

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Drug dependence and abuse in Kenyan secondary schools: strategies for intervention

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There may have been a time when we in Kenya considered the use or abuse of drugs as a problem relating only to Western world. Today it has become an African problem to the extent that a month hardly passes without media reports on large quantities of drugs having been intercepted in a number of African cities and towns. The results of the study indicated that students abused drugs for varied reasons and the commonly abused drugs were alcohol, bhang, miraa, tobacco and kuber. The study recommended that guidance and counseling in schools be enforced and that strict disciplinary measures be enforced by teachers to curb the vice. Policy makers should also focus their efforts on addressing administrative disparities of principal's leadership capacities across urban, suburban and rural setting.

**Key words:** Drug addiction, drug abuse, substance abuse.

## INTRODUCTION

From a historical perspective, it is noted that our remote ancestors explored the properties of every plant, fruit, root and nut they found. The eventual use of these products would be partly determined by the pharmacological effects, the mature, intensity and duration of these strange and desirable new experiences and partly by the particular group's pattern of living (Kombo, 2005).

The inkas of South America for instance took cocaine which had a central role in their religious and social systems throughout civilization which stretched from around AD 1200 to AD 1500 (Wolmer, 1990).

In classical Greece and Rome, alcohol was widely drunk and some scholars of the time mention the problems of alcohol abuse. Many drugs that are routinely used today were once prohibited in medieval times. According to Wolmer (1990) coffee was banned in the Ottoman Empire but with little success. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in parts of Germany and Russia, the penalty of smoking was death. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century in parts of Germany and Russia, the penalty for smoking tobacco included penalties like splitting or cutting off the nose of the offender.

On the other hand, many drugs that are routinely used

today were once freely available. Wolmer (1990) notes that in the United Kingdom in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century opium would be bought over the counter without a prescription from chemists and even from grocers. Cocaine and cannabis were both legal in the United Kingdom and United States of America.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw the development of drugs for special purposes. The special picture of drug taking behaviour showed signs of complication. Prominent leaders and professionals called for attention to social problems resulting from widespread abuse of alcohol, cocaine and opium among others. As a result drugs like cocaine, opium, peyote, heroine among others were declared illegal overtime in many countries. Cannabis which is illegal in many countries has been currently legalized in Netherlands (Daily Nation, September, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2003).

The increase in drug taking among young people incorporates all levels, and what began as the use of drugs in African traditional society for social relations evolved over time into a problem of dependence and abuse and is of great concern, Kerachio (1994).

## Drug abuse and dependence as a global epidemic

The issue of drug abuse is a major headache to societies and authorities from the cities of the North to Africa, Latin

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