

## **Strategies Used to Curb the Level of Drug Abuse in Secondary Schools in Kajiado North Sub-County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

There is a public outcry on how high levels of illicit drug use remain a problem among school going children both in secondary schools and colleges. The purpose of the current study was to determine the techniques used in secondary schools in Kajiado North Sub-County to lower the levels of drug abuse. A convergent parallel mixed methods design was employed for the study. The study applied purposive, automatic inclusion, stratified and simple random sampling techniques to select the sample. The researchers used questionnaires, document analysis and interview guides to collect the relevant information. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 23) was used to analyse quantitative data, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically to obtain views and perceptions of the respondents. The study findings revealed that secondary school administrators in Kajiado North Sub-County are putting great efforts to lower the level of drug abuse in schools. It was found out that the level of drug abuse had gradually decreased. The commonly used strategies to curb drug abuse in public schools were guidance and counseling and police involvement while expulsion was common in both day and boarding private schools. Punishment and suspension were also common across all schools. It was found out that Parental involvement was the least preferred method to curb drug abuse in most schools. The study recommends education of all the stakeholders on the strategies to address drug abuse, the involvement of students in tackling drug abuse problem through the development of peer- to- peer learning forums and the implementation of rehabilitation programs for chronic drug users.

**Key words:** Drug Abuse; Secondary Schools; Kajiado North Sub-County; Kenya

### **Introduction**

Education is the systematic process of gaining knowledge and skills through study and instruction. The knowledge that is attained through education helps open doors to a lot of opportunities for better prospects in career growth (Sanjay, 2014). Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (2001) articulates that the purpose of a child's education is to develop his or her personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to the fullest. Adopting the article 29, a committee on the rights of the child stated the aims of education which included: the holistic development of the full potential of the child, meaning that the education should bring up an all-round child. These would include the development of respect for human rights, an improved sense of identity and affiliation as well as his or her interaction with others and with the environs.

Drug abuse has been considered one of the major obstacles to success in Education. According to Ratlif (2014), school administrators should 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. Substance abuse is a global challenge with detrimental effects on health, wealth and security of nations (UNODC, 2010). Obiechina and Isiguzo (2016) assert that nowadays drug addiction is one of the most annoying and persistent problems that almost all countries have faced in the world including Nigeria. Drug and substance abuse is heavily decried all over the world. The menace has been considered a global epidemic (WHO, 2003).

Academy of Paediatrics (2015) advises that the school environment provides a standard against which young people test behaviour. They emphasize that School personnel often serve as highly influential role models by which preadolescents and adolescents judge themselves. According to O'Donnell and Smith (2012), early intervention and prevention activities should characterize a school's drug abuse program. School administrators should determine the extent of the drug problem within their jurisdiction before initiating a new intervention program. Collaborative plans should be made with all stakeholders who should include parents, school boards, treatment agencies, and other concerned individuals within the community to ensure effective programs.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Studies have shown that drug use among European youths is a major public health problem. While studying on prevention of alcohol use among junior high school students in Europe, Caria (2009) discovered that a lower proportion of baseline occasional drinkers had increased their consumption from 44.3% to 53.9%. Psycho-stimulants and cannabis have emerged as the most commonly used illicit drugs in Australia. A study was conducted by Newton, Champion, Elise and Teesson (2014) on a universal harm-minimization approach to preventing psycho-stimulant and cannabis use among the adolescents in Australia secondary school. A cluster randomised controlled trial was conducted with 1734 Year 10 students (mean age = 15.44 years; SD = 0.41) from 21 secondary schools in Australia. It was found out that the Climate Schools program increased knowledge of cannabis and psycho-stimulants and decreased pro-drug attitudes. Study findings showed that in the short-term the program was effective in diminishing the uptake and reducing the frequency of ecstasy use. However, it was noted that there were no changes in the use of meth/amphetamine.

The Australian study was different from the current study because it was conducted in Australia, a developed country while the current study was done in Kenya which is a third world country, whose approaches in the fight against the drug menace could differ due to the different social and economic set-ups. Furthermore, the study adopted an experimental design whereas the current research applied survey and phenomenology designs. The use of a mixed design in the current study provides a more comprehensive understanding of drug abuse problem than when only one approach is used.

One of the major worries about drug abuse is that children seem to be targeted as the new market for drug industry globally. The unlawful drug trade has been noted to be steadily emerging as a serious problem in sub-Saharan Africa. More sophisticated and synthetic drugs such as crack, cocaine, opium, and ecstasy are finding their way into the continent. Africa has huge young and vulnerable populations which are becoming the target market for the illicit drug industry (UNODC, 2012). A study by Reddy, Koopman, Funani, Sifunda and Masuka (2010) reported that 12% of South African learners had ever used at least one illegal drug such as heroin, mandrax and cocaine. The researchers recommended that it was essential to realise the extent of their use amongst sub populations so as to explore effective ways to scuffle them. Youth Risk Behaviours Survey by Reddy et.al (2011) further denotes that, in light of the drug use related challenges faced by South Africa's youth, there is a need to design and implement robust interventions to mitigate the problems. Evidence in literature suggested that there is a need for more structured and evidence based campaigns which will be able to advocate increased focus and resources to combating drug use.

A study conducted by Sidiq, Bhat, Nusrat, Ahmad (2016) in Pulwama district of Kashmir valley tried to look at the crucial aspect of drug awareness and against treatment of drug addiction. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used to gather data for the study. Simple random sampling was

used to select a sample size of 400 respondents where 200 were male and 200 female from the district of Pulwama Kashmir valley. The study disclosed that 94.17% respondents were not aware of any drug education programs. Only 3.4% respondents stated knowing about the NGO(s) working in the field of drug de-addiction and only 5.4% participants had knowledge about the drug de-addiction centre(s) present in Kashmir valley. It was also noted that the role of the drug monitoring organizations and police in curbing the menace in the Kashmir Valley was very poor. The study was different from the current work as it targeted members of the home community while the current was delimited to secondary school students. This gave the current researcher an insight into how deep the problem is rooted from the young, while investigating on the awareness of the students about the preventive programs used in schools to curb the menace.

Drug abuse in the East African Region is also a real menace. Uganda is no exception; the country was once been rated to have the highest per capital consumption of alcohol in the World (WHO, 2004). Use of narcotic drugs was discovered to be on the rise. It was noted that previously only traditional drugs like cannabis were consumed and that Uganda was only a transit country for hard substances like heroine. However, presently these substances are consumed by the local population, especially the youths. Ugandan Youth Development Link (2010) established that 71% of the students had used drugs with alcohol and cannabis taking the lead. Studies also show that there is an increasing trend in alcohol and substance abuse especially amongst the youths in secondary schools, colleges, and universities. Statistics indicated that 55.21% of youths abused drugs (Serenity Centre, 2011).

In Kenya, substance abuse has also become an issue of great concern. In a survey conducted by NACADA, (2007) it was revealed that drugs and other substances were abused in secondary schools and colleges. It was also discovered that majority of drug abusers in Kenya were students in secondary schools and universities especially in the cities of Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. Another study by NACADA (2017) was conducted in Nairobi secondary schools. Results indicated that drug abuse was still prevalent in most schools.

Studies on the impact of substance abuse on academic activities indicate that the habit interferes with physiological, psychological and emotional functioning of the abusers. Among the problems recorded are impaired memory and other intellectual faculties, tracking inability in sensory and perceptual functions (Brook, Cohen, & Brook, 1998). Further, the habit creates preoccupation with acquiring the substances, adverse psycho-pathetic complications and impaired social development. This may lead to truancy and lack of concentration on studies among others (Brown et al., 2000). Subsequently, Mutua (2015) discovered that the ratio of school going students dropping out of school is 6:10 due to drug abuse especially alcohol and bhang. He noted that this has affected the education system both in primary and secondary schools specifically in Nkaimurunya ward in Kajiado North Sub-County where the study was conducted. In the survey, school principals claimed to have lost bright students due to high rate of drug abuse.

Njagi (2016) carried out a study on strategies used by secondary school principals to curb the effect of drug abuse on academic performance in Naro Moru division, Nyeri County in Kenya. The researcher adopted a mixed methods design. Documents used for collecting data included questionnaires, interview guide and document analysis guide. Findings revealed that the most commonly used strategies for curbing drug abuse included; expulsion, suspension, drug education and heavy punishment. The researcher discovered that these approaches were not diversified enough to as to effectively impact on improved academic performance.

Gathumbi and Cheloti (2016) conducted a research on Curbing Drug and Substance Abuse in Secondary Schools in Kitui, Kenya; focusing on community intervention strategies.

The study employed descriptive survey design. The study sample consisted of 35 head teachers and 407 students. Questionnaires were used to collect data from head teachers and students. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics. The researchers discovered that lack of cooperation from parents and guardians was frustrating DSA intervention efforts in schools. Surprisingly, the study concluded that use of school community was not effective in curbing DSA in schools, since majority of community members never cooperated with school authorities in fighting the drug abuse menace. The study recommended an integrated approach where different strategies or combination of strategies are used purposively for different DSA cases. The researchers also suggested that the ministry of education could review policies on punishment and expulsion as regards to curbing alcohol and drug abuse among students in secondary schools. Notwithstanding, the study did not include key people in the study such as Guidance and counselling teachers, PTA and deputy principals who are directly exposed to the nature of the drug abuse problem in schools as in the current study.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

Schumache and Mcmillan (2001) assert that research design refers to a plan for selecting subject, research sites and data collection procedures, so as to answer question(s). The current study employed both qualitative and quantitative designs in a convergent parallel mixed methods approach. Purposive, automatic inclusion, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample.

A target population is the entire group of individuals, objects or things which share common attributes. They are all the members under study which the researcher would like to generalize results of the study from (Mugenda, & Mugenda 2012). The target population for the current study comprised of 390 participants who included: 8 Principals, 8 Deputy Principals, 8 Chairpersons of PTA who were automatically included in the study and 8 Guidance and Counselling Teachers who were purposively selected. The researchers also selected 360 Students from both private and public secondary schools. Schools in Kajiado North sub-county were stratified into private/public and further stratification done on school categories of mixed day, mixed boarding and single gender school. The researchers purposively selected forms two, three and four students as it was believed they have been in the school longer than form one students.

Data was collected using questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students, PTA Chairpersons and teacher counsellors. The questionnaires comprised both open-end and closed questions. The interview guide was used to solicit information from principals and deputy principals. Document analysis guide enabled the researchers to acquire data that were thoughtful in that time and inexpensive in transcribing as proposed by Creswell (2014). The document analysis helped to determine the historical fact about drug abuse trends and intervention measures.

### **Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments**

The researchers established content validity of the research instruments. Content validity refers to the form of validity which ensures that elements of the main issue to be covered in a research are both a fair representation of the wider issue under investigation and that the elements chosen for the research sample are addressed in depth and breadth (Cohen et al., 2007). Pilot testing was carried out to help the researcher in identifying items in the research instruments that were ambiguous in producing relevant information. Regular consultation with the supervisors who are the experts in research was employed where they scrutinized each item in the questionnaires and interview guides against the topic of the study to establish their aptness. Split half method was used to establish the co-efficiency of internal consistency

of the questionnaires. The calculated correlation coefficient yielded 0.840 reliability coefficient which was considered satisfactory as (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2004) state that a correlation of above 0.6 is enough to judge the reliability of an instrument.

## **Findings of the Study**

### **Demographic Characteristics**

The ratio of male to female students' respondents was 51:49. This indicates that the share of male and female in the secondary schools in Kajiado North Sub- county region is almost equal. The small margin thus implies that there is a gender balance in secondary schools in Kajiado North sub-county. Out of the 5 guidance and counseling teachers that responded, the percentage proportion of the female was 100% indicating that there is no male guidance and counseling teachers identified in the region. This could mean that the society holds a perception that guidance and counseling is a career that only women can do better. PTA chairpersons had a 57% of male respondents and 43% of female respondents. The small margin on the gender means that both female and male parents are considered when selecting leaders in the PTA regardless of gender. From the administrative point of view which represents Principals and Deputy Principals, the population of female was 24% lower than that of the male counterparts, hence representing one-third of the administrative management. The statistics indicate that the challenge of gender stereotyping among the school board members, education administrators and the society at large in relations to school leadership is still prevalent.

### **Strategies Employed in Curbing Drug Abuse**

School Administrators were interviewed while the students, PTA and guidance and counseling teachers responded through questionnaires. Table 1 shows students, PTA, and guidance and counseling teachers' responses.

**Table 1**

**Responses of students, PTA and guidance and counselling teachers' on Strategies used in dealing with drug users**

Strategies	Students		PTA		G & C Heads		
	Public	Private					
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Corporal punishment	80	44.4	0	0	0	1	20
Sent for parents	29	16.1	8	4.4	2	2	40

Working around the school compound	135	75	13	24.5	1	14.2	1	20
Expelled from school	11	6.1	120	66.6	4	25	4	26.7
Referred to guidance & counseling	112	62.2	21	39.6	7	43.8	5	33.3
Nothing is done	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Note sure	3	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0

According to table 1, strategies used in schools in addressing drug use differ with the type of school. Among the public schools, the most commonly used strategy is working around the school compound as a punitive measure followed by being referred to the guidance and counseling department, which account for 75% and 39.6% respectively as indicated by the student respondents. PTA and the guidance and counselling teachers ranked the use of these two strategies at percentage frequencies of 14.2%, 20% respectively on the use of punitive measure and 43.8% and 33.3% on the use of referral to guidance and counselling. Among the private schools, the most commonly used strategies are expulsion from school depicted by 66.6% of student respondents, followed by referral to guidance and counseling department with 39.6% responses from students.

Interviews with the principals and deputy principals disclosed that, expulsion is a common strategy that is used in all the schools studied. However, there was a claim that expulsion is always the last option as one of the principals from a private boarding school stated; “Expulsion is usually the last option after all other strategies have failed, but of course we don’t mention this to the students. To them, drug abuse results to expulsion. (Interview: 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2018)”. The finding is in line with that of Njagi (2014), who discovered that referral to Guidance and counseling, punishment, suspension and expulsion were the most common strategies used by the school administrators.

From table 1, corporal punishment is a measure that is only used in public schools and not the private schools as it accounts for 44.4% in public schools and 0% in private schools. This strategy was also described by some school administrators. One of the deputy principals from a public mixed day school stated. “These boys and girls come from homes where everybody is too busy to watch their discipline, so I believe most of the drug abusers indulge into drug abuse just as indiscipline, so punishing them becomes detrimental to the behavior”. However, the use of punishment is against article 37 of the convention on the rights of a child which states that “No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. Equally, the ministry of education banned corporal punishment and enacted the children’s Act which entitles children to protection from all forms of abuse and violence (Government of Kenya, 2001).

Sending students home for parents to address their behavior and advise their children was also used in both types of schools although not common as only 16.1% and 6.5% proportion students in public and private schools respectively reported it as a measure. Overall, PTA and guidance and counseling proportion of responses on the use of parental involvement was 29% and 40% respectively. When asked whether they engage parents in the fight against drugs in schools, there was affirmation from majority of the principals and the deputy principals. However, there was the claim that parents do not contribute much in the fight against drug abuse. One of the deputy principals from a mixed boarding school had the following to say:

Since I came to this school I have dealt with four cases of students from the same neighborhood. We tried counseling the students but they still went ahead. I involved the parents but of course parents deny the fact that their children are abusing drugs and tend to defend them. The only option then became expelling the students to serve as an example to the rest of the students. That's when I decided that we need a drug policy in the school. All the students know that if you are found with cases of drug abuse you are expelled from the school. (Interview: 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2018)

There was a 2% belief among the public school students that nothing is done to students that are found to be abusing drugs. There was also a 1% that represents the private school students that are not sure what happens to students found abusing drugs which could be translated to the students that are still young in school and have not seen or experienced cases related to drug abuse. However, it could also mean that the small percentage of students claiming that nothing is done or they are not sure, are aware of rampant cases of drug addicts in school who have so far not been discovered by the school authorities.

The information on the strategies in curbing the level of drug abuse was backed by the results gathered through document analysis guide as shown in table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Number of drug abuse cases against the actions taken between 2013-2017**

Number of cases between 2013-2017												
Action	0-5		6-9				Above 10					
	Public		Private		Public		Private		Public		Private	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Referrals	2	50	1	25	3	75	1	25	1	25	0	0
suspension	0	0	2	50	4	100	2	50	0	0	0	0
Expulsion	1	13	0	0	1	25	3	75	1	25	1	25

Table 2 shows the total number of drug abuse indiscipline cases between 2013 and 2017 against the actions taken. 75% of the public schools had issued between 6-9 referral letters from 2013 to 2017, and only 25% had over 10 cases of referral. On the other hand, while only 25% of private schools had the highest number (0-6) of referral cases. 100% of the public schools recorded to have had 6-9 cases of suspension between the period while 50% of

the private schools recorded 0-5 and another 50% had 6-9 cases of suspension. On expulsion, 75% of the private schools under study had issued 6-9 letters of expulsion to students while only 25% of public schools had issued a similar numbers of expulsion cases. This indicates that overall, referrals to guidance and counselling or rehabilitation centres was the frequently employed strategy against students caught with drug abuse related indiscipline cases in the public schools, with expulsion being the most preferred strategy in private schools. All types of schools recorded cases between 0-9 of suspended students. Suspension is the temporary dismissal of an individual suspected of an offence. The action is usually taken as the first step in addressing an indiscipline case so as to allow for further investigation. This could be the reason why both types of schools recorded almost equal number of such cases.

The results in table 2 were backed by school administrators who disclosed that referral to guidance and counselling or to rehabilitation centres for severe cases were mostly preferred in most public day schools while the administrators in most private boarding schools reported use of expulsion as the most preferred. Expulsion means total dismissal of students from schools. Expelling a student from a school may not help the victim to recover even though it deters other students from indulging in the same habit. Once a student is expelled, they may be enrolled in the neighbouring schools, which mean that drug habit is transferred to other institutions rather than being eradicated. This could be the reason why the day public schools consider expulsion as the least option.

On probing further, some of the administrators claimed that they involve the police in dealing with students found abusing drugs. One of the principals from a mixed day school had this to say:

I do not condone drug abuse in my school. If i find a student abusing drug, there is no discussions about anything, we engage the police and the student has to leave the school for good and allow other students enjoy the drug- free environment. (Interview: 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2018).

Other strategies described included use of rewards to students who forward information about drug existence among the students. When probed further, one principal revealed that some of the rewards included paying half of their fees, paying for their school trips or buying items they would desire. Interviews with the schools administrators also revealed that other methods employed against drug abuse included spontaneous inspections especially in boarding schools, thorough inspections as students come in from holidays and outings, and close monitoring. The deputy principals disclosed that this method has been effective as it minimises introduction of drugs to innocent students by drug users. This finding concurs with Maithya (2009) who discovered the use of impromptu inspections as a strategy used by school principals to control drug abuse.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the study findings, the researchers came to a conclusion that various interventions are being employed in secondary schools in Kajiado North Sub-County in an effort to curb the level of drug abuse. Subsequently, the level of drug abuse had gradually decreased across all the schools in the Sub-County. The commonly used strategies to curb drug abuse in public schools were guidance and counseling and police involvement while expulsion was common in both day and boarding private schools. Punishment and suspension were common across all schools. The study findings indicate that the use of various strategies to curb drug abuse depends on the school category and type.

### **Recommendations**

The researchers recommend that school administrators should adopt measures that work best for their school type and category if drug abuse was to be eradicated. The study recommends that students should take upon themselves to engage in activities that would help them overcome temptations of indulging in drug abuse. These may include Christian based activities both at school and in the home community such as participation in Christian unions, peer to peer counseling and school' organized co-curricular activities. Equally, the students should attend seminars organized by the church and other social organizations geared towards fighting drug abuse.

In order to have a successful drug abuse prevention programme all parties need to be involved with a stake in the development and welfare of the students in Kajiado North Sub-County without leaving out the parents. There should be commitment from the parents at the school level. This is because any school programme without parental support is likely to fail since they are the primary socializers of the students. The government should consider continuous training of the teaching staff on drug abuse management, to ensure that expertise lies within the school as well as establishment of accessible and affordable rehabilitation centres.

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