



# Social-Medical Advice Ignored Responsible Alcohol Drinking Within the Context of Family Pastoral Care



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## Abstract

In the past, the advice of the medical experts concerning human health and relationship with others in the family and society were taken seriously because of responsible alcohol drinking. It had a positive role to play within the extended family in Africa. It encouraged adults to come together and share ideas, values, enjoy happily their leisure time, learn to plan for their families' development and progress. However, today the advice of medical doctors about responsible drinking is not taken seriously because this good image of alcohol is no more in the West Nile region. Misunderstandings and abuse of alcohol are common.

Nobody seems to take seriously the root causes of the problem, which rests on three fundamental questions: 'Who drinks the alcohol?'; 'Why drink the alcohol?'; and 'What happens after a person has drunk the alcohol?'. Abuse of alcohol affects family pastoral care. Solving the problem requires taking seriously the wedding at Cana, Saint Paul's advice to Timothy, Eucharistic celebration, and African collaboration in child nurture and protection.

**Keywords:** Socio-medical; Responsible; Alcohol-drinking; Family-pastoral-care

## Introduction

This paper is a focus on the socio-medical advice on responsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care in the west Nile region of Uganda. It has a positive attitude towards drinking alcoholic substances. It makes both the producers and the consumers of alcohol responsible for hindering or promoting family pastoral care. It accepts that there are various reasons for the production and consumption of alcohol, such as to make profit avoidance of church services, the reduction of family stress and so forth. It has become a challenge not only for the medical doctors and nurses but also for many to find out what happens when people make and drink alcohol.

The study is qualitative research. It seeks to avoid the hindrance of irresponsible drinking, which family pastoral care must take seriously in order to help the medical personnel to help the family and the community at large, considering in the process biblical teachings in old and new testaments as well as the Eucharist celebration and traditional African child nurture.

## Background and problem statement

Until recent times, brewing of alcohol in the West Nile Region was done locally and communally by adult women. Alcohol was

for celebrations and communal cultivation purposes, especially when there were weddings and feast days, e.g. Christmas, Easter and 9<sup>th</sup> October (Uganda's Independence Day). It was unheard of for young people and women to drink alcohol although brewing it was a source of income and socialization for some women. Only adult men consumed alcohol. In the process of alcohol making and drinking different family members used to come together to share ideas, values, and to enjoy themselves happily. Alcohol was used during leisure times where members of different families could plan for family development and progress. Indeed, until quite recently the west Nile region of Uganda often had responsible and very restricted alcohol drinking, which occurred in the context of family care.

However, today the situation has changed not because of the failure of the medical doctors but because of misunderstandings and drug abuse. Responsible alcohol drinking restricted to men at family gatherings is no more. Many people drink alcohol to escape or avoid social responsibilities. Alcohol that people drink in the West Nile Region is both locally and industrially made. It is no longer adult women who brew alcohol: men and young people also brew alcoholic substances. Various aims accelerate alcohol brewing

and drinking. In other words, making and drinking alcohol no longer serves the single purpose of family care, but instead serves- especially the drinking-several purposes. Questionnaire responses of 10 family members (5 men and 5 women) from different parts of the region all reported similar reasons for the brewing of alcohol - that is, 'to gain profit' or 'earn money'. But several reasons were given for its consumption:

- A. 20% of the responses were the avoidance of church services;
- B. 40% of the responses highlighted family stress;
- C. 20% of the responses noted imitation (referring to young people as great imitators), but the desire to be different was also noted;
- D. 20% of the responses pinpointed other reasons, such as a cure of hunger or to raise courage for revenge.

The study shows that it is no longer just adult men who drink alcohol in this region, but also women and young people. During an interview with 18 adults, the study noted that 1 respondent's view indicated that people drink alcohol to help them forget about the church's moral teaching, 9 respondents confirm drinking alcohol as a solution to family pressure, and 5 respondents believed that young people's drinking was influenced by the reckless drinking of adults. It means that the remaining number 3 respondents believed in drinking alcohol as a substitute for food, and motivation to revenge, etc. From my experience, I note that the literature reviews available to me do not consider the vital question of the increasing alcohol content of drinks available to the community.

Many family members of alcoholic parents have become alcoholics themselves as a result. Bill W., co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous in Al-Anon Family Groups says: 'Any family, wife, and children, who have had to live with an alcoholic a number of years are bound to be rather neurotic and distorted themselves. They can't help it' [1].

It is drug abuse and unacceptable. While most of us know that alcoholism is a disease, too few in the region recognize that it is also a family pastoral care disease. Many family members in the region are negatively affected mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Children are neglected by their parents. Everybody is full of fear and frustrated because for them nothing can be done to solve it.

Nobody is bold enough to ask the serious question: why do people now make alcohol? Perhaps they know quite well there are various reasons. But fundamentally alcohol is now brewed to make financial profit. It is unfortunate that this has become major business in the region. Among local brewers, there is a belief that when a person has a very strong form of alcoholic drink, s/he can sell it in a very smaller quantity than would otherwise be the case and thereby can get a lot of money. Money has become a primary goal, which is completely wrong. Many lives have been lost because of not knowing the alcoholic content of the drink. As a result many people who happened to drink such alcohol died because of

alcoholic poisoning. Now many people are challenged to ask: how can otherwise avoidable death and alcoholism be of help to others in the regional community?

**Avoidance of church services:** Generally the church in the region is well known for offering moral and spiritual nourishment through spiritual services as part of her pastoral care ministry to all family members. The majority of the drunkards are never part of the congregation. In a way it reflects various views that many people in the region drink alcohol or become alcoholics to avoid church service. But as a result, it has become difficult for many of their family members to live with people without moral and spiritual fellowship and guidance.

Many alcoholic family members become nervous, irritable and resentful. They are people with distorted perspectives. Their attitudes and struggles show the need for responsible alcohol drinking within the context of family pastoral care, rather than the context of separated drinking driven by advertising and someone else's profit. It means that avoiding church services will not help alcoholics at the very time that they need to reconnect with their community and family. Rather it will destroy them, and their families, and the society.

**Medicine against family stress:** It has come to be known that family responsibilities have become too much for many parents in the region. In order to console themselves, some parents resort to heavy alcohol drinking. They act in a manner contrary to basic rules of African moral life. One of the basic rules of African morals was/is that of strengthening the family. A poor father cannot be considered a good member of the society because out of him state exists.

Abuse of alcohol by parents is another way of escaping the responsibility of taking care of children. Perhaps resorting to heavy alcohol drinking for them has become a kind of medicine that they think will help them to deal with family stress and problems. If that is the case it is a total misconception. Al-Anon Family Groups highlights that the majority of alcohol drinkers become confused and frustrated. They fail to deal with tasks and problems in the order of their importance in their families [1]. What happens is that many do not sleep well and look haggard, worry about the bills and about the children, but can never talk things over with their friends [1].

**To be - or not to be - like adults:** Adult life, even though is potentially good, can become frightening to young people because of irresponsible consumption and promotion of alcohol. Alcohol advertisers have been able to link their product to adult experiences - ways of life and conduct that are for people over 18 years old, and who should be (but often are not) incapable of being critical of what life offers. Many young people try to feel and to act like adults, and they are often exposed to the same advertising and behaviour as adults. Unfortunately many of them copy the behaviour of adult alcohol consumers, or listen to what they say about the issues of adult life - sexual affairs, fighting, and murder - which push the young people prematurely into the world of grown-ups (and into a highly emotional, over dramatised and limited idea of adulthood

which is hardly 'grown up' itself) without the resources to deal with it.

Some of the issues make children reluctant to grow up and become adults. They may become incapable of sustaining whole-hearted, emotional relationships such as being married, which is the cell of the family and society. Exposure to irresponsible drinking leads young people into anxiety, pain, and escapism of various kinds, like abuse of harder drugs. Alcohol can be a narcotic, which allows them to escape temporarily from an inner psychological prison, such as shyness; for others, it is a source of brief relief from the traumas/responsibilities of life. However, while alcohol may provide some respite, it does not cure such problems, and its abuse can very often make them much worse.

**Food alleviating hunger:** In the West Nile region many young people resort to alcohol or alcohol drinking because of hunger. It is an alternative solution of food, especially children neglect. Most often it is the result of parents become alcoholics themselves and living young children to care by themselves or by other adults, such as grandparents, uncles and aunts. It is responsibility of the parents to provide their children with basic needs, such as food, protection, centre, health care, and education. They are to offer the young people wise guidance in making life choices [2].

But when parents ignore their responsibilities because of being alcoholic or for some other reason neglect their children's welfare, the children may take this as an occasion to search for alternative solutions (possibly including drug abuse, violence, and night discos) to life's problems. It is within this context that many young people in the region now resort to the drinking of alcohol as 'food' to cure their emotional hunger, which in reality can only be fed by mature and thoughtful adult guidance.

Looking at the current situation of the neglect of children in the region, it seems possible that the parents also suffered from similar neglect when they were children. Perhaps their parents were also alcoholics. Some children are raised by neglectful adults other than their parents, or they are left to take care of themselves, and both of these situations are damaging when there is not adequate community oversight and compassion to make up for the shortcomings. By this neglect, whatever the cause, youths and adults can become involved in immoral and criminal activities that damage their own precious potential for good, and consequently nation-building itself is fundamentally limited.

**Self-motivation for revenge:** The study has noted that many people in the region get involve in heavy alcohol drinking because they want revenge against their offenders. Some tell their offenders in Lugbara: I te nga were, maa bi nga mini fitila mi ma ndre ra (English translation - 'just wait for me, let me taste or drink for you half a bottle of half a litre, you will see me).

This is to show that often some family members may look humble but actually lack courage because they are shy. Even if they are inwardly rebellious they can do nothing without first charging themselves with alcoholic drinks. They need alcohol to give them

the courage to execute their criminal and immoral rebellious intentions and behaviours.

Consequently different types of alcohol in the region have become the means to perpetrate violence and aggression. The study noted that some religious denominations, such as Church of Uganda, in rural areas used not to shake hands with many Catholics. Catholics were perceived as teachers of alcoholism and drug abuse. Perhaps this was because many people see church leaders using wine during Eucharistic celebration. In addition, from my personal experience, many Catholic family members have become heavy alcoholics. It is vitally important to understand why this has happened, and especially whether it is in some way connected to their understanding of their religion: do some Catholics in the region incorrectly see heavy drinking as a part of their religion? Often such irresponsible behaviour leads many family members to become violent towards others in their family and society. And it is the role of the church to responsibly, knowledgeably and compassionately educate all people, regardless of religion, gender, culture, age about these problems, leading always by example.

Irresponsible behaviour is completely contrary to the theme of "responsible alcohol drinking within the context of family pastoral care". Violence is uncontrollable once it is let loose. Violence provokes violence - it engenders more forms of oppression and enslavement. Young people resort to violence as an escape from their problems: some fight with their parents, leaders such as teachers; sometimes children join rebel groups and become soldiers. This is a very common phenomenon in African countries affected by wars and where genuinely communal and fulfilling social life has become difficult to maintain.

Ten senior elders and eight grandparents who were interviewed - using concrete examples about the problem of responsible alcohol drinking in the region, unanimously confirmed that parents who are repeatedly drunk and neglectful of their children sometimes reinforce and reward aggressive behaviour. Some families are open and brazen about it: they systematically and consciously, through irresponsible behaviour, teach their children that it is desirable and even virtuous to attack other individuals or groups. A child who beats up other children on the playground is sometimes respected by his/her peers and sometimes also by the parents. Young people observe that soldiers drink alcohol and other alcoholic contents and achieve glory in combat. The status, the booty, or the bargaining advantages that come to the aggressor can become reinforcements to continue and escalate this kind of aggression.

The school and Church try to promote human dignity and universal values in the region, but there is no certainty that they will succeed. Aggression by drunkards is sometimes reinforced unintentionally - the consequences, predictably, are the same as if aggressive behaviour were deliberately taught. For instance, a recent survey in Arivu Senior Secondary School in the Region found that the out of 21 teachers, all felt that aggressive behaviour by both drunk students and sober students but cause the most anxiety among teachers.

My experience is that the traditional treatment for aggressive juveniles is punishment - often harsh punishment. This is not only of dubious moral value, but also it generally does not work. Rather, it should be worthwhile to have a look-perhaps for the first time-at the theory that aggression is a type of exchange behaviour. Boys become aggressive because they believe that it is the only way to survive; they get something for it; they continue to be aggressive because the rewards are continuing. These young people are exploited by rebel movements, corrupt politicians, and religious groups who advocate violence to spread their faith.

This means that drinking alcohol with such erroneous understanding has several negative effects, such as theft and robbery, sexual misconduct (such as rape), road accidents, gender violence, dropping out of school, unemployment - job loss, family breakdown and divorce, lack of development and progress in the region. If violence even amongst sober students is already a problem, the problem is amplified by alcohol abuse, since one effect of alcohol is the temporary loss of higher levels of judgement and self-control.

### The study questions and approaches to addressing them

The key question guiding this study is this: 'Is it possible to move a community or group away from an abuse of alcohol to a situation of responsible use of alcohol kept within the boundaries and the context of family pastoral care?' Supplementary questions: What is the problem with alcohol drinking? What causes problems? Can these problems be solved pastorally?

This research paper used one questionnaire, oral interviews, observations, and literature reviews. The questionnaire was offered to target groups, in order to give the researcher a chance to collect views from various respondents living in diverse locations. These views were analysed according to the different objectives of the study, using numbers and percentages. Deductive and inductive reasoning was used to interpret the data.

In an oral interview, the researcher conducted discussions with focused groups - adult family members and youths. Observation becomes an important instrument to describe the settings, activities, people, and the meanings of what is observed from the perspective of the participants [3]. The recording of data relied heavily on the use of field notes (description of settings, people, and activities). Acknowledging the difficulty of writing extensive field notes during an observation, the researcher jotted down notes that serve as a memory aid. This happened as soon as possible after observation.

The paper also involved reflective reading of various relevant transcripts such as official records, letters, newspapers, reports, as well as the published data used in reviews of literature, journal articles [4], electronic information, and other sources of information about family pastoral care in the region.

### Key causes

There are at least five key causes hindering responsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care in the region:

difficulties in handling family duties, child neglect, peer pressure, social responsibilities, and misunderstandings and ignorance. It is important to shine light on each one of them in order to achieve a better understanding.

**Difficulties in handling family duties:** In the West Nile Region many parents have become alcoholics. As parents try to fulfil their role in the Christian upbringing of children, they are meeting various problems, including family demands; coping with the needs of the family catechesis has become a problem for the parents. The status of the family is one problem, and the ever-changing social scenarios where everyone thinks of catechising only his/her own children, is another. Therefore, the problem is greater when parents endeavour to bring up their children without the help of a genuine fellowship which has an accepted role in setting examples, sharing burdens, and helping others to step out of their destructively isolated individualism without becoming oppressively interfering.

The influence of society can also lead parents to unwise use of alcohol. Parents have also found it difficult to manage children amidst the influences that come from parts of society, particularly businesses which market the pursuit of pleasure without any adequate indication of the difficulties this can cause (a small 'drink responsibly' note at the bottom of an advertisement can do very little to balance the fantasies of social success, sexual prowess and sporting victory that the advertisers use to promote their product). The young are particularly vulnerable to these fantasies, but they can also be a lure to parents who may be struggling with social criticism, family and neighbourhood relationships. When both children and parents need the artificial dreams sold by alcohol merchants, the need for greater social support and informed pastoral guidance is evident.

In the region, parents are expected to be their own domestic church and are told that they are the best catechists or teachers of religion to their children, but this often comes with problems. Normally they do not accept their responsibilities and are unable to rise to the challenge. The challenge is too big a problem for them [5]. In order to escape all these responsibilities parents take cover under alcoholic drinks, and as a result many become secret alcoholics. In this situation, responsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care is clearly impossible. However, we need to be cautious in our judgements. Children are certainly being neglected, but is it the parents who are primarily at fault or are they to some extent, like the children, people who simply lack the resources to cope with the pressure of daily life?

**Child neglect:** We have already highlighted parents not taking effectively-whether through unwillingness or genuine inability-their irreplaceable responsibility for rearing their children in a manner that strengthens nation-building in the Region. Parents give birth to children but these children are often not directly nurtured by them. Instead, many children are nurtured by their grandparents, the school, and the Church, as well as house helpers, children in child-headed households, and other adults such as aunts and uncles. In some circumstances young people receive such

inadequate care that they lack the most basic needs, not only loving guidance but also food, shelter, health care, education, and security.

My observation is that this may be so because of the changing circumstances of modern youths themselves. For young people, habits of thought, their relations with their families and peer groups, are completely different to what they were in the past. Often young enter too rapidly into the new social and economic environment, where their social and political importance is on the increase day by day. Unfortunately, they seem unequal to the weight of these new responsibilities. Society has not developed appropriate new methods of youth management as instruments ministering the pastoral care in this region. Young people need to receive more than curriculum-centred intellectual training and academic examinations if they are also expected into a form of group community life. It is my conviction that social readiness should be judged in terms of appropriate participation in group life. Such training as they do receive may be superficial or ineffective because it is focused on traditional village-based cultural situations - from which many young people are already alienated - and does not appear to meet the new social environment of urban life. Christianity and the church life are very important because they do more than simply introduce young people to gaining academic knowledge but also seek to provide values that are relevant regardless of time and immediate environment. But when adults fail to teach these values young people may fill the gap left by loss of genuine social life by becoming heavy drinkers of alcohol, a substance which can temporarily eliminate emotional pain by clouding or altering social awareness, and also by reducing the sense of the passage of otherwise long and lonely hours.

The consequences of a life that is socially unprepared and lived in an alcoholic fog can be a loss of social development and the involvement of young people in criminal activities such as robbery [6], unnecessarily rebellious movements, and rape. Young people are involved in sexual promiscuity, leading to consequences they cannot cope with. This occurs within the context of an already disrupted society. There are religious conflicts in schools. Unemployment, environmental degradation, and forced displacement leading to the increase of refugees have become common in the Region. The youth are affected physically, psychologically, behaviourally, and socially. Their Christian heritage is weakened or denied. The situation of those children who are disabled is even worse: parents become stressed and angry and sometimes even beat abandon or kill the vulnerable child.

**Peer pressure:** Young people in the region understudy are very much influenced by their peer groups [7]. These are boys and girls of more or less the same age. Some of these peer groups include church youth groups, choirs, school classes, education for life groups, young adult scripture groups, football and net-ball teams, etc. Today, the majority of young people also drink alcohol and take other drugs such as marungi, and opium. The New Vision (Editorial Board), Uganda's national newspaper listed drugs such as 'sachet waragi,

alcohol, kuberm cigarettes, shisha, marijuana, khatmiraa, cocaine, and glue' [8].

From my personal observation, effects of irresponsible alcohol consumption include young people in schools getting involved in bullying others. At homes, many allow themselves to be cheated by so call 'sugar mummies' and daddies. Women and girls are entangled, giving in to pre-marital sex which again leads to pregnancy, sexual transmitted infections (STIs, including HIV and AIDS), many mothers remain single parents, psychological impacts and changes in life trajectory. There is psychological suffering: young people are exposed to situations of terror and horror. It is an experience that may leave enduring impacts in post-traumatic stress disorder. Severe losses and disruption in their life lead to high rates of depression.

Young male parents often take their involvement in irresponsible alcohol drinking as an occasion to neglect their children. They leave their children with the mothers, in effect leading to an increase of single parents in the region. Even if the father is in some sense still living with his family, his frequent absence or incapacity because of alcoholism make that family wholly dependent upon the mother, who is effectively a single parent.

Similarly in South Africa, in the Tzaneen Diocese, Youth Manuel concurs that children of single parents are disadvantaged when compared with those who have grown up in families with both parents: these children do less well at school, they are more likely not complete school, they have more problems with drink and crime, they have more difficulties in teenage years; girls are more likely to become teenage mothers and boys become teenage fathers. This indicates that social responsibility has a role to play in setting back responsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care in Tzaneen diocese [9], and it is impossible to think that this does not also apply to the West Nile Region.

**Poor social responsibilities:** Many alcoholics endure physical torture because of the social pressure of having many people at home. Some do not have food to eat. As parents, they may treat their own children as if these were already fully mature adults. Instead of helping young people, they threaten them. They may look at their adolescent children with constantly angry or gloomy faces - such behaviour towards a young person is psychological torment. They may constantly criticise, reject, intimidate or humiliate. These acts produce fear or guilt in people, whether young or old. Young people may experience a withholding of love and support, resulting in their own sense of loss and isolation. Many people, whether the adult parent or their child, under such a situation have resorted to isolated alcoholic drinks as a form of relief. But later on, this temporary relief only increases the personal burden, against which they cannot do anything. However, when another person wants to stop their pain by giving advice that involves the end or safe limitation of drinking, that person becomes their enemy.

Some drunkards do not want to socialise with the others because they feel that society disregards them. It is difficult to know

the reason: probably fear of witchcraft and of easily being poisoned by others. There is a very great fear of witchcraft and poison in the West Nile Region. Many people have a belief that good, moral and responsible people often die quicker than the bad, criminal and immoral and irresponsible people. People who would otherwise be good, moral and responsible family members get trapped in these beliefs, and turn to heavy alcoholic drinks to avoid being bewitched and poisoned. As a result many people spoil their formerly good reputation in the region.

The hesitation to socialise can include fear of conversion to other religions (such as Christianity, Islam, or African traditional religion). Believers in these religions seek to promote brotherly and sisterly relationships between all people. However, some people may be suspicious of these claims or find them too demanding, and they turn instead to drink, in the process creating havoc to their family and society. It may be time for members of religious groups to seriously reconsider how they promote their message: is it being 'marketed' (preached) too aggressively or intolerantly, and is there a way to avoid the very message that is so vitally important becoming a stumbling block to alcoholics and others who are both most in need and most suspicious?

In my personal experience, it is often through little or no fault of their own that some adults and young people may drink to a degree that for them alcohol can no longer function in the traditional way of being drink built into a system of family pastoral care. By staying within the traditional system, many adults and young people make great efforts to love and care for their families, even including the wider society, even to rear and educate their children when making or/and drinking alcoholic substance. However, the great majority do not adhere to the traditional limiting safeguards, and so the cycle of alcoholic/drug abuse begins that is repeated in the next generation. There are a lot of misunderstandings about responsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care in the West Nile Region.

**Misunderstandings and ignorance:** In the West Nile region misunderstanding and ignorance about responsible drinking of alcohol in the context of family pastoral care reveals itself in various ways. In this region, potentially committed or responsible men and women who become involved in alcohol abuse may find it difficult to commit themselves to their family duties. Often, if they are men, they prefer getting drunk when they are with the wives of others, and they want other people to be responsible for their families. According to Biblical proverbs, they are seduced by women. Under excess consumption of alcohol, they prefer loose-living women, for the lips of these 'aliens' drip with honey, and their words are smoother than oil. It is a total misunderstanding that their outcome is 'bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword', it is like a feet down to eternal punishment; 'far from following the path of life, their ways are undirected, irresponsible' (prov. 5:3-6). A great challenge indeed. 'Why be seduced, by an alien woman, and fondle the breast of a woman who is a stranger?' (Proverbs 5:20). However, 'seduction' is far too simple and one-sided an explanation, if we take it to mean that the man is somehow a helpless victim controlled by

a powerful woman. Both men and women are affected by alcohol and possibly a lifetime of other influences, so that they are together acting in ways that ultimately damage themselves, their families and their community. We *can* take it as a sign that in the region, the wicked or drunkard man or woman is snared in his or her own misdeeds, and is caught in the meshes of personal crime and sin, so that for want of self-discipline, many often die and are lost through their own excessive folly. At the same time, shall we forget that many of us have avoided a similar fate as much by the fortunate chance of having good parents and helpful circumstances as by our own self-discipline? If pastoral Christian care is to be effective, we must always keep this before our own minds.

Similarly in the region, many women prefer to get drunk among men and with the husbands of other women and teenage boys, and as a result many become sexually vulnerable or are raped, beaten by their husband and divorced. On top of that they want somebody to take care of their own families but not husbands. They fail to know that irresponsible alcohol drinking is like strong wine. 'Wine is reckless, strong drink quarrelsome; unwise is he whom it seduces' (prov. 20:1). Additionally, under-aged girls are often too ignorant about both the potentially harmful effects of alcohol and of the natural restraints required by responsible drinking, and are therefore greatly at risk.

In oral interviews with 28 young men who have become addicted to drug abuse - i.e. alcohol, marungi and opium and tobacco - in the region, it became clear that many people wrongly interpret the Catholic Church's celebration of the Holy Eucharist, where wine and unleavened bread are involved. Catholic priests, during their celebration of the mass, consecrate wine as the blood of Jesus Christ. According to the interviewees, this indirectly introduces people to the consumption of alcohol. It was more challenging to note that, the same interview when conducted with 2 priests also reflected a similar response: 'Because of the abuse of alcohol by some priests, people are right to say that priests indirectly mislead people to become alcoholics'. Furthermore, during an interview with 35 adult men and women, the very strong comment came up that: priests tell us and other people not to drink alcohol, but every day all of them are drinking wine at the altar. Fathers (priests) N and N, used not to drink alcohol, but today they have become drunkards. Is the school for priests training young people to drink alcohol? Some of them are even drinking more sophisticated and powerful alcohol, e.g. whisky, than many of us.

The statement aims to show that priests are teaching people to drink alcohol. Some priests in the West Nile Region, arrive late to mass, but in certain circumstances their bishops have stopped them from celebrating mass and have sent them home first because of excessive drinking. But today some bishops seem to be more relaxed, and it may be they are also accepting that (occasionally excessive) drinking is fine for priests.

The first part is a total misconception of Holy Eucharistic celebration. The Bible (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20; Mark 14:22-25; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25) tells us very clearly that what

catholic priests are doing is what Lord Jesus Christ did on the eve of Holy Thursday at the time he was betrayed. He entered willingly into his passion, he took bread, gave thanks to God the Father, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: 'Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for his is my body, which will be given up for you'. Because there is no human body without blood, similarly scripture tell us that, when supper was ended, he also took the chalice and once more gave thanks, saying:

Take this all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me [10].

This is to show that there is nothing intentional or scriptural about priests' directly or indirectly teaching people to drink alcohol: it is a total misunderstanding. Perhaps the second situation, where some priests learn to drink - some excessively and irresponsibly so - after their ordination can be accepted as priests' shows a bad example to others. It is difficult to know the reasons, but presumably, this may be so because of community pressures or too much work for too few labourers, resulting in alcohol being used as 'medicine'. But if some priests are otherwise guilty of alcohol abuse they reveal total ignorance of the fact that they are public figures. Christians want to be proud of them as their leaders. Reckless drinking is totally unacceptable; it is an abuse of public confidence in the Catholic priests as responsible people capable of being role models for all leaders. They should be aiding responsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care ministry.

**Money maximization:** My personal experience is that local brew is very cheap in the region. Its traders believe that the stronger the alcohol is the more customers it attracts. The owner sells a very small quantity but earns a great deal of money. One challenge is that there is no expert to measure the alcoholic content in locally brewed alcohols before people drink them. It has also come to be known that sometimes alcoholic substances are locally distilled industrially in order to make stronger drinks. These drinks have killed many people in the West Nile Region, not because people consumed more than that would be normal for drinks of ordinary alcohol content, but because they were unaware that for the super-drinks, normal amounts of consumption were suddenly poisonous. People used to call such drinks 'Liralira' in Uganda. This is very common with the local brewers because people are searching solely for money and family pastoral care has been totally thrown out.

Because searching for money has become the key objective in the region, even young girls and boys are now involved in the making of local alcohol. Parents, especially women, encourage children to take care of their locally brewed alcohol and even sometimes brew this together with children, as a means to pay for their school fees. It reveals the poverty of the region. Amidst such situations genuinely pastoral agents must ever be ready to help people look at responsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care ministry in the region. Moreover, such agents must be mindful that many people are acting out of poverty rather than careless profit-

making, and so act where possible to relieve that poverty as a prime means of renewing responsible attitudes towards alcohol.

### Responsible alcohol drinking

This takes seriously traditional attitudes towards alcohol drinking as an important element to be imitated wherever possible by the current generation. It also involves Jesus's act of changing water into wine in the wedding feast at Cana, Saint Paul's response to Timothy about the wine for health. Included is celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and taking seriously selective advices of the media communications.

**Traditional attitudes in the west Nile region and northern South Africa:** Traditionally in the West Nile Region of Uganda, alcoholic drink plays important role in family pastoral care. It was reserved adult married men alone. Alcohol was never for women, children, or youths. At times young adults could also be tolerated to drink, but this was done secretly, perhaps so as not to cause scandal to other family members. It was also made for special occasions such courtship: that is when two families (bride and bride groom) are engaged to begin a new family for their children. Similarly in parts of South Africa (it is known as Lobola in Sepedi or northern Sotho), it was formed part of celebrations within communal work. Within Judaic/Christian tradition, which entered into parts of African cultures, it was enjoyed ceremonially, bringing people together, following, for example, the wedding at Cana (John 2: 1-10) where Jesus and his mother Mary were present. It came to be used on special occasions, such as graduation, Christmas, and Easter celebrations, was brewed traditionally, and was accompanied by the slaughter of a goat or sheep: ritual served at least partly to enable family members enjoy their leisure time.

Within these structures, alcoholic drink was made only for married family men. It is difficult to know why. Perhaps, it helped these men to communicate more freely-that is without fear-with other men. It implies that drinking alcohol or alcohol was one of the means of knowing each other, to share ideas, to disclose secrets that were only supposed to be known by married males and females. Perhaps this improved their ability to help each other, as responsible heads of the family, to hold the family together. Without ignoring the enjoyment that traditionally brewed alcohol gave to married adult men, it also helped them to know each other more closely and enabled discussion of family concerns.

Furthermore, within this ritualistic setting, which included alcohol as a means to improvement but not as an end in itself, family members were highly respected, especially the head of the family. He was regarded as a king, and his wife was queen of the family. Both were greeted by the consumers and buyers of alcohol with great honour and respect. They were powerful people only in part because of brewing alcohol at their home; they were also powerful because brewing involved traditional expectations and limitations, which those who brewed oversaw amongst the community. During alcohol consumption it was unheard of to permit things like quarrelling and fighting. No excessive drinking was permitted, and time limit was respected because every adult married male had

responsibilities towards his family members. Irresponsible alcohol drinkers were discipline by the group and seriously punished. Problem of drinking was treated very seriously indeed, because it brought dishonour to the head of the brewing family, to other adult male family members, to their wives and children, and to the abuser's society in general.

**Possible media responses:** In the West Nile Region, media can be used as means to aid responsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care. This is possible because in Uganda the speed at which the media inform families and the public has dramatic consequences. This applies especially to the news, which is communicated by the media and sets the national agenda every day [11]. Also of importance are the topics that journalists choose to report, and the ways in which they report them, which in turn influence public discussion and private conversations. The media bring the public's attention to some specific issues, such as the negative effects of alcoholism, e.g. violence, sexual harassment, and the careless attitude which is detrimental to the public fight against HIV and other sexual transmitted diseases (STD).

Drug abuse, sometimes called 'substance-abuse', in Uganda is also associated with drinking alcohol. The media can show that irresponsible drinking can sometimes lead to addiction. It is not only dangerous to the health of the drunkard but it also affects other people. The media can present this by pointing out that children who under the influence of alcohol have killed other children. A student who drinks irresponsibly can be shown to have greater difficulties as a result with academic duties. In the case of a married person, the family can be shown to be economically and socially in crisis if the family resources are recklessly squandered on alcohol. The media can show that irresponsible consumption of alcohol can cause an employee to work unreliably, poorly or unsafely, leading to their dismissal. The media can bring attention to the fact that such people become socially isolated because of their unacceptable behaviour, and often, because of resultant poor health, their life span is short [11].

The National Association for Public Health states clearly that: 'Today's largest drug problems related to licit drugs - alcohol and tobacco' [12]. The media could draw useful comparisons to the abuse of alcohol, especially strong alcohol promoted by powerful companies, with the abuse of the other major legal drug, tobacco. Poor people and young people seem particularly unaware of the terrible consequences of tobacco abuse, and these are the same groups who seem most at risk from alcohol abuse. Both drugs are marketed as signs of success, sexual attraction and maturity. By revealing the real nature and consequences of alcohol (as is already being done with tobacco), the media could do much to remove their attraction, especially to the young. The media, especially television, could also acknowledge that they receive very large sums of money via alcohol advertising, as do sporting bodies, and that it is very doubtful that this is in the public interest.

**Biblical teaching:** Many Christians in the West Nile Region have remained ignorant of Old Testament (OT) and New Testament

(NT) teachings about wine or strong drink. These teachings are helpful for the liberation of Christian and non-Christian families, self-control, and promotion of crime-free, peaceful and moral societies.

A. Old testament: Firstly, OT reminds us about wine/alcohol drink. This is because it can easily result in scandal, especially to young people, incest, rape, and the abuse of women and girls by men.

There was wine scandal. Its beginning was Noah with/and his three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth). He was the first man to plant the vine. He drank its wine and got drunk, uncovered himself, his young child saw his father's nakedness, reported to his two brothers, and brothers came without seeing their father's nakedness and covered him. They were blessed, but the former was cursed by his father (Gen 9:18-28). Warning to a mother was given. The book of Judges 13:2-5 highlights the birth of Samson. First it picks up a man of Zorah from the tribe of Dan (father of Samson), known as Manoah. That his wife (the future mother of Samson) had borne no children. This book states:

The angel of God appearing to this woman and said to her: 'You are barren and have had no child. But from now on take great care. Take no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean. You will conceive and bear a son. No razor is to touch is head, for the boy shall be God's Nazirite from his mother's womb.

With this quotation we see clearly that alcohol is put, in this instance at least, within ritualistic boundaries. It is not a matter of simple choice. Its importance is not to say that no one can ever drink alcohol or shave his head-but to suggest that the act of drinking, especially for a pregnant woman, may have been recognised even then as dangerous to the unborn child, and that we might usefully consider the example of abstinence in pregnancy as something with a long history for good reasons.

Drunkenness and prayer was highlighted. Confusing drunkenness with prayer happened with Hanna, the mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1:12-14). The first book of Samuel reports that when Hannah was in a very deep mode of prayer, because she was barren, her husband Eli supposed that she was drunk and told her to get rid of wine. He was mistaken about her state, but his reaction shows that drunkenness was not acceptable.

B. New testament: The new testament refuses to condemn wine in itself, but gives warnings and promotes self-control. This can be seen in the gospel of Luke (1:11-15). Speaking about the birth of John the Baptist, the Angel told Zechariah, his son 'must drink no wine, or strong drink'. His duty is to bring back sons of Israel to the Lord their God (Lk 1:16-17). It is not unreasonable to suspect that this requirement is associated with a general tradition that alcohol is not regarded within the Bible as a doorway to enlightenment.

John (2:1-11) relates Jesus' first miracle - that is, of turning water into wine in the wedding at Cana. The use of wine here is within the context of family pastoral care. It was a collaborative event of family members. It involved family members, beginning



with the Mother of Jesus, who requested her son to do something for the guest who lacked wine.

It reveals the important role that alcohol can play in the family pastoral care: that is to promote social gathering, sharing ideas that build moral human relationships. Consumers of that wine appreciated this by giving their encouraging recognition of it as the best wine. Perhaps the bride and bridegroom acknowledged this as a great honour and God's blessing of their new family. Jesus' disciples' faith became more strong in him when he let his glory be seen (John 2:12) through this miracle, but it is vital that we do not confuse the miraculous sign itself with mere consumption of alcohol. It was a sign recorded as humble obedience to an elder's (his mother's) wish; everything takes place within the context of family pastoral care. It is the family pastoral care, not the consumption of alcohol, that (apart from the miracle) that we need to keep in mind. Alcohol and Authority is also involved as seen in Saint Paul's epistles.

The epistles of Saint Paul to Timothy, speaks of elders-in-charge. It is noble work that entails impeccable character: temperate, discreet and courteous, hospitable and a good teacher; not a heavy drinker, nor hot-tempered, but kind and peaceable. Not a lover of money. He must be a person who manages his own family well and brings his children up to obey him and be well-behaved. It becomes a challenge for anyone who does not understand how to manage his own family have responsibility for the rest of mankind (1 Tim 3:1-6).

The epistle advances to report the elders who do their work well while they are in charge, especially those who are assiduous preachers and teachers of God's Word. They are expected to give up drinking only water and have a little wine for the sake of digestion and the frequent bouts of illness that they may have. This seems to be advice given to avoid the appearance that one is more pure in the eyes of God if certain foods or all alcohol are avoided (following the former law rather than the new spirit in Pauline thought), even when a little wine might help us; it is not a promotion of wine itself, and the limits are made clear in this pastoral context (1Tim 5:17-23).

**Philosophy of detachment:** 'Philosophy' refers partly to 'an attitude that guides one's behaviour' [13]. Therefore, a philosophy of detachment applies to those family members who have become alcoholic. These are people who have tarnished completely the image of alcohol functioning as a drink for family pastoral care in the region. Yet there is still potential to bring back that image - alcohol as means of promoting family pastoral care. It should be pointed out that as with abusers of other drugs, former addicts - and alcoholism is an addiction - may need to completely abstain from alcohol, since they remain too vulnerable to falling back into their addiction. However, this does not mean that the use of alcohol by others within the context of family pastoral care is not desirable. For alcoholics, a different path of engagement with the family, which is disengagement from alcohol for themselves, may be necessary.

This can be aided through a philosophy of detachment. In this case, 'detachment' means learning to let go of continual worries that

may be far beyond our ability to solve, but also to recognise the false promises of advertising and the pressure to react to every event, good or bad, with another drink. Detachment from a world ruled by alcohol, rather than one where it has a minor pastoral place, is necessary, and can be learnt. Detachment means to understand that there are healthier, better, and more constructive ways of living, and that they are attainable; they are not false promises. This philosophy can as well be called as 'philosophy of love and understanding' [14]. Gradually as this philosophy seeps through, the formerly alcoholic person can begin to become aware of the change in his/her children. This is because the emotional energy that has been wasted in dealing with the problems of alcoholism is now given constructively to offspring. They respond like flowers to water - they start to blossom [1]. This is one approach of Alcoholics Anonymous which will also help the person to look back and realise the ideal way of receiving victims of alcohol abuse in future: not by trying to teach or preach to them, but through power of example, and education. In the case of children's questions, they are answered as they arise, normally and truthfully, with nothing alarming and without evasion.

## Conclusion

The article highlighted traditional society free of irresponsible alcohol drinking in the context of family pastoral care. In the past a person passed from childhood to adulthood through a process of initiation for adult life, which sometimes consisted of isolation, and instruction provided by elders, grandparents, uncles and aunts. After initiation society perceived them as ripe for marriage. Today the drinking of alcohol is common among most adults and many adolescents. Perhaps so called 'enlightened society' where boys and girls go to school in preparation for adult life in a modern world is doing more harm than good. Adulthood and marriage are postponed. The years of adolescence formation become very important. Preparation for marriage includes dating, which was rarely heard of in traditional life. In traditional life, the time of puberty, boys and girls spent time separated from each other, whether in forests, or isolated from family and community [7]. We also need to be realistic. The modern world may well need different responses. What can we do, in a modern, often urban world, to take guidance from past traditions of drinking within a context of family pastoral care? Perhaps we can move towards a sense that we are all responsible for one another, male or female, and to the extent that drinking can promote fellowship - and no further - find new ways to bring its use into a context of pastoral care.

Various reasons leading to irresponsible alcohol drinking were highlighted, such as the avoidance of the Church's moral and spiritual education, response to family stress, the desire of the young to feel like adults or to avoid feeling like adults, to motivate and encourage revenge or rape. Furthermore, violence and aggression were spotlighted as key causes of alcoholism [15].

My aim was to discourage irresponsible alcohol brewing and drinking in the region, and to promote nation building through family pastoral care ministry. A pastoral care is concerned with good human relationships, dignity and values without losing sight

of going back to good traditional and biblical values. The human person as a family should take the priority over money in the making and drinking of alcohol. The Media should focus on exposing the dangers and misrepresentation of alcohol, and on promoting family dignity as an aid to responsible alcohol drinking. We need to take seriously the example of the wedding at Cana, where wine was involved as a drink within the framework of the family pastoral care. We need to pay attention to the teaching of the Bible, which is also the teaching of the church, concerning the avoidance of the abuse of alcohol. We need to be utterly explicit that the use of wine in the sacraments is a model for extremely controlled and purposeful use, not something related to personal enjoyment and not in any sense permission for casual, uncontrolled abuse. We need to do whatever we can to sanction priests who set a bad example by abusing alcohol in their own lives, and to lead them back to appropriate behaviour, always remembering that 'them' could also mean 'us'. We need to show love and concern towards alcoholics. And we need to take what we can from the past without ignoring the present, and seek to include both young men and women in the use, if they should choose to use it at all, of alcohol within a broader context of pastoral care that fits our present needs and time.

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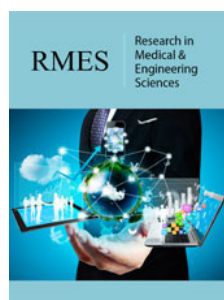
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