

Role of Mass Media on Prevalence of Illicit Drug Use among Public Secondary School Students in Kisumu

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of mass media on the prevalence of drug abuse among students in public secondary schools in Kisumu City. The study was based on a descriptive survey design. The target population for this study was 5097 students and 18 teacher counsellors in public secondary schools in Kisumu City. Stratified random sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a sample size of 240 students and four teacher counsellors from form two, form three and form four classes. Frequency distribution and percentages were used to analyse data. The study concludes that exposure to mass media displaying drug content influenced students to abuse drugs. Thus mass media significantly influenced the prevalence of drug abuse among students in secondary schools in Kisumu City. The study recommends that the administrators of day secondary schools in Kisumu City should closely monitor and counsel students so as to eradicate the use of drugs among students. The government should pass laws that regulate the content of the media.*

Keywords: drug abuse, prevalence, mass media, Kisumu City, secondary schools

1. Introduction

Drug has been variously defined. According to Croen, Woesner, Hermann & Reichgott (1997) drug abuse is any substance that when absorbed into the body may modify one or more physiological functions. Illicit drug use may impair functional ability resulting in the user's physical, social and emotional self-harm (Croen, et al., 1997). A large number of students in many learning institutions across the world have been exposed to alcohol, tobacco, khat, glue sniffing, bhang (Otieno & Ofulla, 2009). A review of literature by Chebukaka (2014) shows that currently 1.3 billion people use tobacco and 230 million people aged between 14-18 years use illegal drugs. According to UNODC (2012), Africa and Asia account for 70% of global population using opium and its derivatives. In America, the rate of illicit drug use among high school students has increased and the prevalence rate of illicit drug abuse currently stands at 19.6% between the ages of 18-20 years (Kwamanga, et al. 2003). In Britain, cross-sectional studies have shown that at least 40% of high school students aged 14-18 years have used illicit drugs at least once in their lifetimes. Also among those aged 16-24 years, 38% of males and 5% of females regularly drink alcohol (Alcohol Concern, 2000). In West Africa, studies have consistently shown that there is considerable prevalence of drugs and substances abuse, with varying prevalence rates found for both overall and specific drug abuse (Abdulkarim, Mokuolu & Adeniyi, 2005).

The factors influencing students to illicit drug use have been identified including mass media. Children from homes where parents take drugs tend to imitate their parents' behaviour and through modelling start using drugs (Ngesu, Ndiku & Masese, 2008). According to Abdulkarim et al (2005), students may start using illegal drugs due to media influence (Mayoyo, 2003). This implies that drug abuse and its effects on secondary school students is a worldwide problem with no exception to Kenyan secondary school

students. Previous studies show that more than a fifth (22.7%) of secondary school students in Kenya takes alcohol (Otieno & Ofulla, 2009).

This situation has been made worse by the introduction of Free Secondary Education (FSE) in 2008, in which most students have been attracted to enroll in day secondary schools countrywide (Ngesu et al., 2008). Since some day schools are located far away from homes, some students are housed by relatives and friends while others rent houses near their schools (Otieno & Ofulla, 2009). As a result of lack of school fees, with availability of and access to drugs around schools and influence of media and idleness among the youth may encourage high prevalence of drug abuse among students in day secondary schools. Moreover, students in mixed day secondary schools who are not staying with their family may be at risk of getting into the trap of starting to abuse illicit drugs (Ngesu et al., 2008). The most at risk are the students who rent houses near their preferred day schools. Other students at risk of abusing illicit drugs are those who stay with their peer, friends and elderly siblings in either rural or urban school settings (Otieno & Ofulla, 2009). Such students may fall prey to drug abuse due to idleness and lack of parental guidance against the school regulations that require all students to desist from habit of drug abuse (Ngesu et al., 2008). In Kisumu City, Otieno & Ofulla (2009) have revealed that there exists a significant relationship between mass media and drug abuse among students.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Drug abuse menace is believed to have affected secondary school students all over the world. Despite the worldwide concern and education about the dangers of drug abuse, the prevalence of drug abuse continues to be felt at an alarming level in secondary schools in Kenya (Mayoyo, 2003). Recent studies show that more than 22.7% of secondary school students take alcohol (Otieno & Ofulla, 2009; Oteyo

& Kariuki, 2009 Otieno, 2005). This implies that drug abuse has adverse consequences to the learners. For instance, drug abuse has led to social problems in schools such as arsons, school dropout, poor academic performance, sexual immorality, bullying, teenage stress and destruction of school property. In spite of the measures put in place to control drug abuse in secondary schools in Kenya, this menace is still rampant especially in public day secondary schools. Therefore this study sought to investigate the influence of mass media on the prevalence of illicit drug use among students in public day secondary school in Kisumu City, Kisumu County, Kenya.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To find out the influence of mass media on the prevalence of drug abuse among students in public secondary schools in Kisumu City

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by the symbolic interaction theory. This theory was formulated by LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) who postulated that people act based on symbolic meanings they find within any given situation. The theory maintains that meanings are modified through interpretive processes by first internally creating meaning then checking it externally and with other people. Symbolic interaction theory can be used to explain the reasons why students engage in drug abuse through their interaction with the mass media (Parrott et al., 2004). Through the adverts the adolescents are brainwashed by the huge advertising industry from early years of childhood (Rice, 1992). An increasing number of cigarette adverts is designed to appeal to teenagers. Over 90% of teenagers are aware of such adverts and most say the adverts influence their behaviour (Berk, 2007). For example billboards equate cigarettes with excitement, relaxation, or being in style (Davison et al., 2004).

Furthermore, cigarette smoking is identified with masculinity, independence, beauty, youth, sex appeal, sociability, wealth, and good life (Parrott et al., 2004). Movies also play an important role, in that smoking is generally portrayed as sexy and pleasurable, rather than addictive and problematic. The appeal is always to the emotions and to the desire for acceptability, popularity and sexual allure. The presenter in the advertisements' sultry voice, the society setting, the back-to-nature promises, is all rewards teenagers seek (Rice, 1992).

2.2 Mass Media and Prevalence of Drug Abuse

Excessive illicit drug use is not only a Kenyan problem but a global problem (Elizabeth, et al., 2003). The unprecedented growth of ICT in 21st century has also enhanced rapid communication across national and continental boundaries resulting to an international global village market economy and trade involving exchange of goods and services with no exception to illegal trade in illicit drugs (Elizabeth, et al., 2003).

Otieno (2005) has observed that parents need to play a more active role in the fight against drug abuse since many students in Kenya are exposed to drugs through advertisements in mass media which glorify smoking and alcohol abuse as indicators of success and stardom. The media has also been perceived to be a stumbling block to the war against youth drug abuse. Often teachers have felt that mass media is responsible for indirectly promoting liberal and permissive social values combined with promotion of a sensation-seeking culture which is instrumental in increasing drug abuse among students. This is perceived to be in contrast to the moral values emphasized by the community and society in general. In addition, alcohol and cigarettes are legally advertised through the media while attached warning labels are too small to be read by many people (Shaw, 2007). Otieno (2005) revealed that, for several decades, mass media campaigns have been utilized in attempts to address youth substance abuse. However, teachers view the media as a stumbling block in the war against drug abuse among the youth. Mass media campaigns have the potential to be effective communication and educational tools, given that the youth obtain most drug information from the media (Otieno, 2005).

3. Methodology

The study was based on descriptive survey design in which data was collected by interviewing and administering questionnaires to sampled respondents with an aim of studying their attitudes, opinion and habits. The target population for this study was 5,097 students and teacher counselors from 18 public secondary schools in Kisumu City. Stratified random sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a sample size of 240 students and four teacher counsellors from form two, form three and form four classes. Frequency distribution and percentages were used to analyse data.

4. Results and Discussion

The results on the influence of mass media on drug abuse among students in secondary schools in Kisumu City are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Influence of Mass Media on Drug Abuse

Statement	N (%)	SA	A	N	D	SD
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Watching TV makes students get involved in drug taking	240(100)	90(38)	34(14)	10(4)	56(23)	50(21)
Advertisements through radio influence students in drug taking	240(100)	120(50)	80(33)	5(2)	20(8)	15(6)
Some movies influence students in drug taking	240(100)	100(42)	85(35)	5(2)	30(13)	20(8)

F=Frequency; SD=Strongly Disagree D= Disagree N= Not Sure A=Agree SA= Strongly Agree

In regard to whether watching TV makes students get involved in drug taking, 52% of the respondents agreed compared with 44% who disagreed implying that students

got information about taking drugs when they were watching television. By watching the TV the students ended up abusing drugs because of the influence from the mass media. Regarding whether advertisements through radio influenced students in drug taking, 83% of the respondents agreed compared to 14% who disagreed. This means that students were influenced by radio advertisements and were likely to take the message negatively especially when the information was intended for adult consumption. This further implies that even after learning about a certain alcohol or drugs through radio advertisements, they might want to test it because of curiosity. Further, the researcher sought to establish whether some movies influenced students in drug taking. As revealed in the table above 77% of the respondents agreed compared to 21% who disagreed. This means that many students like watching movies which showed drug users and how they use them. If those students modeled the movie stars they may become drug abusers like them.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that exposure to mass media displaying drug content influenced students to abuse drugs. Thus mass media significantly influenced the prevalence of drug abuse among students in secondary schools in Kisumu City. On the basis of the conclusions drawn from the study in respect to the influence of mass media on drug abuse among secondary school students in Kisumu City, the study recommends that the administrators of day secondary schools in Kisumu City should closely monitor and counsel students so as to eradicate the use of drugs among students. The media houses should also sieve the contents of their advertisement to ensure that drug content does not teach students. The government should pass laws that regulate the content of the media.

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