic improvement. Even if 'Pareto efficiency' is applied, for an outcome to be more efficient, at least one person should be made better off and nobody should be made worse off. As is evident, the same is not fulfilled by the above prohibition. However, it is said that in the real world, no action of the government or legal rule can be Pareto efficient, and the Kaldor-Hicks formula remains the major economic principle to test the underlying cost and benefits of any public policy. Even on the basis of

²⁹ *Alcohol banned in Nitish Kumar's Bihar, now cases of drug abuse spikes*, FINANCIAL EXPRESS (Apr. 8, 2017) <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/alcohol-banned-in-nitish-kumars-bihar-now-cases-of-drug-abuse-spike/620525/>.

³⁰ Amarnath Tewary, *2016 Bihar hooch tragedy, nine get death sentence; life term for four*, THE HINDU, (Mar. 5, 2021) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/2016-bihar-hooch-tragedy-nine-get-death-sentence-life-term-for-four/article33997424.ece>.

Kaldor-Hicks efficiency criteria, the underlying cost of this prohibition law seems to be far above the benefits accruing to society. While supporters of the policy may try to counter some of these arguments or issues raised with their subjective analysis of morality, it should always be kept in mind that the role of law in bringing economic equality and justice must not be discounted at any cost.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the above study provides limited insights into the prohibition policy, it is clear in its findings. Liquor had an important economic place in the State of Bihar as the excise revenue earned on IMFL and Country spirit at one time reached the peak of 4,001 crores in 2015-16.³¹ There was almost a sevenfold rise in excise revenue from 525 crores in 2007-08, making excise duty flourishing and upsurging section of the State revenue.³² It was an important source of fiscal revenue in the form of taxes. Liquor production was a source of direct and indirect employment, and the prohibition on consumption, sale and production has not brought significant change in the social environment and the rate of crime.

The economic impact of the prohibition policy cannot be undermined, and therefore, in order to assess the full range of economic implications of the ban policy, the government of Bihar needs to understand that the implementation should not evoke contradictory responses from policy targets. However, the State government may argue that prohibition alone can address the significant individual and negative social effects attached to drinking, and so the revenue loss of the government should be juxtaposed against the social and other economic gains of the State.

On the point of making the present policy more efficient, the following measures are immediately required. Firstly, Prohibition can achieve its intended objective when there is community mobilisation and not mere group and sub-group (addict and his family, sellers, criminals) mobilisation. Therefore, instead of sudden implementation of a complete ban on manufacturing, sale and consumption of alcohol and thereby adversely affecting every aspect

³¹Amitabh Srivastava, *Bihar goes dry*, INDIA TODAY (Apr. 18, 2016, 4:50 PM) <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20160418-bihar-goes-dry-liquor-ban-nitish-kumar-828716-2016-04-06>.

³²*Id.*

of the economy and human life, the State government and the policymakers should have focussed on framing stricter laws assuring responsible behaviour and compliance and creating mass awareness against liquor consumption.

Secondly, on the point of the high economic cost of implementation in the form of diverting limited police resources enforcing the liquor ban. State should focus on collective action involving all groups like community workers, social media, NGOs, SHGs, health activists, and educational institutions. The emphasis of collective action should be on mass awareness, highlighting the adverse social and economic consequences of alcohol abuse.

Thirdly, the prohibition policy will become very efficient in its approach if it is accompanied by the State government's other strategies and policies based on the WHO guidelines to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. These guidelines are based on global experiences and therefore, are capable of effectively improving the health and social outcomes for all, including individuals, families and communities.³³ The global strategy prepared by WHO is a mixture of economic, social and legal requirements to reduce the harmful uses of alcohol.

Fourthly, the government should also focus its attention on the other alternative addictive substances and toxicants; otherwise, the impact of the alcohol ban would be confined to the scarcity of only one of the addictive and nothing more. In the case of Bihar, the government should control the spill over effects in the form of increased demand and the sale of other substitute additives.

Fifthly, government prohibition policy should be adequately funded at each implementation level, particularly in providing health services to the marginal community. It should be treated as a public health issue and not merely a legal issue. The government should give equal impetus on awareness programmes related to alcohol and its health and medical consequences.

Last but not least, sound monitoring and surveillance are indispensable for the success of any policy. Bihar needs a consistent, sustainable action of the government with strong leadership, political determination and commitment to pursue the prohibition policy. The prohibition policy should be rational, efficient and clear with specific objectives and targets.

³³ *10 areas governments could work with to reduce the harmful use of alcohol*, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (Mar. 6, 2021, 5:06 PM) <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/10-areas-for-national-action-on-alcohol>.