

The Preconditioning Factors to Drug Use and Abuse among Secondary School Adolescents in Kiamokma Division, Kisii County

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Abstract

This paper sought to investigate the factors influencing drug use and abuse among secondary school adolescents in Kiamokama Division, Kisii District. Simple random sampling was used to select five schools out of the eleven schools in the Division. The accessible population was 120 Form Four students in the selected schools. A questionnaire was administered to the students with the help of two teachers in every school. An interview guideline was used for the collection of information from teachers. Observation-document analysis was also involved. Data collected was cleaned, coded and entered in SPSS package where it was analyzed. A descriptive approach was used in analysis to make inferences and conclusions to the study findings. It was found that students staying with drug users followed suit, as peer influence, advertisements and availability increased use while addiction was the only side effect. The study recommends that the government regulates alcohol use, drug advertisements and raise awareness on effects of drug use; students should be encouraged to avoid staying with drug users; conditions that create negative peer influence should be eradicated and that parents shouldn't use drugs in front of children. The findings of the study are useful to counsellors, community workers and other therapists who seek to promote emotional, mental and physical health of the society by eliminating the preconditioning factors of drug abuse and its related problems.

Keywords: addicts, drugs, illicit, trafficking, factors, secondary school students, Kisii, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, social deviance was largely limited to traditional incidents of petty theft, occasional arson and, sometimes, mob behaviour like strikes and demonstrations. All these have been situations that can be contained within the schools disciplinary and administrative structures. However, as a consequence of rapid change in social structures, the use of drugs has found its way from the international to the local scene. Hence, the use of the drugs among the youth as a means of solving problems is a relatively new problem which is a consequence of rapid social changes.

Many people would feel that it is not worth the effort to study the feasibility of drug use and abuse at secondary school level and that instead, we should put more emphasis on drug education at an adult educational level. While this assumption may be logical to an extent, we should acknowledge the fact that the youth in Kenya constitute over 50% of the total population. At the same time, secondary education has been seen to play a very significant role in the building of our nation through the moulding of youths into future leaders.

There have been many complaints from school administrators about students' drug use and abuse and its deleterious consequences. The problems range from poor academic performance to damage of the

institutions property, inhibition of the students' career aspirations, assaults of all kinds and general indiscipline problems. The study was therefore designed to investigate the factors contributing to drug use and abuse among secondary school adolescents in Kiamokama Division.

The Concept of Drug Abuse

A drug can be defined as any substance which, when ingested by a living organism, alters one or more of its physiological functions. Tebeny and Sergon (n.d.) define a drug as any substance, legal or illegal, which affects the central nervous system either by stimulating or depressing it. Legal substances include alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee which if taken in reasonable quantities have no health side effect on the consumer. However, they can be harmful if taken in excess. Illegal drugs (hard drugs) which are harmful to one's health even when taken in small portions, are heroine, *miraa* (khat), *kuber*, *mairungi*, cocaine, mandrax and *cannabis sativa* (bhang), alongside its by-products, hashish and hashish oil.

A substance is considered abused if it is deliberately used to induce a physiological and/or psychological effect or both for purposes other than therapeutic ones and when used contributes to health risks or some combinations of these (Ndambuki, 2003). A drug may be prescribed for specific therapeutic

purposes. Obtaining and taking them without prescription for the purpose of experiencing some desired effects is abusing the drug. It is likely that in the near future the term substance abuse rather than drug abuse will be used because not all abused chemicals are drugs. Abused substances, other than drugs, include glue, cleaning fluids, petrol and other chemicals that can cause psychological and physiological effects (Ndambuki, 2003, p. 81).

Drug abuse is neither a habit, confined to any specific social-economic group nor gender specific. Consequently, drug abuse is to be found both in developed and developing countries. Currently, drug abuse is a problem experienced by both the young and the old though the young are more affected. In many African communities, drug use was accepted but regulated among adults. In most cases, use of such drugs marked important socio-cultural practices such as marriage, harvest dance and initiations. Today however, traditional values and family patterns, which had, for long given the society coherence, sense of belonging and identity have been assaulted and in some cases, discarded altogether in our shrinking 'global village' (Ndirangu, 2004).

In Kenya, there is evidence of high and rising drug use and abuse of drugs. A report by the Ministry of Health (2000) indicates that 67% of men and 32% of women in Kenya smoked and 45% of those are below 20 years. A report by the United Nations' Drug Control Programme shows that 60% of students abuse drugs. The then National Agency for the Campaign against Drug Abuse's (NACADA) Co-ordinator, Joseph Kaguthi, noted that drug and substance abuse is a worse disaster than HIV/AIDS and famine combined (Kaguthi, 2006). Drug abuse policies and strategies for prevention and reduction have been formulated. For instance, in 1994, the Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substance Act was enacted to curb drug abuse and trafficking and United Nations designated 1991-2001 as the decade against drug abuse. In March 2001, NACADA was formed with the mandate to initiate public education campaign against drug abuse, develop an action plan aimed at curbing drug abuse by the youth in school and other institutions of learning, sensitize parents on drug use and abuse and this function as role models and initiate rehabilitation programmes for addicts (NACADA, 2004). However, despite these efforts and measures, statistics and daily observations around us show that the rate of drug abuse is still on increase.

Kenya is committed to providing education for every child not just for human rights but also as a necessary element for social-economic development. Consequently drug use and abuse is therefore identified as one of the problems that hinder children

from taking full advantage of educational opportunities.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors responsible for drug use and abuse in Kiamokama Division of Kisii County. In order to achieve this, several questions were addressed: does the family background of the adolescents contribute to drug use? What personal factors motivate adolescents to take drugs in this Division? Are there other factors that influence the adolescents to take drugs apart from family and personal factors?

Factors Influencing Drug Use and Abuse

There are many factors influencing drug use and abuse among adolescents. Among them are psychological factors, psychiatric factors, family related factors, peer influence, mass media advertisement, accessibility and affordability.

❖ Psychological Factors

Psychological factors refer to patterns of thought, behaviour, personality traits, self-esteem and coping skills among others (Swadi, 1999). Such non-pathological factors may cause an adolescent to develop alcohol and drug abuse problems. Owing to a lot of mental stress in academic courses and an unachievable expectation from teachers and parents, some youths turn to drugs (Nasibi, 2003). It is known that adolescents who witness or experience physical and/or sexual assault are at a great danger of developing alcohol and other drug use disorders.

❖ Psychiatric Factors

This refers to emotional and behavioural conditions severe enough to be classified as mental disorder by the DSM-1V (APA, 1994). Psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be related to alcohol and substance use in adolescents. Deas-Nesmith et al. (1998) have revealed that social anxiety disorder is the most common. The anxiety disorder exists with alcohol and other drug use. According to Clark et al. (1997), alcohol abusing adolescents are 6-12 times likely to have a history of physical abuse and 18-21 times more likely to have a history of sexual abuse and that PTSD and alcohol dependency was stronger in female than in male.

❖ Family Related Factors

Breakdown in social structure of society, which includes the family and its role of inculcating morals to young ones, has contributed to drug abuse (Nasibi, 2003). Most families are characterized by issues of immorality, spiritual emptiness, lack of direction and purpose in life among other problems. Coombs et al. (1991) have conducted a comparative study on 225 adolescents' drug users and an equal number of abstainers. Their study reveals that the drug free children not only feel closer to their parents but consider it important to get along with them. The drug users bear such characteristics as loneliness, rejection, isolation and constant punishment.

Furthermore, Needle et al. (1990) have shown that youths from disrupted families tend to get involved in substance abuse. On the other hand, Coombs (1990) has observed that abstainer parents have firmer standards regarding curfew, television, schoolwork, use of alcohol and other drugs.

❖ Peer Influence

Teenagers have an urge to belong, to be loved and liked by those close to them. This can lead to one doing things he/she could not have done to gain group approvals and identity with it. This is more serious when one has low self-esteem, sense of lack of security and dependency. The insecure youth finds comfort and approval by conforming to the standards of a peer group. Wills et al. (2001) have conducted a study of 1700 adolescents and assessed them yearly from the seventh to the ninth grade. The findings show that there is a good co-relation between the level of alcohol and other drug use in the respondents and the number of the peers who used the drugs. In addition, when children of drinking parents lose parental tie, they tend to be strongly influenced by peers who could also be heavy drinkers. In addition to acting as role models, parents who consume a great deal of alcohol have been shown to exhibit reduced parental monitoring of the activities of the adolescent children and to produce stress and negative effect on their children.

❖ Mass Media and Advertising Industry

According to Coombs (2002), apart from drug manufacturing industries-tobacco, alcohol, pharmaceutical, drug-glamorizing industries such as the entertainment media, music, fashion paraphernalia and advertising industry play a large role in drug abuse addiction. All these glamorize the drug lifestyle making it attractive and appealing as high life especially to young people. Television not only dominates leisure and family time, it powerfully affects our attitude, behaviours and relationships like any other kind of communication. It teaches viewers through what it portrays, more specifically; children often look to television for role models. In 1999 the White House released a study on popular movies rental and 1,000 of the most popular songs from 1996 and 1997. It was revealed that:

- 98% of movies and 29% of songs depict illicit drugs, alcohol or tobacco.
- Illicit drugs appeared in the 22% of the movies.
- Fewer than 15% youths, who smoke marijuana or cigarettes, experience apparent consequences.
- 20% of the movies portrayed illicit drugs use in a humorous context.
- Illicit drugs used was associated with health or luxury in 20% of the songs in which drugs appeared, sexual activities in 30%, crime or violence in 20%.

- Although there were few Africans, American characters in movies were portrayed as using drugs at a higher rate.
- Alcohol and tobacco were used in over 76% of movies.

Fashion industry also promotes and glamorizes drug use. There have been reports that heroine addiction is common among fashion photographers and models used to dress like the "heroine chic" of advertisement for Calvin Klein Clothes 1997 dubbed so because models used to dress like drug addicts.

❖ Accessibility and Affordability

International drug peddlers have invaded Kenya so that all sorts of drugs are in our country. Some of the drugs are consumed within but others find their way out of the country. Kenya has become a transit point and people charged with the responsibility have been compromised so that arrests are for public relation, uncoordinated steps of arrest. Cannabis Sativa (bhang), which is commonly abused, is locally available in Kenya. It is grown on the slopes of Mt. Kenya and also comes from Uganda through Lake Victoria and Tanzania through Namanga and Kuria boarders. It is cheap and therefore most students can afford. Miraa is also accessible and affordable as it is grown in Meru parts of Kenya. Its open use and the powerful "drug culture" where drug use is considered normal by communities is also another factor. Most parents give their children a lot of money (pocket money), which enables them to buy all they need, drugs included. Those not given involve themselves in criminal acts like robbery and prostitution to get money.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study only focused on the factors influencing drug use and abuse among secondary schools students in only five schools in Kiamokama Division, Kisii District. The questionnaire's data was also based on the students' response, which may be untrue, and the interview was based on the teachers' opinions. Boarding schools were not included in the study and all the five schools were mixed school, which is not a good representation of all types of schools. Finally, not students were present on the material day.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A casual comparative design was adopted in exploring casual relationships of variables relating to drug use and abuse. The authors were interested in investigating the role played by parents, peers and drugs availability on drug habit and the type of drugs commonly abused. The study was conducted among secondary school students in Kiamokama Division, Kisii County. In this Division, there are 11 secondary schools. There is only one boarding secondary school (a girls' boarding secondary school) and no private school. Each of the secondary schools has an average

of 360 students. The ratio of girls to boys varies from school to school. The target population was made up of Form Four students who were aged 16 -24 years. To cater for both boys and girls, the investigation was conducted in mixed day schools. Day schools were preferred because students are not under such strict control as those in boarding schools, and as such certain related factors associated with the absence of adults were anticipated as possible motivators to drug use and abuse. All possible steps were taken to ensure that the samples selected were representative of the target population. Five schools were selected randomly after writing the names of all the ten mixed day schools in the Division, on pieces of papers, folding, mixing and drawing one randomly, mixing again and drawing another. The same procedure was repeated over and over until all the five schools were selected. On the material day, after receiving the names of form three students, re-grouped according to gender, the authors assigned them numbers, wrote the numbers on pieces of papers and placed them in a draw basket. Twelve girls and twelve boys were selected using the mix and draw random sampling method. The names of the selected students were given to the class master/mistress who assembled them in an empty room. The authors introduced themselves before presenting them with the questionnaires. The guidance and counselling master/mistress in the five schools automatically became potential information source.

A questionnaire prepared by the authors was administered to the students with the help of two teachers in every school. An interview, structured interview, guideline constructed by the researcher was used for collecting information from the guidance and counselling teachers. These teachers were helpful in giving the researcher information on cases of drug abuse in the past. The authors also made use of direct observation and document analysis. After collecting data in all the five schools, interpretation was done in descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages to summarize data on close-ended items. Responses to the open-ended items were analyzed qualitatively. Such data was organized into themes pertinent to the study and presented using descriptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Family Factors Responsible for Drug Use and Abuse

The respondents were asked to state whether or not their parents and/or the people they resided with took any of the drugs under investigation. The majority of the respondents (73, 61%) said yes while only 47(39%) said no. The table below shows the drugs that were used by the parents and/or those living with the respondents.

The study then sought to establish the relationship between students' use and abuse of drugs and their staying with people who used the same drugs. A Chi-square was used to test the relationship between the two variables and the results revealed that 63% of the students that had ever used alcohol stayed with people using the same. On the other hand, a majority (62%) of the students that stayed with people that did not use alcohol had never used it themselves.

Table 1: Drugs used by those they stayed with

Category	Count	% of Responses
Coffee & Tea	37	29.6
Alcohol	36	28.8
Asprin	24	19.2
Piriton	14	11.2
Cigarettes	10	8.0
Miraa	3	2.4
Bhang	1	.8
Total Responses	125	100.0

A Chi-square test, done at 95% confidence interval, revealed that the relationship between students using alcohol and staying with people that used it was statistically significant. This implies that the students most likely to use alcohol are those living with parents and/or other people that consume the same. The respondents were then asked to state the extent to which several factors presented to them had contributed to their use of drugs. The findings are as shown in the figure below.

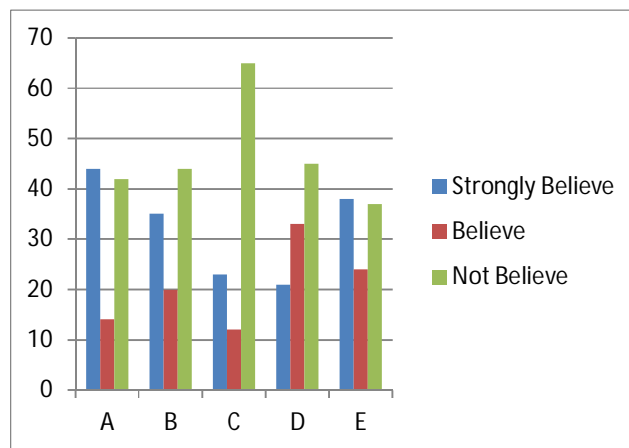


Figure 1: Factor contributing to student Drug Use
 KEY:

- A- Availability of drugs at home
- B- Father's drinking or smoking
- C- Mother's drinking or smoking
- D- Sisters/brothers use of drugs
- E- Relative use of drugs

The findings suggest that a father's and/or relatives' use of drugs had the greatest impact in causing the students start using the same. Mother's had the least impact, suggesting that they were mostly non-drug users.

Other Factors that Influence the Adolescents to take Drugs

Experiences Associated to Drug Use

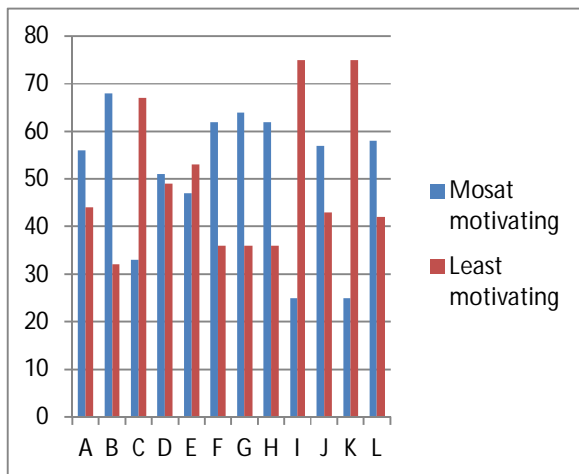


Figure 2: Drug use experiences motivating students to use drugs

- KEY**
 A - Excitement/pleasure feeling
 B - To enjoy and have fun with others
 C - To be accepted by others
 D - Feeling of grown up and fashionable
 E - Experience relaxation and calmness
 F - Forget problems/frustrations
 G - Relief stress, anxiety and fears
 H - Reduce pain and fatigue
 I - Courage and better performance
 J - Feel 'high' and great
 K - Alertness/think better
 L - A feeling of being energized

Peer Influence

The students were asked to state whether or not they were able to resist friends' influence to use drugs.

Table 2: Do you find it difficult to say 'no' to your friends' suggestions even when you know they are wrong?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	39
No	64	53
No Response	9	8
Total	120	100

The extent to which students were motivated by friends to start using drugs was also calculated and it was found that 45% of the students that had used alcohol learnt from their friends. The proportion of smokers that copied the habit from friends was 33%. The findings disclosed that peer influence played a major role in leading students to start the use of drugs.

Drug Advertisements

Also investigated was the role advertisements played in causing the students to indulge in drug use. The

table below shows the first impression formed upon viewing or hearing cigarette and beer commercials.

Table 3: First Impression created by Beer and Cigarette Adverts

First Impression	Frequency	Percent
It was fun	51	37
Thought drugs make one a winner	37	27
A great thing to do	31	22
Admired those who smoke/ drink	20	14
Total Responses	139	100

Drug Availability

It was anticipated that the students would not indulge in drug use unless the drugs are available to them. The table below gives a list of drugs students got to use because they were available.

Table 3: Drugs used Due to Availability

Category Level	Count	Pct of Responses
Alcohol	90	35.0
Cigarettes	68	26.5
Bhang	58	22.6
Miraa	32	12.5
Asprin	6	2.3
Piriton	3	1.2
Total Responses	257	100.0

It can be deduced from the findings that drug availability increases the chances of use. A palpable approach in any anti-drug abuse campaign in these schools would be to reduce or entirely eliminate drug availability. An investigation into the relationship between drug use and who students stayed with revealed that 63% of the students that ever used drugs were staying with parents compared to 37% that lived with relatives. The findings show a higher proportion of drug use for students living with parents and vice versa. The relationship between students' drug habits and their parents' was also investigated and the results are shown below.

Table 4: Chi-square Results of Relationship between Student's Drug Use and Parents' Drug Habits

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.268	1	.428

The above results indicate a lack of significant relationship between the two variables.

In summarising the above findings, it is clear that, alcohol use was the most prevalent in the division with 46% of the students having used it. Cigarettes had been used by 16% of the respondents, while cocaine and heroin were the least used by only 2% of the respondents. The boys were predominant drug users who made up at least two-thirds of drug users in the hard drugs category. Girls' use of hard drugs was highest in cigarettes and miraa where they made up one-third of the users. It was found that students that

stayed with a person that used drugs were two times more likely to start the habit compared to those whose parents or people they stay with did not abuse drugs. Enjoying and having fun with others as well as relief of stress, anxiety and fears were the most motivating drug use experiences that propagated the use of drugs.

Peer influence also played a major role in students' use of drugs with 45% of alcohol users and 33% of the smokers having copied the habit from their friends. Drug advertisements were found to have struck a positive first impression among the students. Most students got the impression that it was fun to use the drugs. Precautionary messages on the commercials went largely unnoticed. Availability of the drugs was found to associate with the use. Alcohol, the most used drug was as well found to be the most available. Students identified addiction as the main harmful effect of drug use. In general, awareness of the harmful effects of drugs was found to be low.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drug use and abuse in secondary schools is a vice that needs to be addressed. Factors that lead to drug use were observed to be ranging from personal, social and economic. The fight against drug use cannot be fully effective without involving the people that the students live with as they were found to influence the students' ultimate use of drugs. As such, students need to be properly educated on the negative effects of drug use. They also need to be put to light on factors that lead to drug abuse and the effective precautionary measures they should take. Peer influence was found to propagate use of drugs, especially the first use. Schools should therefore deal firmly with students found to use drugs. In addition, parents and guardians should be informed during the parents meetings that their use of drugs could be copied by the children. The government should also revise the regulation on the minimum age for alcohol consumption considering that there are students in high school well above 18 years of age.

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