

Factors Influencing Alcohol and Drug Abuse among Chuka University Students, Kenya

Benjamin M. Kanga

ABSTRACT

Alcohol and drugs abuse is on serious increase, especially among the youth in many parts of the World. It has been reported that the most affected persons by the challenge of alcohol and drugs abuse the world over are University students. In Kenya, the National Campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA) report indicates that 84% of youth between 16 to 24 years are involved in alcohol and drug abuse. University students fall under this age bracket. To mitigate this NACADA requires that all universities in Kenya to have Alcohol and Drugs Abuse prevention committees and policies. This study aimed at finding out the causes of Alcohol and Drugs Abuse at Chuka University. The study employed a descriptive research design. The target population was 15,290 Chuka University students. Simple random sampling technique was employed to choose 384 respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect data. statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 for windows was used to analyze data. Data was presented in frequency distribution tables, bar charts, and pie charts.

Keywords: Addiction, Alcoholism, Alcohol Abuse, Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Drug Abuse.

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B. M. Kanga*

Department of Education, Chuka University, Kenya.

(e-mail: Mugambikanga@gmail.com)

*Corresponding Author

I. INTRODUCTION

Different countries have identified several risk factors associated with alcohol and drug abuse among university students. Social demographic characteristics like being a male gender are part of the risk factors (Mohammad Poorasl *et al.*, 2014). Elansari *et al.* (2015) and Osman *et al.* (2016) found that high family income was a risk factor for alcohol and drug abuse. Living out of the university hostels and living in an upper, middle, or high-income country also predisposed students to alcohol and drug abuse (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2016). illicit drug use is associated with the use of other drugs including tobacco smoking and alcohol drinking (Silva *et al.*, 2006). Cho *et al.* (2015) found that psychological factors like anxiety and depression were risk factors for alcohol and drug abuse. The other risk factor was found to be violent behavior like a physical fight (Gomes *et al.*, 2013). NACADA (2012) found the risk factors that predispose university students to drug abuse as unemployment, neglect, violence, sexual abuse, and poor academic performance. Cahill and Byrne (2010) males had a higher concern and concluded that alcohol consumption declines when people get to steady relationships, parenthood, and financial responsibilities.

Hope, Dring and Dring (2005) carried out a college lifestyle and Attitudinal National Survey socialization, enjoyment, and relaxation. Fisher *et al.* (2007) carried out a similar study in the United States and found that 63% of participants considered themselves as social drinkers. According to Mitchell and Sanders (2004), peer influence is a major cause of drug abuse by adolescents and University

students. Wheeler (2010) also found that peer influence was the most important factor that caused excessive drinking.

According to Aklog *et al.* (2013) main causes of Alcohol and drug abuse by University Students are peer pressure, social factors, academic adjustment challenges, psychological and environmental factors. This study further found that students take alcohol and drugs to help them increase pleasure, decrease emotional or physical pain or gain a sense of belonging socially in response to peer pressure in their university life. Maithya (2009) found that students in Kenya take drugs out of curiosity and to gain acceptance from friends. According to Kiiru (2004), youths consumed drugs as a result of peer pressure in order to stimulate their appetite for food. Gabreslassie *et al.* (2013) found that Joining University gives students new opportunities, independence from family control, self-decision making and peer pressure which facilitates chances of alcohol and drug abuse

According to Fekadu *et al.* (2007) Genetics play a big role in the development of alcohol and drug use. Fekadu *et al.* (2007) found that genetic factors play a role in the transmission of Alcohol and drug use from parents to children, that is, children of parents who take drugs are predisposed to taking drugs through genetically inherited genes.

According to Fekadu *et al.* (2007) family factors have a lot of influence on children to take drugs, especially at adolescence. These factors include quality and consistency of family management, communication, relationships, and parental role modeling (Wittrock, 2010). Specific family factors that influence alcohol and drug abuse are ineffective

parental family management techniques like lack of discipline and negative communication in the family (Fekedu, *et al.*, 2007) found that cannabis abusing students were mainly those children who were deprived of parental supervision and warmth from infancy. According to Ogedengbe (2012). most of the student alcohol users and abusers in Nigeria began taking it in their childhood or early adolescence.

Martens, O'Connor and Beck (2006) found that children who experienced traumatic events like sexual, emotional, or physical abuse or neglect were likely to engage in alcohol and drug abuse. Children who are physically or sexually maltreated may have a poor self-image which consequently affects their socialization making them feel unsafe in the world and hence find solace in alcohol and drugs (Berning *et al.*, 2015). Their study further found that drug users seek approval for their behavior by convincing their peers to join their habit as a way of seeking acceptance. According to NACADA (2012) students whose parents use or sell alcohol and drugs are likely to abuse these drugs themselves.

WHO (2010) suggests that socioeconomic status like living in a deprived neighborhood and low-income level is a big risk factor for problematic behavior including alcohol and drug abuse. According to Agarwal *et al.* (2013) Drug abuse is caused by the environment where the most influential are the family, peer association, school performance and social class membership macro-environmental abuse advertising, legislation, and law enforcement as well as availability of drugs. The other macro-environmental factors that cause drug abuse is social and psychological challenges that are caused by the rapid changes in the society like increase in family conflict and break down, increasing poverty, high youth unemployment and increasing education pressures (O'malley & Johnston, 2012).

Tesfaye *et al.* (2014) state that many studies have been done on the influence of psychological distress and psychiatric disorders on alcohol and drug abuse. According to Marteau (2002) psychological distress like low self-esteem and depression are a cause of initiation and maintenance of

alcohol and drug use. They also found a relationship between alcohol and drug abuse and psychiatric disorders. Alcohol and drug abuse can be attributed to lack of knowledge on risks associated with such use (Marteau, 2002). Students are more likely to start using drugs if they believed that casual use is not harmful.

II. DATA ANALYSES

The study sought data on the reason why students took drugs, and the responses are shown in Fig. 1:

According to Fig. 1 majority of the respondents (44%) indicated that students took drugs for pleasure and 25% indicated that it was due to influence by friends. Only 7.5 % and 9.5% of the respondent indicated that seeing parents taking and in order to forget family quarrels respectively.

The study elicited data on the family factors that influence students to take drugs. The responses are shown in Table I.

According to Table I majority (51.5%) of the respondents agreed that family factors influence students to take alcohol and drugs. The majority (60%) of the respondents agreed that lack of parental guidance caused students to take alcohol and drug while 33% indicated that parents who sold drugs caused students to take alcohol and drugs. This concurs with finding by Fekadu *et al.* (2007) that family factors greatly influenced their children to take drugs.

The majority (58%) of the respondents indicated that excess money from the parent caused students to take alcohol and drugs. This agrees with a study by Kingala (2000) which found that excess pocket money and traveling money were redirected to drugs. Lack of fees due to poverty was indicated by 45% of the respondent as another factor that caused students to take drugs. This could be due to frustrations and the fact that cheap alcohol and drugs are readily available in the environment. This concurs with findings by Kingala (2000) that students from poor families had access to cheap illicit beer and other drugs which made them vulnerable.

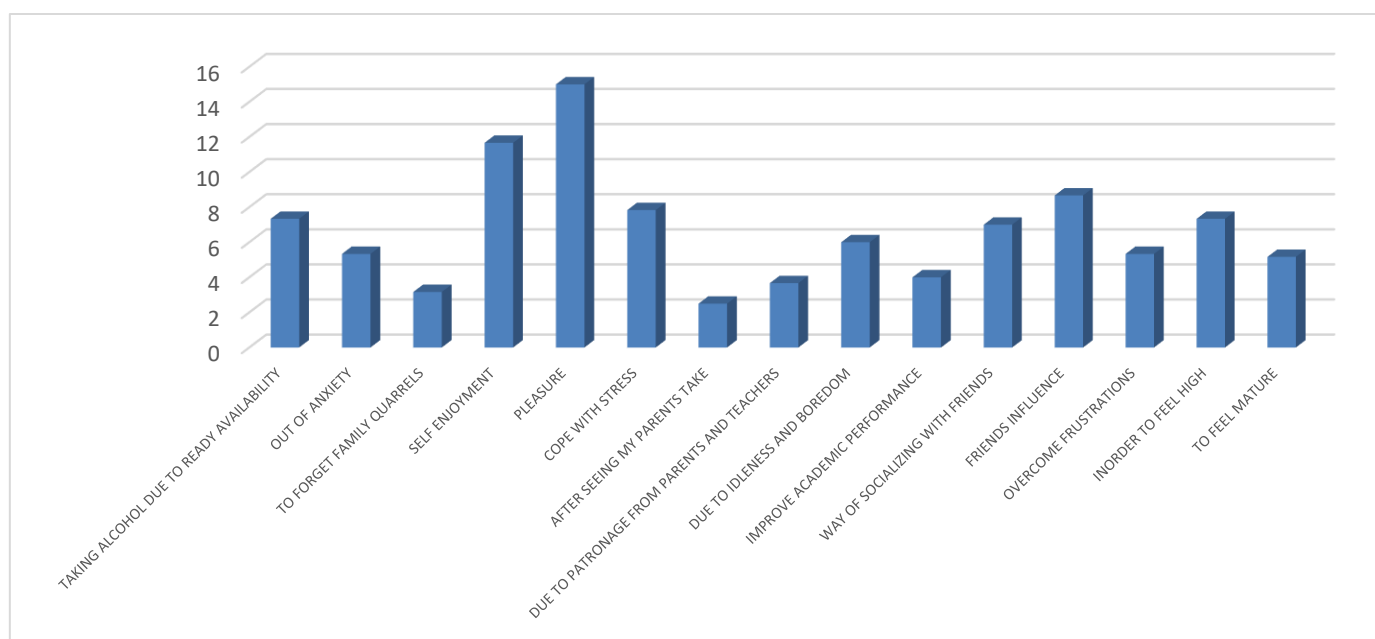


Fig. 1. Reasons for students taking drugs.

TABLE I: FAMILY FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS TO TAKE ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Family Factors Why Students Take Drugs	N	SA%	A%	U%	D%	SD%
Lack of Parental Guidance	384	23	37	9	14	17
Conflicts in the Family	380	14	38	16	17	15
Imitate Parents or Other Adults	381	14	35	18	13	19
Because Parents Sell Drug	373	11	21	15	26	27
Readily Available at Home	372	17	30	15	19	18
To Cool from Harassment by Parents	375	13	30	15	22	21
High Expectations and Harassment by Parents	369	16	31	17	16	20
Absence or Unavailability of Parents	361	19	30	14	17	19
Family Frustrations	369	21	35	14	15	15
Lack of School Fees	371	19	26	12	19	24
Availability of Excess Money	373	28	30	13	13	16
To Cool Off Emotions after Abuse by Parents	369	13	33	18	18	18
To Cope with High Academic Demands by Parents	371	14	27	13	19	26
Total		18.4	33.5	14.5	17.5	19.6

TABLE II: ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS THAT CAUSES ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Environmental Factors Causing Ada	N	SA%	A%	U%	D%	SD%
Enticing Adverts	364	23	39	11	14	12
Availability of Drugs in the Area	370	41	41	5	6	7
Family Conflicts	365	14	37	22	14	12
Lack of Jobs for the Youth	366	32	39	11	10	8
Idleness	364	38	40	8	7	7
Pressure to Perform Well	361	23	27	18	17	14
Too Much Freedom at the University	366	27	30	14	13	16
Being away from Teachers and Parents	363	23	29	14	18	17
Too Much Money from Home	367	21	31	13	18	18
Lack of Money	362	11	19	23	23	23
Family Breakdown	365	17	35	20	13	15
Absence of Guidance and Counseling	357	27	40	13	10	10
Too Many Pubs around	362	41	30	10	9	10
Total		26	33.6	14	13.2	13

Family conflict was identified by 52% of the respondents as a factor that causes students to take drugs. This agrees with the finding of a study by Otieno and Ofulla (2009) that family conflict and divorce caused students from those families to abuse drugs. Another 49% of the respondents indicated that students took alcohol and drug to imitate their parents and other adults. This concurs with a study by Pudo (1998) which found that children from families where parents took drugs tend to imitate their parents by taking illicit drugs.

The study sought data from the respondents on the environmental factors that cause alcohol and drug abuse among university students. The responses were as shown in Table II.

According to Table II majority, 59.6% of the respondents agreed that environmental factors cause alcohol and drug abuse. A total of 82 % of respondents agreed that the availability of drugs around the university caused alcohol and drug abuse while 30 % suggested that poverty or lack of money caused alcohol and drug abuse. This concurs with studies by Elizabeth *et al.* (2003) who found that when students joined institutions of higher learning they get exposed to more availability of alcohol and drugs, drug abusers and social engagements which influenced them to join in alcohol and drug abuse. Rose *et al.* (2019) Reported that availability of alcohol and drugs in learning environment was on increase, and it was a major cause of alcohol and drug abuse in secondary schools and universities.

Many (67 %) of the respondents indicated that lack of guidance and counseling cause alcohol and drug abuse. This concurs with findings by Kern *et al.* (2011) that teenagers who lacked guidance and counselling engaged in alcohol and drug abuse. It further agrees with a study by O'Malley and Johnstone (2002) which found that alcohol and drug abuse is

attributed to lack of knowledge on the risks associated with alcohol and drug use.

The study sought data on the psychological causes of alcohol and drug abuse. The response is shown in Table III.

TABLE III: PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS CAUSING OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Psychological Causes	N	SA%	A%	U%	D%	SD%
To Overcome Low Self Esteem	340	28	42	10	10	10
To Frustrations	342	29	49	10	8	5
To Overcome Depression	340	31	45	10	8	6
To Feel High	341	30	36	15	9	10
Copy with Family Problems	345	19	37	15	18	11
To Overcome Exam Anxiety	340	21	34	15	16	13
Disappointment by Girl/Boy Friends	340	38	34	11	9	8
To Satisfy the Craving for Beer/Bhang	338	30	40	12	9	9
Total		28.3	39.6	12.3	10.9	8.9

Table III shows that 67.9 % of the respondents indicated that they agreed that psychological factor cause alcohol and drug abuse with 78 % and 55 % agreeing that frustrations and exam anxiety respectively caused alcohol and drug abuse. This concurs with findings by Martens, O'Connor and Beck (2009) that students who experienced traumatic events like sexual, emotional or physical abuse or neglect were likely to engage in alcohol and drug abuse.

Another 70% of the respondents agreed that students take drugs to overcome low self-esteem. This agrees with a study by O' Malley and Johnston (2002) which found that psychological distress like low self-esteem causes the initiation and maintenance of alcohol and drug abuse.

III. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study established that alcohol and drug abuse were caused by availability of drugs, idleness, self-enjoyment, peer influence and frustrations. The study further found some family factors like conflict, lack of parental guidance in early ages, excess money for upkeep and frustrations from family members influenced drug abuse among students. The environmental factor found to be causing alcohol and drug abuse include their availability, absence of guidance and counseling to the youth, independence and detachment from home supervision and too much freedom at the university. The study found that the psychological factors that caused the students to engage alcohol and drug abuse were frustrations, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety and disappointment from boyfriends or girlfriends.

The study found that the factors that influence alcohol and drug abuse were both internal and external. The internal factors were psychological in nature and may best be handled psychologically through guidance and counselling. The external factors were either family or environmental related. Serious family factor may call for involvement of family members in helping the addicts. Environmental factor may be mitigated by where possible addressing the factors contributing to alcohol and drug abuse or helping the students navigate through the challenges.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. To mitigate the psychological factors influencing alcohol and drug abuse the university may need to intensify Guidance and counselling services by availing more funds for developing behavior change communication materials. These materials can be in both soft and hard copies. These materials can be used by student welfare department to sensitize students on mental health issues on a weekly basis. This may be made possible by training more peer counsellors and distributing them to cover all the faculties and departments as well as the hostels.
- ii. The student welfare department may also need to develop e-counselling platform to enable students to access guidance and counseling services online. This platform may be hosted in the university website and students get sensitized on its existence and importance.
- iii. Family factors were found to be contributing to student involvement in alcohol and drug abuse. There is, therefore, a need for university counselors to involve parents in family therapy if it becomes necessary. This may help in mitigating the family factors that influence alcohol and drug abuse.
- iv. The environmental factors influencing alcohol and drug abuse may be addressed by mobilizing the community to form a community anti-drug coalition. This is a new world approach in the fight against alcohol and drug abuse. It brings together the various community stakeholders to address the drug supply reduction in the community. Drug supply has been the biggest hindrance to the war against alcohol and drug abuse worldwide.

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