

## **DRUGS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN KENYAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: IS IT A REALITY?.**

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**Abstract:** *Drug abuse has become a global phenomenon affecting almost all countries though the degree and individuality effects and impacts show a discrepancy depending on the country in question. Kenya has not escaped the phenomena, drug abuse has permeated all stratum of Kenyan people; many of the Kenyan youths, especially those in secondary schools, are falling prey to drug and substance abuse. This has ruined their life as a result of addiction. Today it has become an African problem to the extent that a month hardly passes without media reports on large quantities of drugs having been intercepted in a number of African cities and towns. The results of the study indicated that students abused drugs for varied reasons and the commonly abused drugs were alcohol, bhang, miraa, tobacco and kuber. The study recommended that guidance and counseling in schools be enforced and that strict disciplinary measures be enforced by teachers to curb the vice. Policy makers should also focus their efforts on addressing administrative disparities of principals' leadership capacities across urban, suburban and rural setting.*

**Key words:** Drug addiction, Drug abuse, Substance abuse.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Globally, illicit drug abuse is now characterized by a concentration among youth, notably young males living in urban environments. Yet Drug and substance abuse have been proven to be dangerous to human health as per the different scholarly definition. Njeru & Ngesu (2014) defines drug as any substance other than those required for maintenance of normal health, which when taken into the living organism, may modify one or more of its functions. Ngesu et al 2008 states that, Drugs can be legal or illegal, they further state that, Drug abuse refers to non-medical use of drugs that is; a substance is considered abused if it is deliberately used to induce physiological or psychological effects or both for purpose other than therapeutic ones and when the use contributed to health risks or some combinations of these (Ngesu et al 2008). Hence drugs and substance abuse is a great cross-cultural and tri-continental problem in the twenty first century. Therefore this calls for intelligent thinking about the future and a good risk management approach to be set to avoid the disastrous impacts and manifestations of drug and substance abuse both in the social and economic spheres.

## **Literature Review**

From a historical perspective, it is noted that our remote ancestors explored the properties of every plant, fruit, root and nut they found. The eventual use of these products would be partly determined by the pharmacological effects, the nature, intensity and duration of these strange and desirable new experiences and partly by the particular group's pattern of living (Kombo, 2005, Njeru & Ngesu 2014). In classical Greece and Rome, alcohol was widely drunk and some scholars of the time mention the problems of alcohol abuse. Many drugs that are routinely used today were once prohibited in medieval times (Kombo, 2005). Africa is not spared the phenomena of drug and substance abuse. A

research conducted by World Health Organization (WHO) in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Ghana Narcotics control board established that there was a close relationship between drugs abuse and students discipline. The study targeted a population of 4880 respondents. The analyzed data further revealed that social/peer pressure was the major reason for drugs and substance abuse as cited by 1734 (35.5%). Other reasons cited were workload, parental influence, and lack role model in society/school and for fun (WHO 2003). According to a recent report from the United Nations Drugs control programme, the menace of drugs is assuming worrying proportions the world over and negligible headway is being achieved in elimination, owing partly to lack of serious commitment from government or the sophisticated nature of drug business presently. The report further paints a gloomy picture of how more and more countries are being affected by the vice unlike some ten years ago when drug business was restricted to a few countries. Despite the proliferation of drug laws in United States of America, drug abuse among young people and adults is widespread and increasing (Kombo, 2005). In Nigeria acts of indiscipline among student were blamed on use and abuse of drugs (Fafunwa, 1971). Kenya has not been spared the pestilence of drugs and it is abundantly clear that it is a transit point for hard drugs from Columbia heading to European capitals (Kombo 2005, Alice et al 2012). Trafficking of hard drug into developing countries has not spared Kenya and the drug consumption and dependence among secondary and college students has led to unrest and consequently wide ranging destruction of life and property. Kombo (2005) observes that the relationships that students establish in and out of school are a major factor in their school behaviour. When the students succumb to negative peer pressure they lose their self

image and respect. Such students end up engaging in inappropriate behaviour which includes strikes and drug abuse.

Over the recent years many African countries including Kenya, have had an upsurge in the production, distribution and consumption of drugs and substances with the youth mostly affected. Many of these countries have become markets for drugs as a result of the activities of organization and individual traffickers who use Africa as a transit points in their trade with the countries in the North (Kombo, 2005).

The drug problem has resulted in Africa countries developing their own drug control policies. Many have adopted anti-drug laws or legislation or established drug control agencies. Many of these countries are signatories to United Nations Drug Conventions (UNDC), United Nations Office on Drug and related Crime (UNODC) and United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNIDCP). Globally therefore, the overall drug consumption continues to spread. National Campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA) was established in Kenya in 2000 with the mandate to look into the issues of drug use and abuse in the country.

In Kenya secondary schools there is the connection between drugs and substance abuse and the rising crime rates, HIV/AIDS prevalence, school unrest, poor performance and . In another study by Njeru & Ngesu (2014) it was revealed that other drugs like alcohol can lead to risky sexual behavior as they affect judgment and decision making, resulting in exposures to sexually transmitted infections among secondary school students. This has ripple effects countrywide in terms of treatment of the victims and maintenance of the rehabilitation centers as these are some of the issues that eat in to the taxpayers' money.

These experiences have led to poor performance in education, also gravely impacted negatively against the schools and County's development agenda on various fronts.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following objectives guided this study.

- Investigate the causes of drug abuse among students.
- Examine strategies for intervention towards preventions of drug abuse in secondary schools.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The design of the study was a descriptive survey. Descriptive survey designs are used in preliminary and exploratory study to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification. Orodho (2003) noted that descriptive survey research is intended to produce statistical information about aspects of education that interests policy makers and educators. By involving broad category of stakeholders, the proposed study was able to fit within the cross – sectional sub-types of descriptive survey study designs.

### **POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

The target population of the study considered of students, head teachers and heads of guidance and counseling from different schools in Starehe sub County. Random sampling was used to select the Form three students and out of the total number of 1232, 291 students were sampled. This was based on a table designed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970:608) as cited in Mulusa (1988). For the head teachers and guidance and counseling teachers, purposeful random sampling was used. 6 head teachers and 6 guidance and counseling teachers were sampled.

### **INSTRUMENTATION**

The research instrument used in this study was questionnaires. Data was collected through a self- administered questionnaire. Orodho (2004) defines a questionnaire as an

instrument used to gather data which allows a measurement for or against a particular view point. The questionnaire was preferred due to its suitability for the study as suggested by Mugenda (1999:71) who observed that questionnaires are commonly used to obtain important information about a population. Using a questionnaire offers anonymity to the respondent, encourages truthfulness and gives the respondents adequate time to think through the question which is not usual with the interviews. The questionnaire was designed using closed and open-ended questions. This is a type of research instrument that gathers data of a large sample. Questionnaires were administered to students, guidance and counseling teachers and head teachers.

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

As its primary objectives, this study sought to investigate the causes of drug abuse in Kenyan secondary schools and strategies for intervention. The results showed that the majority of the respondents (80%) agreed that alcohol was the most frequently abused drug followed by miraa, kuber and bhang.

Alcohol was the most commonly abused drug largely because it is sold legally and has attained a commodity status. Most alcohol adverts target men and tend to portray a picture that alcohol drinking is masculine. Those who escaped the allure of alcohol advertisements are captured by the fact that moderate alcohol drinking is good for one's health. The findings concur with Kombo (2005) who reported that peer pressure and easy availability of drugs were the main causes of drugs and substance abuse among students in secondary schools. Peers play a major role in initial drugs use in the non-socialized youth, in the contemporary culture. Through peers, illegal drugs are made available since these drugs can seldom be purchased through ordinary means (Njeru & Ngesu 2014). The peer group may either supply the drug directly or provide information on obtaining it. Having a large number of drug using friends means that the non-socialized individual has ready access to drugs. The non-socialized youth has no' internal drive to say no. This gives the peer group a strong predictive strength of prevalence of initial drug use among non-socialized youth. The peer group may also provide models for drug usage, teaching its members when, where and how to use the drugs. The study further established that

there were more female students than males engaged in drug abuse. Absent parents, fear of exams and media avert were cited by the majority of the respondents as playing a critical role in drug and substance abuse.

As regards strategies for intervention, the study recommended that head teachers should endeavour to inculcate good discipline and responsibility among students. Good discipline should be acknowledged and any punishment meted out whether in the form of blame, or reproof, fine or suspension should be fair and commensurate with the nature of the offence committed.

Further, guidance and counseling services should be strengthened in order to provide opportunities for clients to work towards living a more satisfying and resourceful way. As such, experienced, well trained guidance and counseling personnel should be put in place to guide and counsel students on the facts about drug abuse instead of leaving them to decide on their own.

Varieties of leisure activities and recreational activities should be strengthened in the learning institution so that students can avoid boredom and idleness.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Drug and substances abuse is a historical phenomena and a serious moral issue in secondary schools and if not well addressed will continue to affect the education sector in locally and regional level. Students should be counseled against this vice and advised against the use of drugs. In this context teachers, parents, educational officers and other government agencies should prioritize this agenda in order to make schools a better place for the current generations and generations to come. The critical challenge of the Kenyan secondary schools is therefore attracting students who are knowledgeable, mentored and committed to their studies and more, importantly training competent students highly committed to their own future and the future of Kenya. The study recommended that guidance and counseling in schools be strengthened and that strict disciplinary measures be enforced by teachers to curb or minimize the vice. Mentorship programmes should be

enhanced to stimulate learner's feelings of well being policy makers should also focus their efforts on addressing administrative disparities of principals' leadership capacities across urban, suburban and rural setting.

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