



CHALLENGES FACING THE PREVENTION OF DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: CASE OF MALINDI CENTRAL URBAN SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

This study investigated the prevention of drug and substance abuse among students in secondary schools in Malindi Central urban Sub-County of Kenya. The research problem emanated from the concern that many school children are being wasted due to drug and substance abuse despite efforts put in place to prevent it by various stakeholders such as the government, parents, teachers and religious leaders. This study focused on the objectives of finding out the types and sources of drugs and substances abused by secondary school students in Malindi Central Urban Sub-county, the existing measures against the vice as well as establishing the challenges in the prevention of drug and substance abuse in the study locale. The target population was 8 schools and 112 teachers. The sample size was 4 schools and 60 teachers. Schools were chosen through purposeful sampling depending on their closeness to the urban environment of Malindi Sub-County while teachers were also chosen purposively where longest serving teachers participated in the study. The information was elicited by use of interviews and focused group discussions. Quantitative data was analyzed through simple statistics while qualitative data analysis took the thematic approach. The results showed that drugs abused mainly by students were khat (miraa), bhang, cigarettes and alcohol. Such students obtained drugs and substances of abuse from their peers, community and parents. The study established that existing measures in schools within the study locale against drug and substance abuse were mainly guidance and counseling as well as police arrests. However, the study went further and sought the challenges that have made it difficult to curb drug and substance abuse which are mainly as follows: lack of cooperation from parents, the school community and constant watching of media like television sets (TVs).

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Keywords: peer pressure, drug and substance abuse, poor academic performance, indiscipline, poor role models

1. Introduction

Drug and substance abuse is a problem facing children world-wide (UNODC, 2011). Because of the seriousness of the problem, many countries have come up with measures to curb this problem. Abuse of drugs and other substances among children carries a high risk for school underachievement, delinquency, teenage pregnancy as well as depression. Children already trapped in the habit of drug and substance abuse need to be rehabilitated so that they start leading normal lives. For this to be achieved, a lot of efforts need to be put in especially at the family, school, community and national level. Various programmes as well as measures have been put in place with the hope of helping youngsters avoid the problem of drug and substance abuse for example the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Nigeria as well as the National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) in Kenya.

At the international level, the problem of drug and substance abuse is quite eminent. According to the United Nations (2005), the use of illicit drugs has increased throughout the world and the major world trend is the increasing availability of many kinds of drugs among the ever-widening spectrum of consumers. Of the major concern is that children seem to be targeted as the new market for the drug industry globally. In the United States of America, the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) has emphasized strategies of protection against drug and substance abuse through the family, school and community prevention programmes (NIDA, 2015). For instance, NIDA (2015) sponsors clubs in schools called 'Just Say No' by offering such clubs with materials like booklets and T- shirts. Such materials carry messages against drug abuse and hence members find that these clubs give them a reason and a way to refuse drug abuse (NIDA, 2015).

DARE UK (2017) and DARE US (2017) are other preventive programmes in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, respectively, which are limited to using only drug education for prevention of drug abuse. Instructors of DARE curriculum are local police officers who have undergone special training in areas such as child development, classroom management, teaching techniques and communication skills. This enables children to interact with police officers in a controlled, safe classroom environment. DARE teaches hundreds of youngsters on how to avoid the dangers of illegal drugs, violence, anti-social behaviour, bullying and peer pressure. This programme provides children with knowledge, skills, and an opportunity to explore attitudes to help them make informed decisions, and to develop safe and healthy lifestyles. Children look at the normative beliefs about alcohol and tobacco. The sessions also provide a range of learning opportunities through individual activities, teamwork, discussions, story boards, and appropriate role play. DARE UK (2017) and DARE US

(2017) are not just about drug abuse in schools but have lessons on gangs, violence prevention, internet safety, and bullying.

In Kenya, drug and substance abuse are becoming an increasing problem among the youth where every Kenyan youngster at one time or another experiments with drugs and substance abuse (Masita, 2004). This has led to bodies like the National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) which was formed on 26th March 2001. NACADA was established by the NACADA Act of 2012 (CAP121B) of the laws of Kenya (NACADA, 2014). This marked a big milestone by the government in the war against drug and substance abuse. NACADA was mandated to facilitate setting up of rehabilitation centres and to target the youth both within the school and outside as concerns prevention, reduction, and control of drug and substance abuse. NACADA has held many open forums and workshops to sensitize young people both in school and outside on the dangers of drug abuse (Kiiru, 2004; Kombo, 2005).

The existing measures against drug and substance abuse have been targeting children either in school or out of school. However, the vice still exists and causes irresponsible behaviours (DARE UK, 2017; DARE US, 2017; MoH, 2003; NACADA, 2007; NIDA, 2015), like indiscriminate sexual behaviours with prostitutes, making student drug abusers prone to being infected by venereal diseases like HIV and AIDS which would lead to death of the infected students. This would mean loss of young active individuals who would have developed the country economically. Furthermore, the core values in youth like honesty, tolerance, peace, responsibility as well as creative thinking would be lacking because of continued involvement in drug and substance abuse.

2. Statement of the Problem

The problem of drug and substance abuse is a serious problem among the youth especially in schools. This is despite the various efforts by stakeholders likes religious groups, parents, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the government to help young people live drug-free lives. Even the government through the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) has also employed guidance and counseling masters in schools to help children avoid the vice. This is because young people face a lot of challenges for example their stressful environment at school and home as well as parental and societal expectations for them to succeed. Such challenges entice young people to involve in deviant habits like drug and substance abuse. The infiltration of drugs into Kenyan schools has raised a lot of concern among all the stakeholders.

The problem of drug abuse has various adverse effects on student learning like indiscipline. Unless this menace of drug abuse is minimized, the schools would become unmanageable since indiscipline cases would become very overwhelming. Children in schools would also end up performing poorly in their studies because of this problem. It is therefore necessary to establish why these preventive measures are not successful.

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- 1) To find out the types and sources of drugs and substances abused by secondary school students in Malindi Central Urban Sub-County.
- 2) To identify the existing measures against drug abuse and substance abuse among students in secondary schools in Malindi Central Urban Sub- County?
- 3) To establish challenges in the prevention of drug and substance abuse in Malindi Central Urban Sub-county.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a survey design to investigate the challenges facing the prevention of drug and substance abuse on students in secondary schools in Malindi Central Urban Sub-County in Kenya. The total target population of the study was 8 schools and 112 teachers in Malindi Central Urban Sub-County. A sample size of 4 schools and 60 teachers was then obtained. The information was elicited by use of questionnaires and interviews. These instruments were validated by fellow lecturers at Pwani University as well as high school teachers in secondary schools in Kilifi town. Quantitative data was analysed through simple statistics that involved use of percentages and tables. These data were also presented in the form of bar graphs as well. Qualitative data was analysed through the thematic approach and the content in every theme was assessed.

4. Results and Discussions

The study sought to examine the types and sources of drugs and substances abused by secondary school students, the existing measures against drug and substance abuse as well as establish the challenges in the prevention of drug and substance abuse in Malindi Central Urban Sub-county. Following the methodology presented in the previous section, the results of the study were presented in the form of percentages, frequency tables, pie charts as well as bar graphs. The themes were presented as in the following sub sections.

4.1 Types of Drugs and Substances Students Abuse

The drugs and substances abused by students in Malindi Central Urban sub-county schools according to the responses from teachers are shown in Table 1 below. The table provides 3 columns of types of drugs, frequency and respective percentages. Teachers were free to state as many drugs as possible which were abused by students in their schools. The total number of teachers mentioning each drug was then computed and presented as frequencies and percentages as well.

Table 1: Types of Drugs and Substances Students Abuse

Type of drug	Frequency	%
Miraa	42	70.0
Bhang	50	83.3
Cigarettes	25	41.7
Alcohol	22	36.7
Heroin	1	1.7
Cocaine	1	1.7

Source: Field Data (2019)

From data presented in Table 1, the main drugs and substances students abuse in the study locale are bhang (83.3%), miraa (70.0%) cigarettes (41.7%) and alcohol (36.7%). The studies done by Cheloti and Gathumbi (2016) in Nairobi County in Kenya about curbing drug and substance abuse in secondary schools agree with the findings in this study in terms of the identity of drugs abused by students in secondary schools. Cheloti and Gathumbi (2016) found out from head teachers that the main drugs abused by students in secondary schools in Nairobi County were cigarettes as the most abused, followed by bhang, then miraa and lastly alcohol. From the data, one of the reasons why such drugs and substances are easily abused could be their easy availability. This is because the study was done in an urban setting where such drugs and substances are easily found. This also agrees with DARE, UK (2017) and DARE, US (2017) which avers that when children enter high school for the first time, they are exposed to greater availability of drugs and substances of abuse which entices them to start the habit. The above findings do not fully agree with the study done by Minishi (2017) in Eldoret town in Kenya. Minishi (2017) found out that the most abused drug in Eldoret town was alcohol and tobacco while miraa came third in the order of the most abused drugs. This is an illustration to show that the types of drugs abused also depend on the region or place because some drugs are more accessible in some areas than elsewhere.

4.2 Sources of Drugs and Substances Abused by Students

Teachers were also asked to provide the various sources where school children obtain drugs to abuse. Below is Figure 1 which is a pie chart that illustrates their responses.

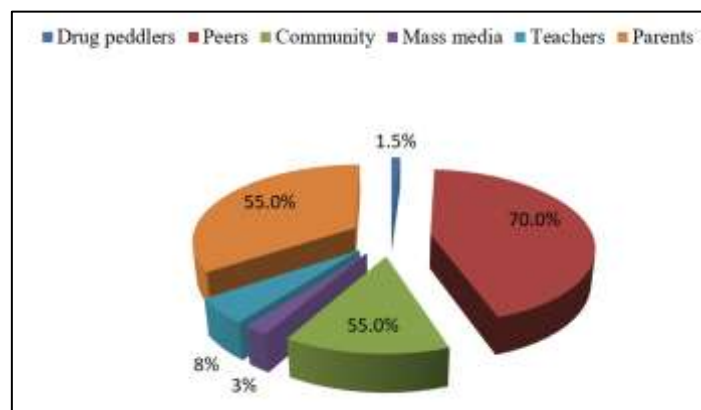


Figure 1: Sources of Drugs and Substances Abused by Students

Figure 1 above shows that the sources of drugs and substances abused by students are peer (70.0%), parents (55.0 %) and community (21.7 %). The findings in Figure 1 illustrate how the Malindi Central urban environment has a lot of drugs and substances which students easily abuse. From the Figure 1, peers were the main sources of drugs and substances abused among secondary school students in Malindi Central Urban secondary schools. Other studies that identified this source are by Muoti (2014) who conducted his study in secondary schools in Kathonzeni district in Makueni County. Cheloti and Gathumbi (2016) also identified peers as a source and also a cause of drug and substances abuse in their study of curbing drug and substance abuse in secondary schools in Nairobi County.

Still, Figure 1 above shows that parents (55.0%) and community (14.0%) were also sources of drugs which students abuse. This could be interpreted that such drugs and substances are easily available at home and in the community at large where parents and community members take drugs in front of their children and other youngsters in general. Therefore, they provide poor role models to students and other youngsters who also start the habit. This agrees with the study by Muoti (2014) who found out that children who lived with parents, relatives and guardians that possessed and abused drugs led these youngsters to also obtain and abuse similar drugs. Muoti (2014) further avers that poor role modeling from parents, teachers and community members is the main cause of drug and substance abuse. In this case when parents sell drugs or when drug peddling occurs in the community, these would provide poor role models for students to emulate.

4.3 Existing Measures in School against Drug & Substance Abuse

Teachers were also asked to give the existing measures in their schools against drug and substance abuse. Their responses were calculated into frequencies and percentages and are reflected in Figure 2 below.

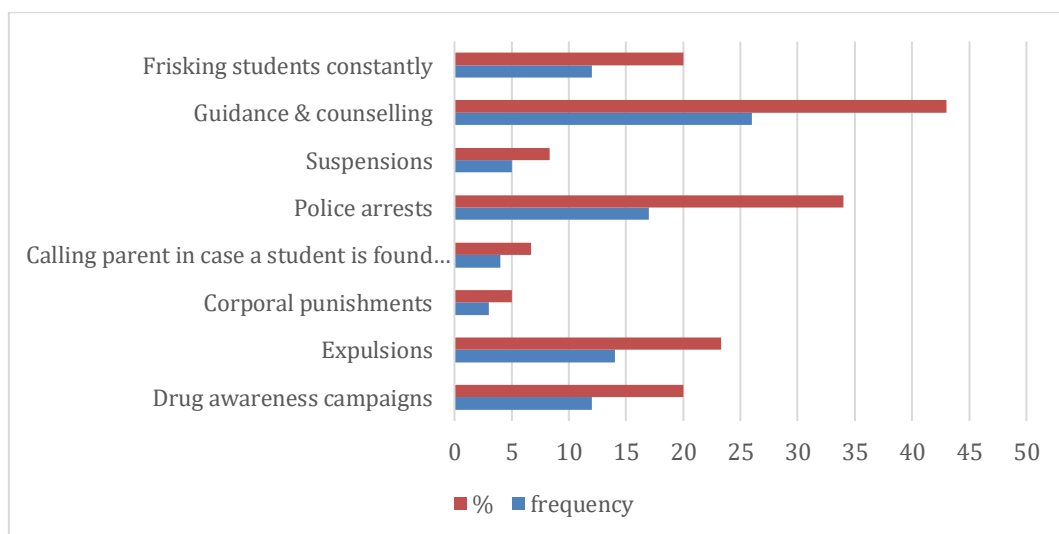


Figure 2: Existing Measures in Schools Against Drug and Substance Abuse

From the results in Figure 2 above, Guidance and counseling (43.0%), Police arrests (34.0%), Expulsions from schools (23.3%) and drug awareness campaigns (20.0%) are the main existing measures in secondary schools in Malindi Central urban sub-county. From the study, the main existing measure is Guidance and Counseling which has the highest response rate. Fisher and Wambui (2015) explain why the government of Kenya recommended the implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in Kenyan schools. According to these authors students are under a lot of stress from stakeholders like parents to perform well in national examinations as well as the stress of not getting jobs after completing or graduating from high school (Kisaka, 2012). Because of such like problems facing students, the Kenyan Government through the Teacher’s Service commission (TSC) has committed itself to solve the problem by employing guidance and counseling teachers in every school who are also the heads of those departments.

The use of measures like Police arrests (34 %) and expulsions from schools (23.3%) only creates fear when students are arrested or expelled. Furthermore, when the expelled students are admitted in a different school, the problem would not have been solved because the problem would only have been transferred from one school to another. The method of drug awareness campaigns (20 %) used could be suitable because children would be enlightened of the dangers of abusing drugs and this would make them shun the habit.

4.4 Challenges Hindering Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse

Furthermore, teachers were asked to give the challenges hindering the prevention of drug and substance abuse in Malindi Central urban Sub-county. Their responses are reflected in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Challenges Hindering Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse

Challenges	Frequency	%
Lack of cooperation from parents	58	96.7
Lack of cooperation from teachers	31	51.7
Lack of cooperation from school community	48	80
Laxity in school administration	44	73.3
Constant watching of media like T.V.	49	81.7
Easy accessibility of drugs	4	0.07

Source: Field Data, 2019.

Table 2 above shows the various challenges hindering the prevention of drug and substance abuse. Lack of cooperation from parents (96.7%), constant watching of media like television (81.7%), lack of cooperation from school community (80.0%), laxity in the school administration (73.3 %) as well as lack of cooperation from teachers (51.7%). Failure of parents to cooperate in war against drug and substance abuse was a very serious challenge facing the prevention of this vice. Some parents are aware that their children abuse drugs but do not report such children to the relevant authorities like school administration to get assistance. They wait until their children have abused drugs

to the point of getting addicted is when they report such cases to the schools administration seeking assistance. They think reporting children who abuse drugs to the school administration would tarnish the family name (Kisaka, 2012). Some parents send their children to buy drugs like cigarettes for them from shops. Some parents even abuse drugs and hence providing poor role models for their children.

Table 2 further shows that lack of cooperation from teachers is also a main challenge that hinders the prevention of drug and substance abuse. Teachers would encourage drug and substance when they act as poor role models to students where they abuse drugs and substances openly like smoking in front of students (Muoti, 2014). The community could also provide poor role models when they condone drug and substance abuse (Muoti, 2014). This is where community members abuse drugs and substances openly and this is poor role modeling to the students. It is from the community that drug peddlers hide in order to supply students with drugs and substances of abuse. Constant watching of media like television sets which tend to show abuse of drugs and substances as not a bad habit also provides poor role models to children in schools. Innocents would begin to emulate the habit of abusing drugs and substances as an acceptable habit. Laxity in the school administration occurs in cases where children abuse drugs in front of teachers, but no action was done. Children are not frisked nor their dormitories checked to make sure that such areas are free from drugs and substances of abuse.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that though there is existence of measures for curbing drug and substance abuse in secondary schools in Malindi Central Urban Sub-County, these efforts have been hindered by challenges which are mainly laxity in the school administration, constant watching of mass media especially television sets as well as lack of cooperation from parents and the community members around the school. This has led to the persistence in abusing drugs and substances like miraa, bhang, cigarettes and alcohol. Students acquire these drugs and substances from peers, parents and the community members around the school. The study identified existing measures in schools against drugs and substance abuse in the study locale like guidance and counseling, police arrests, expulsions from school as well as drug awareness campaigns. Despite such measures the problem of drug and substance abuse still persists and this made it very necessary for this study to be carried out.

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