

Effects of Drug and Substance Abuse on Primary School Pupils’ Academic Performance in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Turkana County, Kenya

Immaculate Muthikwa¹, Lucy Kibera¹

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of the drug and substance abuse on primary school pupils’ academic performance in Kakuma refugee camp, Turkana County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent of drug and substance abuse among pupils, establish whether peer influence led to drug and substance abuse among pupils and determine the influence of drug and substance abuse on pupils; academic performance. The study was guided by Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory of 1986. The research used descriptive survey design and stratified sampling technique. The sample size compared 200 pupils, 20 guiding and counseling teachers, ten headteachers and one education officer. The study used questionnaires to gather quantitative data which was analyzed using SPSS package and was after that presented in frequencies tables and graphs. On the other hand, qualitative data was solicited through focus discussion groups and was processed through content analysis and summarized in thematic areas. The findings indicated that alcohol was the commonly abused substance. The majority (65%) of teacher counselors stated that drug and substance abuse and was most commonly available at 55% among pupils who abused drugs and alcohol. As a result, most of the pupils (58.8%) expected to attain between 201-250 marks at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2017. The prevalence of abuse of alcohol was at 55% followed by tobacco and bhang at 45% and 35% respectively. The results have further revealed that the causes of alcohol and drug abuse included peer pressure influence with (75%), idleness (65%), lack of parental guidance (40%), availability of drugs in schools (35%) and influence of extended family (25%).

Key Words: Drug and Substance Abuse, Academic performance, Addiction, Refugee, and peer

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Drug and substance abuse refer to the usage of drugs for other reasons that are not medicinal, and therefore, they affect wellness of an individual negatively physically, socially, and cognitively (Kuria, 1996). For instance, drug and substance abuse can affect an individual’s cognitive ability in relation to the person’s lack of concentration in school work and memory loss (Ndeti et al., 2009) opined that medically, drug abuse is the use of drug to the extent that it produces definite impairment with regard to social, psychological or physiological functioning of the user.

According to the US Department of Human Health Services 200 million people or about 5 percent of the world's population, aged between 15-64 years have abused drugs at least once in the previous months (World Drug Report, 2009). Research has shown that drug abuse amongst the young happens mostly in school (Eneh & Stanley, 2004). One of the important psychological phenomena observed during the period of adolescence is experimentation new experiences such as drug and sex-related activities (Graham, Turk & Verhulst, 1999).

Wechsler (2002) noted that drug and substance abuse was prevalent in Pakistan schools. Indeed, Khattak, Iqbal, and Ullah (2012) established that Pakistan had an around 25 to 44 percent of pupils who indicated to have used drugs and alcohol and increasing rates that have become a challenge and concern for Pakistani schools and colleges. Alcohol consumption and illegal drug use are linked to some problems for students. Cloninger (1983) found that alcohol consumption is linked to relationship problems, issues in employment and academic performance among the students who use them.

Drug abuse is also common in Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, studies show that individuals who start drinking in SSA countries (for example, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Ethiopia, Congo, Burundi, Rwanda) have either gone through or are currently experiencing major conflicts, war, genocide with all the attendant complications on its displaced or post-conflict populations. Such conflict and instability have been observed to increase drug abuse use and HIV vulnerability in the Sub Saharan Africa (Lewinsohn, 2007).

In Kenya, there is also a high rate of drug and substance abuse among pupils receiving education from public institutions (Ogek-Ogunde et al., 2004). NACADA (2002) reported that an estimation of 70 percent of the pupils in primary schools in Kenya had taken alcohol, 22% tobacco, 2% bhang and miraa 5% respectively. Refugees who have been living in Kenya at Kakuma refugee camp are not an exception.

Kakuma Refugee Camp (KRC) was founded in 1992 to cater for children and youth fleeing violent conflict in Sudan and Somalia. Over the years refugees from 20 other nations have sought protection in Kakuma. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2004), 55 % of Kakuma's population is aged 17 years or under. Exposure to extreme stressors (trauma) increases the risk for a range of mood and anxiety disorders, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Agaibi and Wison 2005; Cohen and Hien, 2006). It is conceivable therefore that refugees who are young and are in their adolescent stage are likely to be more vulnerable to drug abuse compared to those who are not refugees.

Refugees living in camps often face a myriad of health and social problems including unemployment, poverty, violence, insecurity, and lack of essential daily needs. Such problems can lead to frustration, depression, and involvement of some into drug abuse. A study titled "Behavioural Surveillance among Refugees and the surrounding population in Kakuma" by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2004 reported that 2% of primary school going respondents had shared a syringe with each other to inject drugs. It was important to investigate whether drug and substance abuse has increased in

schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp and their effects on the academic performance of pupils at the primary level of education in Kakuma Refugee Camp. This is because the academic performance standards of most schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp has been less than 50 percent out of the 500 total marks a child is supposed to attain at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) (Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Department of Education, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has committed a lot of money and effort towards the control and fought against drugs and substance abuse. International Rescue Committee (IRC) to has been very active in Kakuma Refugee Camp sensitizing especially the youth on the dangers of drug and substance abuse. To effectively control this problem, these organizations coupled with other stakeholders have initiated programmes and activities to enhance academic performance by keeping the youth away from drugs. However, despite all these efforts geared towards improving the academic performance in primary schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp, the mean scores are low. By available information, there is evidence that critical study on the effects of drug abuse on the academic performance of pupils in primary school among pupils in Kakuma Refugee Camp has been minimal. This study, therefore, sought to establish the extent to which drug and substance abuse are used among primary school pupils in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Also, the study examined whether peer pressure and parental influence have contributed to drug and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

Objectives of the Study

The primary goal of the study was to establish the influence of drug and substance abuse on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. The specific objectives sought to:

1. Determine the extent of drug and substance abuse among primary school pupils in Kakuma Refugee Camp.
2. Establish whether peer influence leads to drug and substance abuse among pupils in public primary schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp.
3. Determine whether parents who took drugs and alcohol in Kakuma Refugee Camp influenced their children to abuse drugs and alcohol.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey method was found appropriate for data collection because large quantities of data can be collected from large numbers of respondents through structured questionnaires. The subjects targeted by the study were surveyed in their natural environment. The method also facilitated the researcher. Out of 19 public primary schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp, 10 of them were randomly selected. The random sampling method was used to select the pupils. From each school, two teachers were selected randomly (1 male and one female) from the guidance and counseling department making a total of 20

teachers. Also, 1 (one) education officer and ten headteachers from the ten selected primary schools participated in the study. Therefore, in total the selected sample had 231 participants. The research instruments for this study comprised two sets of questionnaires questionnaire for pupils, teachers and an interview schedule for head teachers and an education officer respectively. Data collected was analyzed by use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Study Findings

Parents’ and Guardians’ level of education

Before presenting findings related to the objectives, results of parental and guardian background regarding the level of education have been presented. This is critical because of parents’ level of education impact on children’s academic performance and behavior. The pertinent findings are contained in Table 1.

Table 1: Parents and guardian’s level of education

Level of education	Father		Mother		Guardian	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
No formal education	2	2%	6	10%	4	11%
Primary level	16	20%	20	34%	2	5%
Secondary level	30	37%	18	31%	12	34%
College /Diploma level	21	26%	8	15%	13	36%
University level	12	15%	6	10%	5	14%
Total	81	100%	58	100%	36	100%

The findings in Table 1, indicate that (37%) and 26% respectively of the fathers had secondary level while (26%) had secondary and college/diploma level of education. The study further found out that a large number (31%) of the mothers had a secondary level of education while (15%) of the guardians had college/Diploma level of education. Most of the parents had a secondary and post-secondary education. This means that their challenge was not education but probably, emotional instability because of their refugee status, leading to idleness, lack of material resources and many others and therefore they had not been able to guide their children properly. The education officer was of the opinion that parents could have played a major role in controlling the drug and alcohol abuse among the school going, children.

The **first** objective investigated the extent to which drug and substance were being abused among the primary school pupils them by asking teacher counselors to indicate drugs and substances they thought were commonly abused by pupils. The results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Teacher Counselors' Responses on drugs and substance abuse among primary schools pupils in Kakuma Refugee Camp

Drugs commonly abused	Easily Available		Available		Less Available		Rarely Available		Not used at all		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Alcohol	11	55	4	20	2	10	3	15	3	15	20	100
Tobacco	9	45	6	30	3	15	1	5	1	5	20	100
Bhang	7	35	3	15	5	25	3	15	2	10	20	100
Khat	5	25	3	14	8	40	2	10	2	10	20	100

According to the results in Table 2, (55%) of teacher counselor respondents stated that alcohol was the most commonly abused and most available followed by tobacco with 45% and bhang at 35%. Further, some 25% of teacher counselors stated that Khat was easily available to the pupils. This means that the pupils abused alcohol more than tobacco, bhang, and Khat respectively. The education officer too indicated that alcohol was the most commonly abused substance followed by tobacco. He further stated that the pupils were able to get the alcohol easily from the bars through elders who bought it on their behalf. There were also hawkers who sold the drugs and illegal substances to pupils. However, the regular users of hardcore drugs such as cocaine and heroin seem fewer compared to those of cigarette and alcohol, the study has argued that the major cause of concern is that high consumption of these by young people is likely to predispose them to become addicted thus, threatening their health, safety, and opportunities to pursue education. In turn, their engagement in drug and substance abuse would inflict difficulties on their families and friends.

The **second** objective sought to establish the influence of peer pressure on drug abuse among primary school pupils. The pertinent responses from teacher counselors indicating why they engaged in drug and substance abuse are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Teacher counselors responses on reasons on the influence of peer pressure, idleness, parental experience, availability of drugs and influence of extended family

Reasons for engaging in drug abuse	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Peer pressure	14	75	2	10	2	10	1	5	19	100
Idleness	13	65	4	20	0	0	3	15	20	100
Lack of Parental guidance	8	40	1	5	5	25	6	30	20	100
Availability of drugs in schools	7	35	6	30	4	20	3	15	20	100
Influence of extended family members	5	25	4	20	6	30	5	25	20	100

The findings in Table 3 reveal that majority of teacher counselors respondents (75%) strongly agreed that peer pressure caused them to engage in drug abuse. The other reasons why pupils abused drugs included idleness with (65%), parental influence (40%), availability of drugs in schools (35%) and influence of extended family members at (25%). The education officer too ranked peer pressure as the first reason why the pupils engaged in drug and substance abuse. Further, teacher counselors also indicated that lack of proper parental guidance of the pupils with 45% made them indulge in drug and substance abuse. Studies carried out locally and elsewhere have indicated a strong linkage between alcohol and drug abuse by young people. Again, it has been observed that indigenous cultures in Africa generally, restricted the use of alcohol to senior age groups and special occasions (Gitahi and Mwangi, Daily Nation April 2, 2007). This practice enabled parents and old members of the society to monitor young children against taking and abusing alcohol.

Sources of Drug and Substance Abuse among Pupils

The study again sought information from teacher counselors on what they thought were likely sources of drug and substances that being abused by pupils. The pertinent analysis of the possible sources of drugs and substance abused by teacher counselors is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Teacher counselors responses on possible sources of drugs and substance abused by pupils

Source of drugs	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Available at home	13	65	0	0	0	0	7	35	20	100
Available in the village	13	65	4	20	0	0	3	15	20	100
Available in school	12	60	5	25	2	10	1	5	20	100
Sold at the market	8	40	3	15	7	35	2	10	20	100

The data in Table 4 reveal that 60% of the teacher respondents strongly agreed that the source of drugs was from the school. Some (40%) of the respondents also strongly agreed that the drugs were being sold at the market. Majority 65% of pupils strongly agreed that the drugs used by the pupils were available at home and in the village respectively. By these results, it can be concluded that the drugs and alcohol were readily available at home, in the village school. The education officer concurred with this finding.

The third objective investigated the effects of drug abuse on pupils’ academic performance. The results emanating from teachers responses are captured in Table 5.

Table 5: Teachers’ responses on the effects of drugs on pupils’ academic performance

Effects of drug on academic performance	Very great Extent		Great Extent		Average Extent		Little Extent		No Influence		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Poor discipline	18	90	1	5	1	5	0	0	0	0	20	100
Absenteeism	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0	1	5	20	100
Poor grades	12	60	4	20	0	0	2	10	2	10	20	100
Suspension	10	50	4	20	3	15	3	15	0	0	20	100
Failure to do class assignments	10	50	4	20	3	15	0	0	3	15	20	100
Dropping out from school	9	45	4	20	5	25	2	10	0	0	20	100
Repeated class/exam	8	40	4	20	4	20	4	20	0	0	20	100
Low concentration in class	7	35	5	25	0	0	8	40	0	0	20	100
Non-participation in co-curricular activities	4	20	2	10	3	15	7	35	4	20	20	100

The findings in Table 5 indicate that majority of the teacher respondents (90%) indicated that drug use among the pupils to a very great extent resulted in poor discipline. The findings further indicated that most of the teachers (80%) said that use of drug and substance abuse contributed to school absenteeism at 80%. Also, they contributed to absenteeism by 80%. Again 60% of teachers stated that drug use among pupils contributed to poor grades, suspension with (50%), failure to do the assignment at 50% dropping out of school (45%), repeating class (40%), and low concentration (35%) among others. These findings have supported those of Bawkin and Bawkin (2005) that indicated that an addicted pupil was likely to show a decline in academic performance, frequent absenteeism, loss of interest in school work and weakened motor coordination, poor health, and lack of interest in old friendships.

To gain further insight into the effects of drug and substance abuse pupils were asked to indicate whether such pupils got on well with other pupils and staff. Their responses are captured in Table 6.

Table 6: Peer relationship between pupils who used drugs and those who did not

Types of relationships	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Advise them not to take drugs	96	55	40	23	27	15	0	0	12	7	175	100
Don't associate with me	90	51	37	21	30	17	6	3	12	7	175	100
They reported them to teachers	50	30	36	20	16	9	13	7	60	34	175	100
Become friends	12	7	16	8	8	4	89	51	50	30	175	100

The findings in Table 6 indicate that 51% and 30% of the pupil respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that the pupils became friends with pupils who used drugs. On the other hand, 51% of them indicated that they strongly agreed that they did not associate with drug and substance abuse. Over one third (34%) of the pupils said that they reported the drug abusers to teachers while some 55% indicated they did not advise their fellow pupils not to take drugs. This may be attributed to the fact that drug and substances are violent and therefore feared to be the target of their violence.

It has been established that drug and substance abuse also has a negative influence on pupils' behavior and interior negative effect on their interaction with teachers, pupils, and academic performance. Teachers were asked to indicate the types of behaviors they associated pupils who abused drugs. The findings on effects of drugs on pupils' behavior are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Teacher responses on the effect of drugs on pupils’ behavior and academic performance

Effects of Drug Abuse on behavior	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Low concentration in class activities	19	95	1	5
Not able to handle class activities after taking drugs	18	90	2	10
Rude to teachers	17	85	3	15
Failure to understand during lessons	16	80	4	20
Fighting with other children	15	75	5	25
Drop out of school	15	75	5	25
Likely to be involved in sexual activities	14	70	6	30
Display violent behavior	14	70	6	30
Likely to be involved in crime	13	65	7	35
Likely to suffer from HIV/AIDS diseases	12	60	8	40
Poor academic performance	12	60	8	40
Become a street child	9	45	11	55

The information in Table 7 has shown that 90% of teacher respondents indicated that drug abuse among the pupils made them unable to handle class activities. Further, 95% of teacher respondents stated drug and substance abuse contributed to low concentration in class activities. Again, some 80% of teacher respondents stated that drug abuse interfered with comprehension of lessons taught. Drug abuse among the pupils also led to fighting with other children and rudeness with 75% and 85% respectively. Other behaviours associated with drug and substance abuse included pupils’ involvement in crime at (65%), sexual activities (70%), suffering from HIV/AIDS diseases (60%), dropping from school (75%), manifestation of violent behavior (70%), and likelihood of becoming a street child (45%) respectively. Finally, (70%) of teachers respondents indicated that drug and substance abuse resulted in poor academic performance. The education officer concurred with teacher respondents’ findings that drug and substance abuse among the pupils influenced their behavior and academic performance negatively. The Education Officer too established that indiscipline seemed to be manifested mostly by pupils who indulged in drug and substance abuse.

Further, teachers were requested to predict the mean grade they expected pupils in primary schools in Kakuma Refugee to attain at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education, given the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among pupils.

The findings on marks which standard seven pupils expected to attain at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2017 by teacher respondents are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Scores which standard seven pupils expected to attain at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2017 by teacher respondents

Range of Expected Scores at K.C.P.E	Frequency	Percentage
100-150	0	0
151-200	5	29.4
201-250	10	58.8
251-300	2	11.8
Total	17	100

The analysis in Table 8, has revealed that 58.8% of guiding and counseling teachers indicated that the pupils would get a grade of between 201-250 marks at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2017. This seems to indicate that many pupils might not attain over 250 marks out of 500 marks in KCPE. The expected poor academic performance may be attributed to lack of concentration in class due to the negative influence of drug and substance abuse.

Similarly, pupils were asked to suggest the mean grade they expected to achieve at Kenya Certificate of Primary education. The findings on marks which standard seven pupils expected to attain at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2017 by pupil respondents are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Marks which standard seven pupils expected to attain at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2017 by pupil respondents

Range of Expected Scores at K.C.P.E	Frequency	Percentage
100-150	10	5.7
151-200	17	9.7
201-250	86	49.1
251-300	42	24
Over 300	20	11.4
Total	175	100

The analysis in Table 9 has shown that 49.1% of pupil respondents stated that they would get between 201 and 250 marks at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2017. The pupil respondents assessment of the grade they are likely at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education is lower than that of teacher-counselor. The grades predicted by pupils appear to be more realistic. Poor academic performance may be linked to poor concentration associated with drug and substance abuse.

Suggestions on how to improve Academic Performance

As far as pupils were concerned, the school management should maintain discipline among the pupil though some pupils indicated that the teachers were too strict when dealing with them. Teachers thus should try to understand the predicament of pupils instead of concluding them. The teachers on their part suggested that the pupils should attend counseling sessions more often so that they can to learn the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse on their academic performance. The guiding and counseling teachers again highlighted the

need for more training for guidance and teacher counselors to enable them to acquire adequate knowledge and skills necessary for effective handling challenges faced by pupils.

Further, the Education Officer indicated that one of the corrective measures should be employed to curb the drug and substance abuse menace to ensure that there are canteens and shops located near the schools because they were used for peddling drugs. The pupils should also be checked by teachers and prefects as a way of ensuring that they do not bring drugs and other alcohol-related substances to school.

The head teachers on their part advocated for enhancement of security in the area of Kakuma Refugee Camp. This would assist in curbing illegal trade in harmful drugs and related substances in the community and around the schools. Also, law enforcers and school management should ensure that people used to operate businesses near schools do not sell drugs and other substances harmful to the well-being of students.

Summary Findings

By findings, it can be concluded that alcohol is the commonly abused among the drug and substance abused among the pupils and was readily available. The type of drugs and substances abused include alcohol (55%), tobacco (45%), bhang (35%) and khat (25%). Further, peer pressure was cited as one of the reasons that make pupils engage in drug abuse followed by idleness, parental influence, easy access to drugs and influence of extended family members. It can also be concluded that the drugs and alcohol are available in the refugee camp, thus making them easily accessible to pupils. Drug abuse among the pupils makes them unable to handle class activities. Drug abuse also causes low concentration in class activities, including the inability to understand lessons. Drug and substance abuse also leads to fighting among pupils and rudeness to teachers. The other negative effects of drugs and substance abuse include crime, sexual activities, dropping out of school, poor academic performance, violent behavior and infection from sexually transmitted disease such as HIV/AIDs.

Further, teachers (58.8%) indicated less than 50% of pupils would score between 201-250 marks at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2017, and as a result, many pupils would not attain good grades to transit to the secondary level of education. The projections of pupils' academic performance by teachers and pupils seem to suggest drug and substance abuse contribute to poor academic performance.

Recommendations

The pupils should be sensitized to the dangers of drug and substance abuse. They should be encouraged to seek counseling or rehabilitation services to help them quit the vice. This can be done through the invitation of guest speakers on the dangers of drugs and substance abuse by school authorities.

Every school should be mandated to have pupils checked when coming to school to make sure they are not in possession of drugs and harmful substances. The school management should be advised of the need to maintain discipline in school.

Finally, parents should be counseled on the impact of drug and substance on their children's academic performance. This can be done through meetings for parents and through invitation by school management during which parents would be given information on the dangers of drug and substance abuse by their children about their health and academic performance.

Area of Further Research

The following are areas which have been suggested for further research;

- i. The effect drug and substance abuse on class attendance and retention among primary pupils.
- ii. The effectiveness of guidance and counseling teachers in curbing drugs and substance abuse in primary schools.

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