

THIS PAGE. Your opinion is your opinion, your perception is your perception – do not confuse them with “facts” or “truth”. Wars have been fought and millions have been killed because of the inability of men to understand the idea that everybody has a different viewpoint. – John Moore, *Quotations for Martial Artists*.

viewpoint 2

HEALTH

breakdown

Mental health. The revelation by the Butabika hospital executive director, Dr David Basangwa, at the Ministry of Health monthly media breakfast meeting came as a big shock to the public.

Effects of drugs, alcohol abuse could return to haunt us in future

VICTORIA NYEKO > DISTINCTIVE PERSPECTIVES

Daily Monitor on Tuesday, May 29, reported that the majority of patients admitted to Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital are university and high school students suffering from alcohol and drug abuse.

The report was alarming not only for most parents with children in the effected age group, but also for families with young adults in their households. The revelation by the Butabika hospital executive director, Dr David Basangwa, at the Ministry of Health monthly media breakfast meeting came as a big shock to the public.

According to Dr Basangwa, the factors leading to the increase in number of mental patients includes alcohol and drug abuse.

“At any one time you walk into Butabika you find a total population of 850 patients, with more than 20 new mental patients daily which translates to 7,300 cases annually,” he said.

Some people suspect that the difficult economic times, coupled with peer pressure, globalisation and inappropriate content on television channels could be among the conditions fuelling alcohol and drug abuse.

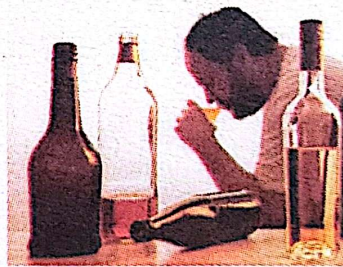
Others push the blame to high unemployment rates and high household poverty levels. For the self-employed, who are thought to be better off, business also seems to be on a downward turn, fuelling stressful conditions all around.

Increasingly, many people are working long hours to try and make ends meet, while worrying about their personal security in the era of kidnappings.

According to Dr Hafsa Lukwata, a senior medical officer in the Health ministry, “mental disorders in Uganda are triggered by situations such as the prevailing insecurity characterised by kidnaps and murders, notwithstanding poverty, jiggles, nodding syndrome and disease

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outbreak.”

The implications for Uganda may

sadly be long term: minimised economic development output and a country with a young population suffering from alcohol and drug abuse. In the pearl of Africa where the youth make up almost 80 per cent of the population, this trend is worrying.



The increasing mental health breakdown in the youth is robbing the country of economic development in the future, and government doesn't seem to be alarmed.

In 2015 a study in the United Kingdom conducted by researchers from the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King's College London was able to provide some insights into youth alcohol and drug abuse challenges.

According to the study, “the impact of mental health problems remained statistically significant over time in young people contending with alcohol and drug abuse”.

Given the long term health and economic development implications for Uganda's young population, the hope is that government will act swiftly, with Ministry of Health coming up with a strategic proposal and plan to effectively deal with the problem.

The danger is that this sensitive issue effecting the youth may just be ignored without appropriate response and action.

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