

Title: Levels of drug abuse in selected secondary schools in Kitui District

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Abstract: The study was carried out in Kitui District in Eastern Province of the Republic of Kenya. The primary purpose of this study was to investigate levels of drug abuse in selected secondary schools in the study district. Out of the sixty-eight secondary schools, twenty-nine boys boarding and girls boarding schools were sampled. Out of the twenty-nine six were purposively sampled as the title indicates representing 20.7% of the schools in this category. Out of the six schools four were boys' schools and two girls' schools. Each school provided a total of twenty-five students all in form four, the headteacher, deputy and the counselling teacher. One hundred and fifty students were randomly selected and eighteen teachers purposively sampled because they came from the same schools to facilitate consistency in the research process. One self-report questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions was administered to each individual student and teacher. Students' questionnaires were filled and collected, there and then. Teachers' questionnaires were given in advance during the booking of appointments with the schools and collected on the day when students filled theirs. Eight objectives and eight questions derived from these objectives were covered in the study. Data collected were analyzed in frequency distributions and percentages in some cases or both. The findings showed that drug abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in the study area was an existing phenomenon that had to be addressed seriously. Commonly abused drugs were alcohol, cigarettes, miraa and bhang among others. A new drug known as kuber was established among the boys whose chemical contents could not be known immediately. Drugs of abuse were obtained from local homes and villages neighbouring the schools and shops and bars surrounding the schools. The villagers, fellow students and school workers among other people supplied these drugs to the students. The study established that stress was the major reason why youth abused drugs. Other reasons were sleep and pleasure, peer pressure, to feel high and to read for many hours. Most students agreed that drugs abused influenced school discipline for instance it caused stealing and sneaking among other discipline problems. The study revealed that most students had received counselling from their parents or relatives on drug abuse. Most parents did not invite other people to assist them counsel their children. Most students (82.8%) who abused drugs had parents or relatives who also abused them; meaning that parents were not good models. Students who abused drugs were punished through suspension, manual work, expulsion etc. Only girls reported that they had received counselling as the most effective way of dealing with the vice. Teachers had faced many challenges in dealing with drug abuse particularly in boys' schools. The teachers did not know how to handle addicted students. In fact, these addicts needed psychotherapy according to the questionnaire responses from these teachers. Counselling and drug abuse education were recommended. Religious activities in schools, rehabilitation of drug abusers, severe punishments for those who broke the law on narcotics, monitoring activities between students and villagers were among other recommendations made by this study. Further research on drug abuse in the rural areas and urban populations was recommended to establish the extent and nature of the vice and recommend solutions.