

The Role of Parental Alcohol Abuse on Children Detachment to the Streets in Kabale Municipality, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how parental alcohol abuse influences children leaving their homes in Kabale municipality, Uganda. The study was guided by Erickson's psychosocial development theory in view of the environment that would facilitate or hinder proper development. Phenomenological research design of the qualitative approach was used in the study. Children who left their homes due to parental alcohol abuse were the targeted population accessible at The Shepherd Center and Grace Villa children-care centres. A sample size of 15 participants consisted of 5 boys, and 5 girls living in children-care centers, 4 children caretakers from the children-care centers, and a Probation Officer was purposefully selected. Interview and observation methods were used to collect data. Colleagues and supervisors reviewed the research instruments for validity. Triangulation of participants and voice recorder facilitated reliability and trustworthiness. Data analysis procedure was by transcribing, and then coding according to research questions, followed by presenting, discussing, and interpreting in a narrative form. The findings revealed that children left their homes because their drunken parents neglected them by their absence, the inadequate provision of basic needs such as food, and abused them by beating, unpredictability, insulting, rejection, and sending them out of the house at night. Consequently boys left home and went to the streets while girls went either for early marriage, prostitution, and working in hotels or house girls. The participants suggested community sensitization, laws and regulations regarding the production, marketing and consumption of alcohol, and ensuring children are in school as possible interventions to control parental alcohol abuse in Kabale municipality. The study also recommended psychotherapy for parents involved in alcohol abuse and resilience training for children to buffer against the negative influences of parental alcohol abuse.

Keywords: *Street children, Alcoholism, Drug Abuse*

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The phenomenon of children leaving their parental homes to a state of homelessness on the streets is a worldwide concern. The presence of children on streets is a global challenge and their estimated number is continuously growing. “According to a report published by the United Nations, there are 150 million children aged three to 18 years on our streets today and their numbers are growing fast. 40% of the world's street children are homeless, the other 60% work on the street to support their families” (Prem Singh and Ebenezer, 2013). Such is a number of the world's population, needing care and guides to grow responsibly, that is homes and left to survive on their own. This number evens out to most parts of the world. “A 2013 study by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), estimated that there were 10,000 street children in Uganda, a 70 % increase in the number of children on the streets since 1993, with 16 new children coming to the Kampala streets every day” (HRW, 2014). This is a big percentage of children to be leaving home going on the street on a daily basis.

Who then are street children? This study adopted the definition by UNICEF in 1993 that defines street children as boys and girls under 18 years for whom ‘the street’ (includes unoccupied dwellings and wasteland) has become home and/or their source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised by the authorities such as parents and other elders (Ennew, 2002). Following on such definition of street children the concept of home as is generally known does not have the same meaning.

McCabe (2013) in her studies about the homeless in Ireland defined home in terms of physical and psychic space. McCabe's concept of home as a physical space is where one can live having a sense of belonging with personal belongings. In this sense home can be understood to carry the concept of a dwelling place in terms of shelter where one accesses the physical needs. McCabe also describes home as the psychic space to mean an environment that allows for the provision of psychological needs such as love and security. Therefore, by the definition of home given by McCabe, street children are homeless. On the street parental provision of both physical and psychological needs is not available. On the street children are reduced to self-care in order to survive. Ideally, the definition of street children brings across a concept of homelessness, helplessness and vulnerability of children that creates dependency on the good will of the public.

The phenomenon of street children in Africa may be associated with a cultural transition. It is an outcome of something not going right according to the cultural expectations. According to African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect Publication (1991) family structure and parental background contributes a lot to children migrating to urban areas. The structure of the family and parental background has changed thus influencing the life of the children. In traditional African society children parenting and upbringing was a collective effort. In this family framework, children were well cared for and the phenomenon of street children was not common. The interference of family structure through the processes of industrialization, urbanization and modernization has adversely weakened the family institution (Kinoti, 2013). This has greatly affected the strong family fabric leaving child care to individual families and the result is increased influx of children to the street. Kinoti noted that many of the children living in the streets today are a consequence of family related problems which are as a result of a weak family structure. His point of view indicates that there is a breakdown of African cultural structure.

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Children leaving home for the streets point to the concept of their discomfort in the home environment. Alcohol abuse in homes is one of the things that can create an environment that is uncomfortable for children. An estimated one in four U.S children under the age of 18 is exposed to a family alcohol problem (NACA, 2001). UNICEF (2006) found out that children in United Kingdom who lived in homes where there was domestic violence were afraid their parents would separate. Keenan, Kenward, Grundy, and Leon (2013) in their study about Longitudinal Prediction of Divorce in Russia: The Role of Individual and Couple Drinking Patterns, observed that people who are seeking treatment for their own alcohol problems were often dealing with financial problems, separations and divorce, stress, and poor health. Separation and divorce impact negatively on the children. According to Laslett et al (2015) heavy parental drinking is linked to negative effects in families ranging from modeling of poor drinking habits, behaviours, family arguments and ruined family occasions and relationships to child injuries, ongoing child neglect and abuse, and domestic violence. They also state that the effects of heavy drinking upon families can include arguments, disharmony, divorce, domestic violence, and inadequate role performance by family members. Home environments where there is such disharmony resulting from parental alcohol abuse seem to lead children to live with a sense of insecurity, tension and fear.

Uganda is the leading consumer of alcohol in the world with per capita consumption of 19.5 liters, and there has been no clear regulatory policy on alcohol use in Uganda (Kasirye and Mutaawe, 2010; cited in UAPA, 2014). The survey on the Alcohol use among adults in Uganda by Kabwama, Ndyanabangi, Mutungi, Wesonga, Bahendeka, and Guwatudde revealed that;

Alcohol is available almost everywhere and is culturally acceptable. Many people learn and start drinking at their homes as early as during their teenage. The level of alcohol use among adults in Uganda is high such that the survey conducted in 2014 indicated that 9.8% of the adult population had an alcohol-use-related disorder (2016).

Such records show how easy access it is to alcohol in the country which is likely to generate alcohol related disorders among the people especially the family. Building on their findings this study sought to investigate how parental alcohol abuse impacts on the family and children who are the vulnerable members of the family.

METHODS

This study adopted a phenomenological design in order to get an in depth understanding of the variables under study. Creswell defines a phenomenological research as a qualitative strategy in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants in the study (Creswell, 2003; cited in Asiamah, Mensah, and Oteng-Abayie, 2017). It allows the participants to be in their natural context and express their worldview. In this case the choice of phenomenological design was identified by the researcher as appropriate in order to explore and gain insight from the participants in the phenomenon of children leaving their homes for the streets of Kabale municipality.

In this study the target population were children of Kabale municipality who left their homes due to parental alcohol abuse and are living in children-care centres. The concept of target population is clarified further to an accessible population such that the actual study takes place with the accessible population. The accessible population was children from The Shepherd Centre and Grace Villa children-care centres aged between 10 and 18 whose parents abuse alcohol. According to the administrators The Shepherd Centre took care of

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children as residents ranging between 48 and 54, while Grace Villa took care of over 100 children 24 of which were residents. Majority had alcohol abusing parents with a percentage estimate of 50% to 60%.

Purposive sampling was used in his study where two children-care centres; one of the girls and the other of the boys were selected. Ten children participants; 5 boys and 5 girls between 10 and 18 years old were then selected by simple random sampling. Five adults were selected by automatic inclusion; 4 from the children-care centers and one from probation office. This made the study sample size of 15 participants. This study used interview and observation methods for collecting data. A phenomenological research design has a strong philosophical underpinning and typically involves conducting interviews (Georgi, 2009; and Moustakas, 1994; cited in Crosswell, 2014). The researcher interviewed every research participant. While the interview was going on the researcher observed the manner the participant responded and also took note of the non-verbal communications which included the tone of voice.

RESULTS

The research participants, (specifically the children) narrated their home and family experiences with sorrow in their voices. They described what the alcohol-drinking parents did or did not do for their children. Children shared what they noticed their parents doing before them that were not pleasant that influenced their departure from home. Children caretakers at the children-care centers and the Probation Officer gave their responses about how children were treated by their parents from the dimension of their work. The findings hinged around abuse, domestic violence, inconsistency, marital misconduct, and neglect. The following are the findings in a more detailed presentation of the responses to the interviews.

Most parents drank alcohol daily

Responding to the question about how often parents drank alcohol, the general response was that it was daily. The parent that drank was either mothers, both mother and father, or guardians depending on who the child was staying with. For example participant KC 2 lived with an aunt whose husband drunk daily and most nights he would return home in the night drunk as late as 1 or 2 am. Participant KC 5 came from a family of heavy drinkers, the uncles and aunts drunk heavily daily. Participant KC 8 lived with a grandfather who drank heavily daily. Participant KC 9 had a mother who drank daily. Participant KC 10 had both parents who drank heavily some days. Most participants said that parents would arrive home late in the night.

While parents would be out drinking, children would be left at home. Children dreaded their parent's arrival from drinking because they were never sure of how they would be treated. The participants said that parents would mistreat their children by beating, insulting, chasing them out of the house into the open cold air, or a combination of the three. Such treatment the children found very difficult to endure all the time.

Parents earned the money they spent on alcohol

The findings from the participants about how parents got money they spent on alcohol revealed that it was earned through a variety of ways. For example, participant KC 2 stayed with an aunt whose husband earned a government salary but spent most of it on alcohol. The uncle of participant KC 3 raised the money from a monthly salary. The father of participant KC 6 worked as a herdsman and the money he was paid would be spent on alcohol.

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Participant KC 4 was not very sure how the money was raised but noticed that the neighbors would leave their homes in the morning and return drunk in the evening.

Participant SH 1 also mentioned that some sell family property. SH 1 said with a voice full of sadness, "One child reported to me the mother had sold half the little charismas package that had been given to the child to celebrate with the family for alcohol". Participant KC 7 said that the parents raised the money by selling their farm produce when it was in season and other times it was from casual labour. Participant GV 4 gave the following response;

Some women grow whatever and sell it. Or women can grow crops and husbands steal them and sell them in order to buy alcohol (February 2018).

Participant GV 3 responded thus;

I have no idea. But men get money from women to drink. Did you know women work and men take the money? Women would rather be with a drunken husband than alone. That is what I do not understand. They say if you are alone nobody respects you. They would rather respect you with a drunken man (February, 2018).

The response of participant PO 5 was as follows;

For your information most men (husbands) just grab anything from home like what the wife will have harvested. They just take and sell. We have had such cases where family property was sold by the man, such as harvests, even land. To investigate it was for alcohol. It is difficult to imagine parents selling food while their families, especially children, are suffering (February, 2018).

Participant SH 2 commented thus;

Most of the children stay with their grandparents who are frail. Surprisingly, though frail, they still spend the little income they get on alcohol (February 2018).

The findings indicate that the sources of the money parents spend on alcohol were casual labour, sell of farm produce, government salary and sometimes sale of family property including land. The participants, especially, children shared that they could not imagine how the parents spent money on alcohol when they were having little food in their homes. Spending money on alcohol undermined the possibility of parents providing food for the children.

With parents earning money and spending it on alcohol, participants were asked to describe children's homes experiences. Different experiences were shared. The following were the findings:

Child Neglect and Abuse

With sadness detected in the voice participant SH 2 exclaimed;

Children have faced a lot, a lot! When they share you can cry. When parents return home drunk, all they do is to beat their children. Children are beaten so badly that they get scared of their very homes (February 2018).

Participant PO 5 said that children from homes where there was parental alcohol abuse had terrible, violent and stressful experiences. Participant PO 5 shared the experience of talking to child on the street thus;

Those who are not violent will share. One child told me, 'ah, at home it was really terrible. My father used to beat me. My parents could beat me now and then

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especially when they would be drunk. Even at home I used to sleep outside'. Family environment was violent and stressing for the child. The child ended up looking for an alternative environment which became the street (February 2018).

Participant GV 3 also presented an experience of two boys whose mother drunk alcohol.

A case of a boy we take care of who has a mother only. She was the problem. She drank too much. She even had a mat that she would go with in the bar and sleep there. The boy had worked and bought a goat, and his mother sold the goat for alcohol. That is when he came to me crying. And he had a little brother with him. So he was also a mother to his little brother though he was a child. So we get a lot of it (February 2018).

Here "So we get a lot of it" seems to indicate the kind of shared stress that children of alcohol abusing parents face from their parents. The mother of the two children neglected them and frustrated them by selling the goat one hard worked hard to purchase. The elder boy had taken on the parenting role over his young brother. This affirms what NACADA (2011) pointed out that parental alcohol abuse jeopardizes the care of children. In the case of the two boys, the elder one took over the role of mother.

The following are the lived experiences children shared. Many of the experiences shared had a complexity of issues such as neglect, abuse, parental inconsistency, and rejection. Such experiences combined to generate confusion and stress for the children.

Participant KC 6 had both parents who drunk every day. The description of parental experience was;

Our parents were tough especially my dad. Every time he came home drunk he would beat us children. He would beat me more than others saying, "You are not my son". This was because my skin is darker than the rest of the children. Whenever he was sober it was fine but when drunk it would be tough (February 2018).

Participant KC 6 experienced a combination of inconsistency, abuse and rejection. It was bad enough to be beaten like other children in the family were beaten, but being disowned made the situation worse; a rejection by the father. Yet the participant explained such mistreatment happened when the father was drunk and never when he was sober. Such a swing from one extreme of child mindfulness to abuse and rejection demonstrates inconsistency. This inconsistency can bring confusion in the mind of a child. This kind of treatment reflects the work of Mayes & Truman (2002) cited in Mathenge (2016).

Participant KC 9 had both parents alive but not living together. The lived experience was with of the mother especially her behaviour towards the children and the neighbours. There was great sorrow in the tone of voice as the experience was being shared. The experience went thus;

It was hard; there were quarrels at home and with the neighbours initiated by my mother. She would arrive late about 11pm drunk and begin to quarrel and throw us children out of the house. Besides she used to bring men in the house.

After a pose and with a deep breath participant KC 9 continued;

Ah! No food! There would be one meal a day which my mother would prepare in the morning before going to work and ask us to have it for super and she would return

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late at night drunk. I used to spend time wondering in the trading centers. If my mother would see me she would punish me when we got home. Often she threatened to kill us children (we were many for her to take care she said). One day she beat me heavily. I remember it very well. I was about 9 years old. She tied me both hands, hanged me up in the house and beat me while hanging. It was at this time when she mentioned she was going to kill us that I told my elder brother that I was leaving home and I did (February 2018).

The experience of KC 9 represents a situation of parental neglect with poor provision of food, psychological and physical abuses through quarrels and beating that left children traumatized. The person that a child calls mother, who would be security for that child, was the one inflicting torture on the children as described. Where the child hoped for love and care there was a contrary and horrifying experience of being tied up, hanged and beaten, a condition of helplessness with no means of escape. The child sought an alternative secure place by moving to the streets.

Participant KC 10 recalled and narrated one experience and shared it almost in tears;

My parents used to drink alcohol every day and come home late. As children we remained at home but with no food. The day I left home I remember there was a lot of darkness. It was around 8 or 9 pm. I used to go at a lady's work place whose name was *Munyankole* during the day and peel Irish potatoes for her and she would give me chips. I would return home before my parents. This day I returned home after my parents. My father beat me very much. He put a brick on my chest and stepped on it as he beat me. When he released me I run away. My mother followed me and found me. And when she did find me she cut me by the elbow (*showing the scar*). This made me very angry and I left home for the streets. My father died when I was already here (*the children-care center*). When he died I felt angry and sad. (*Pauses: lost in thoughts*) I feel sad now when I remember him (February 2018).

The sharing of participant KC 10 brings forth stressful and traumatizing experiences that are highlighted in parental neglect, physical and psychological abuse. The parent was absent to the children most of the day and did not provide the basics such as food. This is neglect. It also points out to physical and psychological abuse where both mother and father physically beat the child. Mothers are normally sympathetic and protective of their children. It was not so with KC 10. He was seriously tortured by both parents and left helplessness.

Domestic violence

Many of the things that happen to children and in the family resulting from alcohol abuse may become public while others hardly ever get told. Domestic violence was of such things implicated in the findings of the study. Participants GV 3, a children caretaker, shared the following about parental alcohol abuse and family;

Kabale has the highest prevalence of alcoholism. Some kids do not bring it up as an issue because the problem is so common that nobody thinks it is an issue. For example one day the kids came running to me and asked me to come running because the mother Anne (pseudo name) was bleeding on the road just above our house. (Anne was one of the children in the care centre at the time. Her mother's husband was a step father of Anne). Anna's mother had been beaten badly by her husband when she asked him for salt at night when he was drunk. He got angry and started bashing her, and jumped up and down on her abdomen. When we got her into

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hospital we were told that he had burst her spleen and intestines. She died (February 2018).

One can presume that it was not the first time Anna's mother was beaten. This study did not have any other reference to prior incidences of such beating. However her death was as a result of being beaten recklessly by her drunken husband. One can only imagine what went on through the mind of Anne as she watched her mother dying after she had been beaten. This confirms what Klingemann (2001) reported saying that the size of the problem of alcohol and domestic violence is often underestimated. The case of Anne's mother presents a typical example of domestic violence and the many other associated problems due to parental alcohol abuse.

Participant KC 7 narrated the experience of witnessing the parents fighting and it was unpleasant and difficult to watch. The experience of what happened went as follows;

It was late in the evening when my parents returned home drunk and started fighting. This made the neighbours to gather around and they started looking on and laughing at them. I got upset, uncomfortable and angry. I disliked the fact that they were fighting and people were laughing at them. I could imagine how people would be laughing at me because they had seen my parents fighting. I did not like it. So at that moment I left home (February 2018).

Parents fighting in public made participant KC 7 feel so ashamed. It was uncomfortable imagining how the neighbours would be referring to this incident. This was the reason that finally made KC 7 to leave home. The reaction of KC 7 reflects what Windle (1996) says that prolonged marital conflict, influenced by parental alcohol use, contributed the child's escape.

Sexual misconduct

Parents could be insensitive of their sexual behaviours before their children. Participant SH 2 said that there were many experiences children whose parents abuse alcohol shared. One such experience was associated with the separation of parents. The sharing went thus,

Single parenting (mothers or father) creates a situation where other men or women are brought in the (house) home. Such parental behaviour confuses children (February 2018).

Participant SH 1 had a similar experience from another child;

One child shared that he was living with the mother in a house which was a single room. The mother was bringing home other men every night. The child was tired of seeing such acts. 'One day', he said, 'I decided to leave home and never to go back again'. Under such circumstances the child had limited options (February 2018).

Such an act of unfaithfulness before the children was a scandal. Children did not react to their parents about it but they knew it was not right.

The following was an experience of Participant KC 10;

My father used to bring some food at home whenever he got money, like matoke and posho. But my mother would bring men in the house and say that they were the ones who had brought the food. This was very bad (February 2018).

Participant KC 7 responded thus;

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Both our parents drunk but did not harass us. We used to have one meal a day, supper. But our house was not big enough. Our parents had one room and us children another. In our room as children there were two beds, girls shared a bed and boys shared the other bed. I did not find it comfortable (February, 2018).

A shared small space within the small house made participant KC 7. If one was to visualize the housing condition that this participant described there seems to be a sense of stress that such environment can generate. It is as if the sleeping space was not enough leading to an invasion of privacy within the house for both children and parents. There was never enough food either.

Participant KC 8 said;

Life would be bad some days when grandfather would come home drunk and throw us children out of the house at night to stay in the open (February, 2018).

This was said without much emphasis as if it was a normal thing to happen. Since it was happening regularly the children almost knew what to expect from the drunken grandfather.

Participant KC 2 said;

There was no peace at home. I used to stay with my aunt and her husband. I would do most of the domestic duties and go to school as well while my cousins did very little. Many times my aunt would insult me. I was never given the basic needs for school. The aunt's husband would drink too much daily. Their son had also become a drug and alcohol addict and he and his father would sometimes fight. I was never happy there. I prayed and I was very happy when I was brought here to the center (February, 2018).

Besides feeling neglected and abused the living environment was abusive by having father and son drunk and fighting in the home. Such an environment in a home where there is child abuse and neglect, with physical fights between family members may be frightening and uncomfortable for a child.

Participant KC 6 with the face down said, "Life was difficult". This participant said no more. Even with a long pause nothing more was said. This seemed to say it all. The expression seemed to indicate a lot of painful experiences that the participant could not express at the time.

To most children, alcohol abusing parents neglected them and this deprived them of accessing their basic needs. Children are vulnerable. Child neglect included parental poor provision of food as well as leaving the children unattended.

Participant GV 3 had this to say about parents neglecting their children;

When both parents drink, children are left unattended. When a mother drinks the spirit of parenting is abandoned. She never cares whether children eat or not. She goes to the bar and comes home late. Some would return as late as 10 pm or even 2 am. Many will think of going home when there is no more alcohol in the bar for sale. This is child neglect (February 2018).

Participant SH 2 shared an experience of a child who experienced neglect from the mother.

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One child had a mother who would take a mat to the bar and sleep there. For some days the children would not see her. The days the mother would be gone children would have to take care of themselves. What they did to care for themselves was not investigated. Most likely they wandered around begging.

With the mother away from home, children took care of themselves. In such cases not only do the children miss out on the basic physical needs such as food, but they also miss out on parental guidance and monitoring. In such instances children simply guess what to do and how to behave.

Parental inconsistency

Some children also mentioned that they experienced parental inconsistent behaviour towards them. When parents were sober they treated them very well. Children felt loved and cared for by their parents, but when the parents were drunk the children felt treated harshly. The treatment moved from loving and caring to physical, verbal and psychological abuse. The experience of participant KC 10 was that the father would be caring when he was sober but a different person when drunk. The experience was described as follows;

When my father got money he would use some of it to buy food for the family, but when he was drunk he became tough. Yeah! One day he put a brick on my chest beat me badly standing over the brick. When he released me, my mother did not help. She run after me and cut me by the elbow. That day I decided to leave home and go to the street (February 2018).

Usually girls are protected by family and society, the experience of participant KC 5 of being thrown out of the house at night for a girl of a tender age, all by herself, was unusual. This just shows how much alcohol can make the alcohol abuser so unreasonable. The comments the drunken aunt made to the child when she asked for the basic need such as food were unusual too especially to a child whose mother had died. Yet in her sober state the aunt would not give such a response to a child with such history. KC 5 also experienced inconsistencies in parental care. She felt spoiled with loving care on one hand when her guardian was sober, and neglected without providing food and other basic needs, and abuse by throwing her out of the house at night when she was drunk on the other hand. Such inconsistency all together can be categorized under physical and psychological child abuses. Mulaudzi (2002) as cited by Mathege (2016) describes such inconsistencies as ways of parenting viewed in parents' emotional status swinging from caring, loving and entertaining to violent, argumentative and withdrawn which frightens children.

A close look at the experiences of children in their homes revealed that there were a many challenges at home. Participants expressed the different stressful experiences children had gone through when their parents were drunk. Parents beat their children, insulted them, ordered them out of the house at night, neglected them by being away most of the time, parental inconsistency, and did not provide them with food. Children also witnessed the sexual misconduct of their parents, and parental domestic conflict in the public. Such lived conditions made the home environment uncomfortable for the children they said. Children endured those experiences until a time when they left home in search for an alternative environment.

There was an investigation about what made them to leave their homes. The researcher wished to understand what finally happened that children left their homes.

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Ah! Alcohol would cause many problems at home. I did not like it.

Participant KC 6 explained his experience as follows;

Ah! Alcohol would cause many problems at home. I left home because of poverty resulting from drinking alcohol. Such as there was never enough food at home. Whenever my parents would get money they would not buy food they would instead spend it on alcohol and some days we would sleep on empty stomachs. We did not even have clothes. I felt neglected. Some days I would be wandering in the village searching for something to eat. However, being on the street was better than being at home (February 2018).

Participant KC 6 highlighted how parental alcohol abuse brings about poverty. The parental income, no matter how small, when spent on alcohol the family is driven into poverty. Comparing the suffering at the home to the suffering on the street, for participant KC 6 the suffering on the street could be to leratedbetter than life at home. The researcher realised that children choosing the street to home, as was the case with participant KC 6, indicated that there were more difficulties experienced in their homes. In such families where children would have nothing to eat during the day, and parents returning home late in the night drunk, insulting, beating, and driving children out of the house, would leave children wondering what that could mean. Children could not comprehend how their parents would find money to buy alcohol but no money for food and other basic needs.

Not being allowed to go to school made Participant KC 7 leave home.

I wanted to go to school and my parents were not able to send me. Actually one day when I asked to go to school they said to me in a harsh voice, 'You cannot go to school'. Then I left home and went to the street. (February 2018).

The response to KC 7 from his parents about going to school seems to have been frightening. Not only was the request refused but it was also the manner in which it was given; harsh voice. The studies of Birech, et al, (2013) among the Nandi of Kenya, and protobha, Mathur, and Ansu (2013) in India also indicate that children had left school because of their parental drug and alcohol abuse.

The experience that made participant KC 5 to leave home was shared with sadness in the voice as follows;

Influenced by my uncles who drunk a lot my grandfather stopped paying fees for me. There were other problems after my parents died such as my uncle attempted to rape my elder sister and she ran away from home and disappeared. My other sister was accused by my aunt of befriending her husband. She too left home and got married at a young age. She is unhappy in her marriage. I was relieved when my grandmother brought me to this centre (February 2018).

For this child one problem was adding to another problem. Listening to the tone of voice with which the experiences shared communicated the kind of deep pain that could not be put into words.

Participant KC 2's shared a similar experience thus;

There was no peace at home. My uncle and aunt did not keep the promise to take care of me when both my parents died. They stopped paying my school fee after a short time and did not give me the requirements saying they had no money yet every day

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my uncle would be drunk. What upset me most was when I asked for a roll of toilet paper and plate and they refused to give them to me. Then my aunt threw a cup at me but it did not hit me (February 2018).

Participant KC 2 expressed what one would translate as a betrayal as well as an abuse. The participant looked very frail and sad at the time of the interview. The researcher detected a deep seated pain from the tone of voice as the experience was being shared. The experience was a mixture of neglect, as well as emotional and physical abuse. There was also some form of disrespect in the manner the cup was given. Listening to the participant the researcher detected a sense of shock and helplessness from the participant having been mistreated and let down by people in whom trust had been invested.

On the other hand one would imagine life would be better for vulnerable children in the care of grandparents. This did not seem to be the case for some children. Participant KC 8 shared the experience of staying with a grandfather who drank alcohol with sadness in the voice as follows;

I had regular beatings and verbal abuses from my grandfather when he would be drunk which made me uncomfortable. He would beat me and abuse me saying ‘that is why you left your home’. There was a time he beat me and I bled from the nose. This happened when I had returned from collecting water and he found me sitting on the veranda. When he came and saw me there he pounced on me and beat me for nothing and I started bleeding. That day I left home and went on the street (February 2018).

The findings of the study about children leaving their homes are their elaborate experiences encountered when their parents were drunk. Alcohol abusing parents raised money either by earning a salary or by doing casual work or from agricultural produce. Most of the money parents raised they spent on alcohol and for most of these parents hardly any amount was used for the welfare of the children at home; not even for food. At the same time children were harshly treated by their parents when they were drunk. Children experienced neglect, psychological, physical and verbal abuse from their drunken parents. Children felt threatened and they were sent into confusion by such treatment from their parents. For the children, home, the place where safety would be ensured, became unsafe. Children ended up in a state of dilemma. Consequently, children left home in search for an alternative environment better than they had experienced at their homes.

The findings are in agreement with NACADA (2011) that says that children depend on their family to meet their physical, psychological, needs all of which can be jeopardized by parents misusing drugs and alcohol. In spite of small and irregular incomes, alcohol abusing parents spent most of what they earned on alcohol and the basics such as food were given very little attention. The findings also agree with the survey done by an Australian of children who called the telephone help service ‘Childline’ where most of the children who called the line were linked with parental alcohol abuse. From the survey parental alcohol misuse was identified by children as connected to a broad range of problems, including the child running away, violence in the home, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and poor family relationships (Tomison 1996, cited in Laslett, 2013). These findings highlight problems requiring a solution by drawing interventions which would address parental alcohol abuse.

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DISCUSSION

Parental alcohol abuse can stand in the way of effective nurturing of children. According to Tunnard (2002) alcohol is a legal substance which is widely available and not prohibitively expensive, and its use is not only condoned by most communities, but regarded as an important feature of family and social life. He carried out a study using the then available study findings of studies that had been published in UK in two decades prior to the study and supplemented them with research from other countries especially USA, Australia and Europe in order to address the definition and extent of parental problem drinking, its impact across important dimensions of children's lives, its impact on children as they become adults, and some messages for practice including suggested service specifications. The findings from Tunnard's study indicated that there were various things alcohol abusing parents do and how they affect the family and children such as; money spent on alcohol not available for other things such as cloths, food and other bills; a trigger of parental conflict whereby relationships between parents and children may be affected; distorted roles where by children feel and act as if responsible for the wellbeing of both parents and siblings.

Parental alcohol abuse renders children vulnerable. Drunken parents may subject their children to stressful conditions. According to a survey conducted in Australia about children who called the telephone help service, 'Child line', parental alcohol misuse was identified by children as connected to a broad range of problems. These problems included the child running away, violence in the home, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and poor family relationships (Tomison, 1996, cited in Laslatt, 2013).

This survey was done in Australia where there was a possibility of calling for help. In Kabale, where the current study was done there is no help available and children find it difficult to cope.

A situation of parental alcohol abuse raises serious problems such as poverty, divorce, and domestic violence. Such problems have an impact on the life of children from such homes. The technical report by Stephens (2016) which summarized the available empirical research regarding parental substance abuse, domestic violence and the intersection of the two in the state of Florida, USA, also addressed the numerous ways they impact on children. The technical report was based on the data from 2002–2007 of the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. There were 8.3 million children under the age of 18 years who lived with at least one substance-dependent or substance abusing parent. The National Survey for Children and Adolescent Well-Being estimated that 61 percent of infants and 41 percent of older children in out-of-home care were from families with active alcohol or drug abuse. The report asserts that it is known to be harmful for children to witness violence and it is considered a type of maltreatment in some states.

Domestic violence for parents who drink alcohol in Kabale is witnessed by the children all the time. Children can be victims of such violence too. However, there is nothing being done to protect children from such maltreatment.

In times when parental alcohol abuse erupts into domestic violence, it increases the risk of children developing serious emotional and social problems. Klingemann's (2001) said that children are the most severely affected when there is violence in a home since they can do little to protect themselves from the direct or indirect consequences of parental drinking. He reported that at least one child in 3000 in western countries (Australia, Newland, Sweden,

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the United Kingdom, and the United States) is born with fetal alcohol syndrome. He also mentioned that parental drinking can seriously harm the child's development through parental actions of abuse, neglect, isolation and insecurity or inconsistent parental behaviour. A study by Ghimire (2014) in Kathmandu, Nepal, with 20 participants explored the reasons children leave home for the streets. The study was conducted using interview and observation methods of a qualitative design. The results were as follows: 30% was due to domestic violence, 20% were looking for food, 20% just wandering, 15% abuse and exploitation, 10% lack of food, and 5% deprivation from school. The findings of the study show that the majority of the children left home due to domestic violence with 30%, followed by seeking food and just wandering each with 20% of the respondents. The researcher explained that domestic violence included beatings from their step mother or father, alcoholic father, work stress, and harassment among others.

Different circumstances lead children to the street. A study carried out by Ncube (2015) in Zimbabwe. The research study employed explorative and descriptive qualitative research designs in a naturalistic environment to identify factors that drive children from their homes to the streets of Bulawayo city suburban in Zimbabwe. The research was carried out at Thuthuka Street Children's project where an increase in number of registered street children had been observed. Focus group discussions and interview guides with open-ended questions were used to collect data. Purposive sample selection was used to select 12 street children as participants. The findings of the study were that children went onto the street because they suffered abuse, and or they wanted freedom without parental dominance and wanted to acquire fast riches on the streets.

This study revealed the reasons for children leaving home but did not specify the kind of abuses. The study does not give the condition of the parent when the child is abused. The current study investigated how parental alcohol abuse played a part in what caused children to leave home for the streets.

An environment where there is parental alcohol abuse can cause trauma for the child. The manner alcohol abusing parents treat their children threatens and hinders proper bonding and attachment children attain in healthy relationships with others. As a result of broken promises, harsh words, and the threat of abuse, children in many families learn the "Don't Trust" mantra all too well; silence and isolation can become constant companions (NACA, 2001). Kinyanjui, Waithera, and Ndunge (2016) investigated the effects of Parental Alcohol and Drug Abuse on Children and Adolescents in Murang'a County (Kenya). The purpose of the study was to examine the traumatic effects of parental substance abuse on children and adolescent growth, learning and development. The study adapted a descriptive survey design. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used. The sample was 540 students. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The findings showed that 9 out of 10 families were affected by alcohol and substance abuse. Children and adolescents of parents who abuse drugs were traumatized. 37.4% of the adolescents were emotionally unstable, while 20.7% experienced psychological trauma. Most children and adolescents displayed traumatic effects arising from physical harassment, education discontinuation frustration, and psychological illness among others.

The study reveals how children get affected as a result of their parental alcohol abuse in a range of ways. In most cases children react covertly to the manner their alcoholic parents treat them. Often times the effects the treatment slips into the lives of the children unconsciously

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only to be manifested in their social setting later on in life such as is the case of the adolescents in this study. The children preferred street to home. They accept more from outside to survive but not from their parents.

Parental alcohol abuse to a greater extent affects the manner by which parents nurture their children. According to Keller, Cummings & Davies (2005) as cited by Mathenge, (2016) parental alcohol consumption has been found to affect the discipline of children due to inconsistent and ineffective parenting skills. Under the influence of alcohol, parents treat and behave towards their children in ways different from when they are sober. They become emotionally unavailable, swinging from caring, loving and entertaining to violent, argumentative and withdrawn which frightens children, resulting into becoming impassive and the attachment to their parents is lost (Mulaudzi, (2003) as cited by Mathenge, 2016). Parent's demands on children keep changing. Their parenting style keeps wavering. In such cases parents either adopt excessively authoritarian or permissive parenting styles (laissez-faire), inconsistent disciplining with unrealistic expectations of children's abilities and very unsupportive parenting behaviours (Mayes & Truman (2002) cited in Mathenge (2016). At any one time children do not know what to expect from their parents. This inconsistency makes decision making difficult for such parents and makes children confused. Children get confused and their trust is undermined. This current study also explored the consistencies children whose parents abuse alcohol experienced.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that alcohol abuse among parents had great influence on the influx of children into streets and children centres. With alcohol having the ability to alter cognitive functioning and decision making of parents it follows that parenting behaviour would also be altered negatively. Most children interviewed reported neglect, irresponsible parental sexual behaviour, violence and verbal abuse among others as ways in which their parents behaved after alcohol consumption hence making the home child- unfriendly. This study recommends psychotherapy for parents abusing drugs and resilience skills training for children in order to withstand the challenges paused by alcoholic parents.

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