



Dealing with Psychological Effects of Alcohol Use by Adolescents: A Case of Kihesa Ward in Iringa, Tanzania

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Abstract: *This study sought to investigate ways used to deal with psychological effects of the use of alcohol by adolescents at Kihesa ward in Iringa municipality. Semi structured interview was used to collect data from 36 respondents. The study found out that counseling and psycho education were commonly used to deal with the effect of alcohol use by adolescents. Counseling and psycho education have an impact in assisting adolescents who engage in the use of alcohol in the study area. Medication and spiritual intervention are complementary ways used to deal with psychological effects of the use of alcohol by adolescents. Community took part in curbing the problem under investigation. Since no single treatment to addictions which stands out more effective than all others, so the use of a numbers of approaches is recommendable for effective efforts to help adolescents who are involved in alcoholism. Therefore, psychological, medical, spiritual and other approaches need to be combined.*

Keywords: Alcoholism, psychological effects, Adolescents, psychological ways, complementary ways.

Introduction

The term ‘adolescent’ is an adjective describing a young person in the process of developing from a child into an adult. The term dates back to the late 18th century. It was derived from the Latin verb ‘adolescere’ which means ‘to grow up.’ Alcohol has been embedded into the social and cultural fabric of many African societies and the world in general. Traditionally, it has been used for ceremonial purposes such as birth, marriage, initiation and death. It is also offered for propitiation to ancestors and spirits to express and reinforce social relations. Alcohol is the world’s third largest risk factor for disease and contributes up to 4% of the global burden of disease (WHO, 2011). It is estimated that 2.5 million deaths each year are directly attributable to alcohol. Furthermore, 9% of deaths of adolescent aged 15 to 20 years were found to be alcohol-related (WHO, 2011). When data from the World Health Organization’s Global Burden of Disease study was used to calculate cause of specific disability-adjusted life years for young people aged 10–24 years, it was found that the main risk factor was alcohol which equated to 7%. In Sub-Saharan Africa, alcohol is the leading avoidable risk factor accounting for a substantial portion of death and

disability. Many families and communities suffer the consequences of alcoholism through violence, injuries, mental health problems and diseases (World Bank Data: Sub-Saharan Africa, 2016). In Iringa, some of psychological effects due to alcoholism are mentioned to include impaired judgment, loss of memory and depression (Baraka, 2019).

Gichinga, (2005) found out that the causes of alcoholism include biological factors, family connections, environmental reasons and personal history. Furthermore, psychological effects have been noticed in the life and behavior of adolescents who are accustomed to alcoholism. Alcoholism contributes to alteration of neurochemistry in the higher centers of the cortex that control reasoning and judgment and the lower centers of the limbic system that rule mood, emotion and craving (Inab & Cohen, 2014).

Drinking alcohol also causes adolescents to have trouble in school due to impaired judgment caused by high level of alcohol consumption. Long-term use of alcohol results in adaptation in multiple neural, endocrine and visceral systems expressed when

alcohol is discontinued (Noël, Bechara, Brevers, Verbanck, & Campanella, 2010).

Various ways have been mentioned to be used in assisting people with the problem of alcoholism including adolescents. Cotton and Tarvydas (2007) argued that there is no single treatment to addictions which stands out more effective than all other treatments. Therefore, a number of approaches is better than using only one approach. A renewal of the mind achieved by spiritual development, abstinence as well as an integrated approach of medical, mental health practices and dietary control should work collaboratively to achieve treatment for the addicts. This study sought to identify ways of dealing with psychological effects of alcohol use by adolescents at Kiheisa Ward in Iringa Municipality. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the psychological approach used to deal with psychological effects of alcoholism by adolescents in Kiheisa Ward?
2. What are complementary ways used to deal with psychological effects of alcoholism by adolescents in Kiheisa Ward?

Addictive Disease Model

Addictive disease model is sometimes described as the medical model for addiction. This model states that alcoholism as an addiction is a disease. The viewpoint is that addiction is "progressive, recurring, incurable and potentially fatal. The alcoholics inherently face vulnerabilities which vastly affect perception and rationality issues which may lead into depression. The disease model seeks to not only view alcoholism as a disease, but also strives to treat alcoholism from a medical point of view. The model views addiction as marked in stages: experimental use, social use, substance abuse and addiction (Inaba & Cohen, 2014). This model links to this study because alcoholism as a disease in the life of adolescents results into different psychological effects.

Psychological Effects Caused by Alcoholism

A study of Noël, Bechara, Brevers, Verbanck and Campanella (2010) discovered that drinking may lead youth to cause troublesome experiences in schools. Drinking alcohol is further associated with the use of other substances. Therefore, once the adolescent accustoms himself or herself to alcoholism, they are likely to get exposed to the use of other drugs. Cessation of long-term use results in

tachycardia, hypertension, sweating and tremor. If left untreated, delirium, seizures and even death may appear. Noël, Bechara, Brevers, Verbanck and Campanella (2010) mentioned that alcohol damages the adolescent brain. Cohen (2014) adds that alcohol effects neurochemistry and the central nervous system resulting in changes of mood which leads into depression.

How to Deal With Psychological Effects of Alcoholism

Studies have suggested multiple ways of dealing with alcoholism. Gichinga (2005), for instance, proposed that counseling is likely to be an effective way to deal with alcoholic adolescents if the entire family is involved to support the initiative. The treatment includes teaching the facts about alcoholism, encouraging the alcoholic to take personal responsibility to stop drinking and exposing the adolescent to coping skills through counseling. Williamson (2012) suggests that in order for alcoholics to voluntarily accept treatment, much work has to be done by society to tackle the problem. Cotton and Tarvydas (2007) argued that there is no single treatment to addictions that stands out more effective than all others. Therefore, a numbers of approaches should be used. A renewal of the mind achieved by spiritual development, abstinence and changing behavior as well as integrated approach of medical, mental health and dietary approach should work together to achieve treatment goals for addicts.

Williamson (2012) suggested that in order for alcoholics to voluntarily accept treatment, much work has to be done by the society to reduce the stigma of being an alcoholic. The stigma surrounding an alcoholic has a significant potential to deflate the identity of a person suffering from an alcohol use disorder and significantly limits the alcoholic's social and reasoning skills. It also disrupts the capacity to seek help and interact with treatment professionals openly and honestly.

Studies further indicate that family support, bonding and parental monitoring are associated with lower alcohol use (White *et al.* 2006). Furthermore, social network and social support have protective effects (Ramirez *et al.* 2012). Higher parental monitoring also protects against alcohol and marijuana use (White *et al.* 2006). Higher levels of families (values that place family needs over individual needs) and being in a nuclear family served as protective factors among adolescents (Ewing *et al.* 2015).

Research Methodology

The study used descriptive research design which is as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance with the research purpose. This study employed the qualitative approach. According to Kothari (2004), qualitative approach assesses attitudes, opinions and behaviors of informants in a more realistic way. Particularly, this study was guided by the case study design.

The study aimed at capturing both the reality of the participants' opinions and thought concerning the ways used to deal with psychological effects of alcoholism among adolescents who engage in the use of alcohol. The sample included 30 adolescents from six streets who were engage in the use of alcohol, one Ward Executive Officer and five Ward Executive Officers. The sampling was done through purposive and snowball approach. Information was collected through semi structured interview and analyzed through the thematic approach based on the study objectives.

While Adam and Kamuzora (2008) assert that it is important to observe ethical issues in order to prevent problems that may arise during research and in order to protect the rights of participants, selected respondents were given freedom to participate or to withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were also observed for the informants to make informed responses.

Results and Discussion

This section presented findings and discussed it in the light of literature.

Research question 1: How is the psychological approach used to deal with psychological effects of alcoholism by adolescents in Kiheha Ward?

The study sought to establish views of respondents on ways used to deal with the effect of the use of alcohol among adolescents. Respondents revealed that counseling and psycho education were common ways used. This was revealed by the ward executive officer who was quoted saying: *"We use professional counselors to provide counseling and psycho education to adolescents who engage in the use of alcohol. We normally give them life skills and health coping mechanisms. As a result, some of them quit from alcoholism."* One adolescent who uses alcohol further replied by saying, *"When I met a professional counselor, my life style on misusing*

alcohol changed." This indicates how counseling and psycho education have an impact in assisting adolescents who engage in the use of alcohol in the study area. The findings are in harmony with what Gichinga (2005) advised that counseling is likely to be effective way of dealing with the effect of alcoholism. He further recommended psychological and counseling assistance through trained professionals when dealing with young people who are involved with alcoholism.

Research Question 2: How are complementary ways used to deal with psychological effects of alcoholism by adolescents in Kiheha Ward?

Respondents revealed that medication and spiritual intervention are complementary ways of dealing with psychological effects of the use of alcohol by adolescents. An adolescent who uses alcohol was quoted saying the following during interview: *"there are various treatments of psychological effects due to alcoholism but medication and spiritual intervention worked better. This happened when I was exposed to religious leaders for prayers and counselling before I was exposed to medication."* That response implies that medication and spiritual interventions are helpful to adolescent who face psychological disturbance while striving to get relief. The finding is in harmony with literature which suggests that medication is part of effective ways of dealing with psychological effects of alcoholism (Westreich & Finklestein, 2008).

When interviewees were asked to inform whether the community is used as complementary means to deal with the effect of alcoholism, it was revealed that the community takes part in curbing the problem under investigation. This was revealed by the Ward executive officer who revealed that *"community and family members are actively involved in the plan to help the adolescents with psychological problems as a result if alcoholism. With the presence of cooperation from community and families, the work becomes easy."* Findings further revealed that supportive system which involves family members, community members and friends is effective way of dealing with the problem. Williamson (2012) suggested that in order for alcoholics to voluntarily accept treatment, much work should be done by society.

This reality is supported by literature which reveals that family support, bonding, and parental monitoring are associated with lower alcohol use. Social networks and social support have protective

effects against alcoholism to adolescents (Ramirez *et al.* 2012).

Significance of the use of multiple ways to help the adolescents with alcoholic problems was particularly spelled out by one of the respondents who revealed that “*quitting from alcoholism is not simple and easy tasks as people think. It needs the combination of different treatments to assist adolescents with psychological effects of alcoholism.*” This is supported by Cotton and Tarvydas (2007) who argued that there is no single treatment to addictions which stands out more effective than all others, so the use of a numbers of approaches is recommendable for effective efforts to help adolescents who are involved in alcoholism. Therefore, psychological, medical, spiritual and other approaches need to be combined

Conclusions and Recommendations

Counseling and psycho education were common ways used to deal with the effect of alcohol use by adolescents. Counseling and psycho education have an impact in assisting adolescents who engage in the use of alcohol in the study area. Medication and spiritual intervention are complementary ways used to deal with psychological effects of the use of alcohol by adolescents. Community took part in curbing the problem under investigation.

Since no single treatment to addictions which stands out more effective than all others, so the use of a numbers of approaches is recommendable for effective efforts to help adolescents who are involved in alcoholism. Therefore, psychological, medical, spiritual and other approaches need to be combined

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