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Alcohol Abuse as a Social Problem in Nigeria

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Introduction

The subject matter of alcohol and alcohol abuse has been severally discussed by different scholars and writers. Various academic disciplines like sociology, psychology, medicine etc are all interested in alcohol abuse. Roycies (2001) strongly argued that alcohol is the most abused chemical substance in the world.

The consumption and abuse of alcohol is a world-wide phenomenon. The Australian Drug Foundation asserted that drug abuse, alcohol abuse and HIV/AIDS epidemic are some of the major burdens of societies in the 21st century. The consumption of alcohol is usually associated with every human society from time immemorial. According to Odejide (1993), "the consumption and abuse of alcohol is all over the world. It is the social attitudes of people towards alcohol that vary from time to time". To support this position of Odejide, Hollister (1992), asserted that almost every society has been able to find in nature some leaves and wine which man has converted to one form of drug or another. Alcohol and tobacco (nicotine) remain acceptable in most society of the world.

In Nigeria alcohol consumption is seen as an acceptable social activity. This explains why almost every community or ethnic group in Nigeria is known and associated with a particular brand or brew of alcohol. For example the Idoma of Benue state are known for tapping palm wine, the Tiv ethnic group of the same state is associated with local brew known as 'burukutu' (BKT). The Beroms tribe in plateau is known for brewing "Pito". The southern part of Nigeria, particularly the South-South is known for brewing local gin called "Ogogoro". In Delta and Edo State respectively the same local gin is known as "Sapele water".

Hollister seem to agree with the above view when he posited that, "in Nigeria... alcohol is prepared locally in the form of palm wine and ogogoro in the southern parts" (Hollister 1992). In most parts of Nigeria, it is not the consumption of alcohol that is seen as a social problem but the misuse or abuse of it.

Definitions of Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse

According to Ginsberg, cited in Bean, (1998), the term alcohol can be defined as, "any chemical substance which will produce change in living organisms that are expected as an alternation in functional states usually referred to the effect of the drug". Another conceptual clarification of alcohol is posited by Nwosisi (1998), who viewed alcohol as, "substances which interact with our body system to modify the physiological and biochemical process of the body". Also, according

to Osu (1999), the term alcohol can be defined as any chemical substance that can kill pain or alter the mind of the user.

In his own conception of the term alcohol, Sarason (1996), stated that alcohol is any chemical substance that acts on the central nervous system as a "blocker" of messages transmitted from one nerve cell to the next.

According to Odejide (1993), alcohol abuse is the use of chemical substance when not medically necessary or when used against legal prohibition or excessively as in the case of socially accepted drugs such as alcohol constitute the phenomenon of drug abuse.

According to Denzin (2000), alcohol abuse is defined in terms of "a self destructive form of activities in which the drinker compulsively drinks beyond the point where he or she can't stop drinking for any extended period of time, even if he or she wants to"

Sarason (1996), further argued that alcohol abuse, as a deviant behaviour is defined in terms of behavioural indicators such as lowered job performance and poor interpersonal relationships.

Another conception of alcohol abuse is by Umeh (1992) who defined alcohol abuse as the use of mood modifying substance in dosage many times in excess of those used medically and over length of time that can cause damage to the individual, society or both.

The Concept of Social Problem

Sociology as a discipline was developed as an attempt to find practical solution to social problems; which have become increasingly complex and technological. (Aderinto cited in Adesina et al (2000). As a matter of fact, sociology as a discipline emerged to address social problems and to create a well patterned and ordered society. According to Aderinto (2002), "It is common today to read in daily newspapers of the occurrence of cult members on Rampage", "AIDS claim 10 lives", are common reports that reflect disturbing phenomena and are called "social problems"

Various scholars have defined social problem from different points of view. Horton and Lee (1995) defined social problem as, "a social condition affecting a significant number of people in ways considered undesirable, about which it is felt something can be done through collective social action".

From the above definition, one can say or add that social problem involves issues of roles, status and stress in every day life in modern society.

According to Nwabueze (1992), social problems are some kind of strains within the system, seem as the product of certain objective conditions within the society inimical to the realization of other norms or values for members of society.

Based on the above definition, one can go a little further by defining social problem as the malfunctioning of an essentially stable and conflict free society. A rather more embracing definition asserts that a social problem exists when a significant number of people or a number of significant people, perceive an undesirable difference between social ideas and social realities, and believe

that this difference can be eliminated by collective action.

According to Merton and Nisbet (1996), there is a difference between social problems and other problems because of their link with 'institutional and normative context. According to them "Social problems are distinctively those problems that concern the rules of relationship, formal or informal, which the people of a society established among themselves."

For any problem to be called social problems there are certain common features or characteristic that can be used as an identification mark. Firstly, social problems must be recognized as such by the people they affect. Secondly, for a social problem to exist there must be a real objective condition such as crime, drug abuse etc. There must be a subjective response in people's minds. In other words, the people must see it as affecting the rules of human relationship and hampering orderly existence in the society. And most importantly, the problem must be perceived by a significant number of people. In addition to the above, another features of social problem is that for any problem to be so referred, it must be capable of solution through collective action.

Based on the above discussion so far, it implies that social problems are associated with some kinds of disorder, breakdown of norms and values which affect human relationship. If one should go by the conceptual definition of social problem above, and the common features or characteristics of a social problem then, no doubt alcohol abuse can be described as a social problem.

Theories that Explain Alcohol Consumption

There are several theoretical explanations as to why people consume alcohol. Some of these theories include, differential association theory by Sutherland (1939), social control theory by Robertson (1987), social and community theory by Sarason (1989), etc.

Differential Association is popularized by Edwin Sutherland (1939). The theory argues that the Association patterns of an individual is a source of initiation into alcohol consumption and its abuse, crime, deviants acts etc. In other words, the first principle of differential association theory is that criminal or deviant behaviour is learned. By this assertion, it means it is not the individual pathology or biological factors that causes deviation or crime. The theory further states that deviant or criminal behaviour is not unique to or invented by individuals but instead learned from others.

To Sutherland's (1939), assumption, all human behaviours are as a result of socialization especially with intimate group or peer group. He argued that how we act depends on how those around us desire that we act. How much we deviate from or conform to the norms depends on differences or differentials in which we are associated with. This particular theory also emphasises and assumes that the frequency and consistency of a person's contact with patterns of criminal behaviour and with a group of those who commit criminal acts determine the chances of criminality.

However, in spite of the commendation of this theory there are some loop-

holes. It is not in all cases that criminal or deviant acts can be learned under a group context or by association with criminals or deviants. The theory overlooks the question of the use of "force", lure and conscription into criminal gang without the consent of the victim. An example would be prostitution as a deviant behaviour or criminal act. Most of the girls involve, particularly in international prostitution were lured with the promise of good job in oversea countries.

In spite of the above short-fall of this theory, it is still relevant to this present study or problem under consideration. This is so, because alcohol consumption is also a group activity that is prone to abuse. Alcohol abuse is learned like any other behaviour primarily from association with others that indulge in alcohol abuse. In other words, a person that associates with a group or group of friends who engage and involve in alcohol abuse is very likely to become an alcoholic.

It is important to note that for one to abuse alcohol. Some factors must be put into consideration. Such factors as frequency of association, intensity of the association, duration of contact and age of interaction with the group that abuse alcohol will serve as a social influence that will enhance individual to becoming an alcoholic. Since the major argument of this theory is all about learning; a person that associated with alcoholics will learn the ways, manners, motives and techniques of how alcohol can be abused. Therefore, this theory is also relevant and applicable to the study of alcohol abuse as a social problem.

According to Robertson (1989), an approach to the problem of alcohol is the control theory. This particular theory is quite different from the differential theory and it assumes that life is characterised by temptation. And that deviant acts tend to be attractive, providing rewards to those who engage in them. The theory further postulates that deviance is the outcome of a failure of social control. That people only conform because society is able to control their behaviour. According to the theory if there were no such control there might be little conformity. The theory further postulates that people who are integrated into the community tend to follow its rules, whereas people who are isolated from their community may be inclined to break them.

The implication of this theory is that people will indulge in alcohol abuse if what they would gain in the process is more than what they will gain by abstinence from alcohol. This theory is relevant to the study of alcohol abuse as it attributes the problem of alcohol to the satisfaction or reward from alcohol.

This theory is also relevant to the study of alcohol as a social problem because it emphasises social control. Any society where there is no social control that will check the excess of the people. There will be problem of disorder and disorganization which will undermine development. This theory is also relevant to this study because, problems associated with alcoholism do not affect the victim alone but the entire society.

There are psychological as well as socio-cultural dimensions associated with the problem of excessive use of alcohol. According to Sarason (1996), the value and customs of the community influence attitude towards alcohol abuse. The theory explains that the rate of alcohol abuse is low in groups which the drinking customs, values and sanction are well known, agreed to by all and consistent with

the rest of the culture. The theory also attributes changing socio-cultures within the cultural as a major factor that influence the rate and pattern of alcohol abuse.

It is this social and community theory that best explains the pattern and rate of alcohol consumption and abuse in Nigeria. For example, it is regarded as a deviant act and frowned at by the Idoma community of Benue State, if a potential in-law or an in-law visits the bride's parents without palm wine. The traditions and custom of the people permit the consumption of palm wine in virtually all community based ceremonies.

My assessment of this theory is, that it does not adequately explain why the rate of alcohol consumption is still very high in community where drinking customs, values and sanctions are well known, agreed to by all and consistent with the rest of the culture. Such community or group that does not approve of alcohol consumption and punish offenders yet, the rate of alcohol consumption is not low instead it is very high. For instance, in Sokoto State the custom, religion and value system does not permit the consumption of alcohol. Yet the most thriving business in Sokoto today is buying and selling of alcohol. The rate of alcohol consumption seems to be higher than in some communities where the value system, custom and tradition permit the consumption of alcohol. However, just like we stated earlier, this theory is applicable to this study. This is so because it gives one insight into the rate and pattern of alcohol consumption in Nigeria.

Factors Promoting Alcohol Abuse

According to Ivening (1996), one of the factors that promote the abuse of alcohol is problem(s). He asserted that those who drinks alcohol because of problems include victims of broken relationship, such as, broken marriages, jilted lovers, unemployed, poverty, frustrations etc. To him, the reason why a person with a problem drinks probably is to cope with problem of living or life.

According to Anunonye (1975), Olowoyo (1986), Odejide (1978) Lambo (1965), factors that promotes alcohol abuse include: Social, physical and psychological coping mechanism, relief of tension and stress, family disorder, curiosity, peer group influence, cheap availability of alcohol, frustration, idleness, collapse of religious values, role rejection, assimilation to keep awake and alienation.

In advancing his own reasons or factors that promote alcohol abuse, Louria (1999), argued that; a person who feels unacceptable may resort to the use of stimulants or alcohol to enable him function as desired in a given environment.

According to Weil (1975), it is an attempt by man to fight his environment or alter his state of consciousness to make his environment less threatening to him that promotes alcohol abuse. He further stated that whenever human beings are confronted with psychological problems such as insecurity, anxiety and depression alcohol or drug is usually needed.

On his own part Orji (1999) argued that alcohol abuse is more of socio-economic than a psychological factor. He submitted that factors that led people to alcohol abuse are feeling of neglect by parents or the society, influence of peer group, curiosity, search for more pleasurable life and economic depression which

creates idleness and unemployment.

In his own contribution to the factors that promote alcohol abuse, Blum (1999), posited that the problem of alcohol abuse is mainly caused by social rather than any other factors. He cited the emergence of industrialization and problems associated with urbanization that is responsible for alcohol or drug abuse in Nigeria.

The Process of How a Social Drinker Becomes an Alcoholic

There are various types of alcohol drinkers. Some of the typology include problem drinkers, chronic drinkers, solitary drinkers, binge drinkers and social drinkers among others. Apart from social drinkers, mentioned above, all the other types of alcohol drinkers can be regarded as alcoholic or those that indulge in alcohol abuse.

According to Denzin (2000), some people's preferred way of socialising is via alcohol. Such group of individual are referred to as "social drinkers". To him, social drinkers are not alcoholic dependent though they drink alcohol. But a social drinker can abuse alcohol through learning process. The learning process can be through group context. This could be through group influence or peer pressure. This is in line with differential association theory. A social drinker who associates frequently with a problem drinker or chronic drinker in drinking spots can gradually graduate from being a social drinker to a problem drinker or alcoholic. For instance, a problem drinker is one who drink and abuse alcohol because of the problem of living. Such problems like unemployment, frustration, idleness and broken marriages, force problem drinkers to take to alcohol abuse as a coping mechanism. In the same vein, social drinkers with similar problems of living will gradually begin to depend on alcohol as a coping mechanism and means of solving his or her problems. In the process, gradually from one usual bottle of drink he begins to increase it until he gets hooked up with alcohol. This is the stage of been referred to as "alcoholic" or "a drunk".

Implications of Alcohol Abuse

In most societies, alcohol consumption is socially and culturally approved and accepted but the abuse can lead to alcoholism, (Madox 2002). Madox (ibid), further posited that, the effects of alcohol abuse may result in physiological, physical, psychological and social problems such as loss of self, tuberculosis and sexual impotency among others.

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) (1992) supported the above view by asserting that, the implication of alcohol abuse can be seen from three dimensions. That is physical, psychological and social effects. Among some of the physical effects of alcohol abuse according to NDELA (1992), are poor memory, red eyes, poor coordination of sensory organs and tiredness.

According to McCoy (2001) some of the effects of alcohol abuse include poor perception of time, land distance, sensory illusion and hallucination. Another implication of alcohol abuse according to Hopper (2000), "It is not true that alcohol makes you dizzy. It also makes you stupid, some improperly

motivated students feeling stupid and dizzy will quit right there". He further stated that, alcohol abuse lead to violent illness, stupidity, dizziness and irresponsibility.

Ogunlesi (1992) pointed out that there are so many health hazards and social consequences of alcohol abuse such as liver damage, destruction of nervous system, brain damage, impotency, psychosis, poor memory, family disorder and pre-mature death. In addition to this analysis, he said that apart from direct effects, alcohol abuse may manifest anti-social behavioral patterns that might be injurious to their immediate environment in form of assassination, armed robbery, civil unrest and gangsterism.

According to Fayeye (1993), alcohol when misused or abused produces side effects such as euphoria, insomnia, brain damage etc. He went further to state that alcohol addicts are socially defined as unacceptable and they are believed to constitute "drug problem" for the society.

Ebie (1998), supported the position of Hoppa (2000) concerning health hazards of alcohol abuse. He asserted that, the direct effect of alcohol abuse on the youths is inevitably hazardous to their health.

Wyman (2004) in a research titled, "Drug abuse among runaway and homeless youths" calls for focused solutions". He asserted that alcohol abuse may cause irritability, restlessness, sleep disturbance, tremors, dilated pupils, skin flushing and weight loss over time.

Osu (1999) supported the health hazard expressed by Odejide (1992), and Fayeye (1993). He asserted that, alcohol that is habit forming is dangerous to people's health. According to him, "I would not expect teachers in our schools to be taking alcohol or smoking while in school because they are role models to their pupils".

According to Zungeru (cited in Drug Salvation Force 2004), it is very frustrating to see this substance (alcohol) ruin the lives of the legion of young men. Denton and Ryan (cited in Kalu 1990) collaborated with the above view when they argued that the effect of trade in illicit drug and alcohol abuse include wasted lives, the death from alcohol addiction, broken families and a ruined economy.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2004), the main harmful effects due to alcohol abuse include chronic health effects like liver cirrhosis, lung cancer, emphysema etc.

According to Hoppa (2000), alcohol abuse as a social problem places strain on husband and wife interaction. This effect often leads to separation or divorce and total disintegration of family life. He further stated that alcohol addicts and their families suffered social isolation. This resulted to embarrassment and humiliation suffered by the victim and his or her family members. According to him, social visits by other family members became reduced and less frequent.

The medical, social and psychological implications of alcohol abuse can be deduced from the confessional statement of a female alcoholic (Cited in Denzin 2000).

According to her:

"Hell is our natural home we have lost everything we live in fear alcohol was our only friend. We found ourselves in alcohol and then it turned against us. No other friend would do that to you. But we kept on drinking because we had to.

(Cited in Denzin 2000).

From the above, it is very clear that the effects of alcohol abuse go beyond the individual alcoholic. But it includes the family, the economy, government and the entire society. The implications of alcohol abuse are enormous and a threat to human existence on earth. One can conclude on the implication of alcohol abuse that, alcohol abuse as a social problem is associated with a kind of disorder, breakdown norms and values which affect human relationship.

Policy Issues and Conclusion

This paper has been able to demonstrate that alcohol abuse is a social problem in Nigeria and a health hazard that affects a significant number of Nigerian citizens. In addition, it also pointed out that the effects of alcohol abuse are on both the individual alcoholic and the larger society. The paper has been able to establish also that the problem of alcohol abuse is enormous and poses a great challenge to any society that is aspiring for development. Therefore, there is need for government to come up with policy issues that will reverse the trend of alcohol abuse in our society.

Some of the reasons why people indulge in alcohol abuse as pointed out in this paper include problem of unemployment, poverty, idleness, frustrations etc. There is need for government to come out with a very clear policy issue that can reduce poverty, unemployment etc. This is very necessary in view of the adage that says "an idle man is the devil's workshop". If the citizens are actively engaged in terms of gainful employment, the rate of idleness and frustration will be reduced. This implies less attention for alcohol abuse.

Secondly, alcohol consumption is a socially approved activity. It will be difficult if not impossible to eliminate it from human society. Therefore, there is need for government to come up with legislation in form of heavy tax for the production, sell and buying of alcohol in Nigeria. Also, there should be laws setting the age limit for alcohol consumers. The age limit will discourage teenagers from alcohol consumption. The law should provide heavy fines for anyone who sells alcohol to teenagers and also teenagers that consume alcohol. The Federal Road Safety Corps should also be empowered and equipped with testing gadgets that can monitor the quantity of alcohol in drivers' body system while driving. This will reduce alcohol induce accidents on our high ways.

There is need for commercial drivers, public servants, students and anyone who want to obtain driving license to undergo periodic test to ascertain the level of alcohol in their body system. There is also need for government to back up the law that prohibit the sale of and consumption of alcohol in public places with a heavy sanction such as fines and imprisonment to deter offenders. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to fight the abuse of alcohol, for it is a social problem and a health hazard to human development. There can be no meaningful development in any society that is faced with the problem of alcohol abuse.

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Pattern and Distribution of House-helps in Ilorin: A Preliminary Survey

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Introduction

In Nigerian traditional society and most parts of the world, roles and functions of individuals are clearly defined and accepted for male and female, old and young members. These roles were largely accepted more so that they were supported by traditional myths. As a result, the traditional masculine roles were that of workers and providers while the traditional feminine roles were socially approved to be housewives and mothers. Women have fewer opportunities to develop their skills. Their activities as care-givers and home-makers go unpaid and unrecognized as contributions to national wealth. Outside the home, women usually get less pay for equal work; find themselves mainly restricted to the lower levels; work long hours in substandard or appalling conditions; and often lack membership in unions, enjoying little legal protection (CHRI, 2001:18-25). In view of this, it was not normal for women in general and working mothers in particular to participate in non-traditional occupations.

Several factors combine to present themselves as formidable barriers to women participation in the non-traditional occupations. Indeed, the domestic functions women perform at home with the associated child rearing may create problems for them in meeting fully the demands of the non-traditional occupation. This is clearly evident in the general assumption which holds women to be a subset of men which has probably failed to encourage women participation in non-traditional occupations.

Also associated with this view is the culturally held belief that child rearing and household working hours tend to sap the vitality from mothers and render them less occupationally comfortable and fit. Women who persist through education and training face more barriers on the job, including isolation from other women, lack of clean facilities, and difficulties with childcare (Eisenber, 1998:282-287, and WOW, 1993: 15-17). This is particularly true because the greater part of women's activities was devoted to the care and welfare of children.

Today however, the traditional feminine role of wives and mothers is