

## Effect of Awareness on Substance Abuse among University Students in a Selected Private University in Kenya

Author: Ann Kiriru

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

P.O Box 62157 - 00200, Nairobi - Kenya

Author E-mail: [akiriru@cuea.edu](mailto:akiriru@cuea.edu)

**Abstract:** *Drug and substance abuse has been on the increase and this has raised concern among most peers particularly in developing countries, where interventions towards addressing this vice have yielded little results. These vices have resulted to a number of high-risk behaviours such as engaging in crime, unprotected sexual intercourse, violence, destruction of property and poor academic performance. In essence, Universities in Kenya have been struggling with the problem of drug abuse like other universities in developed and developing countries. This study sought to assess of the effect of awareness on substance abuse among university students in Kenya in context of Catholic University of Eastern Africa. The study used a case study research design. The researcher found the design to effective because it is open to use of other approaches of analysis including both qualitative and quantitative approaches that the study intended to use. The target population of this study included all students of the selected Private University. The study used a sample of 184 subjects. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling procedures were used to select the study sample population. A semi-structured questionnaire and an interview guide for key informant were used to collect data from the respondents. To test for reliability of the tool, the researcher piloted 10% of the sample (19) and which was not included in the final study. Split half method was used where a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77 was obtained thus qualifying the tool as reliable and acceptable. Content validity was used to validate the data collection tool. Data collected using the questionnaires was fed in statistical package of social science (SPSS) version 21, coded and analysed into tables and figures. Descriptive data was presented using simple frequencies and percentages. The researcher used a Chi-square, to test the study hypothesis. The study found that there is a statistically significant impact of drug and substance abuse awareness among undergraduate students in the selected Private University ( $p < .001$ ). The study concluded that drug abuse awareness in the institutions of higher learning reduces drug and substance abuse incidences among the undergraduate students. Therefore, there is a need to involve all the stakeholders including the school administration, lecturers, parents and the community around the institution in the effort to create awareness on harmful effects of drug abuse among the University students. The findings of this study can be used by future scholars in the field of education psychology to provide basis of related studies.*

**Keywords:** *Substance abuse in Kenyan Universities, Drug abuse, Drug abuse awareness, Drug and substance abuse in Kenya.*

## 1.0 Introduction

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Psychoactive substances use can lead to dependence syndrome - a cluster of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated substance use and that typically include a strong desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to drug use than to other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physical withdrawal state (World Health Organization, 2011). The current trend of drug and substance abuse among the youth in the Universities is a major national concern, as it has been reported to pose derogatory effects on their health, academic performance and behaviours (Sambo, 2008).

Globally, the prevalence of drug and substance abuse has been on an increasing trend with an estimation of between 149-272 million people accounting to 3.3%-6% of the world total population aged 15-64 years abusing drugs and substances annually (United Nations Drug Control Programme, 2010). According to this report, a significant percentage (45%) of this population comprise of students in colleges and universities. Further, the same report indicated that 2.5 million people die each year from alcohol related complications and that university students accounted for 30% of this population. The rate of drug abuse is considerably high in universities worldwide (Atwoli, Mungla, & Ndungu, 2011; UNDCP, 2010). According to Riley-Cook (2012) the most widely abused drugs among students are alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, opium and its derivatives, cocaine and heroin.

In Africa, the problem of drug abuse among students has been a constant presence for years. In Nigeria for instance, abuse of drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, bhang and Khat have been on the increase among college and University students with varying prevalence rates found for both overall and specific drug of abuse (Oshodi, Aina & Anajole, 2010; Abasiubong, Alphonsus & Uwemendimbuk, 2012). South Africa is another state that has been badly affected by the issues of drug and substance abuse (International Narcotics Control Board, 2003; WHO, 2011). In Tanzania a study by (Simbee, 2012) revealed that in Dar-es-Saalam, the prevalence of current drug abuse among students was 5.1% and that the abuse was higher by 6.2% among male students compared to female students, 3.9%. The same study revealed that 39.7% of students abused drugs daily, 10.8% once in a month and 8.6% abused drugs more than three times in a year.

Alcohol and drug abuse has also infiltrated the society, with the youth and young adults being the most affected groups. Drugs and substances abuse is a major social problem in Kenya (NACADA, 2012). Half of drug abusers in Kenya are aged between 16-28 years with over 60% residing in urban areas and 21% in rural areas (UNODC, 2012). The most commonly abused drugs in Kenya are alcohol, tobacco, bhang (marijuana), glue, miraa (khat) and psychotropic drugs (NACADA, 2004). According to (Lukoye *et al.* 2010) highlighted the negative effects attributed to alcohol and other substance abuse by the respondents among college students in

Eldoret, included quarrels and fights , loss and damage to property , regretted sex , unprotected sex, and medical problem.

Among the many factors influencing drugs and substances abuse among University students is weak awareness creation on the consequences of abusing drugs and other substances presumably would help to reduce these incidences. Other associated factors may include but not limited to: socio-economic factors, demographic factors, technological factors, peer pressure and policy implementation factors (Ngesu, Ndiku & Masese, 2008). In essence, drug and substance abuse menace has strangled students reducing them to dummies, zombies and drooling figures as well as wasting their lives at the age which they are most needed in the society (Ngesu, Ndiku & Masese, 2008). Thus, it is against this background that the study sought to examine the effect of awareness on substance abuse among university students, with reference to a selected private university in Kenya.

## 2.0 Methodology

The study used a case study research design. A good case study uses a number of different research tools to increase validity (Davies & Beaumont, 2011). Similarly, Yin (2003) argues that a case study research allows the researcher to get a rich blend of data for the study. In essence, a case study research can use both qualitative and quantitative approaches and different data collection instruments such as questionnaire, interview guide, and document analysis among other tools. Additionally, Davies and Beaumont (2011) maintained that in a case study research, a researcher should aim to triangulate the instruments or techniques in order to provide different views of the case. This avoids the problem of observer bias; choosing the instrument to measure what you want to see and not what is really there. Thus, the researcher found a case study design to be effective because it helped to answer the research questions from both qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, thus enhancing deeper understanding of influence of awareness on substance abuse among university students in Kenya, in context of one selected private University.

The target population of this study included all students of the private University; this included 1000 students. The study used (Nassiuma, 2000) finite population sample computation formula to arrive at a study sample of 184 subjects. Questionnaire and interview guide was used in research data collection process. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to group students basing of their faculties (Education, Commerce, Science, and Art & Social Sciences). Further, the researcher used simple random sampling procedure to pick the study sample from all the five faculties in the University. Further, purposive sampling technique was used to choose an administrative representative from the University that helped the researcher with qualitative data in an in-depth interview session. The key informant was selected on the basis of in-depth knowledge on drug and substance abuse, and years of experience in guidance and counselling department, in and outside the University. To test for reliability of the tool, the researcher piloted 10% of the sample (19) from the private University, and which was not included in the final study. Split half method was used where a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77 was obtained thus

qualifying the tool as reliable and acceptable. On the other hand, content validity was used to validate the data collection tool.

All filled questionnaires were collected from the respondents for data analysis. By the help of statistical package of social science (SPSS) version 21, data from the questionnaire was input into the statistical package, coded and used to summarize research findings into tables and figures. Descriptive data was presented using simple frequencies and percentages. On the other hand, qualitative data obtained from the interview schedule was organized into themes basing on the study objective. The researcher triangulated quantitative data results from the questionnaire and qualitative data findings from interview schedule in order to provide different views of the case. Also the researcher used inferential statistics, Chi-square, to test the study hypotheses.

Since the researcher was a person genuinely concerned about other peoples' quality of life, the study considered people's rights and ethical issues in research throughout the whole research process. For this reason, the researcher strictly observed ethical and legal issues in research like the principle of confidentiality, anonymity, and acknowledgement of other people's input throughout the whole study. Additionally, the researcher acknowledged the inputs of other scholars to avoid plagiarism.

### **3.0 Results**

#### **3.1 Demographic Characteristics**

The researcher sought to establish the demographic characteristics of the study participants. With Regards to gender, nearly a third (64%) of the respondents were male while the remaining 36% were female. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of the respondents indicated that they first experienced drug and substance abuse when they were in first and second years of study. Nearly a half (48%) of the respondents had a past experience on drug and substance abuse.

#### **3.2 Influence of Awareness on Drug and Substance abuse among University Students**

The study sought to establish the influence of awareness on drug and substance abuse among students in University Campus. The researcher used the Likert scale to obtain the perceptions of the respondents towards the items listed in the data collection tool as shown in Table 1. The scale measures include: *5-Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Agree*. The variables that had a mean greater than 3.0 represented 'agree' while those, which had a mean less than 3.0, represented 'disagree'. Standard deviation was used to indicate the extent of variability of the responses. A standard deviation of less than 1.0 shows low variability while standard deviation with 2.0 and above shows high variability among the responses.

Table 1

*Effect of Awareness on Substance Abuse among University Students*

Statement	Mean	SD
Attendance of drug abuse awareness seminars by students reduce cases of drug abuse in the University;	4.4	2.9
Drugs abuse awareness has helped some students stop abusing drugs;	3.5	1.6
Some students have reduced the number of times they abuse drugs when they get aware of the consequences;	4.2	2.4
Drugs abuse awareness has reduced cases of drugs and substance abuse related accidents among students;	3.7	1.9
Drugs abuse awareness has reduced drugs abuse related deaths among students;	4.0	2.5
Drugs abuse awareness has reduced cases of indiscipline related to drugs abuse;	3.9	2.0
Drugs abuse awareness has reduced reported cases of health problems related to drugs abuse;	4.0	2.5
Drugs abuse awareness has reduced cases of violence among students;	4.2	2.4

As shown in Table 1, attendance of drug abuse awareness seminars by students reduced cases of drug abuse in the University ( $M=4.4$ ;  $SD=2.9$ ). Further, drug abuse awareness had helped some students stop abusing drugs ( $M=3.5$ ;  $SD=1.6$ ). This implies that if more awareness programmes are encouraged in higher institutions of learning, cases of drug abuse among students can be diminished.

The study established that when the students are aware of the consequences associated with drug abuse, it reduced the number of times they abused drugs ( $M=4.2$ ;  $SD=2.4$ ). The study further revealed that drug abuse awareness among student had reduced cases of drug-abuse-related-accidents among the students ( $M=3.7$ ;  $SD=1.9$ ). This shows that if the universities and other institutions of higher learning are involved in drug awareness campaigns, the number of student who are victims of accidents associated with drug and substance abuse would gradually reduce. Additionally, increased drug and substance abuse awareness would help to minimize the frequency of drug and substance use among students.

The study further identified that drugs-abuse-awareness had reduced drug abuse related deaths among students ( $M=4.0$ ;  $SD=2.5$ ). In addition, drug-abuse-awareness had reduced indiscipline

cases related to drug and substance abuse in the University Campuses ( $M=3.9$ ;  $SD=2.0$ ). This reveals that although the awareness, knowledge, practices and attitudes towards drug abuse awareness training is effective, more research is needed to develop effective drug abuse preventative strategies that will combine school-based interventions with those affecting the family, social institutions and the larger community.

Drug-abuse-awareness had reduced cases of reported health complications among the University students ( $M=4.0$ ;  $SD=2.5$ ). Results also indicated that drug-abuse-awareness had reduced cases of violence among students ( $M=4.2$ ;  $SD=2.4$ ). This shows that the more frequent students were made aware of the effects and consequences of drug and substance abuse, the more the harmful effects of drug and substance abuse, the less they will want to indulge in drug and substance abuse. Besides, the researcher noted that nearly all items on influence of awareness on alcohol and substance abuse among the undergraduate students in the private University had a standard deviation (SD) more than 2.0. This shows that the study participants' responses were scattered far and wide from the mean (3.0-neutral), thus, they either agreed or disagreed with the items on the influence of awareness on alcohol and substance abuse among undergraduate students in the private University.

On the other hand, the researcher took the key informant through an in-depth interview in order to gather deeper knowledge on the situation of substance abuse among the undergraduate students in the selected Private University. The key informant observed that:

...abuse of drugs and substances has been rampant in this university since it is located near a big city. As a result, the University administration was prompted to organize awareness seminar every semester which has so far proved to be efficient as some of the students are slowly seeking help to deal with the addiction problems...through this and other efforts to reduce cases of drug abuse in the University, the students have come to understand the dangers of drug abused and the effects these that drug abuse have on their social and economic lives...this has helped them change their minds against drugs completely...additionally, awareness has been instrumental since a good number of students have reconsidered using drugs for fear of falling victims to the health related complications or fatal consequences like deaths...therefore, these programs are good and both Public and Private universities as well as secondary schools should consider creating awareness among their students in order to ensure that the students do not lose their lives in drug abuse.

Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative study findings are in agreement that drug and substance abuse campaigns among the undergraduate students in the Private University have minimized the drug abuse behaviors among the students. This implies that, if all the stakeholders are brought on board in the fight against drug abuse in the private University, drug and substance abuse can be managed at a higher margin. This can be achieved not only through awareness campaigns but also through other methods like guiding and counseling affected victims, controlled student budget by the parents, and eradication of drug selling points near the Universities among others.



### 3.3 Association Between Awareness and Substance Abuse among University Students

The study sought to establish whether there is a statistically significant association between drug abuse awareness and drug and substance abuse among undergraduate students in the private University. The Pearson's Chi-square was computed to establish whether the two variables are statistically significant ( $P < .05$ ) and the results are presented as shown in Table 2. The following hypothesis was tested:

**$H_0$ :** There is no statistically significant association between substance-abuse-awareness and substance abuse among undergraduate students in Private University;

**$H_A$ :** There is statistically significant association between drug-abuse-awareness and drug and substance abuse among undergraduate students in Private University

Table 2

*Chi square test for the association between awareness and substance abuse in university*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.118 <sup>a</sup>	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	23.778	9	.010
Linear-by-Linear Association	.667	1	.227
N of Valid Cases	162		

A 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5.

The minimum expected count is 5.24.

There is a statistically significant association between drug abuse awareness and drug and substance abuse among undergraduate students in private University since the p-value is smaller than the level of significance,  $\chi^2$  (9, N = 162) = 27.118,  $P < .001$ . This implies that the study has enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis and to accept the alternative hypothesis. Thus, drug abuse awareness campaigns in the institutions of higher learning affects the drug and substance abuse behaviour among the undergraduate students.

### 4.0 Discussion

The study findings showed students' attendance and participation in drug-abuse-awareness seminars highly reduced cases of drug abuse in the University Campus ( $M=4.4$ ;  $SD=2.9$ ). Respondents also indicated that drug-abuse-awareness has helped some students stop abusing drugs ( $M=3.5$ ;  $SD=1.6$ ). This concurs with a study conducted by (Boneli, Dew, Koenig, Rosmarin and Vasegh, 2012) in Kingston University in the United Kingdom that found that drug

abuse awareness reduced the rate of drug abuse among students. However, a study carried out by (Tsvetkova, Natalia and Antonova, 2013) on the relationship between drug abuse awareness training and drug abuse prevalence rates among students in Universities from Sweden revealed that the more students attended drug abuse education programmes, the more they abused drug. This could be attributed to curiosity about influence of drugs among students who have never abused drugs and substances. Thus, there is need for continuous drug abuse awareness campaigns in the institutions of higher learning such as holding of drug abuse awareness seminars, workshops and peer discussion groups.

The study found that students were aware of the consequences associated with drug and substance abuse ( $M=4.2$ ;  $SD=2.4$ ), they can reduce the frequency of using drugs. This finding was in line with a study conducted by (Bundy, 2010) on effects of academic drug education course on drug-related attitudes and behaviours among college students in Midwestern State University in USA that revealed that exposure to the drug abuse curriculum resulted to increased knowledge and more accurate normative perceptions of the prevalence of drug abuse among the students. This was found to reduce the incidences of drug abuse among the College students. In contrast, a study carried out by (Agbonghale and Okaka, 2014) in Nigeria to examine the perception of drug abuse awareness amongst undergraduates living off-campus revealed that the high level of awareness of drug abuse claimed by the students did not correlate well with both their ability to classify and identify those drugs. Further, the study indicated that although many students were aware of the negative consequences of drug abuse, there was no reduction in the abuse of drugs. Thus, there could be other underlying factors influencing drug and substance abuse among undergraduate students in University Campuses.

The study found that drug abuse awareness had reduced reported cases of health problems related to drugs abuse ( $M=4.0$ ;  $SD=2.5$ ). This findings was consistent with the study carried out by Vicary and Karshin (2013) which found that drug awareness campaign programmes in Kenya developed negative perception towards drug abuse, thus, making the students refrain themselves from abusing drugs. Therefore, the more students get knowledgeable on harmful health effects of drug and substance abuse, the less they are likely to abuse drugs.

## 5.0 Conclusions

The study concluded that awareness reduces incidences of drug and substance abuse among the undergraduate students in the private University. There is also need to involve all the stakeholders including the school administration, lecturers, parents and the community around the University in the effort to create awareness on harmful effects of drug abuse among the University students. This can be achieved by exposing the students to drug abuse education early in the University, modelling responsible behaviours concerning drug use among the students, instituting family rules, becoming more aware of youth culture, recognizing the early signs of drug abuse and by maintaining communication with the students on drug and substance addiction and how to refrain from drug abuse. The study recommends that the private University should ensure that the drug and substance abuse awareness campaigns are carried out in the University



regularly and that a drug abuse prevention course should be taught to every student that passes in the University. This would reduce the prevalent of drug and substance abuse cases among undergraduate students in the Private University.

Since this was a case study research whose results cannot be generalized, the study recommends that future scholars should consider carrying out a survey instead of case studies on influence of awareness on drug and substance abuse among undergraduate students in both private and public Universities in Kenya.

Drug-abuse-awareness seminars for students should be encouraged since they have a very big impact on the target population in this case the student's engagement in drug and substance abuse.

The consequences of drug abuse should be addressed so that they serve as lessons for those still indulging themselves in the vice.

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