



CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DAGORETTI DIVISION, NAIROBI WEST DISTRICT-KENYA

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Abstract

Drug and substance abuse has continued to ruin our youth and subsequently education despite various measures taken to stop it. This study aimed at finding out what makes students abuse drugs and the effects that arise out of this practice. The study employed survey research design and was conducted in secondary schools in Dagoretti Division, Nairobi. Data was collected with the help of questionnaires. Data was organized and prepared for analysis by coding and entry in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software programme. The study established that majority of students' abuse drugs to feel high and was a result of peer pressure. It was also noted that poor performance is the greatest effect of drug and substance abuse among students. The study recommends heavy punishment of drug abusers as well as guidance and counseling sessions to minimize the vice and make secondary schools drug free.

Key words: Drugs, substance abuse, counseling.

Introduction

Globally, ancestors explored the properties of every plant, fruit, root and nut they found. The eventual use of these products would be partly determined by 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). 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.

Over the past two decades, the abuse of drugs in Kenya has rapidly increased and risen to unprecedented level and no part of the country is safe from the scourge (Ngesu et al, 2008). Drug and substance abuse is linked to the rising crime rate, HIV/AIDS prevalence, school unrest, family dysfunction, poverty and other malaise in the country. At the greatest peril are the youth who are deliberately and tactically recruited into the drug culture through personal factor, uncontrolled media influences and social exposure (NACADA, 2006).

Drugs have been defined differently by different people. A drug is any substance which when taken into the living organism may alter one or more of its functions. The World Health Organization (WHO), defines drug as any substance other than those required for maintenance of normal health, which when taken into the living organism, may modify one or more of its functions (Ghodse, 2003). In medicine, drugs refer to any substance with the potential to prevent or cure diseases. Drugs can be legal or illegal. Drug abuse refers to non medical use of drugs. A substance is considered abused if it is deliberately used to induce physiological or psychological effects or both for purpose other than therapeutic ones and when the use contributed to health risks or some combinations of these.

Drug abuse affects the general population with the youth being most affected. Studies have shown that the age of indulgence has dropped to as low as 4 years, with many reasons given for this (Oketch, 2008). The problem of drug abuse is associated with introduction of foreign ways. Also parents abdicating their role of bringing up children in an atmosphere of love and leaving almost everything at the mercy of house help and televisions.

Youthfulness presents some very special problems and considerations. This is the period of adolescence which is full of many challenges such as stress of physiological and physical change, competition in school and life in general, generation gap, unjust and cruel world among other problems. Psychologically, the adolescents have serious developmental tasks to handle such as peer identification and individualization from their family. Sexual identification; societal and vocational role identification and negotiating issues of authority, power and independence are primary (Oketch, 2008).

A report by United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) shows that 60% of students abuse drugs. A survey by NACADA shows that substance abuse is widespread. It affects the youth mostly but cuts across all social groups. Commonly abused drugs and substances by Kenyan youth include: alcohol, tobacco, bhang, miraa (khat), a host of inhalants and prescription drugs (NACADA, 2006). Heroin and cocaine are also growing rapidly in Kenya especially in large cities; Nairobi and Mombasa. The UNODC representative in Kenya commented about the 2004 seizure of 1.1 metric tones of cocaine in Kenya as the largest ever single cocaine seizure in Africa (Mugo, 2005). Nairobi province was ranked as leading in drug abuse in Kenya; WHO (2001), gave an estimated population of heroine users in Nairobi as 10,000 with 50% those being injected drug users.

Injecting drug use is increasing in Kenya especially the large cities like Nairobi. Dagoretti is in Nairobi and it's not a wonder if students use this method to take the drugs. Use of injectable drug is a major factor in the spread of HIV due

to sharing of needles and also diseases like Hepatitis B or even Hepatitis C all of which are incurable. Other drugs like alcohol can lead to risky sexual behaviour as they affect judgment and decision making, resulting in exposures to sexually transmitted infections. Research findings indicate that there is a direct linkage between drug and substance abuse and HIV and AIDS prevalence (NACADA). New insights on the linkages between drug abuse, injecting drug use and HIV/AIDS in Kenya were provided by a study report released by the UNODC Regional Office for Eastern Africa (ROEA) in 2004. The study estimated that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among injecting drug users in Kenya is between 68 and 88 percent (Ndeti 2004).

Statement of the Problem

It is evident that drug and substance abuse is still a problem in our secondary schools despite various measures taken to stop it. In the year 2008, many schools in Kenya were involved in strikes whereby they damaged school property as well as killing their colleagues. This was blamed on drug and substance abuse. One is left to wonder whether it's just the mocks and big televisions which catalyzed them to do this or it is something else. It is possible that students who abuse drugs while in school play a big role in influencing acts of indiscipline as they are under the influence of drugs. Thus this study sought to find the factors influencing drug and substance abuse and the effects of these drug among secondary school students

Findings and Discussion

Causes of drugs and substance abuse in secondary schools in Dagoretti

It was noted that the major factor contributing to students' abuse of drugs is to make them feel high or happy as represented by 24%. Peer pressure and curiosity among school children also contributes significantly as represented by 18% and 16% respectively. This agrees with Oketch (2008) who observed that the period of adolescence is characterized by many challenges which they believe are understood by their peers. In all this turmoil come a socially classic, adult idealized, commonly available, mood altering drugs. Thus, he said, many adolescents try alcohol, cigarettes and cannabis. This was also supported by NACADA (2006) who reported that Peer pressure accounts for 21 – 42% influence in all types of drugs and substances consumed. The peer subculture also facilitates the behaviour by making the substances available and by providing an appropriate social setting and instructions.

Other factors identified by students that ought not to be assumed include students having more money and influence from their parents who also consume drugs.

According to teachers, peer pressure is the largest contributing factor to drug abuse as represented by 40%. Other factors included curiosity, drugs being available and the belief among students that drugs are silver bullet to passing their exams as represented by 20% each.

These findings imply that peer pressure and curiosity are major factors contributing to drug abuse among students. In this case, students are drawn into consuming drugs by virtue of being enticed and introduced to by their friends. They are convinced that they will feel high or would gain a sense of belonging. Consequently, they become curious to an extent of tasting such drugs. This finally graduates them into consuming drugs

Effects of drug and substance abuse on students and their education

The study findings indicate that 52% of students believed that drug abuse causes poor performance as 30% agreed that their colleagues who abuse drugs develop aggressive behaviour. The findings seem to agree with Blandford (1998) who noted that drug abuse has become a stumbling block to the students learning behavior which is essential element in educational practice. 10% of the students believed that drug abuse contributes to withdrawal syndrome as they do not interact with them while 8% believed that drug users are ever violent.

The results imply that drug abuse to students is tantamount to poor performance as the objectives of education to students are over run by aggressive behaviour, violence and withdrawal. It becomes impossible for such students to concentrate on studies or even interact with fellow students or teachers

Measures that can be taken to control drug abuse

According to the study, 79% of students do not offer any measure to curbing drug abuse. As they are victims, it perhaps justifies as to why their lack of awareness to causes and effects of drug abuse contributes largely to drug abuse among them hence they cannot offer a solution to something that they perceive as of no problem to them. However, from the findings, a significant number of them would offer to play games, read novels and join clubs.

According to the findings, 48% of respondents were of view that students who abuse drug should be expelled. 33% recommended that the school administration should administer corporal punishment as 19% believed guiding and counseling should be used to facilitate well understanding of drugs, their effects and integrated approach to curbing drug related problems.

In relation to measures taken by parents, majority of respondents represented by 38% noted that corporal punishment should be administered to those who abuse drugs. 20% of respondents noted that parents should keep students busy to avoid great chances of indulgence in drug related activities. Only 14% were of view of guiding and counseling to students.

According to the views about the community on curbing drug abuse problems, 21% of respondents indicated that the community should take the responsibility of handling drug abuse victims to law enforcers as 20% recommended that there should be a formation of youth groups as a way of limiting students from drug abuse related activities. Other recommendations were punishing drug traffickers and carrying out community guidance and counseling as represented by 18% and 16% respectively.

The study findings imply that guidance and counseling programmes is not highly rated among respondents although should be placed for all students or youths in general and drug traffickers to be punished as well as those who consume

drugs. In essence, curbing problems related to drugs should be more of preventive so as to deter more youths from engaging into drug abuse. This can be achieved through carrying out measures like guiding and counseling as observed by respondents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidently, drug and substance abuse is a problem among students. From the findings of this study, most students are involved in drug abuse. Most are aware of the consequences, yet they keep on indulging in the vice. Such consequences range from those health related, social related and academic related. Administrators as well as other stake holders recommended heavy punishment for drug abusers as well as guidance and counseling.

The findings of this study are hoped to lead to greater and deeper exploration of this matter concerned among all those concerned with drug abuse in future studies. The main task for the stakeholders is not merely to ensure that the key elements highlighted in the present study are present but also to state what these elements are and how they are vital on making schools drug free zones. Based on the findings of the present study, there is a crucial need to address drug related problems affecting young learners. There is a need for students to receive moral and material support for their future benefits.

Policy makers

- They should provide and coordinate services for students experiencing behavioural difficulties and their schools.
- Ministry of Education in conjunction with National Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) should:
 - Engage in appropriate interagency agreements in order to streamline the provision of services to support students with social and behavioural problems emanating from drug abuse
 - Provide examples of curriculum review and reform which address drug abuse issues through integrating drug abuse information into national school curriculum
 - Offer training targeting school administration and teachers on alternatives to corporal punishment administered to students as a way of solving drug abuse cases.
 - provide appropriate professional development opportunities for staff
 - Provide information to parents on drug abuse.

School administrators

- They should develop, implement and regularly review, in consultation with the school community and governing council, a school behaviour code which is consistent with the drug abuse policies
- They should ensure that student behaviour is managed through procedures supported by a strong theoretical understanding of how student learning and behaviour are best supported
- They should ensure that parents or caregivers:
 - have access to drug abuse information, support materials and related documents
 - are aware of their rights to advocacy and of avenues open to them should they have grievances relating to the school's management of student behaviour
- They should promote structures at class and school level to:
 - enable students to be involved in the management of their behaviour
 - support and enable parents or caregivers and teachers to form relationships within which student behaviour may be managed positively
 - ensure that the school's response to gender, cultural differences, family circumstances or disabilities does not reduce students' learning opportunities
 - increase students' opportunities to experience intellectual, social and physical success
 - teach and model decision making in groups and ensure structures are in place for student voice
 - provide opportunities for staff training and development
- They should involve district support services and other agencies, when appropriate, to support staff and families in managing student behaviour effectively
- They should also use system level consequences and interagency support programs with students who do not respond to class and school consequences.
- Establish parent-teacher-student associations that report students' concerns, advocate on students' behalf, and promote peer education.

Teachers

Teachers should:

- Develop and foster positive relationships with students and families
- Communicate and interact effectively with students and engage in cooperative guiding and counseling sessions.
- Participate in developing, implementing and reviewing the school's procedures for managing drug abuse related cases
- Critically reflect on practices and develop the knowledge and skills needed to manage behaviour change successfully
- Establish, maintain, make explicit and model the school's expectations relating to student behaviour
- Respond positively to responsible student behaviour and apply consequences if students interfere with teaching and learning and the safe school environment.

In particular, teachers should:

- Structure the teaching program to facilitate learning and encourage students to achieve their personal best.
- Cater for the developmental, social and emotional needs of individual students and
- Use a range of teaching methods
- Provide formal and informal feedback on student learning to students and parents or caregivers, and review teaching programs in the light of student learning outcomes
- Develop classroom management strategies which involve negotiation, support the participation of all student and acknowledge positive learning and social behaviours

Parents / Guardians

When they enroll a student in a school, parents or guardians should accept responsibility to:

- ensure that the student attends school and that school staff are notified of behaviour change and absences
- keep schools informed of health issues, concerns about behaviour or other matters of relevance

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