

Full Length Research Paper

Innovations and Opportunities In Social Media For Management Of Drug And Substance Abuse In Selected Informal Settlements of Nairobi County, Kenya

Christopher Mutai^{1*}, Nicholas Ombachi¹ and Ruth Simiyu¹

¹Department of emergency management Studies, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

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Abstract

According to the World Drug Report in 2016, there is an increasing availability of many kinds of drugs to the youth. Researchers have conducted minimal studies on the consequences social media has on Drug and Substance abuse among the youth. This research is a cross-sectional descriptive design to analyze the innovations and opportunities in Social Media for management of drug abuse in informal settlements in Nairobi County. The study is based on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) where by individuals determine their own behavior and the Community Readiness Model which modifies social contexts to support the desired behavior. The study population was youth within Kayole North, Kayole South and Mukuru kwa Njenga slums. For this study purposive sampling, snowballing and systematic random sampling approaches were adopted. Purposive sampling was used to identify groups for the survey and was generated by focusing on the 32 groups with a membership of 460. The sample size was 210 respondents who were distributed proportionately to the selected study area(s). 30 key informants from the study area were recruited. Interview guides were used to collect data from key informants and questionnaires from youth and their leaders. Qualitatively, data was described whereas quantitatively, descriptive statistics including standard deviation and frequency distribution tables were used. Multiple Regression and ANOVA were used to analyze data quantitatively. The researcher summarized the findings from the variables in each objective and the prevention strategies. Marijuana smoking in slums at 73% is the most prevalent. The youth aged 18 to 24 years have the highest levels of drug abuse rates at 73.5%. WhatsApp is the widely used social media at 54%. 23.2% of the respondents agreed that social media strategies adopted had effect on prevention of drug and substance abuse in the informal settlements of Nairobi County. Government should encourage youth to use social media in a beneficial manner.

*Corresponding Author: Joyzy Pius Egunjobi, Email: joyzyp@yahoo.com Tel: +254 739137728 Submitted: 15th April 2020 Published: 30th June 2020

Introduction

According to the World Drug Report in 2015, a major world trend is the increasing availability of many kinds of drugs to the youth. The UNODC Youth Initiative believes that youth represent a strong force for preventing substance abuse in communities and around the world (UNODC, 2014). Study findings suggest that peer-to-peer substance use prevention via social media is a promising strategy. Given the low cost and low burden of social media as an intervening channel, schools, communities and prevention programs can use this approach even in low-resource settings (Evans, W., Andrade, W., Goldmeier, S., Smith, M., Snider, J., & Giraedo, G. 2017).

The LTE by The Mentor Foundation in the US was a pilot project and had the limited objective of demonstrating the potential of social media as a peer-to-peer education tool for prevention. (Mentor Foundation, 2012) The use of media, including the mobile phone, has potential for engaging youth in civic affairs and service, microenterprise, and non-formal education (Evans, 2014). This study examines whether youth driven-programs that manage Drug and Substance Abuse through the use of social media can be applied to informal settlements in Nairobi County.

Social Media Use in Kenya

Social media has become one of the most active platforms for communication and networking in Kenya. The number of digital activists is growing as the middle class population grows (Zuckerman, 2008b). Majority of the Kenyans online use platforms such as Face book, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google and You tube. Kenyan bloggers have also tried to work towards more accessible information and transparency in decision making (Okolloh, 2007).

Drug and Substance Abuse and the Social Media in Kenya

Most organizations dealing with drug abuse such as NACADA and SCAD have blogs that provide a platform for exchange of information (SCAD, 2017). Few programs and packages focus on the youth. There is significant evidence that carefully planned social media campaigns can reduce substance abuse by countering false perceptions that drug use is normative and influencing personal beliefs that motivate drug use (Rono, 2011). Social media linkages may promote substance use activities amongst individuals as a result of uncontrolled discussions on prevalent drug choice among the peers within the networks as well as the dynamics as well as interpersonal dynamics among network members (Moreno, M.A., Briner, L.R. and Williams, A, 2010).

Drug and Substance Abuse in Informal Settlements in Nairobi County

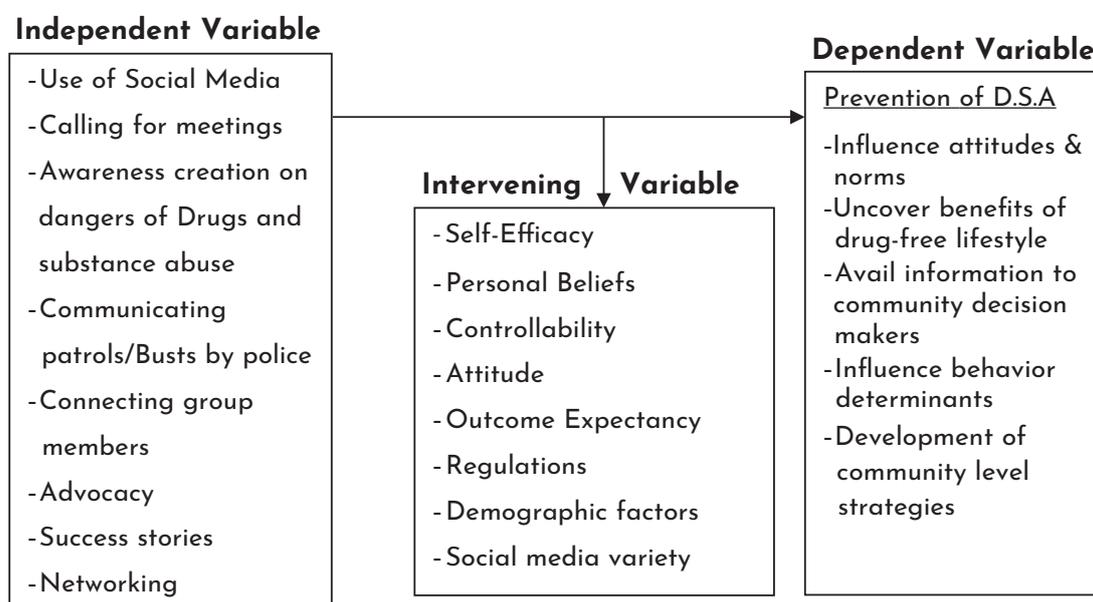
A study by Muchemi (2013) on "Effects of Drug and Substance Abuse among the Youth in the Informal Settlements within Nairobi," revealed that youth use all types of drugs and substances with those injecting themselves highly predisposed to HIV and AIDS and Hepatitis B and C. In a study by Natascha and Ute (2014) titled "Social media and its effects on individuals and social systems, there is extensively array of various understandings interrelated to usefulness of social media as a powerful source of communication and learning". Tundu (2017) conducted a research on "Social Media and the Campaign against alcoholism and Drug Abuse in State Corporations in Kenya: The case of the National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse". The study indicated that advocacy influences the fight against Alcohol and Drug Abuse, social media provides a forum for an individual to interact. Many studies have addressed the potential positive impacts of social media (Bauer, 2007; Pleil and Zerfass, 2010; Rusinger, 2007). There is still very little understanding of how social media can be used as a campaign strategy especially in curbing the use of Drug and Substance abuse.

The study sought to analyze the innovations and opportunities in social media for management of drug abuse in selected slums of Nairobi County. Specifically, it aimed at answering questions on nature and extent of drugs and substances in the selected informal settlements in Nairobi County, benefits of social media use in prevention of drug abuse in those settlements and what challenges face the use of social media as a preventative tool against drug and substance abuse in the selected informal settlements within Nairobi County.

The study is anchored on Social Cognitive Theory, in which behavior is determined by the persons thought processes, the environment and behavior itself, where in this case, are the youth within the informal settlements. For example, youth who believe that taking a substance like cigarettes will make them more attractive, strong, recognized and even more interesting to be around with. Bandura proposed that people form habits by imitating from their immediate environment (Bandura, 1977).

It is also supported by the Community Readiness Model. The Community Readiness Model is a useful complement to social marketing efforts in that it characterizes and measures the social contexts in which individual behavior takes place and is therefore able to guide the development of appropriate community-level strategy (Kelly, J.K., Edwards, R., Comello, L.M. and Pledsted, B.A.2003). Despite increase in interest in the effects of social interactions, only a few scholars examined leveraging social media as an effective tool for getting youth in informal settlements involved in prevention of Drug and Substance abuse. The conceptual model is presented in

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework Model showing Interaction of Variables



Source: Researcher 2019

Methodology

Research Design

The research adopted a cross sectional survey research design. According to Kothari (2007) and Casely and Kumar (1988), A cross-section survey is best suited for this study because of its ability to understand the whole population from a part of it.

The population of interest in this study comprised of youth both in and out of school within Kayole North, South and Mukuru kwa Njenga slums. The study also recruited key informants involved with the youth at different levels. The target population is 460 youth distributed among 32 youth groups in the three wards of Kayole South, Kayole North and Mukuru kwa Njenga. Embakasi Constituency was selected purposively as it has the highest number of youth groups in Nairobi County. Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) 210 youth were sampled from the 32 youth groups whose total membership was 460.

Data Collection

Primary data was collected by means of a questionnaire, interview schedules, observation schedule and focus group discussion guides (FGDs).

The Main modes of questionnaire administration were both face-to-face questionnaire administration, where an interviewer presented the items orally and Paper-and-pen questionnaire administration, where the items were presented on paper. Orally presented questionnaires created a rapport between the researcher and the respondents. The researcher clarified the purpose of the study thus motivating the respondent to respond to the questions.

It however impacted on the validity given that some respondents could have falsified information so as to please the researcher. Most questionnaires though were presented to be filled by the respondent.

Interviewing served well in Mukuru kwa Njenga as it built rapport between interviewer and interviewee and enhanced an environment where participants spoke more freely and openly. Due to the sensitivity of the issue of Drug and substance abuse, most interviewees saw it just as a casual talk and did not fear to openly talk about the issues. It allowed the interviewee to delve more on the issues thus generating more information for the interviewer.

It was also observed that Mukuru kwa Njenga informal settlement is crowded and lack space for any meaningful infrastructure. Tracing the groups and its members depended solely on snowballing to be connected to the groups as most of them did not have formal offices. Slum Information Development and Resource Centre (SIDAREC) acted as a link to most of the youth groups in Mukuru kwa Njenga as it provided space for meeting to most of them. The choice of disguised and uncontrolled method of observation ensured that the researcher did not raise any suspicion among the inhabitants due to the sensitivity of the issue of Drug and Substance abuse.

Focus group discussions were useful to further explore the topic of use of social media in prevention of Drug and substance abuse in the informal settlements of Nairobi. It provided a broader understanding of what the youth thought of in using social media to manage proliferation of drugs and substances in Mukuru kwa Njenga slums. They were conducted with a segment of the youth aged 15 to 24 years and the number of participants per group were 10 participants which made it possible to stimulate discussion and gain greater insights into the topic at hand.

Records of youth groups in the area of study together with minutes and membership of these groups was also scrutinized. This was important so as to know the representation and the kind of feedback from the social media platforms such as those geared towards managing Drug and Substance abuse among the youth in informal settlements in Nairobi County.

To test reliability, Cronbach's alpha was calculated by applying the following formula in SPSS;

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

By default, it is a requirement that for reliability of the study tool, ranges between 0 - 1 where by scales of 0.7 and above have been indicated to have an acceptable reliability coefficient. From the findings, a reliability coefficient of 0.830 was obtained and was considered acceptable.

Results

The demography details on gender, age, respondents' occupation and key informants' working experience were considered, analyzed and presented as shown in the following table.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Gender of the Respondents			Age of the Respondents			Respondents' Occupation			Key Informants' Working Experience		
Response	N	%	Response	N	%	Response	N	%	Response	N	%
Male	120	60.0	18-24 Yrs	148	74.0	Studying	81	40.5	0-5 yrs	20	66.67
Female	80	40.0	25-29 Yrs	26	13.0	Employed	66	33.0	5-10yrs	8	26.67
			30-34 Yrs	20	10.0	Self-Employed	53	26.5	10+ yrs	2	6.67
			35+Yrs	6	3.0						
Total	200	100	Total	200	100	Total	200	100	Total	30	100

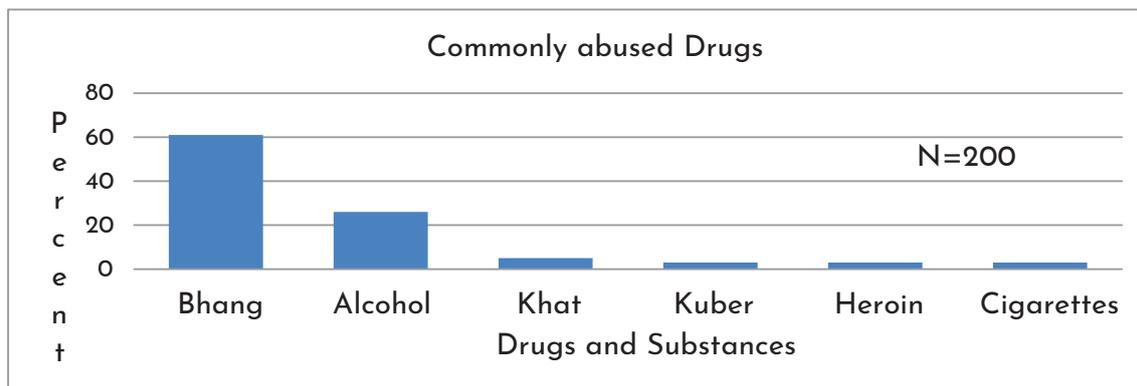
Source: Researcher, 2019

From Table 1, the male were 120 (60%) and the female 80(40%). The youth aged 18 to 24 years have the highest levels of drug abuse rates at 74% and majority of the respondents, 81(40.5%), were students. Most key informants have less than 5 years work experience as indicated by 20 (66.67%) of them.

The Nature and extent of Drug and Substance abuse in selected Informal Settlements in Nairobi County

The study considered the nature and extent of Drug and Substance abuse in the selected informal settlements in Nairobi county, made analysis and presented the findings as follows. Abuse of drugs is high in Mukuru kwa Njenga slums. This was corroborated by both the Assistant Chief and the Chief in Mukuru kwa Njenga Sublocation and location respectively. They placed the percentage at 55%.Concerning the commonly abused drug among the youths in the selected informal settlements; the study analyzed the data and presented the findings as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Drugs commonly abused among the youth in Informal Settlements in Nairobi County, Kenya



Source: Researcher, 2019

Bhang (Marijuana) was consumed more than any other drug as indicated by 120 (60%) of the respondents. This was followed by Alcohol as indicated by 53 (26.5%) of the respondents. Khat was also consumed at 12 (6%). This is majorly attributed to the fact that it is easier to conceal Marijuana than it is for alcohol. Other drugs abused in informal settlements include Kuber at 6(3%), Heroine at 6 (3%) and also Cigarettes at 6 (3%). The findings also revealed that youth were the most affected by the drug abuse as evidenced by 146(73%) of the respondents. The aged were the least affected as indicated by only 14(7%) of the respondents.

Benefits of using Social Media in prevention of Drug and Substance abuse in selected Informal Settlements in Nairobi County

Within this section, benefits accruing from interactions in social media platforms among the youth and its contribution in prevention of Drug and Substance abuse are presented. The findings indicated that all the respondents 200(100%) agreed that drug abuse among youth can best be handled through the social media. 67% strongly agreed and simply 33% agreed. The study deemed it necessary to inquire about the frequency with which the youth in the locality use social media in campaigning against drug and substance abuse. The results show that social media was frequently used in campaigns against drug abuse as 53% of the respondents affirmed. . However, the rest of the respondents which constitute 47 % indicated that social media was not frequently used in campaigns against drug abuse.

Challenges of Using Social Media to Prevent Drug and Substance abuse in selected Informal Settlements in Nairobi County

The study identified ownership of the problem of drug and substance abuse by youths as a possible remedy to manage it. The findings in Table 2 below showed that 52(26.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 109 (54.5%) agreed that acceptance of existence of the problem among the youth is vital in addressing the menace by the youth themselves.

Table 2 Ownership of the problem of Drug and Substance abuse by youth in the selected Informal Settlements in Nairobi County, Kenya

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	52	26.0
Agree	109	54.5
Un Decided	13	6.5
Disagree	13	6.5
Strongly Disagree	13	6.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Researcher, 2019

Cumulatively, 161(80.5%) of the respondents indicated that ownership of the problem of drugs and substance abuse by youth is a possible remedy to managing the problem. It was however noted elsewhere in the study that a significant number of respondents which constitute 94 (47 %) indicated that social media was not frequently used in campaigns against drug abuse among the youth in Nairobi’s selected informal settlements.

The results in table 3 show that youth and youth leader’s strategy had a negative effect on the prevention of drug and substance abuse. A unit change in the youth strategy results to a negative change in the prevention of drugs and substance abuse by 0.891. A unit change in the youth leaders’ strategy results to a change in mitigating abuse of drugs and substances by -0.556.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis showing the relationship between the various strategies in Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse among the youth in informal settlements in Nairobi County, Kenya

Model	B	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		Std. Error	Beta			
	(Constant)	2.646	.285		9.283	.000
	Youth leaders Strategies Mean	-.556	.145	-.305	-3.823	.000
	Youth strategies mean	-.891	.193	-.615	-4.608	.000
	Government strategies mean	1.157	.165	1.058	7.019	.000

Source: Researcher, 2019

However, on the government prevention strategy, there is a positive change of 1.157 in the prevention strategy resulting from a unit change in the prevention strategy otherwise categorized as a strong positive effect. The R-Square value of 0.232 with a standard error of 0.534 lie between 0.21 and 0.50 in Cohen’s d Coefficient of Correlation, which implies a modest link. It thus shows lack of relationship between strategies adopted by different stakeholders in the use of social media to manage drug and substance abuse among the youth in the informal settlements of Nairobi County

DISCUSSION OF THE KEY FINDINGS

Most researches suggests that early (12- 14 years old) to late (15-17 years old) adolescence is a critical risk period for the initiation of substance use and that substance use may peak among young people aged 18-25 years (UNODC,2018) which is also the case in this study. Irrespective of the number of years one has worked, the key informants have at least noted existence of the problem of Drug and Substance abuse especially in the selected Informal Settlements of Nairobi County.

Cannabis is gaining preference over other drugs among the young people as indicated in World Drug Report 2018. This is attributed to the availability coupled with perceptions of a low risk of harm (UNODC, 2018). From the researcher's own observation, drinking of alcohol was evident among adults in Mukuru kwa Njenga informal settlement. This could be attributed to its availability and proximity of households to alcohol joints which are also quite numerous.

The rise in the number of youths connecting through social media could be attributed to the fact that most of the youths access the social media platforms and the instantaneousness of the connection allows users to stay in touch through instant messaging programs. Smartphones and similar technology have made it easier to disseminate the messages on prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse in the selected informal settlements in Nairobi County.

The positive impact in government strategies corroborate with revelations on the effects of interactive media usage and organizational campaign performance by Tundu (2017). According to the findings, 83.8% of the respondents unanimously reported that social media usage has had a positive impact on NACADA's organizational campaign performance. Social media platforms are deemed appropriate as messages can be conveyed far and wide while at the same time shielding the identity of participants in such groups sensitive topics on Drugs and Substance abuse in informal settlements can be discussed comfortably as opposed to what would happen in a face to face interactions amongst the youth and other players (Okello, 2016). As noted by a discussant who works as a computer instructor at SIDAREC ICT center that is adjacent to Mukuru kwa Njenga slums, said:"The youth may not be willing to freely talk about drugs in a social media forum because if already abusing the drugs without the knowledge of the parents or guardians, it could easily betray them"-Wednesday, 14th August 2019, computer instructor at SIDAREC ICT center.

The ineffectiveness of the youth and youth leaders' strategy is due to suspicion and fear from the youth on existence of social media platforms that handles use of Drug and Substance abuse among the youth in informal settlements. Two presenters from Ghetto F.M reiterated that use of social media in addressing issues of psychoactive substances among the youth is minimal. They intimated that Drug and Substance Abuse is a taboo topic and most of them do not want to be associated with platforms addressing issues of drugs.

Though all the respondents were of the view that social media can handle the problem of drug abuse among the youth, a significant percentage (47%) of those interviewed in Mukuru kwa Njenga do not identify with the problem of Drug and Substance as indicated in their interactions in social media platforms. A media personality hosting a talk show on Drug and Substance Abuse at Ghetto F.M located at the heart of Mukuru kwa Njenga slums had this to say: Use of Social Media in addressing issues of Drug and Substance abuse among the youth is minimal. It can only be possible if the communication is done by an expert or institutions and not Individuals-Wednesday, 14th August 2019, Media Personality, Ghetto F.M

The general believe here is that suspicion and apprehension are common amongst individuals and given the correlation between drugs and crime, friends and peers may shy away from formulating a social media platform in which they can interact and discuss pertinent issues involving drug and substance abuse. Discussions in platforms created by public institutions such as NACADA are more acceptable as the youth freely ventilate issues of drug and substance abuse in the informal settlements through discussion fora or blogging

Conclusion

The study revealed that most of the youth in the informal settlements do not tag organizations or groups that discuss issues of Drug and Substance abuse, thereby; their involvement in managing of drug and substance abuse is minimal. NACADA should link up with community organizations such as Internet Society Foundation, Kenya chapter and Tunapanda Net initiative that is in the forefront in connecting informal settlements of Mathare and Kibera respectively to internet at a low cost (Miliza, 2018). With such programs, more youth will be connected; get a forum to discuss and blog on issues of Drug and Substance abuse and learn to cushion themselves from its effects in their localities.

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