

Full Length Research Paper

Drug dependence and abuse in Kenyan secondary schools: strategies for intervention

Lewis M. Ngesu¹, Judah Ndiku² and Alice Masese³

¹University of Nairobi, Kenya. .

²Masinde Muliro University, Kenya.

³Kisumu Day secondary school, Kenya.

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There may have been a time when we in Kenyan considered the use or abuse of drugs as a problem relating only to Western world. 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 principal's leadership capacities across urban, suburban and rural setting.

Key words: Drug addiction, drug abuse, substance abuse.

INTRODUCTION

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).

The inkas of South America for instance took cocaine which had a central role in their religious and social systems throughout civilization which stretched from around AD 1200 to AD 1500 (Wolmer, 1990).

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. According to Wolmer (1990) coffee was banned in the Ottoman Empire but with little success. In the 17th century, in parts of Germany and Russia, the penalty of smoking was death. In the 17th century in parts of Germany and Russia, the penalty for smoking tobacco included penalties like splitting or cutting off the nose of the offender.

On the other hand, many drugs that are routinely used

today were once freely available. Wolmer (1990) notes that in the United Kingdom in the early 19th century opium would be bought over the counter without a prescription from chemists and even from grocers. Cocaine and cannabis were both legal in the United Kingdom and United States of America.

The 19th Century saw the development of drugs for special purposes. The special picture of drug taking behaviour showed signs of complication. Prominent leaders and professionals called for attention to social problems resulting from widespread abuse of alcohol, cocaine and opium among others. As a result drugs like cocaine, opium, peyote, heroine among others were declared illegal overtime in many countries. Cannabis which is illegal in many countries has been currently legalized in Netherlands (Daily Nation, September, 2nd 2003).

The increase in drug taking among young people incorporates all levels, and what began as the use of drugs in African traditional society for social relations evolved over time into a problem of dependence and abuse and is of great concern, Kerachio (1994).

Drug abuse and dependence as a global epidemic

The issue of drug abuse is a major headache to societies and authorities from the cities of the North to Africa, Latin

*Corresponding author. E-mail: ngesu2002@yahoo.com.

America and Asia. The menace of drugs has strangled the youthful population reducing them to dummies, zombies and drooling figures only to waste out the prime of their lives when they are most needed to invest their energy in worthy nation building ventures (Kenya Times, July 4th 2003).

Over the past two decades, the use of illegal drugs and misuse of therapeutic drugs have spread at an unprecedented rate and have penetrated every part of the globe. No nation has been spared from the devastating problem caused by drug abuse. At the same time, broad spectrum of the world community has demonstrated intense concern over the problem (Ibid).

The complex and intricate web of drug business has defied even the most alert security apparatus and that is why to date drugs continue to be peddled across the boarders, seas and oceans to chosen destinations. Drug barons are still making a kill from diabolical trade and concrete evidence abounds of their ability to control and manipulate government authorities to carry out the evil without any obstacles (Ibid).

Drug barons are so powerful and ruthless that they are able to hold at ransom any one standing in the way of the evil trade irrespective of his/her position of authority. Drug barons are said to finance some politicians in that part of the worlds. This is why Latin America Countries are covered by plantation of cocaine, opium and marijuana (Ibid).

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.

The British approach to the drug problem contrasts sharply with that of USA in that it views addicts as ill rather than criminals. According to Julian (1977) under strict guidelines, addicts can obtain heroine or methanol at normal cost. According to the United States of America department of Health and Human services, half of all teens and 60% of high school teens report that drugs are used, kept or sold at their schools. Students at these schools are three times more likely to smoke, drink or use illicit drugs than students whose schools are located elsewhere.

Prior to 1991, the use of tobacco and illicit drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, inhalants, had been decreasing since the peak levels in the late 1970s. However after 1991, these rates have increased steadily. For example, in the United Kingdom, Jason Aillardyce, a Scottish politi-

cal analyst, reported a case where heroine, worth more than 500 ponds was found in the school bag of eleven years old in a Govon Primary School.

In Nigeria acts of indiscipline among student were blamed on use and abuse of drugs. The acts of indiscipline that occurred among students of Kily's College in Lagos and that of Methodist Boys High School in Ooron were to be blamed on drugs (Fafunwa, 1971).

In Zimbabwe, a presidential Commission of inquiry into education and training was set up in 1998. The findings of the commission showed that lack of morals and deteriorating learning standards and strikes in Zimbabwe schools were caused by drug abuse by students (Daily Nation, July, 2000).

Drug abuse in Kenyan school

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.

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.

A pilot survey carried out found that in most school compounds today, there is a ready and wide variety of drugs. For instance in Lugari District, it was confirmed from the school records that in the last five years, over 20 students were either suspended or expelled from Lumakanda Secondary School for having taken drugs in the same year (Chesile, 1996).

In a speech delivered during the official closing of the African convention of Principals (ACP) in Kenya on 27th August, 2004, the Minister for Education, Honorable George Saitoti noted that some cities in Africa had been identified as either destinations or conduits for hard drugs. Drug peddlers and barons were known to target the youth as a lucrative market for their unethical business. He further noted that one of the root causes of some indiscipline cases in institutions could be traced to drug and substance abuse. For this reasons the war against drugs and substance abuse was one that Kenya could not afford to lose because failure to address this problem would lead to the destruction of Kenyan youth and thus the future of this country (The East African Standards January 19th 2004). He appealed to all to join together to fight this menace.

Abused drugs can be classified in the following categories:

- i.) Stimulants: e.g. cocaine, nicotine and amphetamines.
- ii.) Hallucinogens: e.g. Lysergic Diethyl Amide (LSD).
- iii.) Narcotics: e.g. Cigarettes.
- iv.) Tobacco.
- v.) Psychotropic: e.g. Anti depressants, Antipsychotic

drugs, barbiturates.

Researchers have cited various reasons for students' abuse of drugs. Some of these reasons include:

Easy availability of drugs

According to Merton and Nisbert (1971) people use illegal drugs because of their ready availability and promotion interests of those who are in a position to benefit financially from their sale. In Kisumu, The Big Issue (a magazine in the Wednesday Standard) team identified shops at the Kisumu busy stop and schools within the town centre as the best known dens of drugs taking.

Peer group pressure

The interest and expectation of the peer groups have an important bearing on whether or not a person will try dependence producing drug. A friend or peer group is likely to be the source of information for drug users about the availability of drugs and their alleigeable effects.

The age factors

Majority of students are adolescents, a stage of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is a momentous period of life filled with changes, difficulties and special problems. It is described as period of 'storm' and 'stress', a time of self discovery and self assertion. This is the stage the Youth tend to experiment a lot (Okech, 1977).

Curiosity/modern day rite of passage

Curiosity is one of Mans outstanding characteristics. It is not surprising then that many young persons will wish to try some drug in order to determine the effects for themselves.

Parental influence

Pudo (1998) noted that children from homes where parents take drug tend to imitate the behavior of their parents by taking illegal drugs. Young people learn from what they see by imitating what parents and other people in the community do.

Availability of cash

The availability of cash to the youth as pocket money and travel allowances especially if excessive can be redirected into purchasing of drugs. The money is usually not put into proper use and when opportunities arise they team up with friends, taste drugs and eventually become drug addicts.

School administration related factors

School administration factors will refer to how those who are charged with the management student's affairs are prepared and equipped to plan mobilize, allocate and instill the necessary control of the attainment of the institutional goals. Highwandedness, of school administration, harsh treatment, lack of freedom on the side of and students' failure to have their grievances addressed creates stress which can lead to the abuse of drugs.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives guided this study.

- i.) To determine which prohibited drugs are abused by students in public secondary school.
- ii.) Investigate the causes of drug abuse among students.
- iii.) Examine strategies for intervention towards preventions of drug abuse in public secondary schools.

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 Kisumu municipality. A list of student from this Municipality was obtained from District Education office, Kisumu. In addition, heads of secondary School a well heads of guidance and counseling in the sampled schools completed the questionnaire.

Sampling procedure

A sample of 150 students was required for the study. All the students in the selected class formed part of the sample. A table of random numbers was used to obtain a simple random sample. In order to include a significant number of male and female respondents, a stratified simple random number was selected. Ten heads of departments of guidance and counseling (one from each school) and ten heads of secondary school were purposively sampled.

Instrumentation

The research utilized a questionnaire. The first step was designing the questionnaire items. The next phase was pre-testing the instrument. Those respondents who took part in the pre-testing of the instrument were not included in the main study. The instrument elicited information on how to curb drug abuse. In addition the

questionnaire responses provided more holistic understanding of the causes and strategies for intervention in curbing drug abuse.

DISCUSSION

As its primary objectives, this study sought to investigate, examine drug abuse in Kenyan Secondary Schools and strategies for intervention. The results were conclusive. 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 ones health.

The study posits that alcohol was the most abused drugs by students because of the following reasons:

- i.) Alcohol unlike other drugs does not have a drastic effect on personal health when consumed moderately.
- ii.) Alcohol is readily available and it is consumed mainly in pubs and other entertainment centres which have features which students crave.
- iii.) It is more acceptable in the society compared to other types of drugs.
- iv.) Alcohol can easily be sneaked into school without detection, for example when mixed with juice or chocolates.
- v.) Most beer commercials have very attractive scenes. The people in the advertisements are very happy enjoying their drinks. As a result, students take alcohol to experience what they see on television.

The study found out that the main reason for drug abuse was peer pressure. The majority of the respondents believed that intense peer pressure led to their taking of drugs, either to have a sense of belonging or to seem more powerful than their peers.

The study findings also indicated that students who abuse drugs had the following symptoms:

- i.) Aggressive behaviour
- ii.) Depression and anxiety
- iii.) Sudden changes of appetite
- iv.) Cold clammy skin
- v.) Irritable
- vi.) Frequent complaints of headache
- vii.) Memory loss
- viii.) Over excitement
- ix.) Over suspicious
- x.) Secretive
- xi.) Less self confidence

- xii.) Excessive sweating
- xiii.) Watery eyes and nose

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.

Conclusion

In conclusion a review of literature and studies in Kenya reveals that secondary school students abuse a wide range of substances, though the magnitude of abuse varied with types of substances. In this respect, the substances they most commonly abuse were social drugs like alcohol, bhang, miraa, kuber as well as indigenous alcoholic drinks. The critical challenge of the Kenyan secondary schools is therefore attracting more students who are knowledgeable and committed to their studies and more, importantly training competent students highly committed to their own future and the future of Kenya.

Suggestions for future research

The study raised several possible avenues for future research both in terms of their limitations and their findings. First, broadening the area of research would even provide more useful international perspective. The location of this study was Kisumu Municipality, Kenya. Hopefully, future studies on drug abuse will examine a broader set of national contexts, which are likely to enrich the understanding of the complexity of drug abuse and dependence.

Second, a striking feature in this presentation is personal leadership qualities and how this could help in curbing drug abuse. A closer examination of these factors would be valuable in understanding other complexities and varieties of leadership. How experience and other personal characteristics impact the focus and other features identified would make significant contributions to our understanding of the causes of drug abuse and strategies for intervention in our schools.

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