



“Role of School Environment in Alcohol and Drug Abuse among Students of Public Secondary School Students in Nairobi”

**Policy Brief
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Introduction

Alcohol and drug abuse (ADA) among secondary school students is a major social and public health problem. This has been linked to such adverse consequences as suicide, delinquency, criminal behaviours, psychological trauma and a drop in academic performance. Substance abuse during adolescence is the single most predictive factor for adult drug dependence. Therefore, an understanding of the factors that place adolescents at risk of ADA is critical for the development of effective prevention efforts.

The school environment can either be a risk or a protective factor in students' initiation and continued use of alcohol and drug abuse. Inadequate supervision and easy access to alcohol and drugs in schools, for instance, may act as risk factors for initiation of drug abuse while drug abuse education offered in the school may increase the child's self-efficacy to resist initiation of drug abuse.

The overriding goal of this study conducted by NACADA Authority in 2010 was to understand the effect of factors in the school environment associated with alcohol and drug abuse among students in Nairobi schools.

Methodology

The study utilized stratified, simple random and systematic random sampling procedures to identify the respondents. Public secondary schools in Dagoretti, Kamukunji, Starehe, and Westlands Districts were divided into two strata based on “levels of affluence” in the selected regions. A simple random sample of twenty schools and a random sample of forty students per school were picked. A standard self-administered structured questionnaire with closed questions was used to collect the data. A total of 773 students were interviewed during the study.

Key Findings

- 83.2% of the respondents reported that it was possible for students to abuse drugs without the teachers' knowledge.
- Alcohol was the most commonly abused drug in schools as mentioned by 74.4% of the students.
- Miraa was second mentioned by 62.9% of the students.
- Cigarettes were mentioned by 58.1% of the students.
- About half of the students stated that bhang was being consumed in their schools (50.3%)
- More than half (56.3%) agreed that prescription drugs were being abused in their schools.

- Cocaine and heroin had the least levels of abuse as reported by 6.9% and 4.2% of the students respectively.

Individual Usage of alcohol and Drugs

In terms of individual lifetime reported usage;

- Alcohol was the most commonly abused substance, with 36.3% of students reporting a lifetime use.
- Miraa/muguka was second used by 31.5% followed by cigarettes used by 20.2% of the students.
- Bhang was used by 9.8%, whereas kuber was used by 5.5%.
- Heroin was used by 3.1%, inhalants/glue was used by 2.7%, amphetamines/mandrax was used by 2.6% and lastly cocaine was used by 2.2%.

Availability of alcohol and drugs in the school neighbourhood

In terms of availability of alcohol and drugs within the school neighbourhood;

- Prescription drugs were the most readily available as reported by 71% of the students interviewed.
- Cigarettes were reported by 69%, and alcohol reported by 66.4% of the students.
- Miraa was reported by 65.8% and bhang by 55% of the students.
- Inhalants/glue was reported by 44.8% and kuber by 35.6% of the students.

The least available drugs in the neighbourhood were;

- Heroin reported by 16.3% of the students.
- Cocaine reported by 19.6% of the students.
- Amphetamines reported by 23% of the students.

Hotpoint areas of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Findings also showed that alcohol and drugs were mostly abused when students were on their way home, during weekends at school, during school outings, school trips, dinner and school competitions.

These are times when they are least supervised. The findings also demonstrated that friends, their homes, fellow students and kiosks or shops near schools were the major sources of alcohol and drugs used in schools. However, the usage of these drugs is very secretive.

Policy Recommendations

The following programmatic recommendations are important in addressing alcohol and drug abuse in schools.

- Mainstreaming of alcohol and drugs in the school curriculum and training of teachers and students should be accorded high priority in order to instill skills to resist drug abuse among those who choose a drug free life.
- The schools management should strive to create an atmosphere that minimizes availability and access to drugs by students. This should also include extra-curricular activities like sports to reduce idleness amongst students.
- School management and parents should understand the linkages between the school community, the home and the surrounding school environment in the fight against drug abuse among students. This will ensure collaboration in order to effectively monitor and control illicit drug use patterns.