

Addictions: A Gradual Developmental Disease



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Addictions Proactive Management: When to do What?

Introduction

Going through Kiingati (2022), on addictions, mission and social transformative agenda, gives us the definition of addiction and its components. It then goes on to discuss the types of addictions namely behavioural and substance abuse related. After that it enumerates and discusses the common types of drug abuse, the causes, as well as drug addiction and specialized groups. The paper goes on to shed light on risk and protective factors relating to addictions, effects of addictions on mission and on social transformative agenda. Towards its completion, the paper dwells on interventions: pharmacological, psycho-social and behavioural. In the end it gives suggestions on the way forward on mission and social transformative agenda before proposing an intervention model.

Acknowledging the challenges in terms of costs (Mogaka, et al., 2021) and the high probabilities of relapse (“The relapse rate was 50% for cannabis, 33% for alcohol and 65% for harder drugs such as cocaine and heroin (Kuyeya, 2021. p. 5) among persons living with addictions, this study chooses to focus on the proactive management of addictions based on the premise that this is a gradual developmental disease. Largely, the paper addresses the “*When to do What*”, in line with the different decades of human growth as a way to deal with the addiction’s elusive yet luring trajectory. The paper hypothesizes that lack of proper negotiation of one’s childhood (0-10 years), adolescence (11-19 years), and emerging adulthood (20-29 years), contributes to an addiction pathway. Also, lack of prompt identification and correction of an individual’s deviation from the proper pathway, contributes towards addictions; thus, the significant role of parenting styles (Sangawi, Adams, & Reissland, 2015; Gatune, 2020). In adulthood, negotiation of young adulthood (30-39 years), middle adulthood (40-49 years) and late adulthood (50-59 years), also influence how one positively deals with addictions. It is assumed that in young adulthood, the problem of addictions has already been exposed. The after years: early old age (60-69 years), middle old age (70-79 years) and late old age (80 years and above), see the addict (if alive), easily sink into depression (Kiingati, 2023), coupled with what Ólafsdóttir, Orjasniemi, & Hrafnisdóttir (2020) refer to as neglect from the one-time significant others. What then are the life stages based on the decades, and what is their relation to addictive tendencies or avoidances? Before embarking on the discussion of each decade, the study first elucidates on virtues and vices that relate to addictions and in general, human wellness.

Virtues and Vices

As we travel through life’s pathways, we carry with us virtues and vices that inform our character strengths (Park, Barton, & Pillay, 2017). Peterson and Seligman single out “wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (quoted in Park, Barton, & Pillay, 2017, p.5). In this paper some emanating dichotomies of virtues and vices are listed.

Virtues

High Spirituality
Communalism
Hope
Equality and Equity
Universalism/ inclusivity

Vices

Extremist/high religiosity
Individualism
Despair
Segregation/power hangovers
Racial/ethnic/gender discrimination

Controlled liberalism: Actions versus consequences	Licentiousness
Prudence	Dependency/Addictions
Hard work	Laziness
Delayed gratification/saving	Immediate satisfaction/lust
Subsidiarity	Destructiveness
Preferential treatment to the poor	Displaced adoration of the rich

The list to these dichotomies is endless. The dichotomies, to a limited degree, result from nature (inheritance) and nurture (upbringing); “nature and nurture (...) shape developmental pathways and out-comes, from health to behavior [and] to competence” (Keating, 2011, p. 1). This means that parents play a distinct role in contributing to the pathways that the individual undertakes, thus the significance of the first years of life leading to the questions: What behaviour trait is prevalent around the environment of the growing child and how does it relate to addictive behaviour? Which of these behaviour traits are positively and/or negatively reinforced (Bandura’s Social learning Theory & Social Cognitive Learning Theory, cf Nabavi, & Bijandi, 2023)? In many ways, the what and the how of the process influence the value inculcated into the child, which in turn becomes the character in adulthood. The more the reflection on the importance of nurture, the more significant parenting becomes, in informing addictive traits and thus in influencing and forming generations (Sangawi, Adams & Reissland, 2015; Gatune, 2020). Then what happens and what needs to be factored in, in each of the subsequent decades after birth, and how does each of these phenomena relate to addictive traits?

The *first decade (0-9)* is mainly spent under the care of primary caregivers (mother or nanny), as the virtues and vices from these caregivers, are inculcated and made part of the growing lives. At this age, “communication set up between parent and child [is meant to] lead[s] to healthy interpersonal attunement that serves [the] developmental progress” of the child (Katzman, 2020, p. 23). According to Erikson (McLeod, 2024) it is at this first decade that the toddlers and pre-teens acquire trust (or mistrust) [when...] needs such as nourishment and affection will be met (0-1: *Trust* versus *Mistrust*); sense of *independence* (1-3: *autonomy* versus *shame/doubt*); take *initiative* on some activities/may develop guilt when unsuccessful or boundaries [are] overstepped (3-6; *initiative* versus *guilt*); and develop *self confidence* in abilities when competent or sense *inferiority* when not (7-11; *industry* versus *inferiority*).

While one may easily say, “I do not trust you?” there are others that will say, “I do not even trust myself.” Such statements are not to be misconstrued or even under-rated. Issues of trust are key, in matters of enhancing independence and autonomy, initiative and industry, leading to self-confidence. Lack of the development of these attributes that are also looked at as virtuous, opens the door to the development of mistrust, shame, doubt, guilt and inferiority that according to Erikson (McLeod, 2024) are linked to vice and in this context, are looked at as related to an increased tendency towards dependencies.

While Erikson in this first decade dwells on four psycho-social stages of human development, Freud (Cherry, 2016) brings forth the stages of oral (birth to 1year), anal (1-3 years), phallic (3-6years), and finally puberty (6 years and above). Freud lays focus on psycho-sexual development where in the first stage (oral/mouth; Birth-1), the infant develops a sense of *trust* and *comfort* through oral stimulation. Through this, the child becomes *independent*. The contrary is fixation where the infant develops dependency and aggression that may lead to problems of drinking, eating, smoking and nail-biting.

In the second stage, the bowels and bladder control are the erogenous (sexually sensitive) zones. At this stage the child learns to control bodily needs (*orderly*). When this is done successfully,

the child acquires *accomplishment* and independence. The role of the parent is key, when he/she utilizes praise and reward, the child experiences a positive outcome leading to the development of *competence, productivity* and *creativity*. When the parent is punishing, ridiculing or shaming, the child experiences negative outcomes resulting in him/her being messy, wasteful, and/or destructive. This may also result from the parent's leniency. When the parent is too strict, the child may develop stringency, rigidity or obsession. Addictions are looked at as an obsession, thus linked to an outcome that points to the child's negative growth.

In the third stage, Freud discusses the phallic stage (3-6 years). In this stage, the primary focus of the libido is on the genitals. Children begin to discover the differences between males and females. For Freud, boys start to view their fathers as rivals to the mother's affection (Oedipus complex; feelings of wanting to possess the mother and the desire to replace the father).

Nevertheless, the boy child also fears the father's punishment following these feelings (castration anxiety). On the contrary, according to Freud, girls experience the Electra complex (penis envy). Attempts on the child to identify with the same-sex parent are viewed as means to possess the other parent. To what extent do these feelings of affection and rivalry; identify and possession, contribute towards addictions? Aligning oneself (or disassociating the self from) with a parent struggling with addictions, may have an effect on one's addictive tendencies.

The fourth stage is the latent period. At this stage, the libido interests are suppressed as the development of the ego and the superego contribute to this period of calm. Children at this stage are in school (in search of intellectual pursuits) and the focus is on peer relationships and hobbies (social interactions). In this stage children develop social and communication skills and self-confidence. When the child is exposed to erroneous addictive substances, they may start getting attracted to (or dissuaded from) addictions, either as positive or negative reinforcement.

After the latent period, Freud has one more stage which is puberty (puberty to 18 years). This stage starts with a strong sexual interest to members of the opposite sex. The question at hand is whether at this stage, the individual has already developed a balance in life. When there is no balance, the individual is more prone to addictions, as they search for identity and life equilibriums.

While Freud's concern is human psycho-sexual development, Piaget's interest is in the cognitive development (Babakr, Mohamedamin, & Kakamad, 2019). The first stage is the sensorimotor (birth – 2 years). In this stage, infants seek to understand objects by using sensor activity (Moreno, 2010). They also experience object permanence and deferred imitation (Bremner, 2010). The second stage is the preoperational stage (2 - 7 years) (Cacioppo et al., 2013). In this stage, infant's develop symbolic ability where they can use images and words as symbols to understand the physical world (Bjorklund & Blasi, 2012). They can also draw pictures (Santrock, 2011), though they cannot think logically (Ciccarelli et al., 2012). These infants also are limited in animism (Santrock, 2011): - ability to differentiate between animate and inanimate objects; egocentrism (Santrock, 2011): - inability to differentiate between their perspective and that of others (Kesselring & Müller, 2011); and finally have conversational difficulty (Kesselring et al., 2011): - ability to recognize that something remains the same amount even if its shape changes (Franzoi, 2011). When the primary caregivers take interest and encourage the growing mind towards continued cognitive development, the child develops confidence and independence. When on the contrary, the caregiver's attitude and efforts are towards discouraging the cognitive development of the child, shame and guilt may develop in the young mind, who in turn may, get attracted to deviancy, and at a later stage, seek solace in addictions.

The third stage is called the concrete operational stage (7-11 years). During this stage, children are less egocentric and they display the ability to understand concert things (Hockenbury et al., 2011). They can also solve complex problems (Bjorklund, 2012). At this stage, children can also understand

classification such as shape, value, and size, as well as their associations (King, 2011). They are able to differentiate between weaker and stronger objects fit for what play (King, 2011). They can also comprehend relationships between sets and subsets and different roles such as a father can be a grandfather and a brother at the same time (Santrock, 2011). However, these children may overestimate (Cacioppo et al., 2013) things or even fail to understand relationships between things that do not exist in the physical world, such as numbers (Comer et al., 2011). As in the previous paragraph, encouragement on the part of the child's significant other(s), is core in reinforcing the child's cognitive development and pursuit in behavioural traits that deviate from the addiction's pathway.

The final stage is called the formal operational stage (when children approach 11 years) (Franzoi, 2011). At this stage an individual's thinking and understanding develop significantly (Feldman, 2013). Adolescents in this stage can think logically and deal with abstracts such as Mathematics (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2013). This is the last stage of cognitive development according to Piaget. At adolescence, individuals attempt to seek their identity. Through increasing peer pressure, feelings of self-unworthiness, may tilt the teenager's admiration towards groups that have addictive tendencies.

In this first decade, Erikson has four stages while Freud and Piaget, have to a large extent, all their stages in this first decade. This reality shows the importance of this first decade in child development and thus the role of the primary caregiver, in many cases the parent. Appropriate negotiation of this decade, has a significant role in the child's developing virtues or vice and the subsequent link (or no link) to addictions.

Based on this realization therefore, the lessons from the three theorists agree that the human being undergoes change. Each of the changes is affected by the child's caregivers, "positive institutions like families, schools, and communities make it easier or harder for individuals to have and display good character, but these institutions are only positive in the first place when comprised of people with good character" (Park, Barton, & Pillay, 2017, p. 4). In each stage, the mode of negotiation contributes either positively (towards positive character formation and acquisition of virtues), or negatively (towards acquisition of anti-social behaviour). The first position, tends to propel the individual towards formulation of character strengths (and resistance) in the face of addictions. The second position, tends to lead the individual towards weakened character, thus predisposing the individual to addictions. In addition, acquisition of socially accepted diction in language is key in enhancing self-worth, as the child learns key words such as thank you, sorry, please and excuse me. Lack of self-worth is in this study linked to desire in the child to search for identity in groups that are more exposed to addictive tendencies.

An additional theorist focusing on moral development is Kohlberg (Berghout, n.d.). The theory has "six identifiable stages which could be more generally classified into three levels". The stages are Level One: Comply/Compete – Self-Centered (Ages 7 – 11) :- Stage 1: Fear of Punishment, Stage 2: Profit; Level Two: The Conventional Level Group Centered (Ages 15 – 25):- Stage 3: Group Loyalty, Stage 4: Law and Order (Begins around age 15, increases to age 25), Level Three: Post Conventional Level- Internalized-Truth-Centered, Stage 5: The Common Good Ages 21 – 25, Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles- Integrity (Can be reached beginning in the late 20s). While there may be a reductionist desire to reduce Kohlberg's contribution to moral development, the attributes (self centeredness, fear of punishment, group loyalty), if navigated negatively, can lead to associations within groups that tilt towards addictive tendencies. However, when well navigated, virtues of common good, internalized truth, and integrity play a notable role in solidifying one's control and prudence, that in turn ground the individual in self-worth and by extension, shield one from addictions. Table 1. presents Kohlberg's moral development.

Table 1: Kohlberg's Moral Development

Level	Stage	Ages	Social Orientation
<i>Pre-Conventional:</i> A person's moral reasoning results from consequences of actions, such as punishment, reward, or exchange of favors, and from the physical power of authority figures. The first level of moral thinking is that generally found at the elementary school level.	1	2-4	<i>Obedience and Punishment:</i> (i) Fear of Punishment, (ii) Not law or justice, but cost to me Conscience = self-protection
	2	4-7	<i>Individualism, Instrumentalism:</i> Profit (i) Minimize the pain; maximize the pleasure (ii) Right behavior means acting in one's own best interests. (iii) Reasoning is largely based on an attitude of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." (iv) Conscience = cunning
<i>Conventional:</i> Group Centered. Begins around age 15, increases to age 25): A person's moral reasoning involves maintaining the expectations of one's family, peer group, or nation for one's own sake regardless of the immediate consequences, and a desire to respect, maintain, support, and justify the existing social order.	3	7-10	<i>Good Boy/Girl: Group Loyalty</i> (i) Obligation to one's family, gang, etc. (ii) One earns acceptance by being "nice." (iii) Behavior is often judged by intention – "Well, they mean well." (iv) Conscience = loyalty
	4	15-25	<i>Law and Order:</i> (i) Without laws, society would be chaos Right behavior consists of doing one's duty and respecting authority. (ii) Flaws in the system are due to the failure of individuals who do not obey the system. (iii) Conscience = good citizenship
<i>Post Conventional:</i> Internalized-Truth-Centered. The Common Good. (Can be reached beginning in the late 20s)	5	21-25	<i>Social Contract:</i> (i) Loyalty to truth (ii) Conscience = reason (iii) A person reasons according to moral values and principles which are valid and applicable apart from the authority of the groups. (iv) Moral reasoning becomes more comprehensive, reflects universal principles, and is based on internalized norms.
	6	Adult	<i>Principled Conscience: Universal Ethical Principles-</i> (i) Integrity (ii) Principles, no matter what the price (iii) Choices are grounded in genuine moral interest in the well-being of others, regardless of who they are. (iv) Conscience = personal integrity

Unlike Piaget and Freud, Kohlberg has only one stage (pre-conventional) and a bit of conventional on the first decade of a child. For him, there is obedience and punishment, individualism as well as group loyalty. The role of parenting is significant at this stage since the parent executes punishment; what he/she does, the intensity, the frequency as well as when, where and how, are all important in helping the child develop the required aforementioned virtues. When the parent is too lenient or too strict, the effect of the punishment may be negative, thus leading to proneness to seeking solace in addictions.

In all cases, challenges given to the individual children in this first decade, are the changing trends where mothers, the ipso facto, primary caregivers, are engaged in getting out of homes to go earn due to the economic hard times (Njau, 2017). This departure from the traditional roles of the mother and increased single-motherhood (Degbey, 2010 & Mather, 2010), leave the child exposed to other primary caregivers. Nannies come in together with other persons that assist in co-parenting. What resources need to be granted to nannies so that they adequately care for coming generations? What employment policies need to be in place for young mothers and fathers, to ensure that they too get opportunities to realize their parental roles? How much more should firms think of day-cares to allow more parent-child contact hours? An overlook of these questions, may expose the caregivers to

external stressors that in turn negatively affect how they relate to the growing minds. When such a case happens, the child is by extension exposed to feelings of inadequacy that in turn contribute to seeking compensation either from substances or from groups prone to misuse of substances. This then exposes the growing mind to addictive tendencies.

The worry is often to see an increased reduction of contact hours between the parent and the toddler, more so between the mother and the toddler. Might this detachment on the part of the mothers and their toddlers, be a significant contributor to the increasing challenges affecting the growing minds? How informative would empirical studies be, if they carried out longitudinal researches on children brought up by mothers (parents) versus those brought up by nannies! Key to this study, would be the link that these interactions influence a child's tendencies towards addictive behaviour.

The traditional African societies, not only had mothers having as their main focus child-rearing, but they also had extended family members (Wachege & Rūgendo, 2018). These members co-parented, thus often reducing pressure on the immediate biological parents (Mchale, Dinh, & Rao, 2014). Growing up in such set-ups, allowed the toddler to be guided, and provided for by all the members there present (Gitonga, Mbūgua, & Ogeda, 2013). Changing trends however, dictate changed methods, changed presences to the growing young mind. Increasingly, outside nannies have to be brought in, while increased commercial day-cares mushroom. What influence do all these changes have on the children in their first decade of growth, and how do these changes influence the child's acquisition of virtues that lead towards a deviation from or towards addictive tendencies?

While some caregivers may look at this stage as too early to focus on addictive tendencies, character formation in this decade is key. For families whose generational trees, show addictive patterns among family members across generations, early deliberate efforts towards the formation of the child on paths that strengthen character, are needed. This decade is key in cementing in the child the virtues of trust, comfort, independence, sense of accomplishment, competence, productivity and creativity. The virtues lead towards character strengthening that sets the child towards a path that resists the use of substances for self-reassurance. The virtues also set on a pathway that attracts groups of young ones that have self-worth and who may not need to prove their worth through deviancy. As the second decade, exposes one to increased peer influence, the individual child, is on a pedestal that is towards virtue, as a base for character strength.

In the *second life's decade (10-19)*, the encountered questions emanate from interactions with peers. In this decade, to be is to belong. These encounters, are on the one hand, influenced by neighbourhoods, the play groups in which the adolescents find themselves, and the learning institutions that these teenagers attend; all courtesy of the decisions of the primary caregivers (Gatune, 2020). On the other hand, the encounters are also dependent on the limited choices, since the true selves (behaviour choices and attitudes) begin to determine the persons with whom these individuals interact. In this second decade, according to Smetana and Rote (2019); and Besser-Jones, (2020), there are contrasting pulls of virtue and vice among the youth. However, these may largely remain latent due to the linear educational pathway that the teens are part of, and to which they must adhere. Nevertheless, in this pursuit of education, the degree to which character is formed based on virtue, informs the degree to which one interacts with like-minded and virtue-tilted groups. It also informs the individual's tendency towards seeking solace from addictive substances.

Before further embarking on conformity, a significant trait among teens, there is need to bring on board scholarly works by Erikson who calls this stage Identity versus Role Confusion (12-18 years) (McLeod, 2024). It is a stage where individuals acquire both the sexual and the occupational identities (cf Kiingati, 2019a; existential and role identities). This information is important to this write up for it lays emphasis on identity versus confusion. For Freud, the end of psycho-sexual development is at puberty (Cherry, 2016). A similar position is held by Piaget, whose development

of logical thinking is at the formal operational stage (when children approach 11 years) (Franzoi, 2011; Feldman, 2013). Lastly, on Kohlberg, the focus is on the conventional stage. Contributions from these theorists inform on identity as it appertains to the period between childhood and adolescence. The teenage who fails to have a clear identity, struggles with blind conformity and peer acceptance which according to (Bunu, Isyaku & Umar, 2023) lay fertile ground for aligning the self with groups that are more exposed to substance abuse. Also, the individual teenage is equally eager to try a search for identity and meaning, in these groups. The degree of character foundation based on virtue, may also influence the ability of the teen to desist from the pursuit of substance abuse pathway.

In addition to the conformity, teens may find themselves exploring earlier un-thought grounds of sexual practices, and even substances. With the minds not having acquired full maturity to allow them make informed decisions, the wave towards conformity may be overwhelming (Wouter, 2024). These young minds, if adequately kept busy, and based on the strength of their character strengths, may have limited times to express their real selves within the well-structured daily engagements of the formal learning institutions. This may enhance self-cultivation in them, where an intentional, conscious, reflective process of the individual makes moral progress through one's efforts (Slote 2016) and increased character formation. That notwithstanding, the teens still have sneak moments that signal towards their inability to say "No" and their getting carried away by the strong desire to belong and conform.

In line with the belonging and conformity, the media plays a significant role upon the teens (Boyd, 2014). Yet paradoxically, only few categories of persons appear in mainstream media: politicians, entertainers and sports persons (Wheeler, 2013; Lawrence & Boydston, 2017; Canter, & Dot, 2019; Murray, & Gavin, 2023). Other persons that may occasionally appear on this media include outliers in different fields, including persons involved in crime. This narrow path of media has however been expanded, thanks to social media platforms (McGregor, Lawrence, & Cardona, 2016). When teens try to belong and conform to those appearing in mainstream media, the efforts may often be misguided, and at the same time, too demanding to the individual teen. This blind conformity is associated with weak character formation linked to reduced virtues. Indeed, the efforts to conform, may derail the teen further away from reality into a life of fantasy, and imminent disillusionment (Mitchell & Hussain, 2018; Throuvala, Griffiths, Rennoldson, Kuss, 2019). With increased character malformation and reduced life of virtue, the individual is then more prone to aligning the self with addictive tendencies and like-directed groups.

Of interest to persons in this second decade, are sports. Individuals who have appeared constantly on media also include sports personalities (Canter & Dot, 2019). Despite this, reality reminds that to be a top-class world contender, and thus appear on mainstream media, is to a very limited percentage of teens. Even so, many of those that appear on mainstream media, may have started training and nurturing their talents, at the very start of the decade, if not earlier. This second decade is therefore utterly significant for individuals who have identified their talent as bodily kinesthetic (Thanavathi, 2022). The intelligence/talent, also comes with a lot of discipline. Persons that seek to move up the ladder into world sports, are meant to put immense hours into work, for them to get the right competencies. The task calls for resilience, consistency and commitment, as well as focus; virtues that are linked to strong character.

In this second decade, there are life-detractors and deafening noises. Earlier mentioned ones are the desire to belong and to conform (Wouter, 2024). There has also been a mention of dependencies. Together with other divergent forces that attract and derail teens from their intended paths, are social media and entertainment (Boyd, 2014). While these may not be harm in themselves, immense boundaries and control is needed. This is on how much time is spent on social media, and what is watched in this media. Clarity of thought, founded on a strong character, on the part of the guardian, is needed in order to permit clear guidance. Camouflaged in fun, detractors to teens include

drugs, sex, and even technology including smart phones (Kiingati, 2022). These are not only quite expensive, but they also offer a deluded sense of success and importance, more so to the weak in character. The longer the teen takes to disentangle the self from the web of this delusion, the longer it takes for the same teen to mature and focus on their well-being, and the more prone they may be to addictive tendencies and groups.

Still in this second decade, there is a question of satisfaction and complacency. Both are apparently related: Complacency can be defined as self-satisfaction, especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies. Complacency is extremely dangerous in the workplace. We get so used to things being done the same way that we do not always look at the hazards in our surroundings. We may also underestimate the risk of tasks that we perform regularly, or fail to notice a change in our environment when we become complacent in our daily routines (ToolBox Talk, 2013).

While this quote is from a technical field, its contents are relevant to the current paper and to this age bracket. Self-satisfaction is positive as a stand-alone virtue, and when linked with self-exploration and evaluation (continued inquiry on the self), self-awareness (knowledge of one's limitations and strengths), self-acceptance (admittance of one's limitations and strengths), self-esteem (being positive of one's limitations and strengths; not blaming) and self-transcendence (seeing one's contribution within the larger community of which the Supreme Being is in charge).

On the contrary, complacency entails a lack of awareness, reduced character strength, and subsequent deficiencies in virtue. It points towards a laziness to change and take challenge, characteristic of persons with weak character. With complacency, things that go wrong are blamed on higher powers (including nature), and the individual resigns to fate. When unchecked, metaphysical entities of religion, superstition, witchcraft and magic could easily become escape routes to the complacent individual who in turn may be getting lured towards reduced self-control and subsequent entry into addictive tendencies.

Complacency is linked to addictions in that when the individual struggles with the latter, they could easily fall prey to an inability to take responsibility of one's failures. This means that the individual may easily blame others for the apparently negative phenomena. In addition, in laziness, they could escape from their uncomfortable feelings, and land into addictions. The temporal satiation-appetitive effect derived from either the addictive behaviour or substance is easily embraced. In that way, coupled with the drive to belong, and the undeveloped mind of the youth, the individual may find solace in substance abuse and in groups whose main point of attraction, is their addictive tendencies.

This second decade, has as its concern, teenagers or adolescents, in search of identity, despite their not-fully developed minds. Aspects of peer influence and a desire to belong are significant and become strong factors in determining their different pathways. When there is weak character formation, hardly founded on strong virtues, the individual teen then becomes prone not only to over-experimentation, which includes use of illicit substances, but also to aligning the self with groups among them the deviant. Each of the two pathways, could easily offer the teen, a gateway into addictive tendencies. With increased technology, the use of electronic gadgets, allowing one to access different social media platforms, also expose the teens towards behavioural addictions linked to betting and computer games. While care givers may only, at this stage, see some pointers towards addictive tendencies, the behaviours tend to become more alarming at the next decade, 20-29 years.

In the *third decade (20-29)* (others such as Arnett et al., (2014) age it at between 18 and 29), also called emerging adulthood (Nelson, 2020), individual's true self emerges, "identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities /optimism" (p. 2), making this decade

“rich, complex, [and] dynamic” (Arnett, 2000, p.477; Arnett, 2013). Also in this decade, actions move from one-time actions, to behaviour and to character, as expressed by Kohlberg (Berghout, n.d.) One is meant to develop principled conscience, as well as universal ethical principles: integrity, principles no matter the cost, make choices that are grounded on genuine moral interest and well-being for others. Personal integrity is core (Berghout, n.d.). According to Arnett (2000), “the characteristics that matter most to emerging adults in their subjective sense of attaining adult-hood... [are the] individualistic qualities of character...(i) accepting responsibility for one’s self and (ii) making independent decisions...[and] (iii) becoming financially independent” (p. 472–473). Authentic level of character formation, and the acquired virtues, become more evident in this decade.

In this decade, Erikson (McLeod, 2024) addresses intimacy versus isolation. While he notes that this stage could range from 18 to 40 years, this paper chooses to focus on the third decade only, in order to keep the flow of discussing decade by decade. In this decade, one is concerned with forming intimate, loving relationships with others. This may mean permanent commitment to either marriage (O'Reggio, 2012) or celibacy (Schneiders, n.d.; Knauss, 2017). This commitment calls for personal sacrifice, without which one could fall prey to the addiction pathway. The success of the commitment is often linked to the solid base of one’s character strength.

For those who embrace intimacy, mutual dependency is key while one also opens the self to share. With intimacy, one is all right with making sacrifices for the sake of the relationship (Visserman, 2019). On the contrary, there are those who may be facing isolation. This refers to a struggle to form close relationships. This may be as a result of earlier unresolved identity crises, fear of rejection, and even lack of trust. These are issues that were discussed in previous decades. The virtue of love is significant to this decade. Love is thus defined as deep commitment to relationships that are founded on mutual trust and respect; “Love represents a cognitive, behavioral, and emotional stance toward others” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 303). Love, thus becomes a decision, rather than an emotion. Success in navigating this decade, based on one’s virtues and strength of character, lead to a sense of safety, as one cares for other than the self and the immediate family members; a tendency that is highly linked to increased happiness and wellbeing. On the contrary, avoidance of intimacy, may lead to isolation, loneliness and even depression, thus justifying one’s search for meaning in substances and in addictive behaviours.

In this decade, the individuals are often out of the immediate control of their primary caregivers and a little out of the naivety of desiring to belong (Nelson, 2020). One that is increasingly unable to say “no” to group pressures, posits future dangers, among them increased substance abuse, and adoption of pathways that lead to behavioural dependencies. Indeed, Arnett (2014) notes that in this decade, individuals are at a higher risk of anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and substance misuse, thus the need for continued caution.

Also, in this third decade, the individual largely exits the structured and largely controlled learning institutions. Those that still are in some of the learning institutions, high degrees of liberty, permitting self-expression, become the norm: being an adult is not something an individual all of a sudden does because of an age, event, or piece of paper (e.g., marriage certificate), but it also is not something that a person magically becomes over time. One must develop those characteristics of quality. To become responsible, a person needs to practice being responsible. To be able to care for others, a person needs to practice caring for others. To become less selfish, one needs to practice being less selfish (Nelson, 2020, p. 183).

Notably too, these emerging adults often have increasing financial obligations. The presence of money, invites responsibility on matters of financial management. A lack of focus and attention, may contribute to the emerging adult falling prey to crime, insurgent criminal gangs (Craig & Piquero, 2016; U.S. Department of Justice, 2019), and even risky sexual behaviour including prostitution

(Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013). Despite having taken National Identity Cards, the degree to which these holders of the third decade are adults, is pegged on more deliberate choices.

In this decade too, there is a need to make major life choices. The first of this is the choice of vocation (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Vocation/calling refers to “a transcendent summon[s], experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (p. 427). It is “discerning one’s purpose and meaning in the world...not simply what one ‘wants’ to do or ‘is expected’ to do, but that toward which one is drawn, and which (it is hoped) will provide one’s life with meaning, purpose, and a sense of genuine fulfillment” (VanLaningham, College, Pampel, Kotinek, Kemp, Reppmann & Stewartp, (n.d.) p. 82; cf also Cunningham, 2016, 2017, 2019). There are two major vocational paths: celibate and marriage (Diefendorf, 2015). That of the celibate is lived by among others the religious ascribing to different faiths (Shah, 2016); this type of life began in Asia.

The non celibate choose to be married or to live single. In making these choices, there are those that according to Stanley et al. (2006), “slide” into cohabitation. The term “sliding” was used to describe how many couples move through relationship transitions and make commitments without careful consideration of potential implications... [they cohabit] out of convenience, cohabit for some time, and “end up married” when they discover that the costs of ending the relationship are high. These costs, including anything that makes it difficult to leave or end the relationship, are labeled “constraints” ...in contrast other couples may progress through these transitions purposefully, “deciding” to move from one stage to the next... “sliding” into relationships is associated with greater overall risk compared to purposefully “deciding” to move forward.

The frustrations brought about by sliding or even by deciding, are influenced by the company one keeps, which if engineered by addictive tendencies, may easily lead to wrong commitments and decisions. Also, the choices made may in turn increase one’s tendency towards addictions. These are called “floundering” and are linked to risky behaviour, in contrast to “flourishing” (positive trajectories) (Lott, 2019; Leonhardt et al., 2019). Challenges also may be associated with ending up with a partner who is in addictions, ignoring the red-herons, or even hoping that those, unwelcome character traits will change once the marital relationship is cemented. Increased challenges may result as the individual couples realise that their union is not enhancing flourishing. It is important that at this stage, individuals are helped to understand their tendencies as well as those of their spouses, that tilt towards addictions.

There are also those whose choice is in marriage but due to widowhood (Kiingati, 2019a), divorce and separations, find themselves single and others single parents (Mather, 2010). Both those who choose religious life, and those who get married, largely live in communities/families. This means that their decisions, and roles are determined within the set communities/families. To a large extent, the groupings determine their role identities (Kopytoff quoted in Kiingati, 2023b). When one is often in company of persons that are struggling with addictions, it increases the pursuit of the same pathway.

Another component in this third decade is one’s career. Career goes hand in hand with one’s professionalism. In this context, categories of professions are in the blue, green, digital or service economies (Ciocoiu, 2011). The professions may also include artisans in the respective areas. For long, careers titled the men and so granted them identity. In those years, women generally got their identities from their fathers (daughter of “father’s name”), their husbands (wife of/Mrs “husband’s name” or even their grown-up employed sons (mother of “son’s profession”) (Ngubane, 2010; Saidi, Fourshey, & Gonzales, 2021). In the recent years however, women are increasingly pursuing professionalism and so get titles that grant them role-based identities (Kopytoff quoted in Kiingati,

2023b). In a nutshell, in addition to the name given at birth by the mother, and that given at Baptism (Christians), career gives the individual a societal name that the person carries for the rest of their active life before ageing, and often into the grave. One's lack of clear identity, could lead one into a search of identity in addictions.

In school, it was not so difficult to hear the statement, "You will see light at the end of the tunnel." Nevertheless, both discourse and voices passing the message never explained two fundamentals, "Through whose tunnel will I see light?" "Who constructs the tunnel(s), through which I am subsequently meant to see light?" This write up looks at this third decade, as important in choosing and starting to construct the tunnel, based on one's earlier acquired virtues and subsequent strength of character. This refers to the types and sizes of bricks, as well as the colour and texture. Proper foundation has to be set, failure to which, one is set for rude shocks in adulthood. In the words of Nelson (2020), this decade "is distinct because they [the emerging adults] think the third decade of life affords them the opportunity to do things that no other period in life will afford them" (p. 180). And according to Arnett (2000) the decade is distinct in that it is the period of life that offers the most opportunity for identity explorations in the areas of love, work, and worldviews" (p. 473). Hypothetically, the more the individual emerging adult adopts the attitude of seize the day to nurture one's love (vocation), work (professionalism and career), and worldviews (purpose), the more they avoid the addictive pathways and associations. Nelson et al (2015, p. 182), refers to this positive attitude as "future-oriented views that focus on preparing for adult roles (self-preparation; particularly those related to family formation) [and which] tend to diminish links with most risky behaviors [self-indulgence; among them addictions (Andrews & Westling, 2016), risky sexual pathways (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Lam & Lefkowitz, 2013), and crime (Craig & Piquero, 2016; U.S. Department of Justice, 2019)], and according to Rogers et al., (2016), enhances participation in more other-oriented behaviors. The selfless focus on the other, rather than on the self, tends towards driving one away from pursuing the path towards addictions.

The first three decades may be looked at as the initiation decades towards addictive tendencies. While in the first decade, the initiation is majorly latent, in the second decade, the addictive tendencies may begin to be seen. Nevertheless, professionalism and specific interest on the part of the care givers is needed for clarity of identification. Such an identification, would go a long way in pro-actively, influencing, the reduction of the pursuit of this addictive pathway, or even averting the individual from the pathway all together. An inability of the caregiver to identify and focus on the virtue founding and character formation of the growing teen, may then consciously or unconsciously expose the teen into the third decade, where the character weaknesses become more visible. With the required commitments and critical life decisions, the weakness of character increasingly becomes a concern. The evident tilt towards addictive tendencies (behavioural or substance linked), glares at the significant others. There is an increased search for help in this decade, instigated by the persons close to the addictive entrant. However, the individual victim at this stage is often at a denial stage constantly uttering, "I can stop when I want", in reference to the substance or the behaviour. With this statement however, there is an increasing lowered commitment, and wrong choices. At the next decade (30-39 years), the situation, will increasingly get out of hand, and become more cryptic to remedy, stop or even reverse.

In the *fourth decade (30-39)*, key questions emerge. Is the individual satisfied with what they chose to be? Is the individual happy (at ease) or not (regret). Either of the two, the individual has to remain with their earlier made choices, for life: not get bored, push it to the best of what one can be in the area; adopt demands, and do damage control. Erikson (McLeod, 2024), looks at this stage together with that of the previous decade. On that note, for Erikson, the issue is still intimacy versus isolation. The dynamics therefore, are as discussed in the previous decade. The challenges leading to addictions, may even be higher now that the parents are not present.

For those who may have chosen careers/professions influenced by their parents' choices, with lessened parental influence, one may experience an impasse and disillusionment (Dorot & Davidovitch, 2023). With increased competitiveness in the professional fields, one may start coming up against major life hurdles set by those whose talents/intelligences are aligned to the said fields (cf multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner); one hardly becomes a gold medalist while running the wrong race.

The adage of the ostrich that buried her head in the sand (Ganapati & Reddick, 2016), after seeing an approaching lion, is so relevant to persons in this decade. One quick way of not dealing with one's issues is blame all others except the self (Kaufmann, Quirin & Baumann, 2022). Of course, there is always something and someone to blame for our inactivity. Yet the reality is that one's success and one's failure are largely pillared on one's inner capacities (Rayhan, 2023). These include attitudes, life perspectives and decisions made. One's responsibility (ability to respond to circumstances), commitment and focus are key (Delegach, Kark, Katz-Navon & Van Dijk, 2017) in nurturing one's ability to counter addictions.

With the blame on externalities, one easily finds themselves lured into fights. These fights may be against the self, against the significant others and against nature. Let us borrow from the analogy of the river. Rivers do not carry struggling bodies of persons that cannot swim with the current. Naturally, river currents turn the individual fighter's mouth and nostril to face where the river currents are coming from. This allows the culprit to take in huge gasps of water, fast enough to allow the person to speedily lack breath. If need be, the river currents may, bang the struggling body against huge rocks to bring forth the unconsciousness. Cruel it may seem, but rivers need to continue flowing calmly, for their waters give life to people downstream. When the body becomes lifeless, the river will gladly, lay this decay to her side, again so that those downstream will profit from clean water. Such is life, it has to keep flowing along its course. Any attempts by persons in this fourth decade to defy nature, leads to their death and extinction. The invite is to fight less against life currents, but rather swim with the current. Only then is one's progress meaningful and possible. Fights are nasty and ugly, do not engage in them! Spousal fights or fights with those in the same communities, are even closer to the bone; they are more hurting and derailing. They are likely to be fatal and life threatening. Worse still, these fights are likely to be lifelong. Prudence and basic wisdom call for their avoidance. Increased fights against life's odds cultivate a path towards disillusionment and subsequent surrender to addictive behaviours.

On a more positive note, there are individuals who in this decade find it possible and prudent to shift from their earlier chosen professions, add some portions that colour/discolour these professions differently, or even subtract from some of the professions intensities (Anderson, Goodman & Shlossberg, 2012; Agi & Fiddo, 2018). The process of change however, may be quite expensive in terms of resources and time. With the increased dependents, one may be forced to make prudent choices on whether to remain and hang on, or discard and re-start constructing the tunnel. Attempts to hurry in any change, may only lead to increased disappointments. While it is good to change professions, caution needs to be in place to minimize on failure and subsequent depressed states that could prompt one's search for solace in addictions.

There are those who undertake permanent commitment in marriage (O'Reggio, 2012) or in celibacy in their third decade (Schneiders, (n.d.); Shah, 2016). The commitment may have been made towards the end of that decade. There are others who do so at the start or middle of the fourth decade. For those in marriage life, the commitment may already have led to children, hence dependents. These dependents come with additional expenses, and when one is not well founded professionally, it may come in with life strains as one seeks expanded shelter, increased budgets of food and clothing, as well as medical and education expenses. The earlier asked key questions, then hold more water and increased weight; they cannot be ignored. With increased stress emanating from life demands, one is

obliged to embrace deeper self-awareness, failure to which one may find themselves seeking comfort in addictions.

Dependency may also have started in the third or even in the second decade when trying to belong and explore unknown lands. Dependency is bad enough when it involves substances, with increased negative effects on health, esteem, positive social circles and even finances. In addition, when dependency involves behaviour (sex, betting, social media etc.), the effects may also be even more devastating, noting that the behavioural dependency takes long before being noted as a problem (Kiingati, 2022). In this fourth decade, the individual victim, as well as the significant others, get clarification on the ever-growing problems of dependency. These lessons should then contribute towards propelling individuals towards increased happiness.

In this fourth decade therefore, gaps denoting the different pathways that individuals earlier undertook, become clear. For those whose pathways have been leading towards self-improvement and improvement of the dependents, gaps may not be very vivid. Nevertheless, for they whose pathway is on improvement, compared to those whose pathways are on self-destruction, the gap widens at a noticeable rate. For those that are whirling downwards, increased levels of stress, depressions coupled with increased substance abuse, may be noted (Kiingati, 2022). One may not find it easy to stop the spiraling downwards, before hitting rock-bottom. Yet even at rock-bottom, acknowledging one's dependency and inability in face of the substance, may be the only appeal required, for the culprit to start regaining the self.

As said of the *fifth decade (40-49 years)*, indeed life begins at forty (Jackson, 2020). At forty, scales fall of one's eyes to the level that one can no more live in a facade. Illusions diffuse like mist in the presence of the sun, and the clarity of sight is clear. If one is in the dark, they are sure of their location, and so it is for those that are in the pathway towards the light. While those on the pathway towards success may still be victims to catastrophic phenomena, their chances of not being successful, *ceteris paribus*, are given. For they that had started on the path of dwindling oneself, the energies to bring the stone rolling back up the slope, prove often futile to the increasing velocity. Those struggling with dependency, may release whatever brakes that are found remaining; they may sink deeper into substance, as they head towards rock-bottom. That notwithstanding, there are outliers who for reasons that are often beyond human understanding, take sudden turns and start moving in the right direction. For them, while it may be difficult and almost impossible to think of catching up with those already far ahead, the effort to take turns is often visible.

While it was difficult for those in the fourth decade to change their careers, for those in the fifth, it is even more difficult and unlikely (Rege, 2016). Nevertheless, it still happens though to an even lesser percentage. It is worth noting then that younger CEOs have already started coming up and this may pose challenges to the elderly ones. Also, technology that is so fast changing, may pose a challenge to those in their fifth decade (Schmitz, Viego de Souza, Natália, 2022), who may not have the impetus to change with the technological trends (Mayhorn, 2012).

For they that started families in their twenties, their dependents may already be in their teens, thus increasing their financial and parental demands (Roeters, van der Lipp & Kluwer, 2012). In terms of time needed to nurture and guide, as well as the resources required, the individual quadro-generian may find it difficult to change or to even accelerate the ascending velocity. At times it may suffice to maintain the status quo, to a stage when the dependents shall have given breathing space (released their financial dependency).

Professionals at this stage, are often expected to be at the leadership positions. They are meant to be managing the affairs of the companies. They run the economies of their respective countries (Africa CEO Voices, 2022). They are in policy making dockets. Not only are they expected to use

less of their energies complaining and whining of what those that were there ahead of them did, rather, they should be correcting things. It is often more severe, when they are caught up in the web of complaining of those below them. After all, is it not true to say that management is to get others do? More activity and less talk are mandated, as increased energies are in decision-making and management.

In this decade, there are pointers to the need to start slowing down. Nevertheless, Erikson reminds the readers on the importance of generativity (finding life's work and worth and contributing to development through parenting, volunteering, and even mentoring (McLeod, 2024)). Lack of achievement in the area of generativity, leaves one with feelings of being unproductive, wasted life, and lack of meaningful legacy. These aspects are part of this and the next decade. On his part, Kohlberg links this decade and the subsequent others to principled conscience, integrity, moral interest and well-being (Berghout, n.d.). As one interacts with persons of the same age bracket, depending on their generativity, one is facilitated towards increased productivity. When one spends time with persons that are at stagnation, one tends towards increased stagnation, and reduced integrity, which may easily welcome increased addictions. In this way, addictions are further fostered.

The *sixth decade (50-59)* is indeed past the half a century mark: It is at times interesting how persons in this age, may find their minds defying that they are ageing (Mari, Alves, de Castro Aerts, & Camara, 2016), while those that are younger, will with ease refer to them as “very old” (Teater, 2018). Irrespective of what the society says, it is evidently a decade when one has to turn the mirror towards the self (Ubanatu, 2023), or else, face an early life exit. What is it that you desired to accomplish in life, that is still pending, yet is in your capacity to realise? In such, lies self-actualization, so embark on it and acquire it. The acquisition of this long-time desire, may easily be the propelling gear towards the happiness and rationale to which the subsequent few decades shall be pegged. Failure to pursue the pathway of gratitude, drives one towards addictions.

It is assumed that in this decade, dependents have managed to complete their tertiary studies and so the financial obligations have lessened. If not, it is assumed that there are some investments that are latent at some point and could be effected. Even more, it is assumed that the earlier put in place investments, are in some form of generation. What these points are aiming at, is that if one is not financially stable, and on the contrary, there is an increase in expenses, there is an unhealthy imbalance that could lead to increased stress levels. When one is abusing substances, the challenge is aggravated.

Reality is meant to have hit one as life began at forty. For the previous decade, one is meant to have put their life in order, knowing all too well that numbers do not lie. One ought to have taken drastic measures to cement their base, before the start of the dwindling of the energies in the celebration of half a century of existence. If that was not done, the damage caused may only call for mitigation and survival.

How it is hoped that Social Security systems are in place to reward they that earned in their years of strength! (HelpAge International, 2015) How much more it is hoped that one's health remains positive, so that one does not have to spend immense dwindling resources on medication. How much more positive would it be, that the national health insurance schemes were in place to ensure that the expenses are handled by persons of integrity!

In this decade, not only do the strengths start going down, but also many a times health challenges start (Li, Goh, Jhanjhi & Isa, 2021). This then becomes a constant reminder of tough decades ahead. If one's mental health is not sound, the physical may be aggravated, and vice versa. While it was important that nutrition was well organized from the very start, in this decade, it has to be taken with medical precision. As a matter of interest how is your weight? Does BMI (Bobula,

2019) make sense to you? If it did not matter earlier, allow it to be part of what you consume currently. If this is not well taken care of, the hip, knee and ankle joints may start to complain.

Among the major red-lights is the realization that life is a relay race. Like in all these races, there is a place where the runners have to exchange the batons; prior to the baton exchange zone or after the zone, would lead to the entire team being disqualified. Worse still is that at the exchange of the baton, a mistake would lead to the dropping of the baton. They who at this age do not hand over their baton, will soon be time barred. The subsequent set of runners may then experience a fatigue and give up running the race further. The critical nature of this decade, has to be calculated with the called for precision.

Caution is mandatory that this is not the age in which to set records. While there is an apparent immense wisdom based on past mistakes and experiences, this should not be overdone. The younger generation do not have the privy of experiencing life theoretically. Information being passed to the younger generation has to be done with patience and in the doses that they can consume; “patience in adulthood is related to a variety of determinants of personal well-being (Madden and Bickel, 2010;). Patience (Burro, G., McDonald, Read, Taj, 2022) is the key word, while transmitting the wisdom. On the part of the younger generation, it may be a challenge to consume what is being handed over. It is worse when the younger generation is already in so much of dependencies, a situation that denies them the sobriety to see the urgency of receiving the baton. No matter what it takes, those in this decade, have to hand over the baton, lest it shall be too late. Hand over the rows, so that those with more strength and astuteness can sail through the rough waters. Failure to this, our canoe shall capsize and all shall perish. Such is sustainability.

In relation to addictions, in this decade, one who is deep in substances, may find it very challenging to change. Due to increased loss of strength, the individuals in this decade, and are in addictions, may easily go deeper into the dependency. This according to Erikson (McLeod, 2024), is in line with the stagnation that was discussed in the previous decade.

What of the **seventh decade (60-69)**? They that are yet to hand over the baton, are now getting time barred. This means that there are imminent dangers of one collapsing not so far ahead. The collapse may be in the area of one’s failing health and increased forced hospitalizations (Jaul, & Barron, 2017). This may be so for they that are fortunate to be given a stringent warning. There are those, whose single thrust is fatal. There is clarity that life is providence. Nevertheless, this is not a license for one to be careless with this very life.

Persons that were in public salaried engagements are kindly asked to separate (Sewdas, *et al.* 2017). They go back to their roots and have to survive on pensions. For those that still have energies to go to their businesses, there is a clarity on the much that one can do. Often times, one needs other young and fresh blood to run the show. The remnant of the responsibilities for he/she in this seventh decade, may be guidance and less of physical activity. Even with the guidance, that is so much needed due to earlier accrued experience (Derks, Bos, LaceuLLe & MacHieLse, 2019), there is need to have clear boundaries, communication and observation of ethical principles (NIA, 2023). These detail that which one can and cannot do. With such realizations, there is also clarity on that which one shall and shall not do. Both are equally important. Attempts to bite more than one can chew, easily condemns one to hospitalization and even fatality.

Whether among the lay or among the celibate, there is loss of administrative powers that often go hand in hand with financial exploitation (Deane, 2018). The exploitation leads to decreased financial control and increased dependency. Who takes over, and they that are in charge of the affairs of the elderly, are significant in the wellness of these patients. Due to this, systematic hand overs should ensure that there is hardly any shock to they that handled the resources prior. This means that

one should not lack to a level that they experience unworthiness (NIA, 2023). This could easily lead to depressive conditions and increased mental un-well-ness. Ideally, there is hardly any fight over resources; easier said than done. When there are fights over resources, it is often pegged on ignorance and desire to thumb one's chest. It is worse when there are efforts to revenge; when one was in power, they made their subjects suffer; now it is turn to revenge. Revenge nurtures bitterness (Barcaccia, Salvati, Pallini, Saliani, Baiocco & Vecchio, 2020), that continually eats up the individuals, families, communities and the entire society.

For the energies that are going down each day, there is a constant question on whether this individual made sufficient hay when the sun still shone! For the mistakes that one did, there is a bacon to exercise increased self-forgiveness (Brown, 2021) and self-worth (Derkx, 2015). This is needed to those that one may have wronged. Increased efforts towards meaning includes purpose, mental worth, self-worth, control, coherence (comprehensibility), and connectedness (Baumeister, 1991; Derkx, 2013, 2015). These dimensions go hand in hand with self-acceptance (Ackerman, 2018), a necessity in all decades, but more so in this one. Of course, self-acceptance should have come much earlier in one's life, but if not, it is mandatory at this decade. It may be one of the must do recipes, for one to experience self-satisfaction, and have additional decades in times to come.

Fun and cherishing one's life with gratitude (Allen, S: -Greater Good Science Centre, 2018) is also mandatory. Looking back at one's achievements and having a moment to laugh at one's failures should be part of a search for integral well-being and quality of life (Ryff 2014; Derkx, 2015). This means that the individual is able to surrender to the Maker. How happy I am that I was able to cherish the gift of life, that long! How exciting that I was part of these immense mistakes, yet still make it! Such should be the thought processes.

However, it is worth noting that one has had numerous chances to touch on the lives of others (Adebayo & Eyetsemitan, 2016). If in the task, life has only focused on the self, and only on one's immediate nuclear family, it may be worth using the remnants of one's energies to do something to one that will never be able to reward in return. This is stewardship (Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, 2013). Is it not true to say that there has been a lot of benevolence that has contributed to who we are? Is it not minimal to try and extend a hand to one that is not directly linked to us? There is joy in giving; there is joy in serving. Let us desist from a path towards self-pity, crying over spilled milk, and which propels one towards addictions and increased dependencies.

Sunset is quickly approaching in this **eighth decade (70-79)**: While it is spoken joy for those that are heard stating that old age is a gift, it may be painful for those that reach it in immense physical pain (Kutsal, Dogan, Eyigor & Evcik, 2016). It is worse for those that have to go through it in immense psychological pain. The worst of all are those who have to go through this decade, in social rifts and wrangles with family and community members (Bambeni, 2022). How much more important is peace in this decade!

Attending birthdays of persons as they enter their seventies, can be so much fun. It is a glaring reality that old age is a gift. It is good to use the moments to look back and enjoy the successes. It is also a moment to look back and see God's grace having brought the individual this far. One time I visited a cemetery. I thought it wise to take a statistical run of about 100 or so graves. I read each tomb noting clearly how old the person was when he died. I was shocked to notice that over 60% of those lying there had died before celebrating their fortieth birthday. How much grace is the gift of life that we so easily take for granted?

Physical pain is notable in persons in this decade (Dhemba, 2013; Geffein, Kelly, Morris, Howard, 2019). A traditional proverb states it very blatantly when it says, "they that used to jump, now go into the ditch (for them to cross over)". With the gradual yet steadily increasing frailty of the

different body organs through old age, there is increased difficulty in maneuvering around. More than ever before, one needs to keep walking to avoid limbs becoming even more frail (Gumikiriza-Onoria, et al., 2023). With the continued movements and physical exercises, the heart remains a little strong and so are the lungs. To exercise is to want to live longer. The opposite is also significant.

Psychological pain may be realized in moments of stress, and at times in depressive episodes among the elderly (National Institute of Aging, 2021). Some of the given causes of this pain is regret and pain over gradual yet continued loss of life, of command and at times, of honour. At times it is as a result of defying age. The more one accepts their ageing, the better the mental state becomes (Triningtyas & Muhayati, 2018). Increased thoughts may even lead to Dimensia (Wang *et al.* 2023). Is it not at times positive that Dimensia allows the individual to forget what is troubling them, though this comes with forgetting other essential issues? Whatever the situation, it is positive that one accepts their condition for the sake of one's mental sanity. Again, this is easier said than done. Yet it is worth trying.

Social pain increases as one looks at those that one handed over the baton to, yet they have refused to move an inch. It is even more painful when instead of the young looking ahead into a life of responsibility taking, they choose to look back at the meager resources that the ageing one has, with the hope that when s/he dies, they can inherit. This is not only recipe for chaos, but a painful horror movie as one imagines what shall happen in one's death; off-springs shall be left fighting each other in courts of law in attempts to win over court cases, and when that does not work, they may then pick up machetes and spears to eliminate each other.

While it is apparently not always so kind to think of death, the thoughts are inevitable (Martínez-Heredia, 2021) as one sees more and more of one's age-mates, being buried. The list of persons older than the one in this decade, become less and less. The question at hand is whether one still has sufficient energies to carry oneself. Though one ought to have started exercising much earlier (Seguin, Epping, Buchner, Block & Nelson, 2002), it is never too late to start.

Scriptures make a lot of sense (Tamas, Tamas, Aginitei-Zbranca, & Poroach, 2016). Indeed, they do even to younger persons, yet to one's in this age bracket, the end of the physical life and the hope of eternal life are even more meaningful. There is a gradual bidding farewell to the world. If there be moments when one's body does not ache, then one should for this be very grateful. As Triningtyas and Muhayati (2018) state, acceptance and surrender are significant. While it is even more challenging for those in addictions, attempting to "stop" the addiction, is equally quite difficult; one cannot teach old horses new tricks. While it is not too late to learn, one needs to be realistic on the remnants of the energies.

Entry into the **ninth decade (80 and above)** is for the very few. According to the Kenya Population and Housing Census (2019), those whose age is above 80, account for slightly above 400,000 (0.8%) of the Kenyan population. This decade may be spent with the individual octogenarian watching things being done (Lee, Shiroma, Lobelo, Puska, & Blair, 2012), by younger generations. If these things are done positively by those whose racing styles befit the world demands, what joy and serenity, is this to the farewell bidding years! When those that were handed over the batons, are in total shambles and are misfits, what a pity is the horror movie! Yet in both instances, one can only sit back and watch. It is important for one to note that apart from the eyes, the ears, and occasionally the mouth (speech) there is hardly much that one can do; acceptance of one's condition is a virtue (Triningtyas & Muhayati, 2018). Yet one is still encouraged to exercise uniformly each day. Failure to accept that which one is going through, may make one more desperate.

Addictions may not be so much experienced in this decade since there is hardly strength to reach out to the substance, though it is present (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration, 2019; NIDA, 2020). Perhaps further studies in Kenya need to go past those of 65 years (NACADA, 2022). Only then shall we be able to see the prevalence of persons in this decade.

Despite the lack of strength, one should avoid sinking into helplessness and despair (Lee & Oh, 2001), but rather based on gratitude for one's life (Park, Peterson & Seligman 2004; Killen & Macaskill, 2015), should be filled with virtue (Peterson & Seligman 2004). For believers, prayer and surrender to the Supreme Being (Little Sisters of the Poor, 2014) is needed. There is still what one can do to those that are willing to listen; talk whenever you can. The experiences that one has undergone are significant. While the Bible is God's revelation, it is also much on personal life experiences (Azevedo, Martins & Maia, 2017). Had they not dared to share, we would have been underprivileged. Nevertheless, that they chose to talk of their lived experiences, are able to learn so much from Scripture readings each day; the narrations remain relevant in one's life. May the same be said of us many years after we are gone.

There is an appeal for one not to be troubled for many that lived before, for those that have died, yet a constant reminder is that this is the pathway for each. For believers, only then can one inherit life after death and Eternal Happiness (Copeland, M. A. (n.d); Mark 10: 17-31). The call is to live life to the full, doing what you have to do at the right time. In each of the decades, there are steps to be taken towards the positive, while on the contrary, there are attractions towards addictions. One cannot choose the pathway to follow, yet avoid the consequences (Warrender, 2023). It is only in pursuit of the right pathways, that one avoids addictions.

Conclusion

There are many studies on addictions dealing with the definitions, types, causes, effects and even interventions (Kiingati, 2022). Nevertheless, a semi-systematic literature search, did not point to empirical studies dealing with the contribution of human development to addictions. While the study chose to address decade by decade, it did incorporate lessons from Erikson (McLeod, 2024), Freud (Cherry, 2016), Piaget (Babakr, Mohamedamin & Kakamad, 2019) and even Kohlberg (Berghout, n.d.).

The exploration on each of these stages, point to the first three decades; 0-10; 11-19; and 20-29, as significant in determining one's entry into addictions. When the subsequent decades are not negotiated adequately, individuals struggling with addictions, may go even deeper into the dependency. The acquisition of negative character traits, not only facilitate entry into addictions, but also sustain the practice. This therefore, presents a hypothesis that preventive measures brought about by awareness on the part of the primary caregivers, and on the self (youth and young adult), are needed. A more deliberate address of character formation (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), would allow individuals and society, to make strides towards managing addictions. These proactive measures, are also less expensive in terms of time and financial resources, compared to the curative interventions. The study therefore, appeals towards the carrying out of empirical researches towards the co-relation between character formation and addictions. Meanwhile, parents are invited to be more deliberate on matters character formation, as a way to negatively reinforce tendencies towards addictions.

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