ALCOHOLISM AMONG ADOLESCENTS
LECTURE NOTES

Objectives of this Lecture Topic

- Concept of Alcohol
- Factors Influencing Adolescent to Take to Drinking

1.2.0 Objectives
By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define alcohol
- Identify factors influencing adolescents to take to drinking
- Explain those factors influencing adolescents to take to drinking

1.3.1 Concept of Alcohol

Alcohol is a chemical compound and is the active ingredient in beer, wine, whisky, gin, brandy and so on. Alcohol appears in the blood within five minutes of its being drunk, and disappears in an hour to two hours later (Alhassan, 1991:210). The writer further states that milk and fatty foods delay the appearance of alcohol in the blood, while water, on the other hand, facilitates its absorption. The blood carries the alcohol to all parts of the body, including the heart, liver, lungs and the brain. The higher the concentration of alcohol in a drink, the higher its concentration in the blood. Beer, for example, has up to 4.5 percent alcohol content, wine is up to 12.5 percent and spirit up to forty percent.

While alcohol is unquestionably the most widely used drug in Western society, it is certainly one of the most popular drinks in Nigeria. For some adolescents – perhaps as many as a third – alcohol use becomes a habit that cannot be controlled. Alcoholics are people who have learned to depend on alcohol and are unable to control their drinking.

More boys than girls are known to be engaged in alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking and abuse of psychotropic drugs. (Akpala and Bolaji, 1991). The relative ease with which
these substances can be obtained often compounds the situation. More than 25 percent of secondary school students, and 35 percent of tertiary institution students have something in common: they have consumed at least one alcoholic drink during the last 30 days. It is quite possible that in some subgroups – such as male athletes – the proportion of drinkers is even higher.

One of the most troubling patterns is the frequency of binge drinking among college students. Binge drinking is defined for men as drinking five or more drinks in one sitting. For women, who tend to weigh less and whose bodies absorb alcohol less efficiently, binge drinking is defined as four drinks in one sitting.

It is important for you to note that even for lighter drinkers and non-drinkers, the level of drinking discussed above and which is usually experienced among their peers keep changing. This affects their college experience. It is also not uncommon for light drinkers to have their studies or their sleep disturbed by drunken students. It is also important for you to note that girls are also involved in this behaviour.

Alcoholism refers to the state of addiction to alcohol as well as the change in health that result from excessive drinking. In addition to our earlier description of alcoholics, an alcoholic may be defined as one whose dependence upon alcohol has attained such a degree that it interferes with the one’s:

- health
- interpersonal relations
- social position
- economic position

Most alcoholics have masochistic fantasies: inside every male alcoholic is a hero, hammering ineffectually to get out. Occasionally, an alcoholic succeeds not only in athletics, but also in the arts, politics, one of the professions, or in business. However, sooner or later his heroic success dissolves and he sinks into egotism and misery. At this stage, we need to ask ourselves a relevant question: ‘why do adolescents take to drinking alcohol?'
1.3.2 Factors Influencing Adolescents to Take to Drinking

Amongst the most important factors influencing adolescents to take to drinking are the following:

- The adolescent boy/girl wishes to cope with dissatisfaction, frustrations, and failure, by drinking.
- Some develop drinking habits in the context of socialization. If there are occasions when some of the people in a society drink, then that society has a social practice of alcohol use. The occasion may be festive (holidays, birthdays,); ceremonial (wedding toast); social (parties); and so on. If such occasions exist, then it follows that for some people (typically an age limit is set) and the members of the group will have opportunities to learn when and how to drink. What you must note is that adolescents do not fall within the age limit of those who are permitted to drink.

- Some develop drinking habits in the bid to conform with peer group standards.

- Innocent students are coerced into drinking with the false belief that it increases their level of courage towards wooing girls and meeting their girlfriends.

- Alternate states of consciousness are also an integral part of most cultural, social and political functions in the Nigerian culture. The use of alcohol is a prominent feature of many social functions. Have you noticed how often alcohol of different types is used to celebrate Christmas, New Year’s eve, marriages, the arrival of a new baby, birthdays, chieftaincy titles and funerals?

- Some adolescents believe it is the ‘adult’ thing to do.

- Others drink for the same reason that they use drugs: It releases inhibitions and tension and reduces stress (Formme, 1994).

It is now relevant for us to reveal that many British teenagers celebrated the end of their examinations with a drink. Few find their faces plastered across the national press when their
evening ends in drunken collapse. One of the teenagers was Evan Blair, son of the Prime
Minister, Tony Blair. Evan, 16, was arrested as ‘drunk and incapable’ when he slumped
beside the wall in London’s Leicester Square after drinking with friends. He received the
standard police reprimand (Newsweek, 2000)

1. (a) What do you understand by alcohol?

Describe alcoholism?

State 5 factors influencing adolescents to take to drinking?
This is a **SAMPLE** (Few pages have been extracted from the complete notes:-It’s meant to show you the topics covered in the full notes and as per the course outline.

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