



Are too many drinking too much too early? Alcohol use in middle childhood among Ugandan children

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Photo: J. Nalugya and IMS Engebretsen



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Background

- Substance misuse among children outside adult care are acknowledged, but this is not known in the general population.
- Objective: Investigate alcohol use in middle childhood (5-8 years) among children with adult care in Uganda.

Subjects and methods

- Instruments: Child psychiatric assessment by a child psychiatrist (JN) using MINI-KID (DSM4).
- Site, time: Mbale district, Eastern Uganda (Fig 1), 2014.
- Research project: ‘SeeTheChild - Mental child health in Uganda’ (STC).
- 149 children were recruited from the study “PROMISE Saving Brains (SB) in Burkina Faso and Uganda” *.
- Vulnerable children were selected based on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ), parent version.
 - ✓ 122 vulnerable children with SDQ score of ≥ 14 (SDQ high).
 - ✓ 27 control cases with SDQ score < 14 (SDQ normal).

Results

- Similar socio-demographic characteristics for SDQ high and SDQ normal children, Table 1.
- Alcohol abuse was frequent (8.2%) among SDQ high children, Table 2.
- Type of alcohol used was local brew: Malwa, Indali, Busera made from millet.

	Alcohol abuse	Alcohol dependence
SDQ high	10/122 (8.2%)	5/122 (4.1%)
SDQ normal	1/27 (3.5%)	1/27 (3.5%)

Table 2. Alcohol use among 5-7 year old children with high and normal SDQ scores

	SDQ-high	SDQ-normal
Maternal age, years	33.4	33.7
Maternal education, years	5.6	6.0
Child age, years	7.7	7.9
Child schooling, months	10.3	9.6
Socio-economic quintile	2.6	2.6

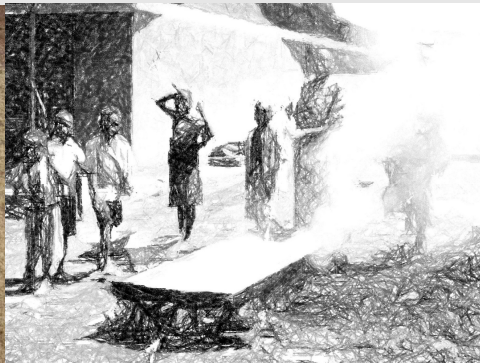
Table 1. Mean socio-demographic data

Conclusion

- Alcohol misuse should be suspected and explored in middle childhood among children eligible for referral to child psychiatrists or scoring high on screening tools like SDQ.
- Alcohol misuse in middle childhood also exist where there is adult care.



Photo: Millet and brewing of millet



Qualitative citations from clinical interviews:

“Alcohol makes them men”
-a Father

“For me I am old enough to drink
but my brother is still young”
- 7 year old boy

Source: Nalugya J. 2014



Fig 1: Maps over study area



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PROMISE

*Study registry number: ClinicalTrials.gov: NCT01882335
The PROMISE SB cohort included 5-7 year old children having participated in a exclusive breastfeeding promotion trial “PROMSIE EBF” in infancy. Of 765 enrolled mother – newborn-child pairs in the PROMISE EBF study (2006-2008), Promise Saving Brains in Uganda saw 543 (71%) child-caretaker pairs again when the children had reached 5-7 years.