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## Pathways to alcohol abuse by school going adolescents: A case study of Chibombo District of Zambia.

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## ABSTRACT

*This article explores adolescents' experiences of alcohol use and abuse in two boarding High Schools of Chibombo District of Zambia. A cross-sectional study design with an emphasis on qualitative approach was done on school pupils in Chibombo district. The study group comprised of 162 pupils both males and females aged between 16 and 20 years and two teachers in charge of school guidance and counseling. The present study employed three data collection strategies: Focus group discussions with 48 pupils, in-depth interviews with two teachers and a survey questionnaire with 92 pupils. The results revealed that factors that induce pupils to engage in alcohol abuse include easy access to cheap alcohol and peer pressure. It was further found out that personal factors such as negative emotional state, pupil's expectations about the function of alcohol are the main causes of alcohol abuse among pupils. In addition to punitive measure against pupils who abuse alcohol, assessment and psychotherapy or counseling of pupils who engage the abuse can go a long in addressing the problem.*

**Keywords:** alcohol use, alcohol abuse, binges drinking.

## INTRODUCTION

Although alcohol abuse may take place at any stage, Getchell, Pippin and Varnes (1995), states that many people come to experience alcohol use during their adolescence and early adulthood stage. It is during this transitional stage that a good number of boys and girls get engaged in risky behavior like unsafe sex, alcohol abuse, cigarette smoking and other risky activities. During this stage the idea of reward and impression making becomes eminent and leaves adolescents more vulnerable to risk behavior (Zuckerman 1979). Illicit alcohol use amongst young people has risen steadily over the past 30 years in the United Kingdom and beyond. Miller and Plant, (2001) explain that young people in their early and mid-teens are experimenting with alcohol, using it as a recreational drug and part of their leisure time.

The Global News Wire of October (2010) reports that alcohol abuse among young people in Zambia has become increasingly common. Children as young as 9 years old can frequently be found in bars or consuming alcohol on the streets.

A study done in Kanyama and Chinyika compounds of Lusaka in (2001) by the Kanyama Youth Programme Trust found that 19.4% of youth between the ages of 10-21 drank alcohol and that the consumption rate among adults stood at 61%. The study indicated that 86% of the respondents commented on the easy access of alcohol. The same study reveals that 79% of adults and youths drank during special occasions like public festivals, weddings, parties and religious occasions.

### Causes of Alcohol Abuse

According to Ames and Sussman (2001), a wide range of causes of alcohol abuse may be interpreted at different levels. The factors may be operating at individual, interpersonal, institutional, community and societal levels (McLeroy et al, 1988). Each of these levels when properly investigated can give an indication as to why a certain individual got involved in the use or abuse of alcohol.

At the first level or domain is the personal factor which is attributed to the individual's personal characteristics for instance one's age, sex, level of education, and knowledge (Tarter et al, 2003). This domain is also linked to an individual's inherited genetic aspects from parents with alcohol use problems (Kendler et al, 2000). Also included in this domain is the

individual's personal profile on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive styles and also personality traits such as hostility, low self-esteem and difficulties in controlling impulsive behavior (Walton & Roberts, 2004). Other elements of the personal domain are experience of traumatic events (Gordon, 2002) and psychiatric disorders (Hoffman & Cerbone, 2002).

The second level is the interpersonal domain which is linked with the adolescent's social interactions with friends, family and close relations (Coggans & McKellar, 1994). The interpersonal domain also looks at the poor early childhood upbringing in the family due to poor family life circumstances (Barret & Turner, 2005; Lysnskey et al, 2002). The same domain is also related to the low parental discipline (Chassin, 2004) and poor parental monitoring (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Included under the interpersonal domain is the family structure since this has an influence over an individual for instance being brought up by a single parent, or in a home where parents are divorced.

The third level is the institutional level. At this level the school culture seems to be one of the factors that influence pupil involvement in alcohol abuse. Jessor and Jessor (1975), reveal how at one time school officials especially at college level regarded drinking on campus as a rite of passage which did not have any serious effects on the students. The type of school especially the co-education boarding school may also have an influence on pupils' involvement in alcohol abuse (Wechsler, 1995). A study done by Hartford et al. (1983) found that students living on campus were more likely to drink in large groups and within the campus than students who were living at home.

The fourth level is the community level which has external environmental factors that may influence drinking. These factors according to Newman et al (1991) include the availability of affordable alcohol and the concentration of drinking outlets in the area surrounding the school. Chaloupka and Wechsler (1996) explain that the lower the price of alcohol, the more people will drink. Drink price specials, kegs, and other sources of low-priced alcohol encourage binge drinking and intoxication. At the same community level, alcohol advertising helps create an environment that suggests that alcohol consumption and over consumption are normal activities and contributes to increased alcohol consumption.

The last level involves the society and the type of policies that are used to curb illegal use of alcohol. Moskowitz (1989) and Gorman and Speer (1996) found that the effective implementation of the underage prohibition law yielded positive results in minimizing youth involvement in alcohol abuse related activities. Therefore in a place or country where the laws or regulations are relaxed the problem of alcohol use may continue.

According to Spooner (2009), the above domains or levels do not operate in isolation they are interrelated and their combination makes the alcohol abuse problem for adolescents a more complex one.

### **Negative Effects of Alcohol Abuse**

According to the Web Med (2009), the immediate physical effects of drinking alcohol range from mild mood changes to complete loss of coordination, vision (sleepiness), balance, impaired judgment and speech. These stated physical effects which can be signals of acute alcohol intoxication, or drunkenness usually wear off in a matter of hours after a person stops drinking. Many law-enforcement agencies in the world for instance in South Africa regard a 0.08 percentage of alcohol in the bloodstream as evidence of intoxication (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009). Getchell, Pippin and Varnes, (1995) state that larger amounts of blood alcohol can impair brain function, cause liver damage, and eventually cause unconsciousness. The same authors further point out that an extreme overdose can cause alcohol poisoning and this can be fatal. They further explain that chronic alcoholism is a progressive, potentially fatal disease, characterized by an incessant craving for increased tolerance of physical dependence upon and loss of control over drinking alcohol. The physical dependence on alcohol may or may not be obvious to other people. While some chronic alcoholics get very drunk, others exercise enough control to give the appearance of coping with everyday affairs in a near-normal way. The Web Net (2008) amplifies on the fact that alcohol abuse if it develops into alcoholism can lead to a number of physical ailments, including hypoglycemia, high blood pressure, brain and heart damage, and end-stage liver damage, enlarged blood vessels in the skin, chronic gastritis, and pancreatitis.

The ZCCP (2006) Literature Review identifies a larger set of issues that are linked to misuse of alcohol: abuse of alcohol has contributed to some of the most violent crimes, accidents and deaths that Zambia as country has experienced over the years. It has contributed to the levels

of domestic abuse, especially wife-battering and divorce. Battering associated with alcohol consumption may be more severe and result in greater injury. In addition some women turn to alcohol in response to battering.

Alcohol abuse affects adolescents in a number of ways. According to Levy (1999), people who begin drinking early run the risk of developing serious alcohol related problems including alcoholism later in life. They are also at a greater risk of involving themselves in sexual risk behavior and poor school performance. Donovan (2004) reiterates this fact by stating that teens that begin drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin at 21 years. Such individuals, Donovan (ibid) goes on to say, fail to manage their drinking habits and their drinking is usually associated with violence. Grant and Dawson (1998) reveal that adolescents who involve themselves in binge drinking at least once in a week face problems in their transition to adulthood; for instance they face educational attainment problems, fail to secure proper marriages and may be financially dependent. Apart from this Johnston (2004) highlights other several mental health problems that those who abuse alcohol can face. He points out that such mental problems like depression, anxiety, and antisocial personality disorders are very common among those adolescents who abuse alcohol. Johnston (ibid), further explains that adolescents who abuse alcohol are associated with considering committing suicide.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Study design and sampling**

A cross-sectional study design with an emphasis on qualitative approach was done on school pupils in Chibombo district. The study group comprised of 162 pupils both males and females aged between 16 and 20 years and two teachers in charge of school guidance and counseling. The present study employed three data collection strategies: Focus group discussions with 48 pupils, in-depth interviews with two teachers and a survey questionnaire with 92 pupils. In the qualitative approach 48 volunteers were requested to participate, 24 from each school. This sample had 28 boys and 20 girls. In each school one group came from grade 10 and 11 and 2 groups from grade 12 since the latter were assumed to have more school experience. Each group had six (6) volunteers from each grade (grade 10, 11&12). According to Krueger and Casey (2000) focus groups can be conducted with 6 – 10 members

with similar nature for instance similar age and status in programme. The first five groups of six were homogeneous thus 3 groups of boys and 2 groups of girls and the other 3 groups were heterogeneous with 2 groups of 3 girls and 3 boys and 1 group of 4 boys and 2 girls .

Participants were given the full details of the study and anonymity was guaranteed. This meant that the volunteers were free to withdraw from participation at any time they wanted. The discussions were held in selected classrooms during the afternoon school sessions.

The sample in the survey was randomly picked from three classes of grades 10, 11 and 12. The researcher ensured that there were more grade 12 participants as it was assumed they had more school experience on alcohol related issues. Since participants were randomly picked, those participants who were aged slightly above 20 years participated in the survey although their responses were not included in the analysis.

The two teachers were purposively selected with an assumption that by virtue of being guidance and counseling teachers they had more information concerning problems pupils were faced with more so with alcohol abuse within the two school.

**Instruments:** In the qualitative approach question guides were used in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The questions in the guides were produced from the earlier conducted pilot study whose questions were extracted from permitted studies on alcohol abuse by adolescents especially from global school health surveys. In the focus group discussions the question guides focused on the following subjects concerning pupils' perceptions on the

- Prevalence of alcohol consumption and abuse by pupils.
- Causes of alcohol consumption and abuse by pupils.
- Types of alcoholic drinks consumed and abused by pupils
- Effects of alcohol consumption and abuse by pupils

In the in-depth interviews the question guides equally focused on the teachers' views concerning the above topics that were tackled by the pupils.

In the quantitative approach a self administered survey questionnaire which preceded the focus group discussions was used. Since the questionnaire was designed from the data generated from the group discussions the same topics were also reflected in the questionnaire.

The variables in this questionnaire were not manipulated since they were meant to show the views held by a slightly large sample on the same topics investigated in the focus group discussions. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics in terms of percentages.

#### **Data collection procedure**

In the qualitative stage a total of eight (8) focus group discussions, four (4) from each school were conducted. The researcher assumed that in order to get great deal of information from a diverse group four (4) focus groups were adequate from each school.

Each session lasted for forty-five minutes. The information was recorded through written notes and tape recording. The audio tape recording was done with the consent of the participants.

The questions in the focus groups were used in a flexible manner allowing other questions which were arising from the discussions to be asked. The formulated questions were used only as a guide to avoid deviations in order to cover the relevant and examinable aspects of alcohol abuse by school going adolescents. The researcher acted as a facilitator who made sure that each question was reformulated according to what was coming out of the discussion taking into account the objectives of the study and topics that were under investigation.

In-depth interviews were held with two guidance and counseling teachers at the conveniently arranged time in their offices. It was difficult to interview pupils who were regular or current users of alcohol since both schools argued that they did not tolerate such pupils as they are usually sent on forced transfers.

The questionnaire was distributed to 112 pupils (56 from each school) in the afternoon session by the researcher who helped in giving details of what each question was asking for. The completed questionnaires were collected immediately at the end of each class period. Out of the 112 distributed questionnaires 10 were not completed thus 102 valid questionnaires were returned. Then 10 of the 102 were removed since these respondents did not meet the age condition as they were 24 years old. The survey questionnaire assured anonymity by not including any identifying information. Participants who took part in the focus group discussion were excluded from completing the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis Procedure.

Data from the focus group discussions and in- depth interviews were first transcribed and the resulting transcripts were compared. The comparison of the transcripts helped in bringing out the similar themes across the groups. Themes related to the objectives were identified and findings that best represented each theme were selected to verify the objectives. After all information had been collected, the data were coded according to themes that had been developed. The coding was revised and modified, as the analysis progressed. Patterns that developed were noted especially those that were consistent across groups. Quotes that exemplified themes were recorded noting details about the speaker like, grade and gender. After the re-coding, analysis of data was done in comparison with the study objectives and questions.

The resulting data from the survey came from 92 respondents and were bench-marked against the research questions to find out views pupils had about the prevalence, causes and effects of alcohol abuse. Depending on the weight of responses the questions were either affirmed or rejected. Since the study was descriptive by nature the resulting data was processed using Microsoft excel and then presented in terms of percentages.

### FINDINGS

#### Prevalence of alcohol use

In both schools participants in the focus groups acknowledged that there were pupils who take alcohol within the school premises. In every discussion group five out of six or four out of six admitted having taken alcohol on different occasions. They also indicated that at least one or two pupils especially boys were drunk every day. The usual time of drinking was at night especially after night class preparations, on Saturday especially during entertainment and on Sports days or other days with big events.

*Everyone takes it even prefects do drink. (Grade 12 boy)*

*I took it and I felt very high like I was Barrack Obama even my English changed and I thought I would continue. (grade 11 boy)*

*I took it and it 'did me', I felt drowsier and cried (Grade 11 girl).*

*You can take beer anytime even during prep just pretend by using a water bottle yet there is beer inside (Grade12 boy)*

A similar question was asked in the survey to find out who had ever taken alcohol. The responses given by the participants indicated that out of 92 participants 60 had taken alcohol before. Participants named a number of alcoholic drinks commonly taken by pupils as Chibuku shake-shake, Tujirijiri, Lusaka beer, Pushkafee, skippers, and Mosi. They also disclosed that the type of beer one drank depended on how much money they had. Tujirijiri is very easy to use because it can easily be mixed with some common juices like Apple Max and other drinks like Havana Cola.

*It depends on your pocket sir; girls drink expensive beer because big guys buy for them. Us, we can take any beer especially tujirijiri, they can take you fast and the 'timbwi' (chibuku shake-shake) is a food supplement but not Kachasu of course. (Grade 11boy).*

The survey also revealed the type of alcoholic drinks pupils have taken before. The number of those who responded to the statement on the type of alcoholic drink one had taken before was 75 while 17 left it blank. Chibuku was chosen by 69% of the respondents as the highest commonly used alcohol by pupils followed by Tujirijiri which was chosen by 52.1% of the respondents. Mosi was chosen by 41%, traditional brew by 20%, Push-kafee by 15% while 45. % indicated that there are other brands of alcohol that they had taken before and Kachasu was only chosen by 1.96%.

**(TABLE 1). Types of Alcohol consumed by pupils (N=92)**

TYPEOF BEER	PERCENTAGE
CHIBUKU	69
TUJIRIJIRI	52.1
MOSI	41
TRADITIONAL BREW	20
PUSH-KAFEE	15
KACHASU	1.96
OTHERS	45



The survey also revealed the frequency of alcohol intake by the respondents. The number of those who answered this question was 60 while 32 left it blank. Out of the 60 with alcohol use experience 42% indicated that they take it regularly, while 33% take it occasionally and 21% indicated that they had stopped. The questions on frequency purposely did not allow the alternative for others because they were meant for those who had taken alcohol before. The term occasionally was interpreted to the respondents by the researcher as taking of alcohol sometimes depending on the situation and regularly as consistent pattern of drinking which has become a habit. The findings from the questions in table 2. Reveal that there are pupils who have developed a habit of consuming alcohol regularly.

**(TABLE 2): Frequency of alcohol use by pupils**

Frequency	N	%
Regularly	25	42
Occasionally	20	33
Have stopped	15	25
Total	60	100

The table below show how long ago respondents had an alcoholic drink. Out of 65 respondents who answered this question, 17 (26 %) reported having taken alcohol a day before the survey was conducted while 12 (18%) took it one week before the survey, 5 (8%) took it one month before the survey, 7 (12%) took it three months before and 9 (15%) took it one year before the survey while 10 (16%) stated that they did not remember the last time they drank. This evidence points to the possibility that there are pupils who take alcohol during the school term.

**(Table 3): The last time participants took alcohol**

Last time alcohol was taken	N	%
One day ago	17	26
One week ago	12	18
One month ago	5	8
Three months ago	7	12
One year ago	9	15
Don't remember the last time	15	25
Total	65	100

The survey also reveals how much alcohol respondents use per drinking occasion. The information given shows that there is a possibility that pupils are involved in binge drinking. The table below shows that 24% of 92 reported having seen friends taking 5 or more alcoholic drinks per drinking bout while 22% of 92 indicated that they can take 5, while 22% as much as is available, 18% indicated 2 and 14% indicated that they can only take 1 alcoholic drink per occasion.

**(Table 4): Amount of alcohol consumed per drinking bout.**

Quantity of alcohol consumed	N	%
One drink	13	14
Two drinks	17	18
Five drinks	20	22
As much as friends offer me	20	22
Seen friends take 5 or more	22	24

***Perceived Negative Effects of Alcohol Use***

Participants revealed that alcohol has negative health effects on the user. They cited health problems like loss of appetite, poor memory, stomach ulcers, red lips, red and drowsy eyes and foul smell. Other problems were social problems such as sexual misconduct for those who experiment with alcohol, bad language, lack of respect for school authority, violence, misuse of school fees, stealing from friends, unpredictable moods and dumping friends. Poor academic performance was also cited as a negative effect of alcohol abuse. Participants explained how alcohol abusers skip lessons, sell important books, lose note books, sleep during lessons because of hang-overs, make careless mistakes in tests and forget relevant information during examinations. Some participants acknowledged that alcohol is addictive and can compromise one's self control.

*Beer is dangerous sir, it can completely change your life from being good to being immoral and it can kill you, 'tujirijiri' (sacheted beer) killed someone in Chongwe. (grade 12 girl)*

*You stop thinking and can die fast through diseases and accidents. (grade 11 girl)*

*You can become irresponsible and start stealing money from your parents and friends. (grade 10 boy)*

**(Table 5): Negative effects of alcohol use experienced at school. (N=92)**

EFFECTS	YES	
	N	%
Sickness	56	61
Accidents	54	59
Absenteeism from school	53	58
Use of bad language by a drunk friend	49	53
Skipping lessons	49	53
Sexual temptations	47	51
Poor school performance	43	47
Suspension from school	35	38
Expulsion from another school	24	26

In the survey questionnaire respondents were asked to choose the type of negative experiences they had experienced with alcohol use. Verbal instructions were given by the researcher to the participants asking them to indicate not only what they personally experienced as been involved themselves but even what they witnessed happening to their close friends. The experiences were chosen in this order; sickness 61%, accidents 59%, absenteeism 58%, use of bad language 53%, skipping lessons 53%, poor school performance 47%, suspension from school 38% and expulsion from school 26%.

## DISCUSSION

Results from this study are consistent with many earlier studies which reveal that peer influence, availability of alcohol, poor social coping skills and misconception about the enhancing effects of alcohol have a bearing on adolescents' involvement in alcohol abuse. (Wechsler et al 2003, Weitzman et al 2003 and Dent et al 2005). The results from this study show that there are pupils who use alcohol in the two schools where this research was carried out. This information is seen from the responses given by the pupils especially on questions asking the last time participants had an alcoholic drink. Although this information is showing the prevalence of alcohol use among pupils in the two schools, the prevalence rate cannot be said to be high or low since no similar research was done before for a comparison to be made. The results show that school going adolescents have knowledge about alcohol through the brand names they were giving and which type they felt was popularly used. There are also

indications that some pupils who take alcohol do abuse it at times depending on the frequency and intensity of intake. The study also reveals that pupils are aware about the effects of consuming alcohol.

Pupils in this study acknowledged that alcohol consumption reduces concentration on learning which results into poor school attendance and overall academic performance. Since alcohol is addictive such behaviors as alcohol use may be difficult to control and may lead to alcoholism at a later stage. As a result many government schools do not tolerate the use of alcohol by pupils.

The survey results indicate that respondents acknowledged having experienced problems associated with the use of alcohol. For instance 55% of 92 respondents indicated that alcohol can cause sickness. The sickness indicated could be as a result of binge drinking as revealed by the pupils themselves that there are some of them and even themselves who take five or more alcoholic drinks at one drinking occasion within a period of two weeks. This shows that although adolescents use alcohol they know some of the serious consequences of alcohol abuse. The tujirijiri beer such as Officer has 40% of alcohol content. According to the WHO Expert Committee Report (1980), 90% of the alcohol taken by someone is detoxified by the liver at the rate of 30cc. of pure alcohol per hour and 10% is eliminated with the water that carries it. The liver eliminates alcohol as a poisonous substance at the stated rate but if it is beyond that then the liver becomes inflamed and injured a situation which can cause cirrhosis. Cirrhosis according to the same report can be very fatal. The same report indicates that alcohol intoxication can lead to complete unconsciousness, so deep with weak pulse that a drinker can go into a coma.

In the focus group discussions pupils explained how those who abuse alcohol perform poorly in school work yet the teachers indicated that it was academic failure that puts some pupils at risk of alcohol use. In this study it cannot clearly be concluded whether it is alcohol abuse that cause poor school performance or vice versa although habits like absenteeism from school, skipping of lessons and expulsion from school can be mediating factors towards poor school performance. The results of a study done by Cox et al (2007) indicate an inverse relationship between alcohol use and academic performance.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the current study reveal that some pupils at the two boarding school use alcohol. Although not all those who use alcohol abuse it incidental abuse through the frequency of use and amount used can be deduced from the information the research participants gave. Although the existence of those who abuse alcohol can be inferred their number cannot be so high within the school because according to the views expressed by the interviewed teachers pupils who are addicts are not tolerated by the schools.

The findings and messages from the pupils presented in this report show the pupils understanding of how the environmental factors such as easy access to alcohol, availability of alcohol, home environment, geographical position of the school and the school set up can be mediating factors for alcohol use and abuse by pupils. The findings also show how interpersonal factors like peer pressure, quest for socialization and being friends with those who use alcohol were viewed as risk factors for alcohol use by pupils. The findings further indicate how personal factors of having extra pocket money, negative emotional state, expectations about the function of alcohol and thrill seeking was perceived as causes of alcohol use by pupils. These stated three risk factors are interrelated.

Although some pupils indicated that they use alcohol, the negative effects of alcohol use according to their views seem to be more than the expected benefits. These negative effects may affect the normal functioning of an individual making him or her addicted obsessive and compulsive drinker. The excessive use of alcohol may lead to brain damage and also to criminal activities which may end up eroding one's self-esteem (Billingham et al, 1993, Bradley et al, 1992 & Cronin, 1997).

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## **Teacher Preparedness to Utilize Emergent Literacy for Teaching Initial Literacy in Selected Schools of Mansa District**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether or not primary school teachers in Mansa District utilized emergent literacy skills in their teaching of conventional reading and writing skills to learners in Grade 1 considering the fact that emergent literacy lays a firm and solid foundation for continuous development of literacy skills. The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design since it required the researcher to describe the phenomenon under investigation as obtaining and as observed in the natural setting in the research sites. The sample comprised 62 Grade 1 teachers and 3,594 Grade 1 primary school pupils. Only schools teaching initial literacy in the local familiar language using the Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL) methodology were targeted for this research. The findings indicated that teachers lacked knowledge about emergent literacy and did not know how useful it was for continuous literacy development among the children; most of the teachers ignored pupils' prior literacy knowledge and considered their learners as complete illiterates who knew nothing about literacy skills; teachers never designed extra teaching and learning materials for teaching literacy; and, the class sizes were large resulting in lack of meaningful scaffolding. This study concluded that emergent literacy skills were not utilized by Grade One primary school teachers, thereby delaying the acquisition of higher level skills by learners. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education in Zambia should equip teachers with knowledge of emergent literacy through deliberate training.*