



## TO FIND OUT CHALLENGES FACING PREVENTION EDUCATION PROGRAMMES TARGETING MANAGEMENT OF ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN NANDI CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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### Abstract:

Despite the overwhelming intervention strategies by concerned stakeholders in the education sector, curbing drug and substance abuse, especially among the youth, has not been achievable. The number of schools going youth being sucked into drug abuse is escalating day by day, leading into a crisis. The purpose of this study was to find out the challenges facing prevention education programmes targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya. The research was anchored on Social Learning Theory, associated with Bandura (1977). The target population for this study consisted of all standard eight pupils and guidance and counseling teachers in all 176 primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County. Teachers who oversaw counseling and guidance were purposefully chosen. Pupils were randomly chosen from the sampled schools to respond to a questionnaire. Critical case sampling was utilized to get one pupil from the 18 schools chosen earlier to participate in a focus group discussion. The study used the questionnaire, interview schedule, and focus group discussion guide in data collection. A Cronbach's coefficient Alpha was computed to determine how items correlated amongst themselves, and a reliability coefficient of 0.70 was considered acceptable for internal consistency levels.

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Data from interviews and focus group discussions were thematically analyzed. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study findings revealed that there are challenges facing prevention education programmes targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya (mean = 3.564, standard deviation = 1.426). There is a need for a remedy to challenges facing prevention education programmes targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya (mean = 3.518, standard deviation = 1.342). The study concluded that challenges facing prevention education programs include financial constraints, insufficient collaboration with the local community, stigma associated with discussing substance abuse, and a lack of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Tailored remedies are needed to address these challenges. A holistic, collaborative, and continuously evolving approach is necessary to effectively manage alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in the Nandi Central sub-county.

**Keywords:** challenges, prevention education programmes, alcohol and substance abuse

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The word drug abuse has been interpreted in a variety of ways by academics and medical professionals. Drug abuse is defined by Liu, Guo, & Wang (2023) as the frequent use of a substance that harms the user physically or mentally or compromises social functioning. Despite what the word would suggest, it is the user who abuses the substance, not the drug itself. According to Goldstein & Volkow (2002), drug abuse is further defined as a pattern of drug use that impairs one's capacity to carry out duties at home, work, or school. The World Health Organisation (2006) further defined drug misuse as a condition of recurrent or chronic intoxication caused by the frequent use of a substance (natural or synthetic), which is harmful to the person and society.

According to the criteria given above, drug abuse can relate to the improper use of prescription medications or to the use of any substance that affects mood or state of consciousness. Additionally, it refers to the misuse of medications in a way or quantity that is at odds with culturally specific medical or societal norms. These patterns cover every facet of young people's drug use, including how much, how frequently, what kind of drugs they take, and under what conditions. Drug abuse is described as the incorrect use of drugs to the point that the person or society may suffer negative effects as a result. A drug is any chemical substance that, when ingested into the body, has the potential to alter one or more bodily processes, according to the National Agency for the Campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA, 2020). It defines drugs as those compounds that, when injected, swallowed, or breathed into the body system, have the power to modify feelings, mood, perception, and other mental states, hence influencing behaviour.

There is a global rise in drug and substance usage among many social groups. According to the World Drug Report (UNDCP, 2023), 5.3% of 15- to 16-year-olds globally in 2021 (13.5 million people) reported using cannabis in the previous 12 months. Drug usage can have long-term harmful repercussions since the teenage brain is still maturing. Early drug usage can cause dependency to develop more quickly than it does in adults and can also cause additional issues as adults. Cannabis usage among 15- to 16-year-olds varies by location, from less than 3% in Asia to over 17% in Oceania. However, in most areas, teenage drug use is more prevalent than it is among the entire population of people aged 15 to 64. Only in Africa, where the population is young, and in the Americas, where usage among teenagers was formerly greater than in other regions, was a similar prevalence in the two age groups seen.

Drug and substance abuse among primary school learners in Kenya is a growing concern. In a study by NACADA (2020), pupils were also asked to list any drugs or other addictive substances they had consumed within the previous 30 days. The findings showed that 16.9% of primary school students currently used at least one drug or substance of abuse, 7.2% currently used prescription drugs, 3.2% currently used tobacco, 2.6% currently drank alcohol, 2.3% currently used miraa/muguka, 1.2% currently used inhalants, and 1.2% currently used heroin. Less than 1% of students in elementary schools currently use cocaine, marijuana, or both. The survey also showed that drugs and substance abuse were significantly associated with class repetition and a decline in academic performance. The data also shows that pupils who use at least one drug or substance of abuse are 18 per cent more likely to repeat a class. This study also found that substance abuse was associated with a 6.4 per cent decline in academic performance.

Preventive education programs play a crucial role in the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school learners. Early intervention and education are essential for addressing the issue before it becomes more severe in later life. Authors like Botvin & Griffin, (2007) and Botvin & Botvin, (1992) posit that preventive education programs can be effective by: raising awareness about the risks associated with alcohol and substance abuse among primary school learners; equipping children with essential life skills, such as decision-making, communication, coping mechanisms, and problem-solving; building resilience in children; encouraging positive and healthy peer relationships which can be instrumental in reducing the risk of alcohol and substance abuse; involving parents and the wider community to ensure consistent messaging at home and school on the importance of abstaining from alcohol and drugs; identify children who may be at higher risk of developing substance abuse problems; and creating a positive school environment that promotes health, well-being, and pro-social behaviors, which can reduce the likelihood of substance abuse. It is thus apparent that preventive education programs are vital in managing alcohol and substance abuse among school learners. By fostering awareness, resilience, and healthy coping mechanisms, these programs contribute to a safer and more supportive learning environment, helping children make informed decisions that promote their overall well-being.

Kenya's Basic Education Act 2013, section 4, provides for values and principles, which include protecting children against all forms of discrimination and abuse and promoting values and skills for nation-building. Consequently, the Kenyan government, along with non-governmental organizations and educational institutions, has been working to address drug and substance abuse issues among primary school learners through various initiatives. The National Guidelines for Alcohol and Substance Use Prevention and Management in Basic Education Institutions in Kenya (2021) have proposed several Preventive Education Programs that learning institutions may use to address drug and substance abuse among learners in the basic education sector. The programmes should: raise awareness about the dangers of drug and substance abuse; educate children about the risks and consequences, emphasizing the importance of making healthy choices; engage parents and caregiver in combating drug abuse through them understanding their role in preventing drug abuse among their children; provide counseling services to students struggling with drug and substance abuse issues; involve various stakeholders in addressing drug and substance abuse issues collectively; implement policies and legislation aimed at regulating the sale and distribution of drugs and substances to protect young learners; enforce strict disciplinary measures to deter drug and substance abuse among students; and facilitate access to rehabilitation and treatment centers for those who have become drug dependent. The implementation status of these measures, however, remains unknown.

Although there have been studies on the status, prevalence and prevention of drugs and substances of abuse and their association with risk factors among primary school pupils (Maithya, 2009; Chesang, 2013), these studies have targeted older cohorts and more so those in high schools, colleges and universities. As a result, there has been limited evidence on challenges facing prevention education programmes targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Drug and substance abuse among primary school learners in Kenya is a growing concern. Drugs and substances, including alcohol, bang and tobacco, are often readily available in some communities, making it easier for young children to access them, among other reasons. This does not bode well for future generations, as the lifetime prevalence of alcohol dependence is nearly 40% in those who reported first drinking alcohol before age 14. Many young people are getting pushed into a downward cycle of hopelessness by addiction, which can sometimes be fatal. A report appearing on TV, K24 channel on 13th July 2014, revealed that a 16-year-old male student in a school in Nyeri County died after drinking alcohol in a bar. Additionally, another story by the Nation Media team in the Daily Nation Newspaper on July 15th 2014, indicated that two students were among brew victims who died after consuming adulterated spirits in Eldoret town. This means

that drug and substance abuse among students in Kenya has become a serious health problem.

Numerous studies on school-based drug use prevention schemes from Western nations have been published. The effectiveness of intervention activities is supported by recorded scientific data in these nations. However, the success of these initiatives in the Kenyan context has seldom been studied or reviewed. Very little research has reported on the challenges facing prevention education programmes. In view of this background, the researcher was motivated to examine the challenges facing prevention education programmes targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya.

### **1.3 Research Objective**

To find out the challenges facing prevention education programmes targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya.

### **1.4 Research Hypothesis of the Study**

There are significant challenges facing prevention education programs targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Social Learning Theory**

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory is a psychological theory that emphasizes the role of social interactions, observational learning, and cognitive processes in shaping behaviour. This theory was first introduced by Bandura in the 1960s and further developed in subsequent years, including his work in 1986. Self-efficacy is a central concept in Bandura's theory. It refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a specific behaviour or task. Higher self-efficacy is associated with greater motivation, effort, persistence, and positive outcomes. Self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by past experiences, observational learning, and social persuasion. Bandura's theory further posits that individuals can learn behaviours by observing others. This process is known as observational learning or modelling. People can acquire new skills, attitudes, and behaviours through watching and imitating the actions of others. In addition, Bandura posits that people can learn not only from direct observation but also from symbolic representations, such as media, literature, and stories. This extends the scope of observational learning to situations beyond immediate personal interactions. Finally, the theory affirms that individuals are more likely to imitate behaviours of role models with whom they identify or share similarities. Models who are competent, attractive, and socially rewarded are particularly influential.

The theory underpins the challenges faced by adolescents when navigating peer pressure and making choices about drug use. Aspects of social competency-building programmes which align well with this theory include: providing opportunities for adolescents to witness positive role models who are making healthy choices and avoiding substance use; designing activities that help adolescents develop confidence in their ability to resist peer pressure and make informed decisions about drug use.

## **2.2 Challenges Facing Prevention Education Programmes Targeting Management of Alcohol and Substance Abuse among Primary School Pupils**

Prevention education programs targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils face several challenges. These challenges, according to Kimilu (2011), can range from issues related to community, family, school, individual and peer/media-based factors.

### **2.2.1 Community-based Challenges**

Community disorganization can have a significant impact on the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. Community disorganization refers to the breakdown of social structures and norms that can lead to various issues, including substance abuse. Strong social networks play a role in preventing substance abuse by providing support, role models, and positive influences. In disorganized communities, weak social networks can leave children more susceptible to negative peer pressure. (Masese, Nasongo, & Ngesu, 2012). In addition, in communities with disorganized law enforcement, there may be fewer consequences for selling and using substances. This lack of enforcement can make it easier for children to access and experiment with drugs and alcohol.

The perceived availability of drugs can play a significant role in the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. This perception refers to the belief that drugs are easily accessible within the community or social circles. This leads to the normalization of substance use. If children perceive that drugs are readily available, they may view substance use as a common and acceptable behaviour, leading to experimentation (Otingi, 2012).

A study by Pere & Yatich (2017) found that prevention education programmes targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse can be hindered by community members who may view substance abuse as a sensitive and potentially stigmatizing topic. They might be apprehensive about introducing such content to young children, fearing it could have unintended negative consequences. In addition, prevention programs must consider the cultural and socioeconomic diversity of the student population. One-size-fits-all approaches might not be effective, as different communities have unique attitudes and challenges related to substance abuse. Planning prevention for a multi-ethnic society like Kenya may therefore be challenging.

### **2.2.2 School-based Challenges**

Academic struggles and the stress associated with them can increase the risk of engaging in risky behaviors like substance abuse. A study by Bugbee, Beck, Fryer and Arria (2019) found that substance use is prevalent and is associated with academic performance among adolescents. They found that failure can erode a child's self-esteem and self-worth, making them more susceptible to seeking validation through unhealthy behaviors like substance abuse. In addition, children who are struggling academically might turn to substances as a way to cope with the stress, anxiety, and frustration they experience. Also, academic failure can lead to feelings of isolation, making children more vulnerable to negative peer influences that might promote substance use.

Effective prevention programs require educators who are trained to address the topic with sensitivity and accuracy. Finding educators with the right training and skills can be difficult. The few who are responsible for delivering prevention education might experience burnout due to the sensitivity of the topic, a high number of cases or a lack of ongoing support (Otingi, 2012). Otingi further posits that schools often have limited resources for implementing prevention programs, including funding for materials, training, and ongoing support. NACADA (2021) established that it is challenging to find evidence-based educational content suitable for primary school pupils.

NACADA further posits that designing age-appropriate curriculum content is crucial. Younger primary school pupils may not fully understand the complexities of substance abuse, which could lead to confusion or anxiety if the material is presented too maturely.

### **2.2.3 Family-based Challenges**

Parental attitudes favorable to drug use can serve as a motivator for alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils (Nawi et al., 2021). Children often look to their parents as role models and sources of guidance, and if parents convey permissive or positive views about drug use, it can significantly influence a child's attitudes and behaviors. Positive parental attitudes can lead children to underestimate the risks and consequences of substance abuse, making them more likely to engage in risky behaviors. Children may lack proper guidance and boundaries if parents are permissive about substance use. This can leave them vulnerable to peer pressure and external influences.

Family plays a crucial role in a child's development, and when there is a lack of effective family management, children may be more susceptible to engaging in risky behaviors like substance abuse. According to Kumpfer & Magalhães (2018), poor family management can impact substance abuse among primary school pupils in a number of ways; it leads to a lack of routine, rules, and boundaries, creating an environment where children have more opportunities to experiment with substances; Insufficient parental involvement can result in children feeling neglected, which may lead them to seek validation and belonging through peer groups that might engage in substance abuse; If parents display poor coping skills or substance abuse, children are more likely to imitate

these behaviours; and might lead to emotional neglect, making children more vulnerable to seeking solace in substances as a way to cope with their emotions.

In addition, Otingi (2012) aver that some parents and community members might resist the inclusion of substance abuse prevention in primary school education, believing it is too early to discuss such matters with children.

#### **2.2.4 Individual-based Challenges**

Early initiation of antisocial behavior can be a motivator for alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. Antisocial behaviors, such as aggression, defiance, and delinquency, can contribute to a range of negative outcomes, including an increased risk of engaging in substance abuse (Kimilu, 2011). This arises due to the following facts as enumerated by Kimilu: engaging in antisocial behaviour at a young age can expose children to multiple risk factors, increasing their vulnerability to substance abuse; children displaying antisocial behaviours may be drawn to peer groups that also engage in such behaviours, creating an environment where substance abuse is normalized; and engaging in antisocial behaviours can reinforce a sense of deviance, making children more likely to experiment with other risky behaviours like substance abuse.

Engaging primary school children in drug education sessions can be a challenge due to their shorter attention spans and varying levels of cognitive development (UNODC, 2002). By combining creative teaching methods, interactive activities, and a supportive environment, one can effectively deliver drug education that captures one's attention and leaves a lasting impact. Getting people able to incorporate hands-on activities that involve movement, group work, and sensory experiences during drug prevention programmes can be a challenge.

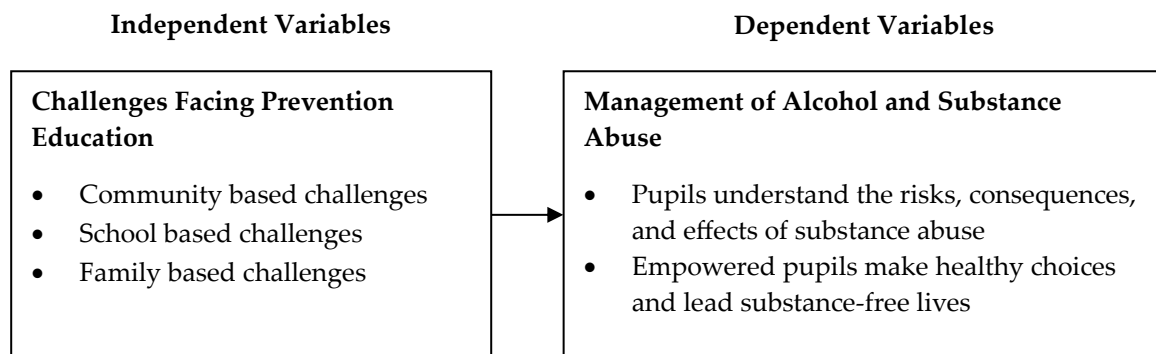
#### **2.2.5 Peer and Media-based challenges**

Children often learn from observing others. If they see peers getting positive attention or perceived benefits from substance use, they might be motivated to try it themselves. Even with effective prevention education, children may still face peer pressure and media influences that encourage experimentation with substances. Peer drug use can serve as a motivator for alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. Peer pressure and the desire to fit in with their peers can influence children's behaviors and decisions, including experimenting with drugs and alcohol (UNODC, 2002).

Children are exposed to various forms of media, including TV shows, movies, music videos, advertisements, and social media content, which can shape their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. Media often portrays substance use in a glamorous or positive light, which can normalize these behaviours and lead children to believe that they are acceptable or even desirable (Barati et al., 2022).



## 2.3 Conceptual Framework



## 3. Materials and Methods

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-method approach in sourcing data from the respondents. The key assumption of this approach was that both qualitative and quantitative data provided different types of information, often comprehensive views of respondents qualitatively and scores on questionnaires quantitatively. Together, they yielded results that should be the same but richer.

### 3.2 Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of all standard eight pupils and guidance and counseling teachers in all 176 primary schools in Nandi Central Sub-County. Teachers who oversaw counseling and guidance were purposefully chosen. Pupils were randomly chosen from the sampled schools to respond to a questionnaire. Critical case sampling was utilized to get one pupil from the 18 schools chosen earlier to participate in a focus group discussion.

### 3.3 Methods of Data Collection

The study used the questionnaire, interview schedule, and focus group discussion guide in data collection.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Challenges Facing Prevention Education Programmes Targeting Management of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Among Primary School Pupils

The study first sought to describe challenges facing prevention education programmes targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Nandi Central sub-county, Kenya. Table 4.6 presents the study results.

**Table 4.6:** Challenges Facing Prevention Education Programmes Targeting Management of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Among Primary School Pupils

Statements		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Sd
Limited financial resources allocated to prevention education programs create challenges in implementing comprehensive initiatives to address alcohol and substance use	F	142	65	9	53	20	3.88	1.36
	%	49.1	22.5	3.1	18.3	6.9		
The shortage of trained personnel, including teachers and counselors, hinders the effective delivery and implementation of prevention education programs focused on alcohol and substance abuse.	F	55	24	6	152	52	2.57	1.38
	%	19.0	8.3	2.1	52.6	18.0		
Insufficient collaboration and engagement with the local community pose challenges in creating a supportive environment for the success of prevention education programs addressing alcohol and substance abuse	F	138	80	11	11	49	3.85	1.47
	%	47.8	27.7	3.8	3.8	17.0		
Stigma associated with discussing alcohol and substance abuse, coupled with misconceptions about the prevalence and severity of the issue, creates barriers in effectively communicating prevention messages to primary school pupils.	F	124	85	11	15	54	3.72	1.51
	%	42.9	29.4	3.8	5.2	18.7		
The absence of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for prevention education programs makes it challenging to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement	F	130	80	2	48	29	3.80	1.41
	%	45.0	27.7	0.7	16.6	10.0		
<b>Total number of respondents (n=368)</b>								

Table 4.6 shows that of the respondents, 207(71.6%) agreed that Limited financial resources allocated to prevention education programs create challenges in implementing comprehensive initiatives to address alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. On the contrary, 73(25.2%) disagreed that Limited financial resources allocated to prevention education programs create challenges in implementing comprehensive initiatives to address alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation, that the respondents agreed with the statement that Limited financial resources allocated to prevention education programs create challenges in implementing comprehensive initiatives to address alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils (mean = 3.88, standard deviation = 1.36).

From the interviews, the guidance and counselling teacher 5 noted:

*"The challenges facing prevention education programs targeting the management of alcohol and substance abuse among pupils encompass community-based factors such as limited access to support services, family-based issues such as lack of parental involvement or substance abuse within the family, school-based challenges like inadequate resources for*

*prevention efforts, individual-based factors such as peer pressure and self-esteem issues, and media-based influences promoting substance use."*

Also, 79(27.3%) of the participants agreed that the shortage of trained personnel, including teachers and counselors, hinders the effective delivery and implementation of prevention education programs focused on alcohol and substance abuse. On the contrary, the majority of the respondents, 204(70.6%), disagreed that the shortage of trained personnel, including teachers and counselors, hinders the effective delivery and implementation of prevention education programs focused on alcohol and substance abuse. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation, that the respondents disagreed with the statement that the shortage of trained personnel, including teachers and counselors, hinders the effective delivery and implementation of prevention education programs focused on alcohol and substance abuse (mean = 2.57, standard deviation = 1.38).

Focus Group 7 said that:

*"Once, my friends wanted to try vaping, but I knew it wasn't something I wanted to do. I remembered my goals to stay healthy and focused on my studies, so I politely declined and suggested we do something else together instead."*

Further, the majority, 218(75.5%) of the respondents, agreed that Insufficient collaboration and engagement with the local community pose challenges in creating a supportive environment for the success of prevention education programs addressing alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. On the contrary, 60(20.8%) of the respondents disagreed that Insufficient collaboration and engagement with the local community pose challenges in creating a supportive environment for the success of prevention education programs addressing alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation, that the respondents agreed with the statement that Insufficient collaboration and engagement with the local community pose challenges in creating a supportive environment for the success of prevention education programs addressing alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils (mean = 3.85, standard deviation = 1.47).

Focus group 8 said that:

*"Our thoughts and beliefs can strongly influence whether we choose to use substances or not. If we believe that using substances is cool or makes us fit in with our peers, we might be more likely to try them. On the other hand, if we believe that substances can harm our health or interfere with our goals, we're more likely to avoid them."*

From the interviews, the guidance and counselling teacher 2 emphasized:

*“The importance of addressing the identified challenges through a comprehensive approach involving collaboration with community stakeholders, enhancing family involvement and support networks, allocating resources for school-based prevention initiatives, providing targeted interventions to address individual risk factors, and promoting media literacy and responsible media messaging to counteract negative influences on substance use among pupils.”*

Also, 209(72.3%) of the participants agreed, and 69(23.9 %) disagreed that Stigma associated with discussing alcohol and substance abuse, coupled with misconceptions about the prevalence and severity of the issue, creates barriers to effectively communicating prevention messages to primary school pupils. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation, that the respondents agreed with the statement that stigma associated with discussing alcohol and substance abuse, coupled with misconceptions about the prevalence and severity of the issue, creates barriers to effectively communicating prevention messages to primary school pupils (mean = 3.72, standard deviation = 1.51).

It was further noted that 210(72.7%) of the participants agreed and 77(26.6%) disagreed that the absence of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for prevention education programs makes it challenging to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement in managing alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation, that the respondents agreed with the statement that the absence of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for prevention education programs makes it challenging to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement in managing alcohol and substance abuse among primary school pupils. (mean = 3.80, standard deviation = 1.41).

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study recognized the stigma associated with discussing substance abuse and highlighted the absence of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as hindrances. These challenges underscore the complexity of addressing substance abuse among primary school pupils, emphasizing the need for tailored remedies.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

Addressing challenges in prevention education programs. Alleviate resource constraints by allocating additional funding to prevention education programs. Provide ongoing professional development and training opportunities for teachers and counselors to overcome the shortage of trained personnel.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this study. The authors affirm that they have no financial, professional, or personal interests that could be perceived to have influenced the outcomes of this research. This includes, but is not limited to, financial relationships with any organizations or entities involved in the subject of the study, or any other external pressures that might impact the objectivity or integrity of the research.

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