



The Effects of Drug and Substance Abuse in Secondary Schools: The Case of Garissa County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the causes and effects of drug and substance abuse among students in secondary schools in Garissa County, Kenya. Many school children are being wasted due to drug and substance abuse despite efforts by various stakeholders such as the government, parents, teachers, and religious leaders to combat drug abuse menace. The study sample was 13 head teachers, 104 teachers, and 780 students. Questionnaires, interviews and focused group discussions were used to collect data. Quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed through simple statistics and thematic analysis respectively. The study established that students abuse drugs because of easy availability, peer pressure and in a bid to relieve stress. Further, students who abuse drugs perform poorly academically, frequently miss classes, are indiscipline, steal or destroy school property, influence others into the vice, and even drop out of school. Seemingly, students are likely to be wasted if measures are not put in place. Some of the recommendations include stepping up the school awareness campaigns against the vice of drug abuse, strictness of the school administration and sensitization programmes for communities surrounding schools.

Key Words: Peer Pressure, Drug and Substance Abuse, Poor Academic Performance, Indiscipline, School.

INTRODUCTION

Drugs have been used since ancient times because they had numerous effects. Drugs like opiates, cocaine, liquor, and, to a lesser extent, cannabis were all initially prominent in medical contexts, but subsequently (with the possible exception of morphine) have been replaced by recreational and social patterns of use. The transition from medical to recreational and social patterns of drugs has caused drug-related problems. This is because, outside medical domains, drugs (such as alcohol, opium, khat and tobacco) are often used in a less controlled fashion, increasing their liability for harm and dependency (Durrant, 2003). Jellinek (1976) and Westermeyer (1991), for example, trace the times of excessive alcohol consumption (a sign of alcohol abuse) back to ancient Roman culture in about 100 AD.

LITERATURE REVIEW

By 1979, the Kenyan authorities were of the opinion that drug use among Kenyan youths in and outside school had not yet reached an extent which could justify an alarm (Nyambe, 1979). In fact, by that time, there was no drug education in the school curriculum as the Kenyan authorities strongly believed that parents were better placed to handle drug issues among their children. However, the generally accepted view by Kenyan authorities at that time was that drug education on dangerous drugs could be included in adult education programmes. For instance, head masters, through the Guidance and Counselling section of



the Ministry of Education, were supposed to receive lessons on kinds of dangerous drugs (Nyambe, 1979).

Drug abuse in the Kenyan society and schools was attributed to changed lifestyles due to westernization. Indigenous Kenyans who had been abroad and tourists would abuse drugs openly offering poor role modeling to youngsters. Having been exposed to drugs, and because it was cheap at the time especially alcohol, students could easily abuse them (NACADA, 2007; Nyambe, 1979).

With the unemployment that had increased by 1979, some students lost hope and engaged in drug abuse. Many youth who had finished their basic education could go around seeking employment which was very hard to get. They would therefore loiter around creating an impression that education has no value. Consequently, students resorted to drug use instead.

Further, parents and teachers used drugs. Hence, they act as poor role models to their children (Kombo, 2005; NACADA, 2007; Nyambe, 1979).

In 1979, preventive measures were put in place to limit the availability of drugs which is one of the causes of drug abuse among students and non-students alike. Clinics were established in high schools, colleges and universities to help the Ministry of Education with records of drug addiction so that remedial steps could be taken (Nyambe, 1979). Sources of these drugs were varied. Miraa in Kenya was obtained from Meru District where it was (is) widely cultivated. Cannabis was obtained from places like Mount Kenya and Kakamega forests where it was also cultivated (MoH, 2003; NACADA, 2007; Nyambe, 1979). These drugs found their way into schools through various agents including drug peddlers, touts and even school's support staff.

The establishment of NACADA (National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse) on 26th March 2001 was a milestone by the government to deal with these effects. This agency (NACADA) has held many open forums and workshops to sensitize young people both in school and outside on the dangers of drug abuse (Kombo, 2005; NACADA, 2004).

More recently, the government through the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) has employed many teachers as Heads of Departments of Guidance and Counselling to offer valuable advice to students against drug abuse. Various stakeholders have also organized workshops for students, and even parents and religious leaders have counselled students on how to live drug- free lives.

Despite these efforts by the government, teachers, parents, religious leaders, and other stakeholders, the problem of drug abuse has persisted in Kenyan schools.

Health and social related effects of drug abuse have continuously been experienced. Children who abuse drugs have been involved in Physically damaging school property leading to economic deterioration. On the other hand, physical damage to students have led to a lot of expenditure on the part of parents on their treatment. Drugs have also caused psychological effects (Durrant, 2003; Kombo, 2005; NACADA, 2007) such as truancy, school dropout, and absenteeism from schools. They are also the cause of irresponsible behaviours (DARE UK, 2017; DARE US, 2017; Drug Enforcement Commission, 2017; MoH, 2003; NACADA, 2007; NIDA, 2015), like indiscriminate sexual behaviours with



prostitutes, making student-drug abusers prone to being infected by venereal diseases like HIV and AIDS which would lead to death of the infected student. This would mean loss of young active individuals who would have developed the country economically. Furthermore, some myths being held by students, like drug-taking makes them study longer and improve their intelligence (NACADA, 2007; Wachira, 2001) lead to drug addiction which reduces their concentration on schoolwork.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Drug abuse is a serious and recent phenomenon in Kenya in general and particularly in schools. Various efforts have been made by the stakeholders to minimize drug abuse in schools, but the problem has still persisted. The government through the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) has employed many teachers as HoDs of Guidance and Counselling to offer valuable advice to students against drug abuse. Various stakeholders have also organized workshops for students, and even parents and religious leaders have counselled students on how to live drug-free lives. However, with all these efforts, drug abuse has persisted and remained a serious problem in Kenyan schools. The infiltration of drugs into Kenyan schools has raised a lot of concern among all the stakeholders.

The problem of drug abuse has various adverse effects on student learning process. Specifically, they have adverse impacts on the student's discipline. Unless this menace of drug abuse is minimized, the schools would become unmanageable since indiscipline cases would become very overwhelming. The study therefore, looked at the causes and effects of drug abuse in Garissa County where no such study has been carried out before.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey design to investigate the causes and effects of drug abuse on students in secondary schools in Garissa County in Kenya. The total target population of the study was 4,734 subjects in Garissa County comprising of students, teachers and head teachers. The sample size of 897 made up of 13 head teachers, 104 teachers, and 780 students was used for the study. The student population in the sampled schools was first stratified into classes of form one (1), two (2), three (3), and four (4). Then students per every class were arranged according to their serial numbers or admission numbers in their class registers starting from smallest number to the highest. Then by dividing the total population of students per class with 15, the sampling interval (for instance k) was obtained for selection of one student to the next by use of systematic random sampling. Then every K th (sampling interval) student from the admission register in the class on the list was selected. Thus, from each class, fifteen (15) students were randomly selected by systematic random sampling and every school provided sixty (60) students to be used in the study, and hence making a total of student sample size to be seven hundred and eighty (780) in the County. Using school records, eight longest serving teachers were selected to participate in the study per school but they should have worked for a minimum experience of one (1) year in that particular school. Out of the 13 schools a total sample size 104 teachers, was arrived at to participate in the study. Since 13 schools were used in the study, a total of 13 head teachers participated in the study. The information was elicited by use of questionnaires, interviews and focused group discussions. These instruments were validated by lecturers and other experts at Kenyatta University.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data was analyzed as per the answers obtained from the respondents during the data collection. Quantitative data was analyzed through simple statistics for example use of percentages, and tables while qualitative data was analyzed by thematic analysis.

Reasons for or Causes of Drug Abuse among the Students

The study also sought to investigate why students abused drugs in schools in Garissa County. The responses from the students, teachers and head teachers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reasons why students abuse drugs

Reasons	Students		Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Drug availability	687	89.7	93	89.4	13	100
Sense of belonging	603	78.7	79	76	13	100
Relieve stress	551	71.9	76	73.1	13	100
School administration's laxity	539	70.4	-	-	-	-
Lack/inadequate guidance	352	46.0	85	81.8	13	100
A lot of pocket money	326	43.0	67	64.4	-	-
Curiosity	313	41.0	46	44.2	-	-
Mass media influence	291	38.0	-	-	-	-
Failure in examination	230	30.0	-	-	-	-
Ignorance	-	-	74	71.2	09	69.2

Table 1 shows the reasons as to why students abuse drugs. Easy availability of drugs was mentioned by majority i.e. (89.7%) of the students, 89.4% of the teachers and all (100%) head teachers. Belonging to particular peer group was cited by 78.7% of students, 76% of the teachers and all (100%) head teachers. Relieving stress as a cause of drug abuse was mentioned by 71.9% of students, 73.1% of teachers and all (100%) the head teachers. However, laxity of the school administration was mentioned by only 70.4% of the students. A lot of pocket money was cited by 43% of the students and 64.4% of the teachers while head teachers did not view it as a cause of drug abuse.

Easy availability of drugs of abuse is the main reason why students abuse drugs. Garissa County is an Arid and Semi-arid Land (ASAL). Schools in this county are located within or near urban areas where there is water, food, and other important services like health. In fact, the population in such areas is concentrated in towns where there is provision of water, food and other necessities. These urban centres also harbour drugs since the improved road network easily connects them to drug producing areas like Meru (where miraa is grown). Therefore, students easily get access to these drugs which are available in shops, kiosks, streets, drug peddlers and market.

Belonging to a particular peer group was another reason causing drug abuse in Garissa County. Peer groups are part of student life and culture. Students form peer groups depending on a number of factors. First, they form a clique based on biological relationships like clanism in the Somali tribe. Second, they form a clique based on area of home residence. Thus, students from one area like Mandera, Ijara, Wajir or Habaswein form a



particular peer group. Third, students also form cliques depending on age groups. Those in a particular age group form their own peer group. Fourth, some form peer groups depending on academic performance, where those who perform well in class form their own clique majorly for discussions on academic performance. Fifth, others form peer groups because they share some vices like truancy, absenteeism and drug abuse.

These peer groups are gateways through which students are exposed to drugs. Students may belong to more than one clique. For instance, a student can belong to a drug abusers' peer group as well as that of same clan. Students in any one particular peer group feed together, spend nights together, walk together and if possible study together. These different peer groups have different expectations, aspirations and characters. Students who form peer groups because of possessing vices like drug abuse and truancy would try to influence other innocent students to join their group.

Students who have joined clique that abuse drugs would either also start abusing drugs or if not, they be forced to leave the peer group. Since they would want a group to belong to, they prefer starting to abuse drugs so that they continue being members of that group. Studies by Basangwa, Ndeti and Kuria (2000), Johnson (1988), Kimanthi (2003); Otieno and Ofula (2009), have pointed out that peer pressure could make a student abuse drugs in order to fit in a particular peer group. According to these studies, peer pressure leads students to abuse drugs because the interests and expectations of the cliques have important bearing on whether or not a person will start abusing drugs. This study, which was carried out in Garissa County, found that innocent students were enticed to start the habit of abusing drugs when they joined peer groups that were involved in drug abuse. They started this deviant habit because they did not want to lose their membership in the group. Furthermore, a new student in that peer group found it easy to start abusing drugs because other members were always together with the new student and would monitor him or her to make sure he or she was firmly involved in their vices of drug abuse. The new students were received well and even were first given drugs free of charge in order to initiate them into the habit of drug abuse.

Students also abused drugs to relieve stress. In some instances, parents would be away from their children because of doing their businesses or even looking after their cattle. In this way student would stay together looking after home and other children. Again, the crammed education system requires more from student than they can handle at a time and poor academic performances were identified as courses of stress. Mwiria (2002) also explains this stress when he describes the Kenyan education system as examination-oriented and having an overloaded curriculum, though he never explained its effects in terms of vices like drug abuse. Such students with poor performance lose hope in academics and view drug-taking as the only option of covering up their failures academically in school.

On the laxity of school administration, the fencing system in many of these schools was very poor and hence students easily leave school not necessarily through the main gate but through illegal outlets of school fence ('panya routes').

Again, most staff were not housed within schools in Garissa County. In fact, more than half of the schools do not have any teacher's houses. This makes monitoring of students extremely difficult. This cause of drug abuse was neither mentioned by teachers nor head



teachers implying that they did not want to expose themselves as weak administrators in curbing abuse of drug abuse in their schools.

Lack of parental guidance was also cited. Parents focused too much on their businesses and other things. Thus forgetting their parental responsibilities. Parents would rather leave their children in boarding schools so that they have enough time to do other things. Due to their nomadic lifestyle, parents do not spend a lot of time with their children. In fact, one head teacher narrated the answer got from a parent when asked about why he had taken a very long duration of time to come and visit his child in school. The answer was "I was in Habaswein to check on my livestock and since it was so dry there, and water was not enough, I moved them to Wajir".

Polygamy too was cited to cause poor Parental guidance in Garissa and Ijara. Economically stable men can marry a maximum of four (4) wives. Consequently, the family will have many children as family planning has not yet been embraced.

High incidences of divorce among Somalis cause poor parental guidance. This led to single parenting where parental responsibilities of two are left for one. Further, when children are given a lot of pocket money, they end up purchasing drugs for abuse. Ignorance also was cited as another cause of drug abuse among students. These were youngsters who abuse drugs to feel their short-term effects of being high and feeling good without knowing that the long-term effects of drug abuse are very harmful.

These findings by students, teachers, and head teachers are supported by the study carried out by Johnson (1988) among high school seniors in the United States of America. The study revealed that students abused drugs in order to fit in with peers and alleviate stress. Other studies that support these findings are that of Kombo and Wachira (2005), Kamuyu (2005), Kimanthi (2003), and Ngesu (2008) who found that students abuse drugs because of easy availability and peer pressure. Studies that provide peer pressure as a major cause of drug abuse by students were also done by Basangwa et al. (2000), Bourne (2005:4); DARE UK, 2017; DARE US, 2017; NIDA, 2015; Otieno & Ofula (2009).

Effects of drug abuse on students

Students, teachers and head teachers were asked to give the effects of drug abuse on students as well as on the school and school property in Garissa County. Table 2 provides their responses.

Table 2: Effects of drug abuse on students

Types of drugs	Students		Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Poor Academic performance	675	88.1	104	100	13	100
Absenteeism from school	390	50.9	98	94.2	13	100
Increased indiscipline e.g. fighting	196	25.6	83	79.8	13	100
Addiction	81	10.6	89	85.6	13	100
Lack of concentration in class	101	13.2	91	87.5	13	100
School drop out	575	75.1	-	-	-	-
Low self esteem	47	45.2	-	-	-	-
Sexual immorality	73	9.5	-	-	-	-



From Table 2 poor academic performance, absenteeism, indiscipline, addiction and lack of concentration in class are dangers associated with drug abuse. These effects were cited by all the respondents of students, teachers and head teachers.

Drug and substance abuse cause students to be sleepy in classroom. They do not concentrate during lessons. Student also become truant and absent from school. They also become indiscipline in school and this translates into poor academic performance. Even at night, the students are looking for and abusing drugs instead of concentrating on revising their class work. Consequently, they score poorly in their Grade Point Average (GPA). Study findings by MoH (2003), NACADA (2007), and Kombo (2005) also illustrate that such effects also translate into poor academic performance.

School lessons in Garissa County are arranged during the times of the day when it was not very hot. They were scheduled to happen early in the morning and late in the afternoons. During the Islamic holy month of Ramadhan, though, all lessons ended at one o'clock of day time. Evening and night time is the best time for personal study in ASAL, due to reduced temperatures compared to the day when it is too hot. Thus, students were expected to engage in rigorous reading and doing homework. Ironically, drug abuse, done with top secret, would happen at night. Drug-abusing students spend most of their night-time in secret places like behind dormitories where it is dark, and inside dark vegetation in school compound to use drugs instead of concentrating on their private studies. These students would only appear in classroom to register their presence after which they go back to use drugs.

Teachers indicated lack of concentration in class (87.5%) as another effect while students and head teachers did not. Students were not able to measure whether another student was concentrating or not. Teachers were able because they could judge the way the students replied to questions asked during lessons. According to the teachers, eye contact between a student and teacher could imply that the student was concentrating or not. However, head teachers, never indicated lack of concentration in class as an effect of drug abuse to students because they are not actively involved in teaching process. In most cases, they only received reports on how teaching took place in their schools.

Unlike teachers, head teachers mentioned school dropout as another effect of drug abuse. The head teachers keep record of all students in their respective schools to facilitate fee collection. When the school fees collected reduces, immediately the head teacher can notice that a student has dropped out. In Garissa County, collecting school fee is essential as schools are not well-established.

Head teachers mentioned only three effects of drug abuse: poor academic performance, school dropout, and indiscipline. Evidently, head teacher's knowledge reflects how low they interact with their students. The many responsibilities head teachers shoulder in and out of school consume a lot of their time leaving limited time for them to interact with their students. This way, they end up knowing very little about drugs use and effects in their schools.

Upon further enquiring through interviews, indiscipline cases including violence were not reported by school prefects to the administration. As evident by 25.6% of the students who cited fighting with other students as an effect of drug abuse, they only represent a small



number. However, many teachers (79.8%) and all head teachers supported indiscipline encompassing fighting as main effect of drug abuse on students. Schools in Garissa County have well-established religious groups called Islamic Society Clubs under the patronship of an Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teacher. Every school has a student chairman, secretary and treasurer. These arrangements extend up to the County and the whole North Eastern region where students elect the chairman, secretary and treasurer of student fraternity in the region. Similarly, the IRE teachers/patrons have the same arrangements with the school patron, County patron, and even the whole of North Eastern Region patron. Their work is to advice students against deviant habits like drug and substance abuse.

Further, during interviews it was revealed that the Islamic Society club was instrumental in advocating for peaceful settlement of violence amongst students alongside Peer counselling club. Peer-counsellor students were also members of the Islamic Society club. The club officials would bring the fighting students for discussion on the problem. The intervention of the club would see the warring students forgive each other religiously. Where the two victims could not be brought together, the school prefects would report the matter to the school administration for their intervention. In case one of the students is serious injured, the case would be reported to the parents so that the injured student was paid 'mag' or 'jiffo'. 'Mag' is compensation by the offender's close relatives to the injured in the form of money or livestock depending on what the injured student's parents chose. This habit which students had adapted was in fact an extension of what happens in the Somali culture as a whole.

Effects of drug abuse on the local community as a whole

The respondents were also asked to state the effects of drug and substance abuse on the local community. The responses are reflected in Table 3:

Table 3: Effects of drug abuse on the local community as a whole

Drug and substance abuse	Students		Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Stealing	699	91.3	94	90.4	13	100
Lack of respect/deviant behavior	654	85.4	32	30.8	13	100
Fighting	428	55.9	53	51.1	13	100
Damaging community property	259	33.8	53	51.1	13	100
Raping of local girls and women	203	26.5	68	65.4	-	-
Creating fear/intimidation	107	14.0	-	-	-	-
Not greeting community members	36	4.7	-	-	-	-

The dangers highlighted in Table 3 are robbing the community property; lack of respect/open defiance to community members; violence with community members; and damaging community property. Drug abusers are always in constant craving for the drugs (Durrant,2003; Kombo, 2005). Because many do not have enough money for constant purchase of drugs, they opt to stealing money in order to purchase enough drugs and substances for abuse. In Garissa County, stealing is a more common phenomenon as was cited by 91.3% of the students, 90.4% of the teachers and all (100%) the head teachers.



Drugs also cause psychological effects (Durrant, 2003; Kombo, 2005; NACADA, 2007) as well as increased anger and hostility (Durrant, 2003; NACADA, 2007). Under such conditions, student-drug addicts exhibit lack of respect or defiance to community members, constant violence and damage to community property. They also engage in inappropriate sexual behaviours like raping ladies and young girls in local community. Such behaviours break the relationship within community. As shown in Table 3, lack of respect was another common effect of drug abuse to the community as cited by 85.4% of students, 30.8% of the teachers and all (100%) the head teachers. Constant violence was also reported by 55.9% of students, 51.1% of the teachers and all (100%) of the head teachers.

Theft of community property and fighting with community members were seen as major effects by all respondents. Teachers and head teachers had mentioned these effects because theft cases and complaints, and fighting with community members were usually reported to them, and therefore they would easily identify those students were linked to drug abuse. Furthermore, if a student was arrested, normally the school administration was notified.

Raping of local girls and women was seen as a minor effect by students but as a major effect by both teachers and head teachers. Parents of girls or husbands of victimized women would report rape cases to the school administration with minimum delay. For girls, it is even more serious because the Somali community values virginity and is treasured. In fact, marriage could be broken if a husband discovers that the girl he had married was not virgin. Usually, boys who had committed rape were punished at school. As if not enough, their parents would further pay a 'mag' or 'jiffo' or 'dia' to the family of the woman or girl raped.

Teachers also cited negative influence of young ones in the community another effect of drug abuse. This results in poor role modeling to youngsters in the community. The local community in Garissa County values and aspires that their children attain good morals which are especially drug-free. That is why this community enrolls their children in religious schools like *duksis* (equivalent of elementary schools) and *madrassahs* (equivalent of a high school that is form one to form six) early enough to acquire religious values. The *duksis* are the foundation of Islamic religious schooling while *madrassahs* are the next stage of religious schooling after the *duksi* stage. The teachers in these religious schools are usually very strict to make sure children have mastered the religious teachings which teach against vices like drug abuse. At the end of each formal schooling (*duksi* or *madrassah*), these children usually sit for an examination to make sure they have mastered the religious teachings. Therefore, the students who engage in drug abuse are a big let-down to the local community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, causes and effects of drug abuse have been brought to light. Causes revealed including poor role models, excess pocket money, laxity in administration, easy availability of drugs, among others. The author revealed these causes through extensive interviews with respondents in an attempt to answer the guiding questions. Effects of drug abuse revealed include lack of respect; inappropriate behaviours such as raping, fighting, quarrelling and stealing; loss of concentration in class, among others. Having known the causes and effects of drug abuse, the author contended that there has been a sense of irresponsibility on the side of parents, school administration and among



the student. For parents, they have acted as poor role models with minimum attention on guiding their children in appropriate ways. Leaving teachers with the responsibility of shaping the behaviour of students is not enough if they are to be morally upright.

School administration too has not put enough measures to curb the menace at their schools. Having temporary fences around the schools means that they have misplaced priorities as far as student welfare is concern. Lastly, student seems they have forgotten about their core mission for going to school. Their parents' biggest investment is in their schooling in attempting to better their future. As such, these students need to be reminded regularly about what they went to school for.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The author recommends that school administration should be in the forefront in fighting drug abuse menace. They should create awareness as well advocacy groups in their respective schools to sensitize their student about drug abuse and related vices. They should also solicit for funding to put up structures capable of controlling movements into and out of school.

Parents should also wake up and take up their parental responsibilities. They should stop abandoning their children for the sake of their livestock and businesses.

Finally, students should act responsibly as they are in the transition stage from childhood to adulthood. This is the time where parents hardly follow up with them as they are being trained to work with minimum supervision as adults.

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