

# Behaviour Disorders Related to Drug Abuse Among Secondary School Students in Kenya.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the behavior disorders displayed by secondary school students as a result of substance abuse. This would assist to train teachers on specialized intervention methods so that they can have knowledge on how to curb drug menace in learning institutions. The students were interrogated about substance abuse practices, use and the factors that lead them to abuse substances. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students and teachers involved in guiding and counseling programs. The findings indicate that students abused drugs and substances and reacted differently, developing different behavior disorders. Their responses revealed that there was no drug abuse program in schools and student addicted to drugs were not attended to. What the teachers revealed indicated that they did not have any training on drug abuse problems and lacked skills and knowledge to deal with drug related behavior disorders among students. Future research and implications for teacher training are discussed.

**Keywords:** addiction, abuse, behavior problem, special needs students, specialized intervention, dependency, substances.

## 1.

### Introduction

The problem of drug abuse has preoccupied scholars since time immemorial. It is a psychosocial problem that affects every society and threatens the future of the young people. Drug addiction has turned many young people into psychopaths, zombies and criminals hence the subject to research.

In his research, Amayo G.N (1994) contends that drug taking is a historical fact and not a new intention. What is new according to him, are the types of drugs and methods of their acquisition. In the past, drug taking was sporadically for religious, social-ritual and treatment purposes and only by certain groups under certain conditions which were recommended. Such purposes and circumstances militated against dependency or abuse.

Adolescent substance and its resulting effects are a major concern to parents, policymakers, teachers and public health officials. Experimentation with substances especially alcohol and tobacco is a progressive behavior from pre to late adolescents. Experimentation is generally not associated with any long-term impairment of functioning (Fetsch & Yang, 1990). It is considered problematic behavior when substance use occurs at a very young age, with increasing frequency, while the child is alone, or in the context of emotional and behavior difficulties. If use of substance becomes more frequent, negative consequences can develop, including impairment at school or work, legal problems, accidents, and interpersonal difficulties.

Early initiation of substance use is linked to drug abuse and dependency. Purris and Mach Innis (2009) revealed that more than 40% of individuals who began drinking before age fourteen developed a dependency behavior on alcohol. In comparison, only 10% of those who began drinking at age twenty and above developed alcohol dependency. Similarly, individuals who begin using drugs at an early age tend to experience greater drug problems. This study focuses on secondary school students who are more likely to develop high dependency on drugs. It goes further to argue for a framework within which to assist these students out of drug dependency behavior.

### 1.1

#### *Students behavior disorders related to drugs*

Among the students who abused drugs certain behavior disorders were reported. It was observed that bullying behavior disorder was common with 41% of cases. Earlier studies by Kerachio (1994) had indicated that bullying behaviour was common among students who are addicted to drugs. In Kenyan schools, instances of drug abuse are becoming common and students in it have even beaten their teachers, raped them or killed their fellow students (Kaguthi, 1994). More so, from their counseling sessions, counseling teachers reported cases of students getting involved in criminal behavior like robbery, indulging into sexual behavior disorders and more so bullying other students in the schools.

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

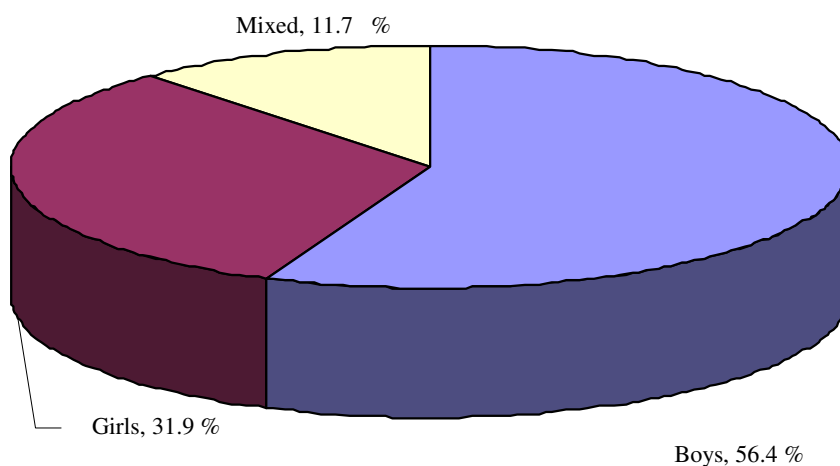
The purpose of this study was to investigate the behaviour disorders related to substance abuse among secondary school students in Nairobi, Kenya. It seeks to find out the types of drugs abused by the students in the county, the reason as to why the students' abuse drugs and the effects of drug abuse on the students. This was with a view to developing specialized student assistance educational programs on drug and substance abuse in Kenya.

## 2. Method

This study adopted a descriptive research design. According to Mmaduakonam (1998), causal comparative is concerned with what the phenomena is like, but if possible how and why it occurs. It involves finding out the effect of past factors on the target characteristics of the population of the study. In this research design, all the events or variables had occurred before the researcher collected data (Macmillan & Schummacher, 1989). The investigator then took one or more dependent variables and examined the data by going back through time seeking out causes, relationships and their meanings. The design was found best for this study since the researcher collected data after the events had taken place.

### 2.1 Participants

Figure 1: participants' background



The students were selected from different types of schools within the county. The distribution of the schools by category showed reasonable discrepancy. This was assumed so, due to their nature and the societal attitudes by parents, teachers and even pupils. As the Fig. 4.1 chart indicates, the most populated schools within Nairobi county were boys schools with 56.4% of the students sampled compared to girls schools with only 31.9% of the total sampled population. Mixed schools (boys and girls schooling together), were least preferred with 11.7%. In Kenya, there is a common belief amongst parents that in gender separate institutions learning becomes more effective.

### 2.2 Procedure

The study targeted a population of 21,555 students from all public secondary schools in Nairobi county; 11,597 were male students and 9,958 were female students (Republic of Kenya, 2007). The students aged between 13 years to 21 years. This age group coincides with the adolescent stage in which teenagers are usually curious and want to experiment with everything; form sex to drugs. It is at this stage when they desire to have some degree of independence and to discover their identities and individualities. During this age, many events occur in the lives of these teenagers which sometimes leave them perplexed and confused. The influence of peer pressure at this stage is very strong as they always seek acceptance from others and want to develop a sense of belonging. Due to these changes, this age group is the one prone to drug abuse as a means of escape and as a means of gaining acceptance from peers who introduce them into drugs.

The researcher got permission from the Ministry of Education to collect data from the selected public secondary schools in Nairobi Province. With the permit, the researcher then approached the targeted schools and booked for appointments with the principals on the material day to administer the questionnaires. Due to the large sample the researcher used four research assistants. The researcher personally held training seminars for the research assistants, regarding the research and the observation of ethical issues. The research assistants were taken through the two sets of questionnaires and exposed briefly to the overall purpose of the study. They were also advised to be as courteous as possible to the respondents and to assure them that the information they provided would not be used against them. The training of the research assistants was done within one day in the researcher's office. The research assistants were put in groups to discuss the questionnaires and to share experiences of researches they had done before. Possible obstacles such as requests for money from respondents and also the latter's unwillingness to give information were discussed and possible solutions to the same shared.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

Once data was obtained from the field, it was then coded and analysis was aided by computer using a statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) programme for windows. It was then summarised using distribution tables, bar graphs, and pie charts for all items. In presenting data, central measures of tendency were used to discuss the findings. The significance of the stated null hypothesis was tested using the Chi – square as follows.

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and various categories of secondary schools.

The students who participated in this study were from form one, two and four. These classes were considered in order to find out the drug abuse pattern and trend among students and across the class levels. The findings are shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Students who participated by classes**

Participants by class	Total number of students	Percentage
Form 1	134	38.2
Form 2	122	34.8
Form 4	95	27
Total	351	100.0

To test the relationship between drug abuse and various categories of secondary schools, drug abuse was treated as the dependent variable while categories of secondary schools were treated as the independent variable. The dependent variable was measured by the number of classmates and friends in schools who abused drugs and substances. The categories of schools included boys, girls and mixed schools. The hypothesis was tested using chi-square test for independent sample; the test was conducted at 0.05 level of significance.

### Relationship between school category and drug abuse among classmates

Category of school	Classmate who abuse drugs		Total
	Yes	No	
Boys School	82	113	195
	42.1%	57.9%	100.0%
Girls School	16	95	111
	14.4%	85.6%	100.0%
Mixed School	18	22	40
	45.0%	55.0%	100.0%
Total	116	230	346
	33.5%	66.5%	100.0%

Calculated  $X^2 = 26.914$  Critical  $X^2 = 9.21$  DF = 2 Significance level at 0.05

The relationship based on the calculated  $X^2$  of 26.914 and the critical  $X^2$  value of 9.21 was significant at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the analysis, the null hypothesis which states that there is no relationship between drug abuse and school categories was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The alternative hypothesis states that there is a relationship between drug abuse and school category. Therefore, it appears that the school categories could have an important bearing in the students' drug abuse among classmates. This information therefore, brings out the fact that in mixed schools drug abuse is a serious problem to many students, both boys and girls. It is therefore apparent that there is need for the government and the Ministry of Education to come up with strategies to address the problem of drug abuse in mixed schools as urgently as possible. There is also need for a serious evaluation of the usefulness and place of mixed schools in Kenya, and if the problems emanating from them far outweigh the benefits then considerations can be made to abolish them altogether. This study also indicates that drug abuse is not a big problem in pure boys and girls schools. In girls' schools, drug abuse was not a serious issue whereas in boys' schools the abuse was slowly becoming an issue of major concern. This seems to suggest that boys were influencing girls into the behaviour of drug abuse. The study concluded that peer influence was stronger in mixed schools than in the other categories of schools in Nairobi.

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and students behavioural problems.

### Relationship between drug abuse and students behavioural problem

To test the relationship between drug abuse and students' behavioural problem, the level of drug abuse was treated as the dependent variable and incidences of bullying in school as the independent variable. The dependent variable was measured by the number of classmates and the number of friends in school who were known to abuse drugs and other substances.

**Analysis of drug abuse and students' behaviour**

Incidences of bullying behaviour at school					
		Yes	No	Total	
Drug abuse among classmates	Yes	63	102	163	
		37.4%	62.6%	100.0%	
		43.6%	51.3%	48.1%	
		34	36	70	
		48.6%	51.4%	100.0%	
Drug abuse among friends	No	24.3%	18.1%	20.6%	
		45	61	106	
		42.5%	57.5%	100.0%	
		32.1%	30.7%	31.3%	
		140	199	339	
Total		41.3%	58.7%	100.0%	
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Calculated  $X^2 = 11.185$

Critical  $X^2 = 6.63$  DF = 1 Significant level at 0.05

The relationship based on the calculated  $X^2$  value of 11.185 and the critical  $X^2$  value of 6.63 was significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which states that there was no relationship between drug abuse and bullying in schools was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The stated hypothesis states that, there was a relationship between drug abuse and bullying in schools. This also meant that conditions such as aggressiveness, delinquency, and mental disorders are often linked with substance abuse and addiction. Experiences such as school unrest, physical and sexual abuse have also been identified as potential risk factors in schools.

**3. Results**

Students were asked to indicate whether they had witnessed incidences where drug abuse resulted to students' bullying fellow students. The findings were that 41.3% of the students reported to have witnessed students bullying other students while under the influence of drugs, and 58.7% said they had not seen such incidences. The findings concurred with Kerachio (1994) who reported that drug abuse led students in learning institutions to bully others. In Kenya, such instances have occurred, where students under the influence of drugs have beaten up their teachers, raped them or killed fellow students (Kaguthi, 1994). More so, from their counselling sessions, counselling teachers reported cases of students getting involved in criminal behaviour like stealing, indulging into sex abuse and more so in bullying other students in the schools.

### 3.1 Drug abuse trend

Generally learning institutions are considered to be environments per excellence where young people learn academics and model behaviour. Every parent, especially in Kenya celebrates annually when their children pass the primary school exams and join secondary schools. This idea has been curtailed by certain challenging events of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Among these events include the drug and substance abuse among adolescents. Adolescents in secondary schools in Kenya have unfortunately been affected by this global epidemic. There are various reasons that have led students to become victims of drug and substance abuse as this study has established. Some of the reasons were speculated by theorists as the study had earlier indicated in chapter two and concurred with the current findings.

Bandura (1977) had argued that people are products and producers of their environment. The behaviour of a person is a product of his or her environment. The theorist further stated that humans select others to interact with. Inherent within the notion of reciprocal determinism is the fact that people are able to influence their destiny. To find out if the students' drug abuse was as a result of the influence by the school environment, (this included, peers pressure, teacher/student relationships and other factors) the students were asked to indicate the drugs and substances they had seen within their schools. Within this section, the counselling teachers were also investigated in order to find out if during counselling sessions they came across cases of students who abused drugs. The results of this information are summarised in tables as follows.

#### Teachers' report of students' experience of drugs and substance abuse

Types of drugs abused by students	Seen in School		Never seen	
	Number	%	Number	%
Alcohol (beer)	323	95.3%	16	4.7%
Tobacco	269	81.5%	61	18.5%
Narcotic drugs (opium morphine, heroin cocaine)	50	16.3%	256	83.7%
Cannabis (charas, bhang, marijuana, hashish)	176	55.2%	143	44.8%
Hallucinogens (I.S.D.P.C.P, mescaline, barbiturates)	28	9.6%	264	90.4%
Inhalants (Aerosol, gasoline, petrol spray, glue)	253	80.3%	62	19.7%
Stimulants (cocaine, miraa)	282	86.5%	44	13.5%
Mescaline	17	5.9%	272	94.1%

Teachers' report on trends of drugs abused	Number	Respondents%
Alcohol	13	100.0
Tobacco	10	6.9
Marijuana/hashish	9	9.2
Cocaine	2	15.4
Heroin	3	23.1
Ecstasy	3	23.1
Inhalants	1	7.7
Non medical psychotherapeutic	2	15.4
Illicit drugs other than marijuana	3	23.1
Miraa	6	6.2

It is evident from the above tables that significant percentages of students were familiar with certain categories of drugs. The study assumed that the drugs that were seen in school were also the ones being abused. It was found that most students were familiar with almost all kinds of drugs. Alcohol ranked the highest with 95.3%, stimulants ranked second with 86.5%, 81.5% of them reported about tobacco; this was followed closely by inhalants like petrol and glues, and cannabis with 80.3%. However, hallucinogens and mescaline were least common in schools.

The counselling teachers had almost parallel information about students' cases of drug abuse. According to their experiences alcohol was the drug mostly abused by the students with 100%. Cannabis was also significantly abused and 76.9% of the students were on it. According to the teacher/counselors, students had moved from softer drugs such as inhalants at 7.7% to harder drugs as discussed earlier in this paragraph. Reason to this behaviour could have been that students had gotten used to certain kinds of drugs and wanted to experiment other newly introduced drugs in the market. Another possible reason could be that students had money to purchase hard drugs though they are expensive since they get pocket money, from their parents and guardians.

### ***3.2 Teacher counselor intervention***

The study presumes that drugs had negative impacts on students' health and education. It was assumed that this could have been a major cause of students dropping out of school. This was further corroborated by the counselling teachers who held that students who abused drugs dropped out of school and developed health problems. Due to indiscipline issues and school safety most students found to be abusing drugs were also suspended from schools. This was one of the steps taken by the school administration as a disciplinary measure against drug abuse. On the same issue, 72.7% of the counselling teachers reported that they had recorded cases of students' suspensions from school due to drug abuse and addiction. This could mean that in those schools there lacked skilled personnel to handle drug abuse problems.

### ***3.3 Intervention methods by teachers***

The respondents were asked whether they sought counselling as a way of dealing with problems resulting from drug abuse. 46.1% of them admitted to have sought counselling help while 53.9% of them had not gone for any counselling. This was an indication that students needed professional help to enable them come out of the addiction problem. The counselling teachers too expressed their view that indeed there was need for professional counselling of students who abused drugs in secondary schools. Due to the seriousness of the problem counselling teachers invited professionals to talk to the students about drug issues. 60% of the counselling teachers confessed that they invited other experts to deal with drug abuse in schools while 40% did not. In dealing with the problem of drug abuse the teachers took such steps as suspending students out of school and referring them elsewhere for counselling. This shows how drug abuse is such a big problem even though many people fear discussing it. It is time the Kenya government declared drug abuse a catastrophe and began involving drug abuse professionals to handle the problem, rather than always handling it as a criminal offence among students.

## **4. Discussion**

The study assumed that the types of people the students lived with were of great influence in their lives and the way they behaved towards themselves and others. It emerged that majority of the respondents lived with their parents and there were 61.6% of such cases. This showed that most of the students targeted for the study lived with their parents who probably staged their behavior and personality. It is also possible that some of the families were not stable and that they could have been full of conflicts and tension which could have prompted the students to abuse drugs as a means of escape.

### ***4.1 limitations and future research***

The results of this study shall not be generalised to apply to the whole country. The study with its limitations is only a general survey carried out on a small number of students in Nairobi. Consequently, other studies on the same topic can be replicated in other counties.



- A comparative study to establish students' drug abuse behaviour and non drug abuse behaviour is required. In this case drug abuse students can be considered as special needs learners.
- A study is required to research on how drugs are made available in schools to ensure appropriate preventive measures.
- A study would be necessary to find out the effectiveness of drug rehabilitation institutions in order to come up with models related to education of students rather than curative measures.

#### 4.2

#### *Implications for practice*

The items considered in this section were meant to show students' awareness of the effects of drugs and substance abuse to their education and health. Accordingly, 68.6% of the students surveyed were aware that some of their fellow students dropped out of school as a result of taking drugs. When asked whether they believed that taking drugs assisted them in studying better, 26.4% of them admitted to harbouring such beliefs while 73.6% did not believe that drugs enhanced academic performance. The findings were consistent with Weinstein's view (1984), in his theory of optimistic bias, that certain individuals think that they are less likely to suffer health problems compared to other people. In assessing their risks, they may not realize the impact of their behaviour on their own health. Moreover, students tended to develop attitudes contrary to reality, like the assumption that drug addiction can easily affect their friends and not themselves. This could lead to continued engagement in substance abuse which can be associated with a tendency to engage in other problem behaviours, such as rebelliousness and precocious sexual and delinquent activities as this study has found.

Various consequences are likely to occur if the drug abuse problem is not keenly addressed in schools and the society at large. To prevent students from dropping out of school and abusing drugs, their energies can be diverted towards healthier and more useful undertakings. This can be done by using preventive interventions designed specifically to address personal and social factors that can place students at the risk of drug abuse. Schools therefore, can reduce these young peoples' propensity to abuse drugs and getting into other unhealthy behaviour if the implications of drug abuse are well understood and proper interventions put in place.

If counselling teachers are not skilled to handle students addicted to drugs, the problem is likely to persist. Students are likely to continue dropping out of school because of poor concentration in their studies. Therefore, this would make the students more frustrated and lead them to practise *streetism* which is already a social problem in Kenya.

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