

Prevalence And Determinants of Drug Abuse Among Boys and Girls in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Drug abuse is a problem that the world is currently dealing with. Approximately 5% of people under the age of 22 worldwide have either voluntarily or involuntarily abused drugs. Drug abuse has crept into schools over the past few decades, forcing administrators to look for new ways to stop the threat. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of drug abuse and its contributing factors among secondary school-aged boys and girls. The relationship between factors that affect the onset and persistence of drug abuse was explored using the Modified Social Stress Model Theory. A mixed-methods approach and concurrent triangulation were used. Boys and girls in Form Two and Three, as well as class teachers and principals or deputy principals, were the study's target population. The study sample size consisted of 236 respondents in total, who were selected using stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The researcher employed survey questionnaires for both boys and girls in addition to teachers and interview guides for principals and deputy principals. Tables and graphs were used to illustrate the data techniques. The results showed a moderate prevalence (24.71%), with peer pressure, a lack of self-control, unfavourable family and school environments, and antiquated administrative practices all being contributing factors. The study suggests improved stakeholder support, inclusive, contemporary counselling techniques, and focused training for educators and administrators. In order to empower both boys and girls to resist drug abuse, a supportive school environment is emphasized.

Key terms: Prevalence; determinants; drug abuse; secondary schools

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Drug abuse is a global problem that is endangering the physical and mental well-being of a significant proportion of the population, especially the youth. About 345 million boys and girls aged 13 to 17 (3.7% of the global population) abused drugs at least once in 2018, with 43 million of them suffering from drug abuse disorders, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018). In the same vein, Kumpfer, Magalhaes, and Xie (2017) argue that drug abuse among boys and girls has dramatically increased in many countries worldwide over the years, particularly in urban areas.

Depending on their culture and current activities, people use drugs for a variety of reasons (Mwakifoya, 2017). However, historically, the majority of these psychoactive substances that are currently causing concern among the public were accepted by society and ceremoniously used at significant social gatherings like peace conferences and harvesting (Benjamin, 2016). Traditional brews among the Luhya, Mijikenda, Kikuyu, and Luo people in Kenya, as well as tobacco among Americans and Indians, were used without concern for psychological or physiological dependence. These substances were known to induce euphoria, which transformed people's moods into pleasant feelings, particularly during social gatherings (Muchemi, 2017). However, drug use has taken a bad turn and led to abuse, particularly among girls and boys worldwide.

Drug abuse among boys and girls is on the rise in Kenya as well. According to NACADA (2018) statistics, 43% of boys and 18% of girls between the ages of 14 and 19 abuse various drugs. About 10 million cigarettes are smoked in Kenya annually (NACADA, 2018). Additionally, according to data from the Ministry, smoking preference rates are 59% for boys and 39% for girls under the ages of 14 and 16. The rate is estimated to be 46.8% for boys and 54% for girls between the ages of 17 and 19 (Gatonye, 2017).

According to the MOE (2017), 55% of smokers and 32% of those who started smoking more recently own cigarette-branded pens, T-shirts, and caps. Additionally, 86% of both boys and girls have seen tobacco advertisements in publications and newspapers. Additionally, according to the study, 38% of smokers believed that smoking appealed to both boys and girls (MOE, 2017). Hard narcotics like heroin, khat, cocaine, and bhang are commonly used in schools by both boys and girls as young as 10 in central Kenya (NACADA, 2018). The survey also discovered that a lot of people use cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and khat, which adds to the high rates of violence in schools.

Statement of the Problem

Schools give boys and girls an essential opportunity to receive an education that helps them learn skills and knowledge that can help them deal with issues like drug abuse in the modern world. Nevertheless, despite this educational opportunity, drug abuse is very common and on the rise among Nyeri Sub County's secondary school students, both boys and girls. Drug abuse has resulted in costly outcomes like fights between boys and girls, property damage, school dropouts, teen pregnancy, arson, violence, unrest, truancy, slang, and disruption of classroom instruction.

Through organisations like NACADA and the curriculum, the government and other interested parties have made an attempt to address this problem. To combat drug abuse, school administrators have employed peer group education, guidance and counselling, and occasionally surprise searches of the lockers in classrooms and the boxes in dorms for both boys and girls. Drug abuse practices in schools continue despite the fact that school administrators have used a variety of other strategies to address the issue, including rewards, exclusion, and suspension as behaviour control measures. The issue has persisted despite the implementation of the Drug Abuse Act, the Alcohol Policy, and severe penalties that appear to deter drug traffickers.

Despite these efforts, it is noteworthy that not much has been done to define the role of school administrators in addressing drug abuse in Nyeri Sub County's educational institutions. This study sought to close this gap by investigating the role of school administrators in tackling the issue of drug abuse among the subcounty's boys and girls.

Significance of the Study

The study's findings offer a number of well-informed recommendations that could aid both boys and girls in their fight against drugs. Furthermore, the findings show that the guidance and counselling divisions would be improved by assigning qualified and experienced counsellors to head the departments. The results of this study may be used by school administrators to help boys and girls determine the factors that contribute to drug use and its prevalence so that corrective action can be taken. Teachers can receive in-service training to accomplish this. The government may use the findings to put policies into place that would improve school guidance and counselling services.

Additionally, the findings could be used to support anti-drug abuse advocacy initiatives, which could be incorporated into the curriculum with a focus on the negative consequences of drug addiction. Lastly, the study's findings would benefit society since they promote the creation of a drug-free society for political, social, and economic advancement in line with the sustainable development goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Caria (2017) found that a smaller percentage of baseline occasional drinkers in Europe had increased their intake from 44.3% to 58.9% when looking at the prevalence of alcohol abuse among junior high school students. The most commonly abused illegal drugs in Australia were psychostimulants and cannabis, which made up 67% of the market. Furthermore, it was discovered that 70.8% of students had consumed alcohol daily for 30 days prior to the survey. There was a gap in the study because, although the researcher concentrated on the prevalence of alcohol alone, the current study also evaluated the prevalence and contributing factors of the drug abuse problem from a broader standpoint in the Kenyan context.

The University of Massachusetts carried out a second study on the prevalence factors influencing smoking behaviours among American secondary school students in 2016. Students between the ages of 12 and 14 were included in the sample. According to the results, 64.6% of the students exhibited signs of nicotine addiction, and 45.7% of the students were addicted. Additionally, the report revealed that 67.7% of the age group had abused heroin, opium, amphetamines, and cannabis during their lifetime.

Takalanish (2016) investigated the prevalence of drug abuse among 13–16-year-old students in 10 secondary schools in the Vhembedzi region of Limpopo, South Africa. The findings showed that 67.3% of teenagers said it was easy to obtain hard drugs in their neighbourhoods. Additionally, according to 65% of the respondents, the easy access to illegal substances like alcohol, cigarettes, and mandrax doubled drug abuse and eventually resulted in addiction. In contrast to Takalanish's study, which solely focused on adolescents, this most recent study included school officials in an effort to bridge the gap.

In the Kamwololo neighborhood of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Mwangela (2017) conducted an assessment on the varied prevalence of drug abuse among secondary school boys. In school settings, the study found prevalence associations for environmental determinants, family characteristics, and individual predispositions. The results showed that 59.3% of respondents had access to illegal drugs, 64% of which were provided by the neighbourhood surrounding the school, and 46% of those surveyed admitted to secretly supplying heroin, cocaine, and marijuana to their peers. Boys in schools made up the study sample size for Mwangela's investigation. To bridge the gap and improve generalisation, the current study included a mixed sample size of teachers, school administrators, and boys and girls.

In a related study, Kiiru (2016) investigated the prevalence of drug use among teenagers enrolled in Ruiru Division secondary schools. According to the results, 56.4% of the teenagers concurred that their schoolmates used drugs. The study also found that while 63% of children from low-income families abused drugs because they were frustrated by their inability to pay for school supplies and other essentials, 54.9% of boys and girls from wealthy homes did so because they could afford them. This study was conducted in Ruiru Town, which made it different from the current one in that the former focused on teenagers, whereas the latter included school administrators as respondents.

Njeru (2017) conducted a study on the causes and effects of drug addiction in secondary school students in Nyeri County. The purpose of the study was to determine the prevalence and contributing factors to drug abuse among students. The results showed that 76.9% of students abused drugs to get "high" and as a result of peer pressure. Additionally, 62.7% of study participants mentioned how reluctant the schools were to address the problem. Furthermore, 47.3% of teachers expressed no interest in educating the students about the dangers of drug abuse. Unlike the current study, which sought to determine the prevalence and determinants of drug abuse, this study focused on the causes of drug abuse.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods approach. For the quantitative data, a descriptive survey approach was used, and for the qualitative data, phenomenology methodology. In survey research, a representative sample is utilised to examine the characteristics of a sizable population or group (Hassan, 2024). This study collected qualitative data from its participants using a phenomenological technique.

Target Population, Sampling Techniques and Sample size

The study's target population was 2,212 boys and girls in Forms 2 and 3 who were between the ages of 16 and 17. They were chosen because it was assumed they were at the height of their adolescence, were more accustomed to school life, and were more aware of drug-related issues in their schools. Twelve schools were used to select the responders. As a result, there were twelve principals or deputy principals and twelve guidance and counselling teachers. The sample for this mixed-methods study's investigation was selected using stratified

and simple random sampling techniques. A random sample of 2,212 boys and girls in Forms Two and Three was taken from the target population (Data Report SCEO, 2022).

Secondary schools were categorised by gender, including mixed-boarding, mixed-day, boys-only, and girls-only. Using the rotary method, one school was chosen at random from among the strata of mixed boarding and day schools. After that, stratified sampling was carried out according to gender, and only one stream was randomly selected when there were several. Every third entrant in the official register was chosen for sampling in single-sex schools using a simple random sampling technique for easier outreach after the forms were chosen and marked using systematic sampling. Purposive sampling was used to choose the principals and deputy principals in charge of the academic docket and counselling teachers. According to Siomona (2014), purposive sampling is employed when a researcher is interested in studying a population that has particular characteristics. This research used Yamane's, (1967) simplified formulae to compute the sample size for the study as follows.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}, \text{ Where } n \text{ is the sample size, } N \text{ is target population and } e \text{ is the level of accuracy (0.05)}$$

Using this formula, a sample size of 212 students was obtained as

Research Instruments

Structured Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a tool made up of several questions intended to elicit responses from participants. Using this method, a significant amount of data can be swiftly gathered (Ogula, 2016). Twelve teacher counsellors and 212 boys and girls were given questionnaires. The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Since open-ended questions allowed participants to freely express themselves while responding, they were used in the study. This allowed for the elicitation of attitudes, decisions, interests, and underlying motives that closed-ended questions were unable to.

Key Informant Interview Guide

An interview guide was another instrument utilised in this research. It allows for probing, personalises the social issue, and conjures up a clear mental image of the participant's viewpoint on a given phenomenon. Additionally, interviews are a multi-method data collection tool that yield the best collaboration and high-quality responses, both of which benefit from the interviewer's presence. Semi-structured interview questions were included in the study's interview guides. The interview guide was used to ask questions of the principals and deputy principals. With their permission, the researcher conducted phone calls, in-person interviews, and audio recordings so that every detail could be recorded and consulted during the analysis.

Data Collection

Following the selection of secondary schools participating in the study, the researcher visited the designated schools to conduct research, which included key informants and gathering data on current drug abusers and non-abusers. Before the actual date, appointments and arrangements were made in person, via the school's learning systems, via phone calls, emails, and the teachers of the e-learning classes. Interviews and questionnaires were employed to gather data. With the help of research assistants, the researcher interviewed principals or deputy principals. Ethics and research rules were followed. With permission from the respondents, interviews were conducted by the researcher and the research assistants in face to face, audio recorded and video recording alongside making notes.

Data Analysis

Following coding and cleaning, quantitative data were entered into Microsoft Excel 2016 and the Statistical Package for Social Science Test Editor (SPSS) version 23.0 for analysis. Qualitative data was recorded, transcribed, and typed. Descriptive analysis was used to examine the quantitative information obtained from

closed-ended questions. Subsequently, the SPSS computer programme produced descriptive statistics, including mean, cross tabulations, percentage, and frequencies. The content and thematic analysis of the qualitative data gathered from open-ended questions included classifying themes based on the words of the respondents and identifying text passages and labelling them as examples of a specific theme. The findings were discussed and analysed in relation to the research questions. The researcher made a number of conclusions and suggestions in light of the findings.

RESULTS

The results of the study were as presented.

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Age of the Respondents

Age was a significant factor because it is a developmental stage that contributes to a person's comprehension of life circumstances as they progress through secondary school. In a similar vein, both boys and girls are exposed to a wide range of life options at this age. The respondents' ages are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	percentage
Boys and girls		
14-15 years	94	45.6%
16-17 years	112	54.4%
Total	206	100%

As shown in Table 1 the majority of respondents (54.4%) were between the ages of 16 and 17, while 45.6% were between the ages of 14 and 15. According to the data, the majority of both boys and girls in the study area were between the ages of 16 and 17. Additionally, these results suggested that 16–17-year-olds were more psychologically aware of their school environment than 14–15-year-olds. Additionally, compared to younger people, they have better perspectives on life circumstances at this age.

According to a study by Namanyanja (2017), boys and girls between the ages of 16 and 17 have a tendency to explore different avenues in life, and many of them choose drug abuse as one of them. The majority of the boys and girls at this age underwent psychological and physiological changes, which, if not managed, led to drug abuse, according to this study, which supports Namanyanja's findings.

Table 2 shows the age of the teachers.

Table 2 Age of the Teachers

Age	Experience in G & C	
Teachers	Frequency	percentage
20-30 years	2	16.7%
31-40 years	4	33.3%

41-50 years	6	50.0%
Total	12	100%

The age and experience of guidance and counselling teachers were investigated in this study. Knowing how well teachers handled situations or cases of drug abuse by both boys and girls in secondary schools was crucial. The majority of the teachers (50.0%) who participated in this study were between the ages of 41 and 50, followed by those between the ages of 31 and 40 (33.3%) and those under 30 (16.7%), as indicated in Table 2. Notably, the study found that many teachers are aware of the negative effects of drug abuse by the time they are fifty years old because they have or have had boys and girls in the same age range who attend the same school or another school.

In order to liberate the affected boys and girls from the threat, this provides them with better experiences in terms of resources and knowledge on how to address drug abuse. The current study's conclusion that teachers' involvement in combating drug abuse helps shape boys and girls into responsible, drug-free members of society is supported by earlier research (Mbuthia, 2019). At the time of the study, only a small percentage of teachers under 30 were improving their professional abilities. In order to address drug abuse issues in secondary schools, they were integrated into their school's guidance and counselling departments. Furthermore, this group of educators lacked extensive and varied knowledge and experience in dealing with drug-abusing students in their classrooms.

The study also collected data on age and role played by the principal/deputies in addressing drug abuse and the results were as presented in Table 3.

Table 3 : Age and Working Experience of Principal/Deputy Principals

Age	Experience	
Principal/Deputy Principals	Frequency	Percentage
31-40 years	3	25.0%
41-50 years	4	33.3%
Above 50 years	5	41.7%
Total	12	100%

Table 3 shows that 41.7 percent of respondents were over 50, 33.3% were between 41 and 50, and 25% were under 40. This showed that because they were age-appropriate and experienced in their roles, the majority of principals and deputy principals in the research area were better equipped to understand contemporary issues. Additionally, they were considered to have settled in terms of having taught for a long time and having access to in-service training on new topics like drug abuse.

A study conducted by Abdi (2017) found that several principals and deputy principals work harder in their capacity to prevent drug entry into schools. The findings support those of the current study, which found that in order to reduce drug abuse in secondary schools, principals and deputy principals encouraged boys and girls to take responsibility for their own character development.

Gender of Respondents

The study sought information on gender of the respondents so as to understand the drug abuse indulgence patterns. It was important to understand amongst boys and girls who were more prone and easily lured into drug abuse indulgence as they go through secondary school education. The results were as presented in Table 4.

Table 4 : Gender Response for Boys and Girls

	Boys and girls Distribution	
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Boys	110	54.4%
Girls	96	45.6%
Total	206	100%

According to Table 4, boys made up 54.4% of the study's respondents, compared to 46.6% of girls. As noted, the information clarified the connection between drug abuse and gender. The results of this study showed that more boys than girls took part in it. Due to the disparity in gender needs, more boys than girls were chosen to participate in the study from the various schools. In addition to gender needs, boys received greater family support than girls to participate in the study.

A study by Chore (2017) found that girls are less likely to pursue secondary school education because they participate in more home-chores. The results of this study, however, contradict those of Chore because they showed a slight difference in the number of boys and girls who participated, indicating that there was a gender balance in Nyeri County's secondary schools.

The gender of the teachers tackling drug abuse was also important in this study. Understanding the gender of the teachers in charge of dealing with drug abuse indulgence among both boys and girls in secondary schools was crucial. The gender distribution of the study's participating teachers is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5 : Gender of the Teachers

Gender	Number of teachers	
	Frequency	percentage
Male	5	41.7%
Female	7	58.3%
Total	12	100%

The majority of the teachers (58.3%) were female, while 41.7% were male. This proved that most female teachers were well-positioned to understand the contemporary issue of drug abuse in secondary schools. Furthermore, this study showed that female teachers were more significant due to their maternal demeanour, which made it easier for them to relate to both boys and girls. Furthermore, the majority of the female teachers had completed in-service training on current issues, which allowed them to address the difficulties that the boys and girls encountered while performing their daily responsibilities in an effort to improve society.

However, several male educators had been trained in guidance and counselling, and as a result, they were given the duty of monitoring the welfare of the schoolchildren. According to a study by Mutumi (2018), women's responsibility for the children aided in character development. This study backs up Mutumi's claim that more women are teaching and are therefore responsible for addressing the issue of drug abuse among both boys and girls in schools.

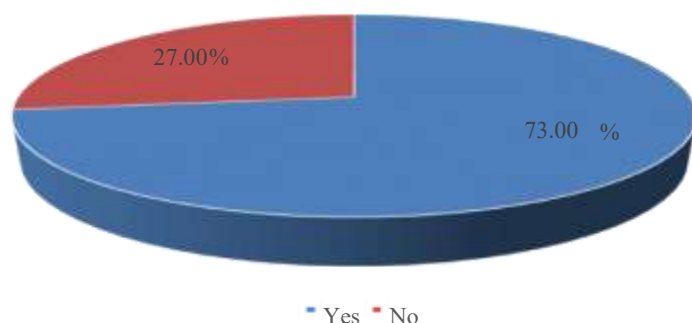
Prevalence and Determinants of Drugs Abused

The objective of this study was to explore the prevalence and determinants of drug abuse among boys and girls in secondary schools. To achieve this objective, analysis was conducted and the findings presented as follows.

Awareness of Drugs Abused other than Medical Drugs

The study sought to establish the awareness of drug abuse whether resulted from engagement in drug abuse due to increased peer pressure, parental guidance, social status and lifestyle that is dictated by social economic influence. The results were as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 : Awareness on Drug Abuse among Boys and Girls

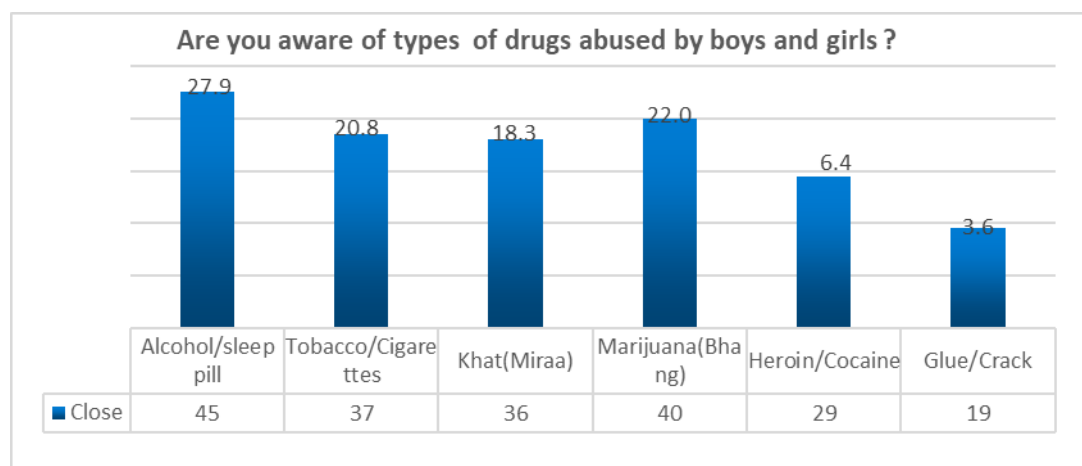


The study found that 73% of the respondents were aware of the kinds of drugs abused in their schools. According to this study, both boys and girls abused drugs like cocaine, marijuana, khat and bhang, and alcohol. Additionally, the study found that several boys and girls were aware of the drugs their school-age peers were abusing. The results of the current study were consistent with a prior study conducted by NACADA (2018) that documented prevalent instances of alcohol abuse and bhang, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, and cannabis in secondary schools.

Furthermore, the study found that a variety of factors, such as environmental influences, personal traits, and societal norms, did not significantly alter the prevalence and determinants of drug abuse among boys and girls in the study area. As Chanila (2015) also believes, it was significant to observe in this study that drug abuse patterns had not changed significantly over time. This was explained by the fact that the study area included both boys and girls attending mixed and single-sex boarding schools, both of which were located in Nyeri County and outside of its borders. The results were consistent with a NACADA (2018) report.

The study sought to establish the actual types and the frequency of drugs abused and the results are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 : Types and Frequency of Drugs Abused



The kinds of drugs that are abused are shown in Figure 2. Of the 45 respondents, 27.9% reported abusing alcohol or sleeping pills. The second most common substance, according to 40 respondents, was marijuana (22.0%), while 37 respondents (20.8%) reported abusing tobacco or cigarettes. About 18.3% of respondents reported chewing khat or miraa, 6.4% reported abusing heroine or cocaine, and 19.6% reported abusing glue or crack.

Therefore, neither awareness of drug abuse nor educational attainment affected participation, suggesting that other factors served as deterrents. According to this study, the most commonly abused drugs were alcohol/sleep pills, marijuana/bhang, and tobacco, with over 20% of participants abusing each of these substances.

According to the respondents, many boys and girls would smoke during break time and drink during lunch because that is when drug dealers prefer to sell to customers who are reliable. This study also found that the use of locally produced drugs, such as alcohol, khat, and tobacco, which are socially, culturally, and legally acceptable in Kenya, was linked to drug abuse. This demonstrated how easily drugs were able to enter schools. This study came to the conclusion that these were schools' perceptions of how drug abuse in school grounds leads to truancy, arson, strikes, dearth, and early pregnancies that impact secondary school boys and girls.

Furthermore, it was a reflection of the country's present overall drug abuse crisis which concurs with the findings of Shibalika (2021).

The study also sought to find out the people in addressing drug abuse and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 : Responses on People Involved in Addressing Drug Abuse

Persons Involved	Frequency	Percent
School administrators	125	60.6%
Teacher Counsellor	40	19.4%
Motivational speakers	27	13%
None	14	7%

One of the supportive resources that improves capacity to address drug abuse which frequently calls for technical efforts for adaptability is people who are actively involved in addressing drug abuse. This was regarded as a crucial practice that was being used to provide girls and boys in schools with more meaningful guidance.

According to the findings, school administrators made up 60.6% of those involved in addressing drug abuse, followed by teacher counsellors (19.4%), motivational speakers (13%), and no one (7%). It was found that school administrators were in charge of implementing the drug misuse policy and that they played a crucial role in developing programmes that kept schools safe and drug-free.

They oversee the daily operations of the schools and handle disciplinary issues involving students who are getting ready for their future in school, according to the survey. The findings of the current study are supported by Acevedo's (2017) report, which states that administrators' efforts to help boys and girls become responsible future citizens include daily safety and disciplinary measures. The results showed that when it came to handling disciplinary matters involving drug abuse, school administrators had taken the initiative to fulfil their responsibilities. This was explained by the teachers' ability to spot the boys and girls abusing drugs in the study area and then modify their instruction to provide support.

Additionally, this study demonstrated that teachers' roles in secondary schools included helping boys and girls with drug abuse counselling, character development, and moral upbringing. They were committed to saving the lives of these students, which aligned with the findings of Kumpfer and Magalhaes (2017). Interestingly, the study found that 7% of both boys and girls said that no one was in charge of dealing with drug abuse at their schools. This was explained by the fact that they had not come across sessions that addressed drug abuse issues.

The results also showed that the boys and girls in this group had not taken the time to become acquainted with the current drug-abuse policies at their schools. According to a report by Ferguson (2023), many boys and girls are not familiar with the methods used to prevent drug abuse or the individuals involved in their schools. The results of the study also showed that more people, including parents, local churches, non-governmental organisations, and the communities surrounding the school, needed to be involved in combating drug abuse.

Accordingly, Kamwololo (2018) suggests that more stakeholders be included in the battle against drug abuse. This will add significant moral values to the fight against drug abuse and help eradicate it on a large scale among both boys and girls.

The researcher also asked teachers why learners abused drugs, and the findings are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 : Reasons for Abusing Drugs

Reason for Drug Abuse	Ffrequency	Percent
Peer influence	9	75%
Dissolution of family unit	8	66.7%
Lack of parental model	7	58.3%
Availability of drugs	6	50.0%
A lot of home work (Stress)	5	41.7%
More pocket money	4	33.3%

According to Table 7, 75% of drug abusers were influenced by peer pressure, 66.7% by family breakup, and 58.3% by a lack of parental role models. Furthermore, the results showed that 33.3% of teachers cited a lack of personal basic effects, 41.7% cited a lot of homework (stress), and 50% of teachers agreed that the availability of drugs was the cause of drug abuse. This data was significant because it highlighted areas that needed attention, particularly for school administrators and teacher counsellors.

The most commonly reported causes of drug abuse among both boys and girls, according to this study, were peer pressure, family influence, lack of knowledge about the dangers of drug abuse, easy access and low cost of drugs, the desire to increase IQ, and a lack of positive role models in both parents and teachers. This was ascribed to the indifference of several school officials who failed to consider the bigger picture and believed that boys and girls attending events like rituals and ceremonies where alcohol was consumed contributed to the introduction of drugs into schools. The study also found that poor classroom management, poor academic performance, affiliations with deviant peers, parental deviant behaviour, and perceptions of peer and community approval of drug use behaviour in schools were factors that contributed to alcohol abuse because the boys and girls mimicked their parents. These results are in line with Ferguson et al.'s (2023) findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicated that 24.71% of the students involved in the study are affected by drug abuse. The high rate of drug abuse among both boys and girls in this region has been attributed to a number of factors, such as cultural practices in schools, a lack of resources to address gender needs, traditional practices, a lack of knowledge about drug abuse, the inability of school administrators to involve boys and girls in decision-making, and negative attitudes towards education. According to the study, most boys and girls lacked the self-awareness necessary to avoid abusing drugs. Other risk factors included affiliations with deviant peers, peers who surrounded aberrant behaviour, and perceptions of approval of drug misuse behaviour in the school and the surrounding communities.

The study found that the lack of self-control among the boys and girls in the study area prevented them from starting to abuse drugs. This study's findings that the majority of boys and girls lacked access to pertinent, useful information on drug abuse are consistent with earlier studies in this field. Therefore, in order to improve their performance, school administrators must start self-value-adding activities like discussion groups through mentoring, debate, and teacher counselling. As evidenced by the respondents' broad awareness of the need to address drug abuse, both boys and girls in the study area's secondary schools received counselling. However, they lacked empowerment and inclusivity associated with structural challenges, lack of capacity for self drive, lack of knowledge on drug abuse effects, and skills to assist them to avoid drug abuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School administrators should encourage teachers to work together and pool their resources and expertise to help boys and girls make informed decisions and avoid drug abuse. This study demonstrated the inefficiency of some administrative strategies for addressing the problem of drug abuse. In light of this, school administrators must put both boys' and girls' suggestions and best practices into effect in order to enable them to deal with drug abuse.

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