



Educate the masses on dangers of alcoholism with better messages

Meaud Major Majwala > Alcoholism

A study carried out by Global Health-care and Education Initiative-Uganda Chapter (GHEI-Uganda) on the "health psychology of alcohol and alcoholism" has shown that using health messages that cause disgust can positively influence future drinking intentions and emotions, perhaps reducing excessive alcohol drinking.

As many are angry at MP Betty Nambuze's proposal to regulate alcohol production and consumption, we actually need a joint effort to educate the masses about the socio-economic (and health) dangers of alcohol and alcoholism.

It is a serious problem that needs more research and policy advocacy for goal-directed action. Given the ugly reality associated with alcohol, there is also need for capacity building to raise awareness and empower producers, sellers and consumers to develop a consensus on participation of stakeholders.

In many parts of Uganda, residents have a practice of selling the food they may have in stock to for money to buy alcohol, especially sachet waragi. This calls for a giant stride to save the people.

Indeed, there is a danger posed by brewing, selling and subsequent abuse. Today, mushrooming trading centres are brimming with would-be productive men, women and youths in search of alcoholic drinks—waragi, *kwette*, *malwa*,

tonto, beer, name it.

Due to gross abuse, alcohol is blamed for playing a substantial role in school drop out rates. It is also believed to be partly responsible for social problems, especially among the youths. Some marriage breakups are also tied to alcohol consumption.

Yet this is becoming a global problem because according to the GHEI-Uganda Research Report: "It is estimated that over 10 million adults in England consume significantly more alcohol than the national recommended daily limits".

Past research has shown that over-consumption of alcohol can induce adverse health effects and aggressive or violent behaviour. In order to combat the issue, governmental bodies have attempted to boost responsible drinking.

Furthermore, health communication practitioners address risky drinking via provision of safe drinking information (such as daily limits of alcohol consumption), which frames health-related messages in unique ways.

In the study, loss and gain frames for health messages are discussed; the primary goal is to facilitate healthier behaviours, attitudes and intentions.

Traditionally, fear framing has been used in health messages such as smoking, to frighten individuals into implementing healthier behaviours.

However, prior research has proposed

The researchers hypothesised that different types of message framing (presented to participants in the form of photos) will have differential effects on positive and negative emotions, as well as intentions related to drinking alcohol.

that when faced with threat, individuals either avoid the fear-inducing factor, or reduce the fear they feel by interpreting the hazard (or fear-inducing factor) as less dangerous.

Ultimately, the health disgust-loss message frame (an image of a person with pus-filled facial sores) was most effective at eliciting intentions to consume alcohol in moderation or reduce drinking in general. The social fear-loss frame (depicting two women fighting at a bar) was the next most effective.

Research suggests that effectiveness of the health disgust-loss message frame might be due in part to the stigma that lies in visible facial deformity.

It is our shared responsibility to employ a multi-media approach to check on alcoholism through capacity building and knowledge enhancement.

Dr Majwala is the president of Sustainable World Initiative-East Africa.
majormeaud@gmail.com

29/35 8th Street, P.O. Box 12141
Kampala, Uganda

Phones 041 7744100
Fax 041232369

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