

Effect of alcohol on family conflict

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Owing to its legality, many individuals engage in alcohol consumption. A growing body of evidence indicates that alcohol is the widely used drug among the various populations. Evidence also indicate that there are many health risks associated with alcohol consumptions.

Many families have one or two members who have problems associated with alcohol use. Alcohol has many social, psychological and economic consequences that are not desirable and as such, often leads to conflict. However, it has been suggested that marital, family or workplace conflicts leads an individual to drink.

There are also suggestions that marital, family or workplace conflicts are consequences of abusive drinking. All these suggestions hold some truth as alcoholism is associated with various problems while on the other hand; various problems are associated with alcoholism. These problems, such as marital, workplace and conflicts can be risk factors for the problem of drinking. However, they can also be conceptualized as consequences of alcohol use.

The conceptualizations of these problems as emerging as a result of alcohol use is important in designing intervention strategies and policies that reduce the negative effects of alcohol use. The aim of this paper is to look at the social consequences of alcohol use, specifically with regard to conflict.

The social consequences of alcohol use can be categorized into those that leads to changes in social interactions with others and those that leads to the changes in an individual's social position or life chances.

One of the major factors that influence the consequences of alcohol consumption is the quantity consumed. Many psychosocial consequences are associated with episodes of acute intoxication or prolonged dependency symptoms that accompany alcoholism (Hauge and Ingens-Jensen 1986). For instance, family violence is often associated with episodes of intoxication.

The proximal biological and psychological consequences of the consumption of alcohol that are relevant to the analysis of the social consequences are the chronic and acute effects of alcohol on an individual's physiological processes and the effects of alcohol on memory, cognition and mood.

An individual's ability to interact with other people may be seriously incapacitated by dependence symptoms and acute changes in the thinking process and mood. This may also impair an individual's performance in their roles. Beyond this, alcohol may lead to aggressive behavior resulting in direct social conflicts.

There are some mediating factors which determine the degree to which consumption may result in particular biological and psychological consequences. Among them are the expectations about the effects of alcohol, alcohol metabolism, gender and other biologic vulnerabilities or resilience (Kreitman 1992).

The majority of these factors are not mutable. The expectancies about the possible effects of alcohol consumption play an important role in the degree and patterns of consumption. These however may be subject to educational interventions. The consequences of alcohol consumption are largely influenced by the social context where the drinking takes place.

According to Herd (1984), social context encompasses the social or ethnic group norm that defines relevant and irrelevant occasions for and the level of drinking. For instance, alcohol intake in communities practicing abstinence may result in immediate negative consequences for social interactions and hence threaten an individual's social position in the community.

As such, he will be in conflict with the rest of the community members owing to his decision to contradict the norms of the community. This is often the case since not many communities encourage drinking. By contrast, heavy drinking may be encouraged in some social groups and ethnic communities where alcohol consumption is valued and expected.

The effects of alcohol use in particular social contexts such as at home may lie on the negative consequences of use in unrelated contexts such as work. Alcohol consumption may or may not be considered as problematic by spouses depending on whether it affects job performance or maintenance of the functions of the household.