

Full Length Research

Effectiveness of Strategies Used in Secondary Schools to Curb Drug And Substance Abuse Among High School Students in Nzau Sub-County, Makueni County, Kenya.

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Accepted 11th June, 2020.

Drug and substance abuse (DSA) among secondary school students is a major public health problem that has been linked to adverse psychosocial challenges that may affect their academic performance. This calls for implementation of interventions that can help to mitigate drug and substance abuse among secondary school students. This study sought to establish various strategies used in secondary schools in Nzau Sub County to mitigate the problem of drug and substance abuse among students. The target population for this study was 12 secondary schools in Nzau Sub County. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample the secondary schools. The target population for this study were from one to four students, Deputy Principals, School Counselors and Class Teachers. The study had a sample size of 270 respondents. The study used interview schedules, questionnaires to collect primary data. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS software program and presented using tables and figures. The study found out that guidance and counselling was used in all the secondary schools to address the drug and substance abuse. Other strategies included; parental involvement, punishment, suspension and involvement of the police. It however established that except guidance and counselling the other strategies were not quite effective. The study recommended the use of guidance and counselling to address the risk of peer pressure as the necessary first step in combating drug abuse. It also recommended the importance of conducting other parallel studies to determine the effectiveness of the current drug programs in secondary schools.

Keywords: Drug and Substance abuse, Strategies, Drug Addiction, Prevalence

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse refers to the misuse of any psychotropic substances resulting in changes in bodily functions thus affecting the individual in a negative way socially, cognitively and physically. Drug and substance abuse among secondary school students is a major public health problem world over and has been linked to adverse consequences such as delinquency,

suicide, criminal behaviors and psychological difficulties (NACADA 2007). Drug and substance abuse among secondary school students is the single most predictive factor to adult drug dependence.

Drug and substance abuse is a global phenomenon and it affects every country. Although it is difficult to authenticate the actual extent and nature of

drug and substance abuse among learners, research indicates that most students in secondary schools' experiment with alcohol and other drugs before joining secondary schools. According to Gilles (1996) it is estimated that 25% of male students and 10% of female students abuse alcohol at least once a week.

The forum on Child and Family Statistics (2000) report in USA indicated that 7 % percent of male learners smoke daily, 16% of 10th grade and 24% of 12th grade so. Siyibo et al (2000) noted that studies in the United Kingdom indicate that 5-20% of high school students use drugs , with 2-5 % using them weekly and with peak prevalence at 14-16 years of age. Rao (1995) observes that in Trinidad and Tobago, the life time prevalence has been found to be 8% for marijuana and 2% cocaine use among secondary school students

According to Siyibo et al (2000) a study of four high schools in Jamaica, found that 60% of high school students had tried one or more drugs. Naing et al (2004) conducted studies in various localities in Malaysia which showed that the prevalence of smoking cigarettes among male high school students was between 17-36% among male high school students and 1-5% among females in the same group. Further Abidi (2017) in his study in Pakistan, revealed most of the drug and substance children drug addicts belonged to the elite and rich class where affordability may not be an issue. In addition, he argued that drugs reached educational institutions in Pakistan being used as a healing source for anxiety, stress and boredom.

In Kenya, drug and substance abuse has threatened the lives of secondary school students. While addressing the opening of Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic substances control seminar, Wako (2001) said that 60% of drug abusers are secondary school students. A country wide survey conducted by NACADA (2004) among high school students found out that hard drugs like heroin, ecstasy, cocaine and mandrax were widely abused in secondary schools in Kenya. The study revealed that some legal substances such as alcohol, tobacco, and khat were commonly abused leading to high incidences of unrest and violence in secondary schools. The study moreover gave the provincial prevalence of DSA as follows; Nairobi 22.6%, Eastern 15.6%, Coast 13% and North Eastern 3% . NACADA (2017) in a study conducted in Nairobi secondary schools indicated that drug abuse was prevalent in most secondary schools.

A study by the Great Lakes University (2009) in Kisumu found out that 58% of secondary school students in Kisumu had consumed alcohol at some point in their lives. According to the study by age 15, some students were found to have already started using drugs and by the time they are 19, 33% of the male and female students had already become drug abusers. From the foregoing, it is evident that DSA is a

reality and prevalent among secondary school students in Kenya.

Drug and substance abuse among high school students is and still remains a major social problem in the world. Kenyan secondary school students have not been spared by the menace and this has triggered the adoption of several strategies in a bid to curb the vice. Ngesu et al (2008) points out that in some secondary schools in Kenya, disciplinary measures are usually used to mitigate DSA among students and also scare potential users from becoming addicts. Cheloti (2009), found that DSA was among the causes of students unrests in Kenya. One of the recommendations for the study was the need to enhance the guidance and counselling departments in secondary schools to assist in mitigating the problem.

According to Gillis (1996), young people are individuals in the process of development and change. In this view, secondary school students usually lie in this category. It is during this period that the students tend to experiment with newly discovered aspects of their physical and emotional selves. He further argues that the youth, mostly secondary school students are likely to experiment with drugs and substances and some may become drug abusers. DSA among high school students is a global problem (Sternberg, 2003). Winger (2004) points that drug and substance abuse increase with the students' age with a prevalence rate of 19.6% between the ages of 18-20 years with marijuana being the most commonly abused substance followed by tobacco. Even though the type of drugs and substances abused in Kenyan secondary schools may differ, the prevalence of different types of drugs and substances may be similar in Kenyan secondary schools as it is in high schools world over. Various countries, governments and learning institutions have used different strategies to curb the problem of drug and substance abuse among the youth and more so in secondary schools.

Investigations done country wide in selected secondary schools in Kenya have indicated that several strategies have been put in place to fight DSA among secondary school students. Khanyisile (2005) argues that secondary schools employ a variety of measures like guidance and counselling, suspension, exclusion, official mention and rewards systems to control behavior and curb drug and substance abuse among the students. It is worth noting that the school is best placed in terms of drug intervention and control compared to other institutions. this study focused on establishing intervention strategies employed in Nzau Sub-County in Makueni County, Kenya. NACADA (2017) also found out that schools did not have proactive strategies to combat drug and substance abuse.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was a descriptive survey which is qualitative in nature. In view of this, it adopted the field survey method to collect data. According to Mugenda (2008) descriptive survey design is best suited when examining social issues that exist in communities. This design was deemed viable for this study given the fact that drug and substance abuse is a social problem directly inclined to the community.

The target population for this study was 12 secondary schools in Nzai Sub County. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample the secondary schools. Participants were drawn from form one to form four students from the sampled schools, Deputy Principals, School Counselors and Class Teachers. The study had a sample size of 270 respondents made up of students, deputy principles, counselors and class teachers. The study used interview schedules and questionnaires to collect primary data.

Interview schedules were used to collect data from teachers and school counsellors to clarify and supplement data collected from students. Questionnaires were administered to students to collect demographic and factual data. The

questionnaire was used due to its ability to cover a wider scope. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS software program. Qualitative data was transcribed and categorized into various themes based on the study objective. Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Data from questionnaires was analyzed using tables which are best for presenting data in descriptive research (Mugenda andMugenda 2012)

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Prevalence of drug and substance abuse among secondary school students in Nzai Sub County

The study sought to establish the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among secondary school students in the study area. Students were asked to indicate whether they had ever used any drugs other than for medicinal purposes. Table 4.1 shows the number of respondents who had used drugs for non-medicinal purposes and the number who had not analyzed according to gender.

Table 4.1: Number of Respondents who had used Drugs for Non-Medical Purposes and Those Who Had Not

	Had used drugs		Had not used drugs	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	69	60.0	42	38.2
Females	46	40.0	68	61.8
Total	115	100	110	100

Table 4.1 reveals that 60% of students who had abused drugs were male while 40% were female. On the other hand, 38.2% of students who had not abused drugs were male and 61.8% were female.

The prevalence of drug abuse was also analyzed according to the type of schools the respondents came from. Table 4.2 shows the percentage of respondents from each type of school who had abused drugs

Table 4.2: Proportion of respondents in Each Type of School Who Abused Drugs

	Type of school									
	Day Mixed		Boarding Boys		Boarding Girls		Boarding Mixed		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Had not abused drugs	23	30.7	16	40.0	32	80.0	39	55.7	110	48.9
Had abused drugs	52	69.3	24	60.0	8	20.0	31	44.3	115	51.1
Total	75	100	40	100	40	100	70	100	225	100

As table 4.2 shows, mixed day schools were the most affected by drug abuse with 69.3% of the

respondents having abused drugs. This was followed by boys' boarding schools with 60.0% of students

abusing drugs and mixed boarding schools with 44.3% of respondents abusing drugs. The girls boarding school was the least affected with 20.0% of respondents abusing drugs. Students in day schools are more likely to abuse drugs compared to students in boarding schools because they have easier access to drugs at home and on their way to and from school each day. These findings reflect those of other studies on drug and substance abuse in secondary schools. Wako (2004) reported that 60% of drug abusers in Kenya are students in secondary schools. In a study conducted in Kisumu District, Gathure (2009) established that 58% secondary school students had

abused alcohol while NACADA (2004) estimates that 43% of students from western Kenya, 41% in Nairobi and 26 in Central Province had taken alcohol.

The researcher sought to establish whether the teachers knew about students who were abusing drugs and how the teachers got to know about those students. The students who were abusing drugs were asked to state whether the school administration was aware of their drug taking habits and their responses are summarized in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Does the Administration Know About the Drug Taking Habit?

	Frequency	Percentage
The administration does not know about the habit	77	67.2
The administration knows about the habit	38	32.8
Total	115	100.0

As shown in table 4.3, the teachers were only aware of the drug abusing behavior of 32.8% of the students who reported using drugs. The teachers did not know about the other 67.2% of students who

abused drugs. The researcher sought to find out how the teachers got to know about the drug abusing students and the responses are summarized in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: How Teachers Learnt About Drug Abusing Students

	Frequency	Percentage
Reported by members of the community	18	47
Teachers found out by themselves	11	29
Others students reported	4	11
Reported by parents	3	8
Arrested by the police	2	5
Total	38	100

Table 4.4 shows that 18 of the students who were known by the teachers to abuse drugs were reported by members of public. Teachers only found out about 11 students by themselves. Fellow students reported four drug abusing colleagues, three were reported by parents and two were arrested by the police.

In order to successfully deal with the problem of drug abuse, teachers need to be fully aware of the extent of the problem in their schools. The study has found that teachers are only aware of about one third of students who are using drugs and, in most cases, these students are either reported by the members of the community or the teachers catch the drug users themselves. Notably, fellow students and parents rarely report cases of drug abuse. It is unlikely that students will report each other because of the strong

peer bonding between them. Reporting a fellow student amounts to betrayal and whoever does it, they risk being ostracized by the rest of the group. In addition, the study also showed that most students share drugs with members of their peer groups hence reporting one member would expose the rest of the group. This situation confirms the notion in Pasche's theory that students bond together in peer groups which act as the basis of socialization and that membership in these groups is prized so much that students readily take up the drug taking habit to gain admission to the groups

Types of strategies for curbing drug and substance abuse among secondary school students in Nzai Sub County

The study investigated strategies used by school administrations to address the problem of drug abuse in secondary schools. The researcher asked the teachers from the six schools in the subcounty to list

the actions they take to deal with cases of drug abuse in their respective schools. Table 4.5 shows the strategies schools used to deal with the problem of drug abuse.

Table 4.5: Strategies Used by School Administrations to Deal with Drug Abuse

Strategy	Frequency
Guiding and counseling the students	6
Summoning the parents to school to discuss the issue	6
Punishing the students	4
Suspending the students	2
Expelling the students	1
Handing the student over to the police	1

The responses presented in Table 4.5 show that in all the six schools, teachers attempt to guide and counsel students who are involved in drug abuse. In each school, teachers summon the students' parents to discuss the students' behavior. Students receive punishment in four of the schools. Students involved in drug abuse are suspended in only two schools and expelled in one of the schools.

All sampled schools used guidance and counseling which was not surprising since Ngesu et al (2004) found that most schools in Kenya depended on guidance and counseling as a method of dealing with the problem. In addition to guidance and counseling, Ngesu et al (2004) also found that various forms of punishment are used to stop students from using drugs and to deter others from joining the habit. Teachers use punishment as an important tool for combating drug and substance abuse. URT (2006) asserts punishment as a behavior modification tool used to

invoke fear in the students so that the behavior does not occur again. Lefton (2002, Kosslyn and Rosenberg (2002) describe punishment from a psychological point of view as anything that decreases the occurrence of a behavior, physical pain, withdrawal of attention, loss of tangibles or activities, a reprimand or even something others would find rewarding.

Effectiveness of the strategies for curbing drug and substance abuse among secondary school students in Nzai Sub County

The researcher sought to find out from the teachers whether these strategies were effective in their opinion. The teachers were asked to state whether the strategies were very effective, moderately effective or ineffective. Table 4.6 shows how teachers rated the effectiveness of the strategies.

Table 4.6: Teachers' Rating of Effectiveness of Strategies to Combat Drug Abuse

Teachers' rating of the strategies	Frequency
Ineffective	11
Moderately effective	4
Effective	3
Total	18

As table 4.6 indicates, 11 of the teachers were of the opinion that the strategies currently used to combat the problem of drug abuse are ineffective, four of them thought they were moderately effective and three felt they were effective. The findings of the study regarding the number of students abusing drugs is a good indicator of the ineffectiveness of the methods used to deal with the problem and most of the teachers

concur that the strategies are either ineffective or only moderately effective.

Ratlif (2014) asserts that Principals and their deputies are responsible for meeting with teachers and parents to help keep students' behavior under control. School administrators usually make rules and procedures that cover the entire school as well as behavior plans for students who regularly cause

trouble. Administrators also help design programs to keep schools safe and free of drugs and alcohol. In this regard the school administrators are tasked with the duty to eliminate any impediments to success in education. The deputy head teachers are in charge of discipline in their respective schools. The researcher sought to find out from them whether they faced any special challenges in dealing with drug related discipline cases. The deputy head teachers were unanimous that they faced a difficult task preventing the students from abusing drugs. They all noted that the ban on corporal punishment and the introduction of stringent procedures for suspending or expelling students made disciplining students more difficult. Therefore, as Table 4.5 shows, they resorted to counseling students and talking to their parents. As Table 4.6 shows, most of the teachers, including the deputy head teachers were dissatisfied with the disciplinary measures available to them.

In order to successfully deal with the problem of drug abuse, teachers need to be fully aware of the extent of the problem in their schools. The study has found that teachers are only aware of about one third of students who are using drugs and, in most cases, these students are either reported by the members of the community or the teachers catch the drug users themselves. Notably, fellow students and parents rarely report cases of drug abuse. It is unlikely that students will report each other because of the strong peer bonding between them. Reporting a fellow student amounts to betrayal and whoever does it risks being ostracized by the rest of the group. In addition, the study also shows that most students share drugs with members of their peer groups hence reporting one member would expose the rest of the group. This situation confirms the notion in Pasche's theory that students bond together in peer groups which act as the basis of socialization and that membership in these groups is prized so much that students readily take up the drug taking habit to gain admission to the groups.

This study has revealed that teachers are not aware of the true extent of drug and substance abuse among students. This fact was revealed when drug abusing students were asked whether the teachers knew about their habit. The teachers only knew about 32.8% of the students. Asked how the teachers got to know about them, 29% of these students were caught by the teachers, and 47% were reported by members of the community. Only 26% of these students were reported by fellow students, parents or caught by police. This finding suggests that people in the community are more aware of the students who use drugs than the teachers yet, the school's administrations have not roped in members of the community in their effort to combat drug abuse. With teachers in the dark about students abusing drugs and substances, it's not surprising that they cannot come up with better strategies to deal with the problem.

The researcher sought to establish whether schools had drug education programs aimed at informing the students about the dangers of drug abuse. The study revealed that all the six schools in the study had such programs. However, the situation in the schools reveals that the drug education programs have not achieved their stated goals. The drug education programs have failed because the schools do not place enough emphasis on them. Teachers tend to put more emphasis on examinable subjects and completing the syllabus and maybe that is why they don't put much emphasis on drug education program. In all the schools, guidance sessions specific to drug abuse are held very infrequently. Students are only subjected to intense counseling when they are caught using drugs. Schools do not dedicate sufficient resources to their guidance and counseling programs in general and the guidance teachers are also required to perform other duties like teaching. This results to having a dual relationship with students and that maybe the reason why guidance and counseling programs are not effective.

CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigated the effectiveness of the strategies used in schools to deal with the problem of drug and substance abuse. The teachers who were polled were asked to state actions they took to deal with cases of drug and substance abuse. All the schools used guidance and counseling as a means of dealing with the problem of drug abuse. This is a popular strategy adopted in many schools (Ngesu et al 2008) and it was not surprising that all the schools in the study adopted it. Ngesu and Njeru (2014) also argue that enhancement of guidance and counselling sessions in secondary schools would minimize the vice and make secondary schools' drug free. In addition to counseling students, all the schools involved parents in dealing with the drug abuse although parents were only summoned when their children were implicated in drug abuse.

Punishment was used in four of the schools, suspensions given in two schools and students were expelled from one school. Ngesu et al (2004) pointed out that punishment was often used in schools to get students out of the habit and to scare others from joining in the habit. Only in one school was the police involved in dealing with drug abuse.

The study revealed that drug abuse is prevalent in secondary schools in Nzau Sub County with 51.1% of the respondents abusing drugs and substances. Secondary school students in Kenya have been known to abuse drugs and this finding confirms previous findings. Wako (2004) noted that 60% of drug users in Kenya are secondary school students. Repeated studies have shown that drug abuse in secondary schools is a nationwide problem. A study by

Gathure (2009) found that 58% of secondary school students in Kisumu District had already abused alcohol. Figures released by NACADA (2004) estimate that 43% of students from western Kenya had taken alcohol, 41% in Nairobi and 26 in Central Province.

A study by NACADA in 2004 also confirmed that drug abuse is a major problem in secondary schools. The NACADA study predicted that 51.3% of secondary school students in Kenya will have abused drugs in the next five years since the time it was published if effective measures are not put in place to deal with the problem. The finding that half of students in Nzau sub-county have abused drugs affirms NACADA's prediction and unless strong measures are taken to combat drug abuse, more students are likely to fall into the habit.

Based on the findings of this study, guidance and counseling seem to be the most popular intervention used in schools to mitigate alcohol and drug abuse. However, it does not seem to be very effective maybe because guidance and counseling teachers are also involved in teaching therefore compromising the quality of counseling services they give to their students because of dual relationship. This study recommends that guidance and counseling teachers be equipped with more counseling skills and competences and be relieved from duties that may compromise professional counseling due to dual relationships. Ongwae (2016) asserts that to effectively address drug and substance abuse in secondary schools collaboration of school administration and parents is very important. Psycho-education focusing on alcohol and drug abuse prevention may also help to mitigate alcohol and drug abuse among secondary school students.

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