



## CHURCH INVOLVEMENT IN ERADICATION OF EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION: A CASE OF THE FULL GOSPEL CHURCH, BARINGO CENTRAL, SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

Excessive consumption of alcohol is a critical issue that affects the lives of many people including church family members. This puts into question the very beliefs, faith and teachings of the church on alcohol consumption. The study investigated the involvement of the church in eradication of excessive alcohol consumption among christian family members, taking the case of Full Gospel Church in Baringo Central sub- County Baringo County, Kenya. The objective of the paper is to establish the strategies put by the church to eradicate the consumption of excessive alcohol among Christian family members. It used a questionnaire to collect data from participants who include 175 church elders and members and these participants were selected using sample random procedure. The discussion is fundamentally informed by community faith-based functional approach and phenomenological method of the church which provides insights into the mission of the christian church in dealing with community issues that affect her integrity. The discussion in the study advocates for an ontological turn in regard to consumption of alcohol; a turn which underlines the notable place of eradication of the excessive alcohol consumption among christian family members. The study raises candid in community based issues about christians' behavior towards alcohol and respectively how they can live their faith among societal and secular influences for alcohol consumption, while advocating for homegrown solutions to the problem. The finding showed that the church is carrying with an outreach services like guiding and counseling, crusading, preaching and educating christian family members. The study recommended that the church should commit herself fully in finding viable ways to evangelize those involved in the menace.

**Keywords:** Church Involvement, excessive alcohol consumption, alcohol producers and consumers, church integrity

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Excessive alcohol consumption is a worldwide problem that is not limited to a particular religion, faith or culture. Sometimes this is due to misconceptions surrounding its consumption. According to Baringo Today Magazine Issue number five (2015) stated that alcohol, particularly illicit alcohol consumption is rampant in the region. The brews consumed include: chang'aa with 34%, sabaya with 33%, kombora 10%, tieltiel 6%, kijololy 10%, buzaa 61%, and second generation alcohol with 2%. The presence of these different alcoholic brews implies easy availability and affordability of alcohol in the region with serious problems to the locals. Unfortunately no faith-based study has been done on this issue and there is no doubt

that responsible alcohol use contributes positively to economic development of many families, including christian families as exemplified by liquor manufacturing companies that offer employment to many people. At the local level, production of alcohol enables poor families to get revenue to care for their families. At the social level, in both traditional and modern communities alcohol is used in many occasions, especially in family events where it is used for socialization to bring people together. But the unfortunate issue is that there is irresponsible use of alcohol in the region.

Despite the government's countrywide crackdown to root out the excessive consumption of alcohol there is still an increase in its production and uncontrolled consumption, which leads to many problems in the region. A report by NACADA (2016) shows that many family and societal problems today ranging from medical, family, social, economic, and so on are as a result of abuse of alcohol. A report by National Disaster Operational Centre (2015) indicates that many people die in a number of counties as a result of alcohol abuse. This affects not only the general public but more importantly christian families that are supposed to be role models to society that looks to the church for solutions to their problems. A study by Toesland (2016) found that in Africa, countries with high Muslim influence have low alcohol consumption rates, while those under christian influence exhibit high consumption of alcohol. Some family members of the church contrary to their teachings engage in alcohol business as a source of income by selling alcoholic drinks like chang'aa that are prohibited by the government. These gaps justify the need to investigate the involvement of the church in eradicating the abusive consumption of alcohol in Baringo Central, Kenya.

The most unfortunate thing is that instead of the Christian family members joining the church and the government in the fight against excessive drinking of alcohol, they are the perpetrators and victims either as alcohol business operators or alcohol consumers (Wachege, 2003). Many christians are affected by their family members who are producers and consumers of alcohol in Baring Central, particularly the unauthorized ones. Alcoholism is a real enemy of human progress; a God given gift of life promised in the scriptures (John10:10) has lost its meaning due to excessive alcohol consumption. The expectation therefore is how the Full Gospel church can work jointly with other agents to solve the problem of excessive drinking of alcohol while working with their family members who are addicted to it and for their transformation for the good of Baring Central community.

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The place of the church in resolving the problem of alcoholism is something that cannot be undermined, particularly in relation to the manner in which it is done and the actual treatment given to the victims of alcohol (Neff et al., 2006). The church model of ministry to alcohol is of servant-hood, which is basically to give hope to those affected by alcohol either as sellers or consumers. Dantley (2003), informs that the church approach to victims of alcohol should be distinct from that of the government law enforcement agencies who in most cases mistreat and jail those involved. Pastoral agents are challenged to seek for pastoral solutions following the example of Jesus who called for those who are troubled and are carrying heavy burdens to go to him and he will give them rest (Mathew. 11:28). However, solving the problem of excessive alcohol consumption is not just about attending to the victims but it should fundamentally be fixed by curbing and eliminating all advertisement that promote alcoholic beverages in colleges across the country (Mburu, 2011).

According to Boyo (2005), it is the responsibility of the church not to deny but to acknowledge the consumption and effects of alcohol in the christian families and the entire community by

channel the healing and restoration of human life and dignity. The pastoral ministries of the church should engage in training, accompanying, guiding and counseling, and rehabilitating those affected by alcohol and other forms of drug abuse. However, the pastoral agents should not just be trained, which is of course necessary but they should also be role models and imitators of Christ “the Good Shepherd.” Through prayer and the study of the scriptures, they are to foster in themselves the qualities of Jesus the caring master.

According to Barbara Gilliam and Min (2014) the creation of awareness can be done through internet related technologies, for it makes it easier and possible to connect with people who abuse alcohol. The training should be focused towards the enlargement of awareness through campaigns against alcohol abuse, prevention and establishment of rehabilitation centers for treatment of the victims. It is to have competent leaders and pastoral teams that care about the urgency to reduce alcohol addiction among christian family members. Furthermore, in creating awareness and educating the people, the church should lead by example and openly preach against excessive use of alcohol. Sometimes churches condone vague awareness of issues related to societal practices that promote alcohol consumption. The Bible also warns against drinking wine in excess which may lead to addiction and other unacceptable behaviors; it teaches that people should not involve themselves in activities that threaten to destroy their bodies and interferes with their relationship with God (Proverb. 22:3). Haber (2007) explains that the role of religious norms and rules is to act as a mediator between religion and alcohol consumers. However, it is important to note that not only the commitment in the involvement in religious affiliation play a role in decreasing alcohol use behavior, but the specific type of affiliation with which one identifies himself/herself with it is equally important.

The issue of alcohol addiction challenges the church to offer a viable alternative to the addicts because the faith-based alcohol treatment services fill the ‘gaps’ left by government agencies in resolving the problem of alcoholism. To carry out this mission, the church should, therefore, design its teachings and pastoral programs to target the whole community and generally the younger generation in particular. In this regard Foxcraft et al (2008) informs that the church education and treatment programs should be geared towards individual behavioral change of models, particularly primary prevention strategies with young people. While Spoth et al (2008) proposes for harm reduction strategies and abstinence programs.

The notable gap in the literature showed that alcohol selling and brewing enable the concerned persons to meet their financial and other social obligations. The family members of the alcoholic victims and the alcoholics themselves should be able to see that it is a matter of their health and other related issues. In most cases the sellers of alcohol are not considered the centre of the solution to the problem of excessive consumption of alcohol but most studies tend to concentrate more on the consumers and not the sellers. In other words, current studies and models of rehabilitation of alcoholics seem to focus on the individual alcoholics with little or nothing done to cater to the affected families. In most cases the victims are helped in isolation of their families and this contributes to difficulties in reintegrating them to their families after rehabilitation. According to Philomena Mwaura (2006), the church should give an holistic spiritual healing and treatment to those under the influence of alcohol and other substance abuse eg. bhang.

### **1.3 METHODOLOGY**

The study investigated the involvement of the church in eradication of excessive alcohol consumption among christian family members, taking the case of the Full Gospel Church in Baringo Central sub-County, Baringo County, Kenya. The study examined the participants’

perspectives on various aspects of the church's engagement with the problem of alcohol consumption in the area. Different clusters of respondents were involved, as shown in Table 1 below. The determination of the sample size was informed by Mugenda Mugenda (2003), who suggests that a sample size of 30% is preferable for a target population of less than 1,000 as shown in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Study clusters, Sampling techniques and Sample Size**

Target group	Target Population	Sampling procedure	Sample size	Percentage
Victims of Alcohol consumers	50	Purposive	15	6.6%
Family Members of Victims	50	Purposive	15	6.6%
Victims of Alcohol Sellers	32	Purposive	8	3.5%
Pastors	22	Purposive	8	3.5%
Church Elders	230	Simple Random	69	30.1%
Church Members	380	Simple Random	114	49.8%
Total	764		229	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2022)

The sole purpose of engaging different clusters was to have a significant and aspects of representation of the respondents on the views of the issue on excessive alcohol consumption in the region and the Full Gospel church's resolve to eradicate if not reduce this menace in the region. Personal interviews were conducted with alcohol victims, their families, alcohol sellers and pastors, while questionnaires were used with church elders and members. Two sampling methods were used: purposive and simple random.

#### 1.4 RESULTS

The presentation of the results on the strategies employed by the church to fight against the menace of excessive alcohol consumption in the area, the study first sought to find out the reactions of church elders and members on alcohol consumption in the region. The findings are as illustrated in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Reactions of Church elders and members on alcohol consumption**

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Drinking is against my religious faith	90	51%
I have seen bad examples of what alcohol is capable of doing	30	17%
Drinking has many psycho-social and health effects	20	11%
Drinking negatively affects my everyday operations	20	11%
It is a waste of family economic resource base	10	6%
There are no substantial benefits of drinking	5	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Researcher's Construct, 2022

The reactions in table 2 implied that alcohol consumption has no any positive use to the residents in the area; there are no substantial reasons why the locals engage in its consumption. After establishing the feelings of the respondents, the study sought to assess the strategies put by the Full Gospel church to resolve the problem of excessive consumption of alcohol in Baring Central Sub-county.

**Full Gospel church strategies and activities for eradicating excessive alcohol consumption**

The study sought to find out specific activities done by the Full Gospel church and the results were as shown in table 3 below.

**Table 3 Specific Full Gospel activities**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Spiritual Guidance and counseling	65	37%
Preaching against the vice	62	35%
Creation of awareness through education and campaigns	20	11%
Economic empowerment	15	9%
Accompaniment of victims and their family members	8	5%
Provision of rehabilitation centre	5	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Researcher's Construct, 2022

Table 3 shows the specific activities the Full Gospel church has put in an attempt to eradicate excessive drinking of alcohol in Baringo Central Sub-county. All the respondents indicated that the Full Gospel church has some programs or activities that target to restore human dignity. Inquiring on the specific activities or programs, showed that 65 (37%) of the respondents agreed that the Full Gospel church gives spiritual guidance and counseling to members of the church and the entire community that are affected by alcohol; 62 (35%) said the church preaches against drinking of alcohol, 20 (11%) indicate that the church is engaged in the creation of awareness through various church educational programs and campaigning on the effects of alcohol on the body of Christ while 8 (5%) affirmed that the church members at community level are involved in combating illicit alcohol production, selling and consumption together with pastoral duty of accompanying those involved together with their family members. The church gives the youth recreational facilities such as play grounds, and musical instruments where they can keep themselves engaged. While 5 (3%) indicate that the church provides rehabilitation centre to the affected.

A quantitative data is reiterated by;

Key informant (KINF 10) who affirmed:

The church does visiting and provision of spiritual guidance and counseling to the members that are affected by alcohol that is: the producers, sellers and consumers. This is because illicit brewers and users, including their family members are people who need guidance and counseling because brewers believe that manufacturing of illicit alcohol is part of their economic activities, whereby they attached their lives to illicit alcohol and those who drink do it as part of their life style.

On the creation of awareness, (KINF5) informed that:

The church holds crusades where it openly preaches against consumption of alcohol and openly advocates for the faith that is rooted in right Biblical principles in relation to consumption of alcohol.

While another, (KINF 6) informed:

The church tends to concentrate more on preaching conversion and winning converts without any concrete outreach programs that have profound actions on the life of the people in the region. The efficacy of faith includes not only to change the behaviors of people engage in (or don't engage in) alcohol because of their faith and the support people find in belonging to faith

communities, but also people's religious and spiritual beliefs themselves should be the basis of change.

This data is in agreement with Hasenfeld (1995) who advocated for church leaders to serve on a church advocacy mission, which is one of the most critical features of community mobilization strategy. Furthermore, the findings are in tandem with Dacher (2014) who asserted that disregarding the important role of the inner spiritual aspects of healing, leaves people with a new set of ailments, including anxiety, mood disorders, post-traumatic stress, and all sorts of problems in life. The findings are also supported by Johnson et al (2015) and Lee et al (2017) who argue that people who are spiritually active, participate in a faith community and invest in a prayerful relationship with their God are less likely not to use or abuse drugs and alcohol or engage themselves in related criminal activity.

On economic empowerment, 15 (9%) of the participants affirmed that the Full Gospel church is engaged in economic development of their members through church women groups where they organized themselves dairy goats and cows as well as engaging in poultry farming. This was reiterated by (KINF14) who states:

The church encourages the faithful to engage in economic projects like keeping poultry, dairy goats and cows that help them to have some economic base for themselves. The women of the church, together with those from other communities to support those families who lived below the poverty line by buy goats and dairy cows to them. The church also teaches and provides loans to unemployed youths to start small scale business meant to cushion them from engaging in illicit alcohol enterprise.

This resonates with the opinion of (KINF 20) who said:

It is true that the church has financed some programs but this is not enough. The church should fund programs that help alcoholic sellers and users to change their attitudes; it should do more to increase its relevance to members of the church, particularly the youth that are affected by this vice.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings of the respondents are in agreement with Johnson, et al (1996) and Cohen and Kibel (1993) explained that community involvement optimizes the stabilization of intervention measures since it transfers responsibility for services to the community by stimulating local community members. Success in the community capacity enhancement stage is measured by the actual continuation of services based on local community actions. Many alcohol consumers fall back into alcohol abuse because they lack church support systems and groups of friends to encourage them stop the vice. Sometimes the church tends to concentrate only on professional counseling living aside the basic church homegrown solutions of friends. Church leaders are used to talk to consumers and other alcohol dealers but not working with them to stop the habit of either being alcohol brewers, sellers or consumers.

However, another (KINF 15) was of a different opinion; he asserted:

The church does not provide support to illicit brewers, which includes the church family members but instead, they think only of addicted consumers. This is a factor that makes most brewers depend on illicit brew for both school fees and their family basic needs.

The study findings implies that religiosity does not reduce alcohol consumption in the area since those selling and consuming alcohol are the members of the families who are in the Full

Gospel church; therefore the church preaches abstinence and it does not produce any fruits to the believing community of Baringo Central Sub-county. The findings were not in tandem with Ameri et al (2016), Desmond et al (2013), Parenteau (2017) and Queiroz et al (2015) who claim that religiosity attempts to reduce excessive consumption of alcohol. But the respondents were of the opinion that the church should widen her knowledge in dealing with the problem of alcohol consumption and they should form church based organizations that work with other non-church organizations. These organizations are believed to give a wider platform where all the churches in the region could meet and discuss issues concerning creation of viable projects for job creation opportunities in the sub- County.

The verbatim findings are in agreement with the study by Bird and O'neil (2004), which opine that the attempts to reduce alcohol-related harmful consequences is the role that individual community play is not greatly emphasized as the Communities do have a major role that cannot be undermined. According to Thangaraj (2015) there is need for a greater collaboration between the different stakeholder groups that are involved in drug prevention and rehabilitation in order to be more effective in the fight against alcohol and substance abuse. The Full Gospel church should therefore expand the capacity of its knowledge by linking with and learning from relevant agencies. These include both governmental and non-governmental organizations and the research related that has a specific mandate which in this case it is controlling alcohol and substance abuse among the youth.

## **1.5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that the Full Gospel Church is doing something to resolve the problem of alcoholism among the family members in the region. The church is carrying an outreach services like educating, preaching against the vice, providing guidance and counseling and spiritual accompaniment of those who are affected by alcohol. However, this commitment is very little to eradicate excessive consumption of alcohol in her jurisdiction. The Full Gospel church position on alcohol has to be challenged basically because the family members of those who are in church are engaged in alcohol either as brewers or consumers. There is no intrinsic religious motivation to stop or reduce the consumption of alcohol in the region. The church teachings seem not to help them lessen the vice in society. Religiosity alone does not reduce alcohol consumption in the area since those selling and consuming alcohol are the family members of those who are in Full Gospel church.

The study also concluded that it is not enough to treat alcoholic consumers and leave out producers of the same. Structures should be put in place to help the producers and sellers of alcohol so that they can engage in other economic activities that are not alcohol related. The Full Gospel church has a fundamental role in reorientation of public debate on alcohol and substance abuse, by shifting the focus from punishment of the government to prevention and treatment.

### **Recommendation**

The study recommends that the Full Gospel church should put more effort with the problem solving solutions to alcoholism by providing concrete and effective measures that involve all members of the church and the entire community; The Full Gospel church should implement viable measures to eradicate alcohol manufacturing, marketing and availability in the areas through policies and incorporating other members of the christian community in finding solutions o the problem. The church should also work to improve its provision of a loving and

caring community for the victims of alcoholic abuse either as producers or consumers; which also includes reconciliation with their family members; focus should be on the family members and the church. Failure to tackle the vice from the family level will appear to be in agreement with the vice of alcohol abuse and the members of the church should also reach out to those involved in alcohol business and consumption to help them in their needs that make them resort to alcohol business and consumption.

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