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Alcohol Consumption and Family Cohesion in Gatundu North Constituency, Kiambu County: A Case Study of Chania Ward

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the effects of alcohol consumption and family cohesion in Chania Ward, Kiambu County in Kenya. The study was guided by three objectives: To investigate the effects of alcohol consumption and financial instability on the families of Chania ward; to find out the effects of alcohol consumption on domestic violence in the families of Chania Ward; and to investigate the effects of alcohol consumption on spouse relationship in the families of Chania Ward, Kiambu County. The study used the Family Systems theory to explain how alcoholism affects the entire family. The study adopted a cross-sectional mixed research design as the study sought to interview individuals with a specific characteristic, with a sample, often a tiny minority, of the rest of the population. The total population of the entire Chania Ward is 6,644 households. Stratified random sampling was used on the households to divide the ward into six sub-locations namely: Kamwangi, Nguna, Kairi, Igeganja, Makwa and Muirigo, whereas purposive sampling was used to sample the stakeholders in each of the sub-locations. These were the priests, health workers, chiefs and head teachers. The study utilized primary data which was collected using observation and questionnaire administered personally with the help of two trained research agents. The collected data was then entered and coded into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was presented in frequencies, percentages, bar graphs, pie charts, tables, and means. Pearson's r , correlation was used to determine the relationship between the variables whereas, qualitative data analysis was based on grounded theories and presented along emerging themes. The study concluded that there is a relationship between alcohol consumption and financial stability in the families. There is also a relationship between domestic violence and spouse relationship and alcohol consumption. The study recommends that public advocacy, civic education, and coordinated efforts between all stakeholders be used to control increased alcohol consumption in the area. The study also recommends more research into other drug abuse in the area.

Key terms | Family cohesion, binge drinking, alcoholic marriage, financial instability, domestic violence, spouse relationship, spouse neglect, poverty

Background to the study

According to the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 86.4 percent of people aged 18 or older reported that they drank alcohol at some point in their lifetime; 70.1 percent reported that they drank it in the past year; 56.0 percent reported that they drank it in the past month. The world statistical data on alcohol consumption shows that there are about 140 million people globally who suffer from alcohol related disorders, and out of this number, it was noted by the World Health Organization (2014) that in 2012, 3.3 million deaths globally were related to alcohol consumptions; a trend that has been seen to persist to the present. In the United States of America, for instance, every year, there is an average of 88,000 deaths as a result of alcohol consumption. Additionally, Rehm, Mathers, and Popova (2009) indicated that alcohol consumption in the USA is the third-leading cause of death, and in the global platform, alcohol-related injury and diseases are responsible for an estimated 4% of mortality rates and 4-5% of lifetime disability.

According to Eurocare report of 1998, Epidemiological study indicated that parental alcohol consumption problems are common across Europe. Based on the extrapolated survey data from Finland and Denmark in the late 1990s, it is estimated that there were between 4.5 and 7.9 million children under the age of 15 across European countries who were living in a household affected by parental alcohol misuse. This equaled 12% to 21% of children under the age of 15 years (Eurocare & COFACE, 1998). In this study, the estimates of the number of children under 18 years exposed to parental alcohol misuse were ranging from 2.7% in Lithuania and 19.3% in Poland.

Data on Australia and the United Kingdom showed similar rates of binge drinking (binge drinking is the number of instances in the past 12 months that women drink 4 or more drinks and men drink 5 or more drinks within a period of 2 hours). A meta-analysis in 2009 of the five National Household UK Surveys conducted in the period between 2000 and 2004 showed that between 3.3 million and 3.5 million children under 16 years, approximately 30% in the UK live with at least one binge drinking parent (Maning, Best, Faulkner & Titherington, 2009).

In Asian countries, there is a significantly lower prevalence of alcohol dependence (Between 0.2% and 7.3%) of each country's population. Biological, cultural and socio-economic factors are believed to account for lower rates of drinking problems in the Asian population such as Indonesia, Japan, South Korea and Iran (Hung, Yen & Wu, 2009).

The results from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNOD) 2011 World Drug Report indicated that South Africa is a key African hub for drugs such as cannabis and heroin, as well as a major producer of other drugs. A large number of the South African population also are engaged in alcohol abuse, which has made the country be ranked as one of the world's highest alcohol consumption levels per drinker. One of the greatest effects of alcohol consumption in South Africa as was indicated by UNODC (2011) was adverse effects on family cohesion where there were many cases of divorce, domestic violence, health related issues, justice costs relating to substance abuse, and an increase in HIV transmission and deaths.

According to the Global Status Report by the World Health Organization, the per capita alcohol consumption in Kenya is 4.3 litres. Government statistics show that alcohol and drug abuse is highest among young adults aged between 15 and 29 and lowest among adults who are 65 years or older. Alcohol consumption in the Kenyan context revealed that about 20% of the former and current consumers indicated that their alcohol drinking behavior had a negative effect on them, affecting their jobs, their finances, and family relations.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Alcohol abuse has serious health and social effects making its prevention and control a public health priority. According to WHO (2002, 2004), alcohol causes 1.8 million deaths (3.2% of total) one third (600,000) of which result from unintentional injuries. In Kenya alcohol abuse is so rampant thereby necessitating President Uhuru Kenyatta to declare it a national disaster in the year 2015 (GOK, 2016). An addiction to alcohol is known to wreak havoc on the body and negatively affect the life of the individual and the lives of those he or she loves (Barrows, 1991). In Central Kenya, it appears to have a marked effect, creating dysfunctional and emotionally stunted families (Berman, 1992).

A recent Nation report highlighted a campaign launched by President Kibaki to try and curb alcoholism among men. A particular focus was put on men in the Central Province. This area is targeted due to dropping fertility rates as a result

of alcoholism among men that is contributing to impotence (Burton, 2010). The problem has gotten so bad that women in the province have staged protest marches to stop brewers from selling alcoholic drinks to their husbands. A minister in the area was reported to have suggested that men from other provinces be shipped in to help impregnate the women as the alcoholic husbands were hard-put to do so, hence replacing one social problem with another (Burton, 2010).

Alcoholism does not only exist within the Central Province, however, and is continuing to grow throughout the country. Based on research conducted in Central Province, Kenya, bar owners continue to report strong revenues as customers are guaranteed every night. Consistent drinking in bars appears to cut through ethnicity, region, race and social class (Berman, 1992). Research by NACADA (2008) indicated that in the Western, Central and Coast Province, between the period of May to October 2010 and January to May 2011, alcoholism was associated with a considerable proportion of gender-based violence, manslaughter, murders attempts, assaults, burglaries and robberies, child abuse, homicides, incest, family violence, and school dropouts; all of which are indicators of dysfunctional families. It is this reality that informs the need for this research.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of alcohol consumption on family cohesion in Chania Ward in Gatundu North Constituency, Kiambu County.

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To establish the link between alcohol consumption and financial stability on the family in Chania Ward, Kiambu County
2. To find how alcohol consumption relates to domestic violence in Chania Ward, Kiambu County
3. To determine the effects of alcohol consumption on spouse relationship in Chania Ward, Kiambu County.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the link between alcohol consumption and financial stability on the family in Chania Ward, Kiambu County?
2. How does alcohol consumption relate to domestic violence in Chania Ward, Kiambu County?
3. What are the effects of alcohol consumption on spouse relationship in Chania Ward, Kiambu County?

1.4 Justification of the Study

Uncontrolled alcohol consumption has been cited as a major development problem in Kenya. In Central Kenya for example, there has been a social outcry over the increased consumption of alcohol. On many occasions women have been crying over their sons and husbands enslavement by alcohol leading to several public demonstrations. Leaders in different levels and occasions have also talked about it in their effort to control alcohol consumption. The president through political leaders has also given a directive to enhance a thorough campaign to control the manufacture, distribution, and consumption of alcohol especially illicit brews, as well as regulating the time for sale of other alcoholic beverages.

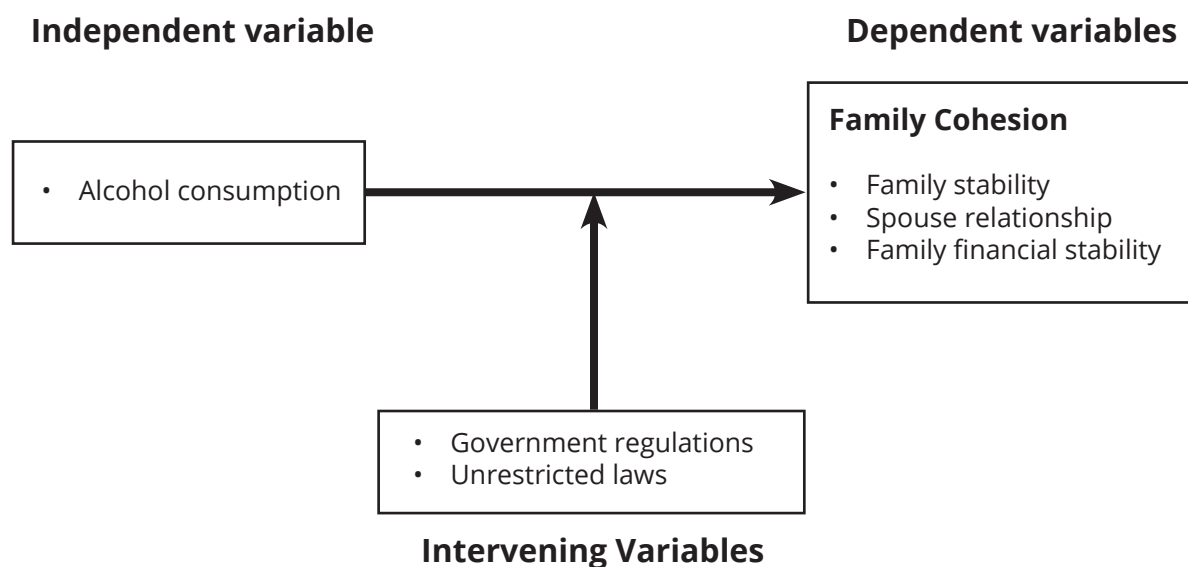
Alcohol consumption has greatly negatively affected the stability of families causing separations and consequently causing poverty and hopelessness. Several reports in Chania Ward especially print, electronic media, and critical observation indicate that alcoholics have died from alcohol-related complications and others have been left blind, impotent, physically and mentally impaired and economically and socially unproductive. It is on these grounds that the researcher wished to carry out this study to help find lasting solutions for alcoholism, which will ultimately lead to more stable families, as a springboard for development and better living conditions.

1.5 The scope and delimitation

The researcher focused on alcohol consumption in Chania ward; how it affects family cohesion; and how it relates to family wellbeing, in Chania ward. However, having given the scope of the study, other causes of family dysfunction apart from alcoholism was not considered.

1.6 The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is presented below:



1.7 Theoretical framework

The Family Systems Theory was introduced by Dr. Murray Bowen and it suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family, as the family is an emotional unit. Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system. Bowen's theory views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit. It is the nature of a family that its members are intensely connected emotionally.

Often people feel distant or disconnected from their families, but this is more feeling than fact. Families so profoundly affect their members' thoughts, feelings, and actions that it often seems as if people are living under the same "emotional skin." People solicit each other's attention, approval, and support and react to each other's needs, expectations, and upsets. The connectedness and reactivity make the functioning of family members interdependent. A change in one person's functioning is predictably followed by reciprocal changes in the functioning of others. Families differ somewhat in the degree of interdependence, but it is always present to some degree. This theory is very relevant in explaining how tension and anxiety begins to grow in the families with drinking persons and how eventually it leads to dysfunctional equilibrium, and how it may eventual breaks in the family.

Review of Empirical Studies

Family cohesion has been conceptualized as the emotional bond that family members have with each other and an expression of belonging and acceptance within a family (Manzi, Vignoles, Regalia, & Scabini, 2006). Cohesion has been defined as including familial support, affection, and caring for other family members (Barber and Buehler, 1996). The study conducted by NACADA (2012) on alcohol and drug abuse indicated that excessive consumption of illicit brew had escalated death rates in rural areas, school dropouts, and financial instability, and domestic violence, among the alcohol consuming families.

The economic impact of alcoholism is also far-reaching. Alcoholics often use money that could have gone towards school fees or food, to feed their addiction. This often leads to family break-ups and even destitution (Doyle, 2011). In a study done by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, it was established that alcohol abuse leads to serious financial problems not only because of the actual money spent on alcohol but also through indirect expenses like medication from alcohol related illnesses, penalty charges paid after violent physical confrontations, paying police bails for alcohol related offences, accidents related to alcoholism, among others.. As individuals are often part of social networks, it is easy to understand how alcohol abuse has a ripple effect across a person's entire network of family, friends, employers, colleagues, and others. When one member of the family becomes alcoholic the rest of the members are also affected. Alcohol consumption has also contributed to domestic violence. According to Coleman, men who were more frequently drunk were more likely to be verbally and physically violent toward their partners (Coleman & Straus, 1983; Hutchinson, 1999; Kantor & Straus, 1989) and they registered high levels of verbal violence where the drunken person abused the family member. In Central Kenya there is a very strong consensus that alcohol use is the reason why wives batter their husbands. A lobby that fights for the rights of male victims of domestic violence says its officials will camp in central Kenya for three months to help deal with piling cases of domestic abuse (Cotran, 2008).

Maendeleo ya Wanaume chairman Nderitu Njoka said his plate was full, trying to help battered men get legal redress to pull out of abusive marriages. Njoka like Hon John Mututho, who is also the MP for Naivasha says 'Central Kenya, is a target because is the worst place where women are in the habit of battering their men. Women beat them because they can no longer cater for their families, provide food, or take children to school. Above all, that they can no longer fulfil marital duties to their wives (Gachiri, 2008). The findings are in agreement with four other studies using similar methods and coding procedures that indicated that alcoholic couples were characterized by more negativity, less positivity, and lower levels of problem-solving than non-alcoholic couples (Billings et al., 1979; Haber & Jacob, 1997; Jacob et al., 1981; O'Farrell & Birchler, 1987).

Alcohol consumption has also contributed to strained spouse relationships. According to Bowen's Family Systems Theory, emotional interdependence in the family, which promotes cohesiveness and cooperation, is required to protect, shelter, and feed family members. Heightened tension, however, can intensify these processes that promote unity and teamwork, and this can lead to emotional imbalance and lack of relationship equilibrium. When family members get anxious, the anxiety can escalate by spreading infectiously among other members especially those that are very close to each other. As anxiety goes up, the emotional connectedness of family members becomes more stressful than comforting. Eventually, some may feel overwhelmed, isolated, or out of control. These are usually the people who accommodate the most to reduce tension in others but they are also human and cannot sustain the tension forever, and because relationships are reciprocal the affected family member gives in and the relationship is strained to breaking point (Kerr, 2000)

These findings agree with those of the following scholars who indicate that alcoholic couples were characterized by more negativity (Billings, Kessler, Gomberg, & Weiner, 1979; Haber & Jacob, 1997; Jacob, Ritchey, Cvitkovic, & Blane, 1981), less positivity (Billings et al., 1979; Haber & Jacob, 1997; Jacob et al., 1981; O'Farrell & Birchler, 1987), and lower levels of problem solving (Jacob et al., 1981) than non-alcoholic couples were. Moreover, alcoholic couples were comparable to distressed, non-alcoholic couples on levels of positivity (O'Farrell & Birchler, 1987) and negativity (Billings et al., 1979). In many countries, drinking in bars and pubs is a social activity. Very often, men will go to bars with their wives on weekends, not to get drunk, but to socialize, meet people, or catch up with the week's events. But in Kenya, the bar is seen as a purely male domain, where men will either sit alone and drink or sit with other men with the sole of aim of drinking till they literally drop or until their money runs out. Some have suggested that in a society where men who stay at home with their families are considered "sissies", the bar offers the only place where insecure men can assert their masculinity (Doyle, 2011).

Research Methodology

This study employed cross-sectional survey design. The researcher settled on descriptive research design and gathered qualitative Data. The study used purposive and stratified random sampling technique. Purposive sampling was used to handpick the 3 chiefs, 3 pastors, 3 nurses and 3 head teachers from Chania Ward. Subjects were therefore handpicked

because they were informative and had the required characteristics. On the other hand stratified random sampling was used on the households. This helped the researcher to have different sub-locations as stratum and random sampling was used to pick households that were used in the survey.

A sample size of 96 respondents was determined by the Kothari (2013) formula for calculating small sample sizes.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2 (N - 1) + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

Where: n = Sample size for a finite population,

N= size of population which is the number of parents (6644)

p: population reliability (or frequency estimated for a sample of size n), where p is 0.5 which is taken for all parents population and p + q= 1

e: margin of error considered is 10% for this study.

Z α /2: normal reduced variable at 0.05 level of significance z is 1.96

e = Precision level desired or the significance level which is 0.1 (10%) for the study

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 \times 6644}{(0.1)^2 (6644-1) + [(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5]} = 96$$

The sample was distributed equally to avoid biasness. The sample size is as laid on the sample matrix in Table 2 below.

The study had a total sample size of 108; 96 households and 12 respondents handpicked from pastors, nurses, chiefs, and head teachers.

Primary data was collected specifically using observation and questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions. The results of the questionnaire were then entered into a spreadsheet and transferred to SPSS. Spearman's rank correlation was used to explain the relationship between the variables.

3.1 Alcohol consumption and family finances

As expressed on the Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis below, the study revealed that there was a strong positive correlation r=0.924 between alcohol consumption and family financial stability. This means that the more individuals consume alcohol, the more it costs, hence leaving the family unstable in terms of finances.

On alcohol consumption, some key informants claimed as expressed below:

Alcohol consumption is very expensive and ongoing drinking becomes habitual and addictive and quickly causes people to spend beyond their means.....alcohol consumption has left many families poor. Many people have lost their jobs on account of alcohol making their families sink into financial crisis. As individuals are often part of social networks, it is easy to understand how alcohol abuse has a ripple effect across a person's entire network of family, friends, employers, colleagues, and anyone else who depends on the alcoholic person. This finding is expressed on table 1, below.

Table 1 | Correlation between alcohol consumption and family finances

See the Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

			Alcohol consumption	Alcohol consumption has taken huge portion of finances
Spearman's rho	Alcohol consumption	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.924**
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	108	108
	Alcohol consumption has taken huge portion of finances	Correlation coefficient	.924**	1.000
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	108	108

Source: Study findings, 2017

3.2 Alcohol consumption and domestic violence

From the correlation analysis presented in the Table 2 below, the research showed that there was a strong positive correlation $r=0.763$ between alcohol consumption and domestic violence. This means that the more the alcohol consumption the higher the rate of domestic violence in the family.

Table 2 | Correlation between alcohol consumption and domestic violence

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

			Alcohol consumption	Alcohol consumption has contributed to increase in physical domestic violence
Spearman's rho	Alcohol consumption	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.763**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	108	108
	Alcohol consumption has contributed to increase in physical domestic violence	Correlation Coefficient	.763**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	108	108

Source: Author study findings 2017

The same position is shared by a number of key informants as seen below:

Domestic violence mainly is from unrealistic demands from irresponsible spouses. a man comes home demanding food and he has drunk his money and the wife has been in casual labour in other people's farm to get food for the children . Then when he is denied food or he finds they have eaten and not left him any food he starts the fight. Important to note is that this violence is very high against the alcoholic than against the sober spouse. In this case therefore I found out that many men suffer this violence in silence.

3.3 *Alcohol consumption and spouse relationship*

The research findings presented in table 3 below shows clearly that there is a moderately positive correlation $r=0.536$ between alcohol consumption and spouse relationship. This means that the more the rate of alcohol consumption the higher the rate of spouse conflict in the family

Table 3 | *Correlations between alcohol consumption and spouse relationship*

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

		Alcohol consumption	Alcohol consumption has increased conflict among spouse
Spearman's rho	Alcohol consumption	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.536**
		N	108
	Alcohol consumption has increased conflict among spouse	Correlation Coefficient	.536**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
			108

Source: Author findings 2017

Key informants had the following to say:

Some key informants stated that alcohol abuse affected husband- wife relationship in a variety of negative ways including: violence, communication problems, increased conflicts and low relationships satisfaction, nagging blame, complaints, emotional and physical abuse, poor sexual relationship and guilt.

3.4 *Recommendations to the reduction of Alcohol Consumption*

The results for initiative to reduce alcohol consumption in the families indicate that majority of the respondents (37) were satisfied that enhancing traditional and cultural norms will help reduce alcohol consumption while (41) were satisfied and also were very satisfied that government policy of regulation can help reduce alcohol consumption. Those that were strongly satisfied that stakeholders engagement can help reduce alcohol consumption were (51) while those that were satisfied that the alternative economic, cultural, and social environments can help reduce alcohol consumption were (52).

Table 4 | Initiatives aimed at reducing alcohol consumption

Initiative	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Not sure	Satisfied	Very satisfied
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
I am satisfied that enhancing traditional and cultural norms will help reduce alcohol consumption	3	16	28	34	27
I am satisfied that government policy of regulation can help reduce alcohol consumption	10	9	7	41	41
I am satisfied that stakeholders engagement can help reduce alcohol consumption	5	9	6	37	51
I am satisfied that alternative economic, cultural and social environment can help reduce alcohol consumption	2	8	16	52	30

Source: Author study findings 2017

Some respondents had the following to say:

It is important to enforce traditional and cultural norms controlling alcohol consumption as well as stakeholder's involvement and improve the economic activities in the area and creating a social cultural engagement for many young people to avoid idleness. However many respondents feels that Government effort to control drinking by pouring thousands of illicit brews and arresting the illicit brew brewers have not yielded much. Instead, large black markets for alcohol have been created as well as a nation where individuals have become proficient at hiding in homesteads.

Conclusion

According to the family systems theory, we have seen that a change in the functioning of one family member is automatically followed by a compensatory change in another family member. Therefore a change in family financial spending when alcohol budget is introduced leads to a compensatory financial instability change in the entire family causing unpleasant equilibrium of financial misuse. Also noted in this study is the relationship alcohol abuse has with increased aggression and reduced ability to rationally think, leading to marital violence, and sometimes very serious physical injuries. Individuals who abuse alcohol often batter their spouses and even the children are not spared, or they are battered by their spouses. Finally alcohol consumption is associated with more expression of anger and less warmth and unity in relationships. Alcohol consumption also consumes the time meant for spouses to be together since most of the time is spent in the club drinking and therefore ruining the times spouses should spend together. Like one of the respondent said, 'alcohol consumption only builds divisions, poverty, and enmity, never families'.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends the following strategies to reduce alcohol consumption and to promote family cohesion:

1. Seminars and intensified public advocacy for couples to sensitize the public on dangers of alcohol consumption. This can be facilitated by the government agencies, local media, NGOs, church, school programs and other stakeholders. Spouses should be trained on financial management skills and how to prioritize their needs.
2. Seriously embark on invading the brewing dens, which require reinforced special police units that are trained and deployed to specifically destroy the dens and to clear the river banks especially River Chania; as well as introducing community policing to know houses where these brews and sold to minimize its availability and affordability.

3. Create a conducive environment for young people to have alternative ways of celebrating and relaxing and having fun like creating regional music festivals, inter-village sports competitions, and talent shows among others. Positive peer influence among the young people should be encouraged.

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