Drug and Substance Abuse among the Youth in the Informal Settlements within Nairobi

By

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General Introduction;

• Drug/substance abuse is becoming an increasing problem in Kenya. A number of studies carried out in the country shows that almost every youngster at one time or another experiments with drugs and substance especially bhang, alcohol or cigarettes.

• The marked and felt velocity is continually highlighted in the dailies since the major cause of concern is that a significant proportion of these young people eventually get addicted posing a threat to their own health and safety, while creating difficulties for their families and the public at large.
While globalization has opened opportunities for individuals and communities to increase wealth and spending, it has also widened access to previously restricted products across national boundaries including illicit drugs.
Objectives

- The objectives of the study were to explore the meaning of drug/substance abuse,
- To find out the major causes and effects of drug abuse,
- To identify types of drugs and substances abused,
- To find out the strategies to use to help our youth come out from this menace.
Statement of the problem

• Drugs/substance abuse among the youth in various informal settlements (slums) has become of a particular concern.

• The research gap; This study seeks to explore drug/substance abuse in the stated group. The study was based in Food for the Hungry Kenya during my internship, a project in place pertaining and entailing youth events on drug/substance abuse and HIV and AIDS prevention hence youth sensitization.
Significance of the study;

• This study could help both NACADA as the main body, the government among others to better understand the current situation and accordingly make changes to address the factors that contribute to drug/substance abuse among our youth.

• This would help them take precautions towards this current menace and get rid of it starting from the initiators of the youth mostly out of school to drug/substance abuse, through the youth themselves especially those who are openly engaged to this kind of illegal activity.
Basic Assumptions of the Study;

• As the art of knowledge gained through research, some of the explanations have been discounted or proved false. I believe as other proponent do that, change is possibly only through personal motivations and efforts.
Methodology;

• The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods which aimed at collecting data from the respondents featured in the study, as stated by various authors, i.e. Mugenda, O and A. Mugenda, (2003).

• Data collection involved primary way of collecting data, which included various research tools and instruments such as questionnaires, interview guides, etc, where as secondary data was through books, journals, and articles among other materials.
The overall aim of the study was to gain insight into the current trend of drug/substance abuse among the target group and to analyze strategies used to address the problem.
Target population, Sample Size and Sampling Procedures;

• The population of interest in this study comprised of youth both in and out of school within the following slums; Huruma, Mathare Area(area 10, and area 3), Kawangware, Dandora and outskirts of Nairobi like Njiru.

• Out of 150 youth from the youth groups registered in the slums visited, I sampled out a sample size of 90 youth.

• The sampling procedures employed were both probabilistic and non-probabilistic. In addition, I conducted interviews with principals of the schools I visited, the students and youth leaders from various groups.
Theoretical Framework

• This study was guided by social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura (1986), where by behavior is determined by the persons thought processes, the environment and behavior itself, where in this case, were the youth within the informal settlements.

• This means that individuals determine their own behavior while being influenced by the environmental factors and their own behavior. For example, youth who believe that taking a substance like cigarettes, alcohol etc, will make them more attractive, strong, recognized and even more interesting to be around with.
The figure below shows how perceptions of drugs/substances have an effect on the attitude whether to abuse or not.
Conceptual framework;

- **Independent variables**
  - Perception on drug/
    substance abuse
  - Substance abuse
    abuse behavior,
  - Positive Attitude

- **Intervening variables**
  - Social factors e.g.
    - Peer pressure,
    - Availability of drugs etc

- **Cultural factors**
  - Beliefs
  - Culture

- **Environmental factors**
  - Nature & Nurture
  - Economic factors business Fraternity.
  - Political factors
    Weak legal prosecutory.

- **Dependent variables**
  - Drug
  - Use
  - Non
Causes of Drug/Substance Abuse as Reported by the Youths

• The following are the factors that were revealed by the youth during the study as the major causes of drug/substance abuse rendering them to become the current most vulnerable group.

• Cultural factors, social factors, economic factors, political factors, environmental factors among others.
According to these results, most respondents, 83.33% strongly believed that cultural factors influences youth into drug/substance abuse and therefore a major area of concern.

This could be attributed to the fact that youths especially those out of school are moving away from dependence and the protective confines of the family towards relative independence and social productivity, and hence their friends through the culture of feeling highly, influences them negatively into drug/substance abuse.
Fig 3.1 (Cultural factors);

- Strongly Agree: 83%
- Agree: 13.33%
- Neutral: 3.33%
- Disagree: 0.00%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%
Figure 3.2 (Social factors)
• The youth felt social factors are also causes of youths engaging in drug/substance abuse.

• For instance, most youth out of school said they dropped from school at an early age in order to look for money that well cater for the whole family and that their little ones go to school while them they don’t as told by their parents to do, and since they fear being disowned, they obey.

• This could also be included in the cultural factors as it’s a way of life among these young people.
Figure 3.3 - economic factors.
• From the above views, 75.55% of the youth who were 68 out of 90 strongly believed and agreed that the economic factors facing the society today contributes to the problem, especially the youth mostly in and out of school. The reason is, due to the problems facing the slum dwellers like lack of capital and better ways to earn a living due to no employment leads them to indulge in this menace also as a way of life and earning a living.

• On the other hand 17.77% just agreed economic factors influences them, 6.66% were neutral where as no number disagreed nor strongly disagreed. This shows that economic factors are seen as also mostly the cause of the youth’s ways of life due to economic retardation in our country, unemployment to mention a few.
Figure 3.4 - Political factors

- Strongly Agree: 46.66%
- Agree: 22.22%
- Neutral: 5.55%
- Disagree: 25.55%
- Strongly Disagree: 0.02%
• This indicates 46.6% of the youth 42 out of 90 was the highest number of youth who believed that drug/substance abuse among the youth is influenced by political factors, how? for lack of transparency among our guiders in the society welfare, culture of impunity, as well as weak legal prosecutory where by the youth felt that this weakens the battle against this menace. They also believed that poor policies in place has led to the youth in not minding what’s going around them hence engages in this stark reality.
Figure 3.5 (Environmental factors);
The views on environmental factors indicated that, 58.8% of the youth strongly agreed they do cause abuse of drugs. How?, living in slums watching their elders engaging in drugs, and substances like alcohol leads them to indulging in drug/substance abuse. Then, 31% just agreed these factors were causes, where as 10% were neutral.
• Hence, we can see that the factors mentioned above were the causes of drug and substance among the youth though we need to dig deep to see whether there could be other causes of which I believe could be there if we unite and pursue the whole agenda together.
Effects of Drug/Substances Abuse as reported by the youth;

• There were also effects of drug and substance abuse as the youth revealed to be; health complications, family break-ups, poor performance in schools as well as contributor of social evils in the community, increased school dropouts, diseases like cancer, HIV and AIDs, sexual transmitted diseases due to the influence of the drugs and substances they use, for instance alcohol, injecting drugs among others.

• Other effects included increase in crime rate, mental disability and disorders, social evils like immoral decadency such as rape which leads to unwanted pregnancies among young girls.

• Increase in poverty due to financial break down and economic retardation, loss of focus in life full of regrets, indiscipline, loss of jobs for those working, low self esteem, lack of development both physical and spiritual, insecurity, violence, hostility and confusion in everything the victim of drug abuse does.
The Prevalence of drugs/substance among the youth

• The empirical study showed that, drug/substance abuse is widespread among the youth with 16.6% saying they have abused drugs/substances.

• However 12.22% of the youth interviewed said that, they have friends who are in drug abuse and that they were trying to come out of the bondage. The findings in general revealed that more male abuse drugs/substances than female, i.e. (57%) males and (43%) females as the percentage indicated for both youth in and out of school.

• This study also established that the proportion of drug/substance abusers increases with age from 20 years and above. The youth out of school said that they had friends who had indulged in drugs and have stopped taking them. However, all the participants I encountered in my study revealed that most drug/substance abusers live in urban slums rather than rural areas, though still from the references, drug/substance abuse is not dependent on area of residence and no significant relationship could exist between the two variables.
Conclusion

• The current study has revealed that youth use all types of drugs/substances with those injecting themselves and are highly predisposed to diseases like HIV & AIDS and Hepatitis B and C.

• The study showed that drug/substance abuse is a threat to the general public as well as to the youth still in school and those specifically out of school.

• It is therefore evident that drug/substance abuse among the youth must be fought in all ways so as to bring down drug/substance related problems at all levels in the society.
• In Kenya, this menace has threatened the lives among young people aged between 11 and 29 years, as the group I interacted with and the rate is estimated to be between 44 and 56% among youth mostly who are still students in secondary schools and those in universities, (Gatonye, Daily Nation November 29, 2009).

• This shows that drugs/substance abuse is a reality. The implication is that with this threat hanging over it, the future of the society is uncertain and therefore something must be done urgently to address the issue. Change can only be attained if all the parties concerned have seen its need and have made an informed decision to effect it.
• Eradication of drug/substance abuse is therefore the collective responsibility of all the stakeholders. Moreover as clearly indicated in (NACADA, 2006:35) reports, young people at an early stage of drug taking could benefit from the provision of early prevention / intervention services to help them stop.
• However, the efforts and potentials recognized from both government and non-governmental organizations actively working against drug/substance abuse herald hope and a brighter future against the abuse phenomenon.
• Thus, drug/substance abuse among the youth is common and spells danger not only to the youth who abuse the drugs but also to the well being of society and whole the nation at large.
Drug / substance abuse is determined by the existence of risk and protective factors. The risk factors include; lack of family and school role models, peer pressure, poor school performance, conflicts between the young people and their parents, easy availability of drugs and substances, poor parenting seen as the most and major problem as the youth reported, conflict between school system and family values among others.
• However the tendency to abuse drugs and substances is higher in male than in female. The greatest proportion of drug abusers is aged between 16-29 years and the least between 11-16 years where by youth in schools are most involved.

• From the findings still, drug/substance abuse is strongly dependent on age of respondents, ease of availability and having family members who abuse drugs.
Overall, commonly abused drugs / substances are alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and khat. The reason for using these drugs is that they are easy to access and almost all except cocaine and heroine are locally produced.

Sources of drugs are mostly the low economic areas such as slums, small shops and public transport through touts and drivers. These drugs / substances are taken in secret and ‘safe’ places away from the authority. Youth both in and out of school expressed knowledge on dangers of drug/substance abuse though they still abused drugs because they believed it as a way of life.
Strategies to **prevent and control** drug/substance abuse could include the following;

- guidance and counseling among these youth which is highly required,
- creating awareness,
- forming forums and anti-drug campaigns,
- imposing law enforcements on drug/substances,
- empowering youth to come up with self help youth groups and also,
- enforce bans on misleading slogans or adverts on drugs/substances among others.
These proposed ways to **curb and control** drug/substance abuse imply that there is need for teamwork by all stakeholders in addressing the issue, which has become a stark problem in reality in our country Kenya.
• However, there are many challenges facing the society as a whole in dealing with drug/substance abuse issues especially among the youth in and out of school.

• This is an indication that there is an urgent need to address these challenges and find a solution to the problem before it is too late, so as to save our youth from self destruction.
• Hence, the synthesis of the findings evidently showed that the youth especially those who live in the slums are the most affected by the issue of concern caused by initiators through the influence of social dilemma.

• The age bracket shows how seriously the issue needs to be looked at and deliberated on because the initiators of drug/substance abuse thrive in this which on the other hand leads to youth destruction.
Recommendations;

• Based upon the literature findings and the empirical research, various recommendations on the current trend of drug/substance abuse among school going youth and those who have cleared the secondary school in selected slum areas within Nairobi are proposed to help address this issue.

• This acknowledges the initiatives on the ground both done by the government and non-government organizations ranging from policy making, implementation, enactment and enforcement of laws, signatory with other nations on drug abuse, advocacy by lobbying on this issue, awareness campaigns, rehabilitation and training.
Suggestions for further Research;

- Drawing from the findings of the study and building on existing research, I would suggest that, more studies be carried out to address the following areas;

- There should be strategies imposed for human action, in the church, in the community and in the state for easy tracking on the culprits involved in this menace. More investigations are also needed on the techniques used to address drug/substance abuse among youth both in and out of school in Nairobi slums and other parts in this country where this problem is persistent. The reasons to this are because the methods used to address the issue/ problem may differ according to different circumstances.

- Although the study has recommended a uniform policy making for drug/substance abusers and anyone involved in drug deals, to address this issue, we need more information on what should be in a general policy to make it effective and efficient.
• All the commonly used drugs/substances noted in this study should be investigated to determine the extent and frequency of their use among the youth and why.
• As a way of action plan, the current research should be implemented by working with social leaders to bring about social transformation for all.
• In addition, further research is needed to ascertain the relationship between the policies and drug/substance abuse among youth both in and out of school where it would make it easier to plan and implement the policy.
• Implications of the contribution to the service of everyone on the basis of situational analysis, field research, contribution to knowledge and theories of this problem should be considered.

• Finally, further research on factors influencing the effectiveness of the information given on drugs/substance abuse among the youth in and out of school could also be necessary.
Finally, as our way forward towards this issue, I would suggest further research on factors influencing the effectiveness of the information given on drugs/substance abuse among the youth in the selected informal settlements as carried in Nairobi, and correlate it with other slums in other areas in our country where this menace is seen as big for sustainable eradication purposes of this problem for now and the future, which I strongly and wholly believe will lead to social transformation if we unite and work as one for the total welfare of society.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH. AS WE WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM- “ME AND YOU”, LET US FOCUS ON BUILDING THE YOUTH AS THE PILLARS OF TOMORROW AND MAKE THEM THE FUTURE SOCIAL TRANSFORMERS FOR THIS NATION, OUR COUNTRY KENYA FAR AND WIDE. MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL ALWAYS.

END!