

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALCOHOLISM AND FAMILY COHESION: A GENDER ANALYSIS OF KIGIO LOCATION, GATANGA DISTRICT, KENYA

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of alcoholism on family cohesion in selected households in Kigio location in Gatanga District. The objectives of the study were to establish the effect of alcohol on family income, find out the relationship between parents alcohol intake and children's education, establish alcohol influences on the distribution of resources in female and male headed households and find out the effect of alcohol on family stability. The results reviewed that parental alcoholism had a negative impact on the education of the children and that the men were most affected. Alcohol abuse affected husband-wife relationship in, intimate partner violence, increased conflict, nagging, blame, emotional and physical abuse, poor sexual relationship and guilt. Based on the study findings, the following conclusions were drawn, that exposure to alcoholism in the family was strongly related to incest, homicide, high school dropout rate, gender based violence, increased STIs, *HIV/AIDS*, divorce and more female headed than male headed households.

Key Words: Alcoholism, Alcohol Abuse, Dysfunction, Family Cohesion

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Alcoholism in family systems refers to the conditions in families that enable alcoholism, and the effects of alcoholic behavior by one or more family members on the rest of the family. Mental health professionals are increasingly considering alcoholism and addiction as diseases that flourish in and are enabled by family systems. Family members react to the alcoholic with particular behavioral patterns. They may enable the addiction to continue by shielding the addict from the negative consequences of his actions. Such behaviors are referred to as codependence. In this way, the alcoholic is said to suffer from the disease of addiction, whereas the family members suffer from the disease of codependence (Webb & Baer, .1995).

When focusing on alcoholism world statistics, it is apparent that there is an alarming rate of alcoholism and alcohol abuse worldwide. According to statistics on alcohol abuse and alcoholism by the World Health Organization, about 140 million people throughout the world suffer from alcohol related disorders. The prevalence of alcoholism varies in different countries. In the United States, for instance, approximately 15% of the population experiences some sort of problem that is associated with their consumption of alcohol. Alcoholism affects roughly 4% of the overall population, or 12.5 million men and women. According to United States alcohol statistics, men are 3 times more likely than women to become dependent on alcohol

Alcoholism and alcohol abuse statistics in Kenya reveal that about 20% of the current and former drinkers stated that their alcoholic drinking negatively affected them, usually affecting their jobs, family relations or their finances. Statistics further reveal that alcoholism and alcohol abuse have reached dangerous levels in Kenya, where it is estimated that approximately one- third of all deaths are related, either directly or indirectly to alcohol abuse or alcoholism. Ironically the attempts by the Kenyan government to control drinking by arresting brewers and pouring thousands of liters of illicit brew have not yielded much but instead they have created an extensive black market for alcohol as well as a nation of individuals who have become proficient at hiding their alcohol problems as highlighted by Kenyan media between July and October 20 10 .

. Alcohol abuse has become a major social issue mainly due to the fact that drinking has become a socially accepted way of conducting business. Alcoholism is characterized by compulsive and uncontrolled consumption of alcohol despite its negative effects on the drinker's health, relationships, and social standing. Alcoholism has profound social consequences for alcoholics and their significant others. Children raised in dysfunctional families score lower in measures of family cohesion, intellectual-cultural orientation and independence. They also usually experience higher levels of conflict within the family. It has been found that families with an alcoholic parent displayed more negative family interaction during problem solving discussions. Alcoholism usually has strong negative effects on mental relationships. Separated and divorced men and women were three times as likely as married men and women to say they had been married to an alcoholic or problem drinker.

According to research done by NACADA in Coast, Central and Western provinces between the period of May to October 2010 and January to May 2011, Alcohol is associated with a substantial proportional of gender based violence, for example, alcohol is a key factor in 68% of manslaughter, 62% of assaults, 54% of murders and attempted murders, and 48% of robberies and burglaries. Relationship between parental alcoholism and child abuse, incest, homicide, rapes and family violence are indicated in a large proportion of the Kenyan population. There have been reports of high rates of alcoholism among the parents of incest victims.

Adult males and females including boys and girls from alcoholic families experience higher levels of state and trait anxiety and lower levels of differentiation of self than those raised in non-alcoholic families. Additionally adult children, boys and girls of alcoholics have lower self-esteem, excessive feelings of responsibility, difficulties reaching out, higher incidence of depression, and increased likelihood of becoming alcoholics (Lacono, 2004).

Alcoholism is one of the leading causes of a dysfunctional family. Alcoholism does not have uniform effects on all families. The levels of dysfunction and resiliency of the non-alcoholic adult males and females, boys and girls are important factors in effects on the family cohesion.

Studies comparing boys and girls of alcoholics with those of non-alcoholics have also found that parental alcoholism is linked to a number of psychological disorders in children. Divorce, parental anxiety or affective disorders, or undesirable changes in the family or in life situations can add to the negative effect of parental alcoholism on children's emotional functioning (Moos & Billings, 1982).

A number of influential clinicians (Black, 1982) have described children of alcoholics as victims of an alcoholic family environment characterized by disruption, deviant parental role models, inadequate parenting, and disturbed parent-child relationships. These family-related variables are thought to undermine normal psychological development and to cause distress, disharmony and impaired interpersonal functioning, both acutely and chronically in families. In a study conducted on the effects of alcohol on parents' interactions with children, it was found that parents are unable to respond appropriately to a child's improper behavior. Although the child is acting improperly, the

group of intoxicated parents not only fails to discipline the child, but engage in parental indulgences that are inappropriate for the family cohesion (Lang, 1999).

Low family cohesion levels appear to be especially problematic among Kigio adolescents who are trying to navigate away from family disharmony as a result of parental alcoholism. Although, high cohesion is often a characteristic of some families, Kigio adolescent's boys and girls may view high family cohesion as a hindrance to their own independence.

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the gender intensification theory developed by Petersen, Sarigian, and Kennedy (1991). The theory postulates that the physical differentiation between men and women, boys and girls is accompanied by increasing socialization pressures to conform to gender roles. Thus, boys may be socialized into valuing agency, exploration, independence, and risk taking, while girls may be socialized into valuing communal, interpersonal relationships with significant others. Since increased emotional autonomy has been associated with susceptibility to peer pressure and affiliation, one possible pathway is that middle-adolescent boys may be more apt to comply or accept normative peer behaviour and values endorsing alcohol use and delinquency. By contrast, to the extent that girls increasingly assume traditional female roles, greater affiliation with the family and wariness of novelty may buffer or, at least delay, their involvement in alcohol and substance use experimentation and escalation in the peer group.

Recent historical trends have increased the number of adolescent girls who use alcohol and in binge drinking episodes, thus fostering the notion that there is a convergence in drinking behaviour between boys and girls, men and women in their life time. However, more careful scrutiny of the data indicates that boys and men, relative to girls and women, drink more frequently and in larger quantities and have more alcohol related problems (Husly, 1997).

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This study utilized both the descriptive survey and exploratory research designs during the research process. These designs were chosen for the study because they allowed the researcher to study phenomena that did not allow for manipulation of variables.

### 3.2 Population and Sample

The target population for this study was 1790 women and men; boys and girls in Kigio location. The sampling frame was a list of households whose parents were alcoholics. The researcher wrote numbers onto small pieces of papers and put them into a small container. The researcher then picked randomly 30 papers and households whose numbers were picked constituted the sample. A total of 179 subjects that included 56 parents and 123 children were sampled in the 30 households to participate in the study.

Table 3.1: Target Population

Category	Frequency	%
Parents	560	31
Children	1230	69
Total	1790	100

From the target population, the researcher obtained a sample size of 179 subjects. Table 3.2 shows the distribution of the sample size.

Table 3.2: Sample Size

Category	Frequency	%
Parents	56	31
Children	123	69
Total	179	100

### 3.3 Data collection Instrument

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire, and interview schedule. Participants were given the choice to answer the questions on their own or to have the researcher read the questions to them by a way of interview. The researcher visited all the respondents to administer the questionnaire. The researcher recorded all the responses and latter grouped the responses so as to answer the research questions.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics, namely frequency and percentage. Qualitative data was categorized and reported in emergent themes. As defined by Watson (1994), qualitative data analysis is systematic procedure followed in order to identify essential features, themes and categories. Once the data was collected, a code book was created to facilitate data entry into the SPSS program. Further, the data was organized, edited and cleaned to remove any outliers presented. This study employed descriptive statistics to analyze the data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Effect of Alcohol on Family Income and Cohesion

The first objective of the study was to establish the effect of alcohol on family income. The household heads were asked to state the main source of family income. The responses elicited are shown on Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Main Source of Family Income

Main Source of Income	Frequency	%
Farming	15	50.0
Livestock keeping	3	10.0
Business	6	20.0
Salaried employment	5	17.0
Others (casual laborer)	1	3.0
Total	30	100.0

The findings show that majority (50%) respondents indicated that the main source of family income was farming. 20% indicated that their family income was derived from operating a business while 17% were employed and their main source of income was salary. The data also shows that livestock keeping was a source of income for 10% of the respondents as 3% performed casual labor to draw an income. The findings clearly show that farming is the main livelihood of majority of the families in the study area. An interview with the respondents revealed that most of them were involved in subsistence farming with low returns and therefore can be described as deriving low incomes from proceeds generated from farming. It is also clear that tremendous heterogeneity exist among the population as the data reflects. Families that indicated they operated businesses had small and

medium business that generated low income. Majority of those who were employed and received a salary were the teachers.

#### 4.2 Family average monthly income

The study further sought to establish the amount of income generated by the activities identified by the respondents. A pictorial illustration of the data shown on Figure 4.10 shows the results of the average monthly income generated by the family income generating activities. The findings reveal that majority 60% families obtained an average income ranging from Ksh 1000-5000 from their income generating activity. The results also show that families that raised Ksh 1000 and below accounted for 20% and that only about 10% of the families were able to rise on average Ksh 5000-10000. Another 10% draw on average Ksh 10000 and above from their main source of income

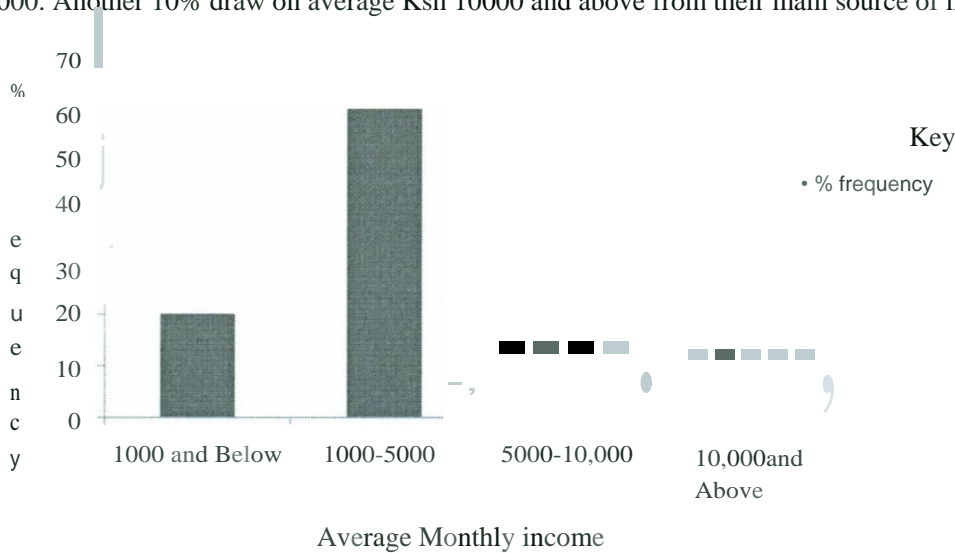


Figure 4.2: Family Average Monthly Income

It can be seen from the findings that the average monthly income for majority the families ranged between Ksh 1000-5000. The information implies that the level of family income in the majority households was low.

#### 4.3 Effect of alcohol on family income

In order to answer the research question arrived at establishing the effect of alcohol on family income, the researchers asked the respondents to state the fraction of family income used on alcohol. The responses generated are shown on Figure 4.3.

##### Fraction of monthly income used on alcohol

The study established that majority (43%) used about 75 percent (three quarters) of the family income on alcohol. The results clearly indicate that alcohol depletes family income in a very significant way. For instance; the amount of money used on alcohol for the majority families with an average income of Ksh 5000 is Ksh 3750 accounting for three quarters of the income. This leaves the family with an average Ksh 1250 to cater for other family expenses. This information is further illustrated by Figure 4.3.

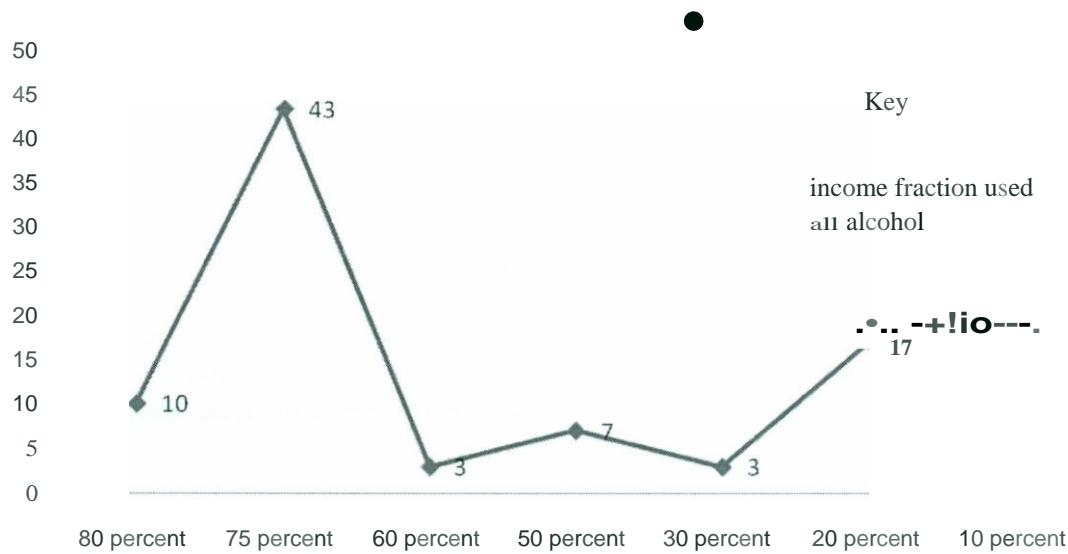


Figure 4.3: Fraction of Monthly Income used on Alcohol

These findings therefore lead to the conclusion that financial constraints are a major source of conflict in the family of alcoholics impacting negative on family cohesion.

#### 4.2.1 Relationship between Parents' Alcohol intake and Children's Education Status and its impacts on Husband-Wife relationship in the Family

The second objective of the study sought to find out the relationship between parents' alcohol intake by gender and children's education levels and how it impacts on husband and wife relationship in the family. In order to examine the relationship between parents' alcohol use and its effects on children education and its impact on the couple's relations, the researchers used several probing questions. The respondent was asked to state who among the parents was an alcoholic. The responses given by the subjects are given on Figure 4.4

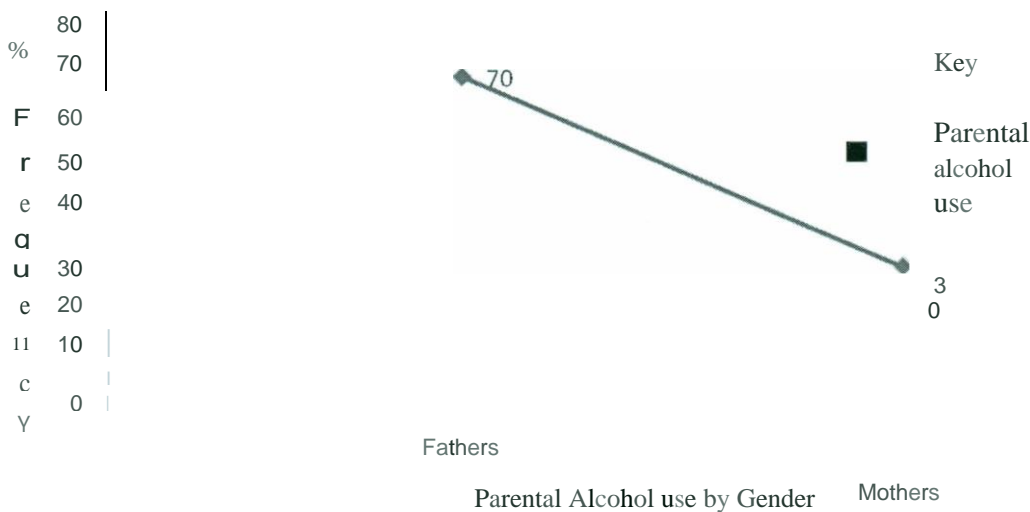
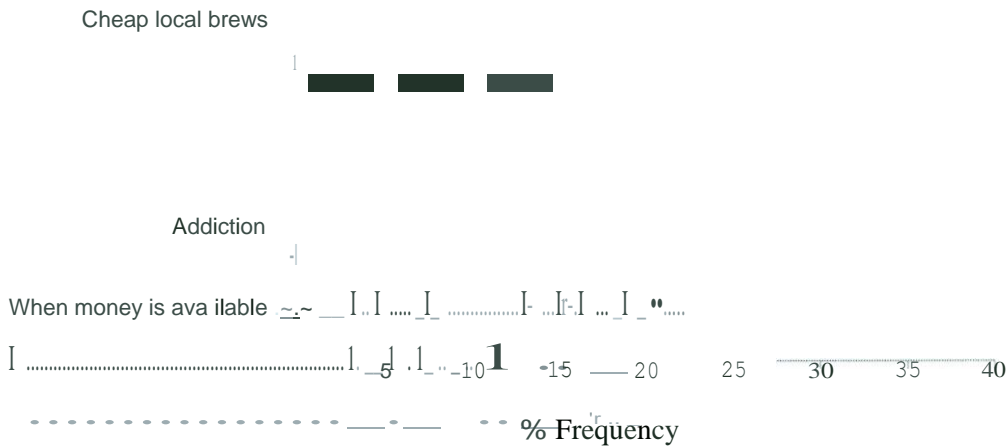


Figure 4.4: Parental Alcohol use by Gender

The study establishes that majority (70%) fathers as compared to 30% mothers were alcoholics. When asked to give the circumstances that predisposed them to drink alcohol the responses shown on Table 4.4 were provided.

Figure 4.5: Circumstances Leading to Alcohol Use

The study established that majority (36%) of the parents took alcohol because they had gotten addicted. 19% reported that local brew were cheap to obtain and thus this made them drink alcohol. Another 17% of the parents indicated that they took alcohol when money was available. Alcohol availability was among the factors predisposing its abuse by about 15% of the parents. 13% said that they took alcohol sometimes due to the influence from friends. This information is further illustrated by Figure 4.13.



4. 5 Figure:Circumstances Leading to Alcohol Use

The other reasons alcohol is taken by parents are given on Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Reasons for Drinking Alcohol given by Alcoholic Parents

Reasons for alcohol use	Frequency	%
Drinking makes collaboration better	8	15.0
Drinking gives one better self confidence	1	25.0
Drinking is a good reward after along working day	3	60.0
Total	3	100.0

The findings show that parents who said that the reason they drank alcohol was because it is good after a long day work formed the majority (60%) as compared to those who said that drinking alcohol gave individuals self-confidence 25%. Another 15% gave the reason that drinking make collaboration better.

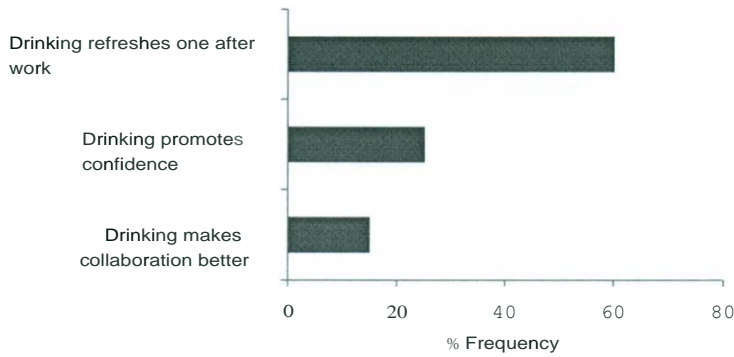


Figure 4.6: Reasons for Drinking Alcohol given by Alcoholic Parents

The study examined children's education status in relation to the parents' alcohol intake. As reflected by the results of the household education status earlier provided on Table 4.6. The education level of children of alcoholics (COA) was significantly low with majority having not gone beyond primary level. The implication is that alcoholic parents used family resources on alcohol thereby compromising the education of their children. When asked if they were constrained in paying the school fees for their children the reasons provided on figure 4.6 were elicited from the data shown in Figure 4.6, majority (72%) indicated that they had problems in paying fees for their children as compared to only 28% who said they were not constrained. Alcoholic parents who said they had problems in paying fees for their children gave the reason that they could not abstain from drinking alcohol as they had gotten addicted.



Figure 4.6: Responses on Whether Fees Payment for Children Education was a Problem

The study further sought to establish the number of children who had dropped out of school because their parents were unable to pay fees. The data shown on Table 4.7 gives the results that the study established.

Table 4.7: Number and Level of Children School Dropout

Level Dropped Out	Frequency	%
Upper primary (6-8)	30	52.0
Lower primary (1-5)	20	34.0
S~~~	7	12.0
College	1	2.0
Total	58	100.0

The study established that the number of children who had dropped out of school at upper primary school was higher 52% while those who had dropped earlier at lower primary were about 34%. This means that most children were not able to complete basic primary education. A fewer number therefore reached secondary and college level however, dropped before they would complete as reflected by the 12% and 1 % responses.

Further, the study sought to establish the impact of alcoholism on husband and wife relationship in the family. Couples were asked to state ways by which alcoholism affected their relationship. The responses indicated that alcohol abuse affected husband- wife relationship in a variety of negative ways including: intimate partner violence, communication problems, increased conflicts and low relationships satisfaction, nagging blame, complains, emotional and physical abuse, poor sexual relationship and guilt. Similar findings were established by Connors (2001) and Robert and Linney (2000).

4.1.2 Alcohol Influences on the Distribution of Resources and Cohesion in Male headed and Female headed Households

The third objective of the study was to determine alcohol influences on the distribution of resources in male headed and female headed households. The purpose of this objective was to determine how resources were distributed in alcoholic male headed and female headed households. The aim was to understand gender specific resource distribution patterns in the areas of land, income, income generating activities, family wealth, and employment. Respondents were required to tick appropriately on a Likert's scale their best opinion. The options from which they were to choose were strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (UO), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SO). Statistically, the perceptions of the parents were computed by deriving frequencies, percentages on a five (5) point scale. The second statistic computed was the mean. This was done by getting the aggregate score for each respondent. The maximum aggregate score that could be obtained was 60(12x5), whereas the least aggregate score was hence computed by dividing the total score by the total number of respondents. The responses to various attributes of resources distribution are shown on Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Resource Distribution by Gender within Households

Statement	SA		A		UD		O		SO	Mean	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
Family income fairly distributed between husband and wife	0	0	0	0	11	21	10	19	32	60	1.603
Husband and wife pools income together	0	0	0	0	9	17	15	28	29	55	1.622
Female has access to critical productive resource e.g. land	2	4	3	6	11	21	16	30	21	40	2.037
Female has access to family											

income generating activities	3	6	5	9	14	26	13	25	18	34	1.905
Female has lesser access to paid employment and income in general than do men	17	32	13	25	10	19	7	13	6	11	3.528
Man controls the valued resources in the family such as income, wealth, and income generating activities	31	58	11	21	10	19	1	2	0	0	4.358

Table 4.9 summarizes results of parents' perceptions on resource distribution. A total of 53 alcoholic parents participated in the study. The study established that men controlled the valued resources in the family as income, wealth, land and income-generating activities as indicated by a computed mean of 4.358. The study further established that women had lesser access to paid employment and income than men (Mean = 3.528). It was also established that women did not have access to critical productive resources like land (Mean = 2.037). This may be due to cultural stereotypes. The findings also reveal that women had limited access to family income generating activities (Mean = 1.905). It was also established that female headed households or male headed households did not pool incomes as shown by a mean of 1.622. Further, It was established that family income was not fairly distributed between husband and wife (Mean = 1.603).

From the aforementioned findings, the study draws the conclusion that females faced severe constraints in terms of ownership of resources. Relatively large degree of gender inequality in resource distribution within households existed. The sexstratification system places men as superior leading to power over women. At the societal level, traditional patriarchal values assign to men the economic responsibility while women role is relegated to children and family care. Female headed households for a variety of cultural and biological reasons are more likely to have unfair resource distribution. The implication here is that gender is a key distributional criterion at the household level.

#### 4.2.3 Effect of Alcoholism on Family Cohesion and Stability

The fourth objective sought to establish the effect of alcoholism on family stability. The dimensions of family cohesion were first investigated and the opinion of the respondents measured on a five (5) point Likert's scale. The purpose was to establish the respondents' attitude on alcoholism and family cohesion (stability). The responses elicited are shown on Table 4.11. A total of 179 subjects that included 56 parents and 123 children responded to this question.

Table 4.11: Dimensions of Family Cohesion

Cohesion evaluation statement	SA		A		UD		D		SD		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Family members are involved in each other's lives	15	9	13	8	43	26	90	54	7	4	2.652
There are strict consequences for breaking the rules in our family	0	0	0	0	34	20	59	35	74	44	1.760
Family members feel closer to people outside the family than other family members	0	0	20	12	26	16	20	12	10	160	1.790

In solving problems, the children's suggestions are followed	0	0	17	10	36	22	93	56	21	13	2.293
Family members like to spend some of their free time with others	38	23	50	30	70	42	9	5	0	0	3.820
There is no leadership in this family	0	0	34	20	33	20	81	49	19	11	2.491
It is important to follow the rules in our family	0	0	0	0	37	22	103	78	27	16	2.059

The data on Table 4.11 summarizes results of the subject's responses regarding dimensions of family cohesion. The purpose of generating this data was to get facts on facets of family cohesion in households of alcoholics.

The study established that in the context of alcoholism in families, family members spend some of their free time with others. Statistically, the mean score established for the statement whether family members liked to spend some of their free time with others was 3.820. This implies that there was significant less bonding among members in an alcoholic household. The means computed for other statements regarding the dimensions of family cohesion in an alcoholic family environment established that on many aspects, family cohesion was significantly affected by alcoholism. After computing the mean scores, it was found that most of the statements generated a mean below three (3) that was considered not to be contributing positively to family stability. For instance, it was found that family members were less involved in each other's lives as indicated by mean of 2.652 and that there were no strict consequences for breaking the rules in the family (Mean = 1.760). This information shows that there was impaired cohesion in families of alcoholic parents. The fact that family members felt closer to people outside the family than other members (Mean = 1.790) shows that there was poor cohesion within families of alcoholics.

The study established that there was poor parental leadership (Mean = 2.491) in households of alcoholics. This implies that members in such a family are responsible for their own deeds and that there was no common goal. When asked to state what they considered to be the state of cohesion in their families, the data that was elicited is shown in Table 4.19:

Status of Family Cohesion	Frequency	%
Very good	28	17.0
Good	40	24.0
Fair	61	37.0
Poor	38	23.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The findings shown on Table 4.12 indicate that majority (37%) respondent said that the status of their family cohesion was fair as compared to those who indicated that the family cohesion status was good 24% and 17% very good. The study also established that there was poor family cohesion among 23% of the respondents. It is suggestive that alcoholism indeed has an influence on family cohesion. The general impacts noted being; lack of family involvement with each other, no consequences for breaking rules, poor parental leadership, poor communication and problem solving as well as poor intra-family relation

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that alcoholism leads to family conflicts, impaired cohesion, instability, unhealthy home environment, gender based violence, sexual and physical abuse. In this situation, there is prevalence of increased STIs, divorce and failure of children to get basic needs such as education, healthcare, food and security. Killings of spouses and children have been rampant in alcoholic families. All these affect the population growth of a nation. The study also established that men controlled family valued resources such as income, land and any other income-generating activity.

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