

International Journal of Psychology (IJP)

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE CESSATION EFFORTS AMONG STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF MACHAKOS MUNICIPALITY, MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

Beth James Makau, Dr Zipporah Kaaria and Doreen Katiba

**CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE CESSATION
EFFORTS AMONG STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF
MACHAKOS MUNICIPALITY, MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA**

^{1*}Beth James Makau

¹Post Graduate Student: Department of Theology Religious Studies and Counselling; Kenya Methodist University

²Dr Zipporah Kaaria

Lecturer: Department of Theology Religious Studies and Counselling; Kenya Methodist University

³Doreen Katiba

Lecturer: Department of Theology Religious Studies and Counselling; Kenya Methodist University

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate into the challenges experienced in drug and substance abuse cessation efforts by students in secondary schools in Machakos County. The study used the study objectives; to investigate individual challenges experienced by students in secondary schools in Machakos Municipality in their effort to stop abusing drugs and to establish school challenges experienced by students in secondary schools in Machakos Municipality in their efforts to stop abusing drugs.

Methodology: The study used descriptive design. From the 27 schools within the municipality, 9 were purposively sampled. Each school provided a total of 12 respondents, 3 students from each form. One deputy principal, and one Guidance and counseling teacher from each school formed the total of 136 respondents. Questionnaires were administered to both students and teachers. Focus group discussions were conducted among students and interviews were done with kiosk owners around the school compounds. The various methods of data collection ensured triangulation and richer data. Data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) utilizing descriptive procedures. The results were presented in frequency distribution, tables, and percentages.

Findings: The findings revealed that 46.7% of both boys and girls in public and private secondary schools were aware that students abuse drugs. Majority 66.7% indicated that withdrawal syndromes were the individual challenges faced in the cessation efforts. 45.3% indicated that peer pressure was the major school challenge experienced in cessation efforts.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Recommendations included having trained drug and abuse counselors in schools to be able to help the students who are involved in the substances of abuse, teachers, counselors, and the ministry of education, parents, and the general public may benefit from these findings a lot. Although drug and substance abuse cuts across all genders, there is hope for the quitters.

Keywords: *Drug and substance abuse, students and schools.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse is a major problem among school-going youths. Majority of the learners indulge in drug abuse unaware of the dangers it causes Drug abuse has become a major problem among the school-going youth. According to National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) (2014), 80 % of the learners in schools are aware of illicit drugs but only 6% of them know the harmful effects of drugs. This means that majority of the learners indulge in drug abuse unaware of the dangers it causes. The report further shows that 41% of form three, and form four secondary school students have tried bhang. 10% are still smoking it. Only 19% have experimented with valium and 8% are hooked on it. Bracchi (2010) asserts that the habit has its roots in the pre-teen years and is further amplified in the teenage years when most of the youth are in secondary schools Pre-teenage and teenage years are critical in the human life cycle as they involve transition from childhood to adulthood. The young people find themselves in a challenging position as they strive to prepare themselves both physically and intellectually for adult life and at the same time search for identity. They are trying to assume their sex role and learn to come into terms with authority.

Kenya like any other country in Africa has been experiencing a rapid increase in production, distribution and consumption of multiple drugs of dependence among the young people. The Kenyan scene like any other country has been associated with the growing state of lawlessness and changes in social dynamics among the young people. The current state of unrest and indiscipline among the young people in schools and institutions of higher learning according to Cheloti (2013) has been linked with the increase in the use of alcohol, bhang and experimentation with hard drugs like cocaine, heroin and mandrax which are imported to Kenya through illicit trafficking,

It is not possible to make an accurate assessment of the number of secondary school students who are actively involved in drug abuse in Kenya's rural areas. However, it is generally accepted that many youths have already come into contact with various types of psycho active substances that are found in this country.

In response to global warnings on the dangers posed by drug abuse, the National Agency for Campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA) is pushing for the establishment of a national drug control authority to enforce all drugs trafficking law in Kenya (Kaguthi, 2006). According to Kaguthi, although religious education has been instilled strongly in the youth, the majority still abuse drugs and are likely to destroy their lives before they become adults. He argues that most secondary school students today are experimenting with drugs. In their most recent study (NACADA) reports (2013), confirmed that a large number of students in Kenya across all age groups have been exposed to alcohol, tobacco, Miraa, Khat, glue sniffing, bhang and even hard drugs.

1.1 Research Objectives

The key purpose of this study was to challenges experienced in drug and substance abuse cessation efforts among students in secondary schools. The specific objectives were to; (i) to investigate individual challenges experienced by students in secondary schools in Machakos Municipality in their effort to stop abusing drugs and to determine establish school challenges

that are experienced by students in secondary schools in Machakos Municipality in their efforts to stop abusing drugs

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Individual challenges experienced by students in their effort to stop abusing drugs.

The basic premise is that students who use substances do so because of social pressures from peers, the family, and the media, as well as internal pressures for example, the desire to be cool and popular (Portnoy, 2014). Fact sheet on statistics and trends in illicit drug in 2015 showed that there were a series of stages that young smokers go through, each of which was influenced by different factors. The stages can progress in any direction and stop or restart any number of times. Firstly, in Precontemplation, the child while not yet considering smoking, has received messages about it. At this stage, the child is most powerfully influenced by family members that smoke, advertising, films, television, and role models. Secondly, the individual gets to contemplate the information received from the media or from peer influence results in curiosity and the desire to try a cigarette. At this stage, friends' behavior is added to the list of influences. In addition, in the Initiation stage, most youths will try a cigarette, but the majority do not become addicted or become regular smokers. Peers tend to exert the strongest influence.

According to Lochman (2012), psychological characteristics associated with substance use include poor self-esteem among students, low assertiveness and poor behavioral self-control. Pharmacologic risk factors become increasingly important as an individual's substance use increases in frequency and quantity. Drugs of abuse such as cocaine, amphetamine, morphine, as well as nicotine and alcohol, have different pharmacological mechanisms of action. However, research shows that each of these substances affects the brain in a similar way. Drug use typically increases the activity of excitatory synapses on midbrain dopamine neurons. Furthermore, there are likely to be important individual differences in terms of neurochemical reactivity to drugs, placing some individuals at higher risk.

In a report by National Survey on Drug use and Health (NSDUH) (2017), Drug and substance abuse carries stigma. This stigma carries a heavy weight on the shoulders of those in wanting to quit abusing drugs. So much that many people do not want to seek help openly out of fear of other's judgment. They do not want to stand out, but rather, fit in. They do not want to be looked at wrongly, to be punished, but rather, to be healthy and move forward in life. Unfortunately, the report further says, this stigma prevents 10 percent of people from moving past drug abuse completely. One-fifth of people who don't seek treatment say they fear what others would think if they went to rehabilitation. The report identified the opinions of neighbors and community members as key factors, but the concern may be closer to home. People with substance use disorders fear the judgment of society, friends and loved ones because addiction has become stigmatized.

Trying out new and different behaviors is part of a natural process of separating from parents, gaining acceptance and popularity with peers, developing a sense of identity, autonomy, independence, and maturity, seeking fun and adventure, and/or rebelling against authority. Unfortunately, from an adolescent's point of view, engaging in alcohol, tobacco, and other drug

use may be seen as a functional way of achieving independence, maturity, or popularity, along with other developmental goals Moodie (2010). The most effective prevention approaches incorporate an understanding that substance use behaviors can fulfill a variety of developmental needs. Therefore, teaching students to “just say no” to substance use is necessary but not sufficient for behavior change.

School challenges experienced by students in their effort to stop abusing drugs

A research conducted by Clayton, (2012) shows that smokers who were trying to quit smoking were faced with school influences that may persuade them to conform and continue smoking. Cravings are easier to detain when one's environment does not provoke the habit. If a person who stopped smoking has close relationships with active smokers, he or she is often put into situations that make the urge to conform more tempting. However, in a small group with at least one other not smoking, the likelihood of conformity decreases. The school influence to smoke cigarettes has been proven to rely on simple variables.

The research continued to show that individuals were 77% more likely to conform to non-friends, while close friendships decreased conformity. Therefore, if an acquaintance offers a cigarette as a polite gesture, the person who has stopped smoking will be more likely to break his commitment than if a friend had offered. Recent research from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey of over 6,000 smokers found that smokers with fewer smoking friends were more likely to intend to quit and to succeed in their quit attempt (Hitchman,2014).

Findings showed that peer factors and degree of bonding to conventional institutions were associated with adolescent substance use (Fidler, 2011). Students, who were not engaged in school, failed to develop or maintain relationships with their teachers, and those who failed academically were more likely to engage in substance use. Similarly, Amrock (2015) pointed out that, when a young person feels disengaged from their communities or feels unsafe in their neighborhoods, not only is this associated with greater substance use, but it also creates greater levels of community disorganization. Students who maintain active involvement in community institutions such as school and church are less likely to engage in substance use. Schools and communities can play a protective role by taking active steps to engage young people in order to avoid drug use and other problem behaviors.

There was consensus among most researchers that the following were the reasons why adolescents abuse drugs: Drugs also help the adolescents to avoid life demands and problems as a defense mechanism (Cookson,2010).). Those who are prone to aggression use drugs as an excuse or justification for their aggressive behavior. Religious affiliation; pseudo religious groups such as Mungiki make their members sniff snuff during rituals. Alternative faiths such as Rastafarianism allow the use of marijuana by its adherents for ritual reasons. Members claim that marijuana helps them to meditate. In some cases drugs are readily availability e.g. cigarettes in shops, cheap alcohol in wines and spirits shops, khat, marijuana etc. some students are used by dealers to peddle drugs and this increases accessibility of drugs to adolescents. Breakdown of social structure; modern society has become more tolerant to immorality. This is displayed in the alienation and rebellious character of the youth, lack of purpose in life (Cookson, 2010).

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive research design. The target population for this study comprised of schools in Machakos Municipality. There were twenty seven (27) secondary schools which comprised of 7 boys boarding, 6 girls boarding, 10 mixed day and boarding, and 4 mixed day secondary schools. Proportional random sampling technique was used to sample the respondents from the targeted population. Purposive sampling was used at the beginning of the study during selection of the nine secondary schools in Machakos Municipality as the sites of the study. In total 108 respondents were chosen from both private and public schools. There were three sets of questionnaires; for students and Deputy Head teachers. These were used for data collection. Simple statistics were used to analyze the data that were collected. Instruments of data collection were checked for completeness and information accuracy. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software Programme. Qualitative data were to clarify information, give explanations and opinions that may have not been captured in the questionnaires. Findings were then generated and presented in the form of tables and charts indicating frequencies and percentages.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section shows descriptive statistics of the study variables on challenges experienced in drug and substance abuse cessation efforts among students in secondary schools. The study used individual and school challenges experienced by students in secondary schools in Machakos Municipality in their effort to stop abusing drugs

4.1 Individual Challenges Encountered in Drug and Substance Abuse cessation efforts.

This section investigated whether there were individual challenges, and what types of challenges were encountered by individual students in their efforts in stopping drug and substance abuse.

4.1.1 Establishing whether there were challenges experienced by students.

The study sought to establish whether there were challenges that were generally experienced by students as they attempted to quit drug abuse. The findings were as in Table 1:

Table 1: Individual Challenges

| Do you agree/disagree | Frequency | Percentages |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Strongly agree | 30 | 27.7% |
| Agree | 42 | 38.8% |
| Disagree | 20 | 18.5% |
| Strongly disagree | 16 | 14.8% |
| Total | 108 | 100 |

From the findings majority of the respondents 38.8% agreed there were individual challenges encountered by students in their efforts to stop drug abuse, whereas 18.5% disagreed. The basic premise is that individuals who are aware that they have struggles in coming out of abuse are more likely to be helped to quit. These findings were supported by those of (Portnoy, 2014) who found that the challenge is deep-rooted because some of the substance abusers are known but

have not been caught red-handed and so taking action against them or rehabilitating them is as difficult as they could be engaged in denial, minimization and rationalization of their involvements.

4. 2 Awareness of drug abuse

The respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of drug abuse in their schools and the responses were as in figure 1

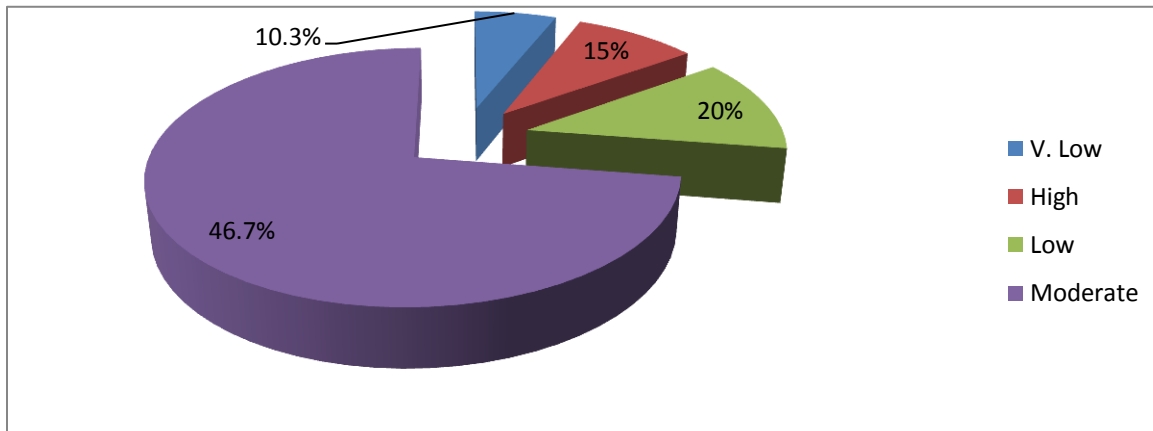


Figure 1 Awareness of drug abuse in school

Majority of the respondents 46.7% indicated that the levels of drug abuse in their schools were moderate while 20% indicated that it was low, 15% was high and 10% as very low. This showed that majority of the respondents were aware of abuse of drugs in their schools and the abuse levels were relatively high. This could mean that the respondents were at the contemplation stage of quitting from drug abuse and could be receptive of interventions to help them overcome the good.

4.1.1 Types of individual challenges experienced by students in their drug and substance abuse cessation efforts.

The respondents were asked to give the types of challenges students experienced in quitting from abuse and the responses were as in table 2:

Table 2: Types of individual Challenges

| Types of challenges | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| Withdrawal syndrome | 44 | 40.7% |
| Stigma | 31 | 28.7% |
| Teasing by other students | 21 | 19.4% |
| Availability of the drugs | 23 | 12.9% |
| Total | 108 | 100 |

Majority of the respondents (40.7%) indicated withdrawal syndromes as the major challenges encountered, (28.7%) stigma, (19.4%) indicated teasing by other students while (12.9%) indicated availability of drugs as the least challenge encountered by students.

The students' respondents indicated that as they try to quit drugs, they found themselves suffering from lots of withdrawal symptoms and cravings for the same. As remarked in the focused group discussion.

“These boys lack sleep, build castles in the air...”

A study by National Clinical Guideline Centre (NCGC) (2010) defined withdrawal syndrome as a set of symptoms that can occur following a reduction in alcohol use after a period of excessive use. These symptoms normally include anxiety, shakiness, sweating, vomiting, fast heart rate, and a mild fever. Other abusers may show more severe symptoms like seizures, seeing or hearing things that others do not. Most of these withdrawal symptoms were experienced by the students. This is because their bodies get used to certain levels of drugs that makes it difficult to function without the “right” doses.

“one is so belittled by the so called group members that guys feel like quitting or changing schools. You are not given a breathing space because they need you back in their camp”

These responses were in agreement with those of deputy principals and school counselors who indicated withdrawal syndrome as the most challenge experienced by students in their effort to stop drug abuse. Many people who are struggling with substance abuse hesitate to seek help because they have heard horrible stories about or otherwise have fears regarding the process of drug detox. Unfortunately, this fear and hesitation leads to many people continuing their dangerous risk-taking and substance-abusing behaviors.

Before anything else, it is vital to note that even in some of the more difficult detox and withdrawal situations, the detox process is much safer than continuing substance abuse. Miller (2006). The long-term health effects and psychological damage that can result from substance abuse can have negative effects for the rest of the individual's life. On the other hand, with medical and other therapeutic support, the withdrawal process is a short-term period of discomfort that doesn't have to be as difficult as people often fear it will be.

The finding also resonates in Bronfenbrenner's theory of Ecological systems. This theory postulates that a person's immediate physical and social environment which is Microsystems influences a lot on ones behavior (Dele & John, 2001). These abusers had formed a bond among other abusers and may be that is why cessation efforts were met with challenges. According to the theory of reasoned action, if drug and substance abusers, evaluate the abuse behavior as positive (attitude), and if they think their significant others want them to approve their behavior. These results in a higher intention (motivations) and they are more likely to continue abusing drugs. However if peers evaluate the change unfavorably or think others do not welcome the change the intention for change is likely to be low.

4.3 School challenges experienced by students in drug cessation efforts

The study investigated the school challenges that the abusers faced as they struggled to come out of abuse.

4.3.1 Establishing whether there were school challenges experienced by students in their drug cessation efforts

The students were asked to indicate whether there were challenges coming from their schools that affected those who were planning to quit drug abuse and the responses were as in Figure 4.5:

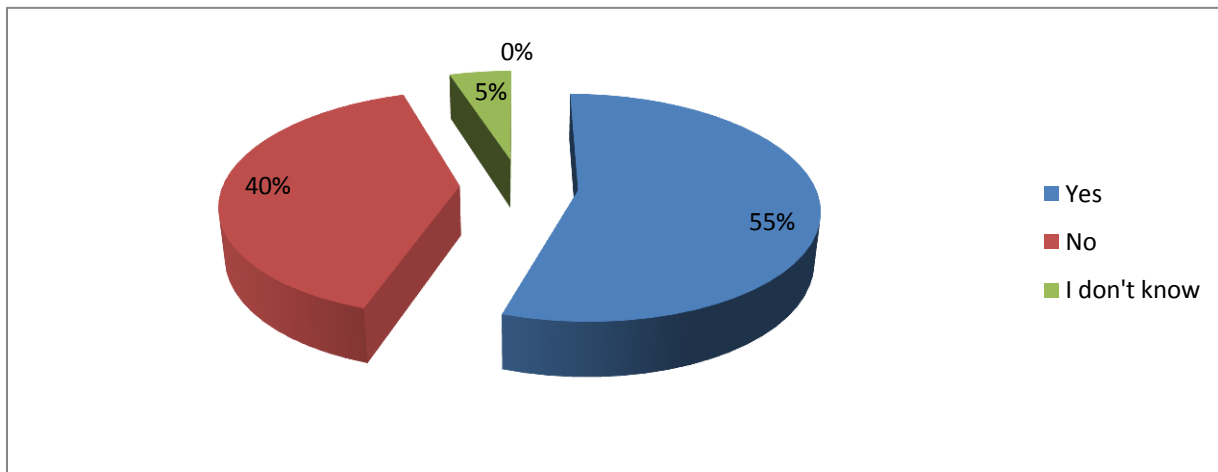


Figure 2: Awareness of school challenges

Majority of the participants (55%) agreed that there were school challenges influencing drug and substance abuse cessation in their schools. 40% indicated that there were no school challenges experienced in quitting drug abuse and 5% were not aware that there were school challenges.

4.3.2 Types of school challenges experienced by students in quitting drug abuse

The participants were asked to indicate the school challenges experienced by students in quitting drug and the responses were as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Types of school challenges

| School challenges | Frequency | percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Peer pressure | 49 | 45.3% |
| Involvement of school workers in supplying drugs | 36 | 33.3% |
| Lack of proper methods of stopping the problem | 23 | 21.2% |
| Total | 108 | 100 |

Majority of the respondents (45.3%) indicated that peer pressure from other students was the major type of challenge followed by involvement of school workers in smuggling drugs into schools 33.3%. lack of proper methods of stopping the problem was among the challenges affecting these students. These findings were supported by the kiosk owners, deputy heads, and guidance and counseling teachers. A deputy head had this to comment:

“Sometimes, when a problem of drug abuse arises, we realize that some students from poor families are easily attracted to imitate students from rich families who may be abusing drugs and have a lot of money to buy these drugs. They think that students from rich families know everything. The pressure to prove that they are not backward leads them to these drugs of abuse”

Peer pressure has led to many destructive behaviors among many youths and especially secondary school students. For instance, in Chalbi Boys High School, six teachers are nursing injuries, with one in critical condition after several students attacked them. Peer influence has caused burning down of schools, riots in schools and even beating of teachers (Irene Mwendwa, Daily nation July 2, 2018). Many students wanting to quit drug and substance abuse possibly do it in secret for fear of being rejected by their peers.

Under the influence of peer pressure from their peers, students’ abusers are likely to be influenced not to quit drug and substance abuse. In his theory of four stages of peer pressure, Erikson states that individuals feel the need to conform to social standards, ideas, and peers to avoid conflict and in the fear of rejection, or not being accepted by others Doumen *et al*, 2012). In addition Jax (2015) asserts that lack of knowledge or understanding may also lead individuals to conform to others’ ideas so as to avoid embarrassment and tension. Hence abusers may easily conform to peer influence.

School workers were mentioned widely by the student respondents and the kiosk owners as people used by students to sneak drugs to the schools and especially in boarding public schools. In the interview with the kiosk owners, some pointed out that especially in the boarding schools, school workers, including watchmen, cooks and grounds men were major sources. Friends and relatives also contributed to sneaking these drugs into schools during monthly school visitations. A kiosk attendant had this to say:

“You see these misungi (local brew packed in 2 litre bottles), there is a cook in the school who buys a bottle every day and carries it like water and he makes a lot of money selling to students without anybody suspecting it. I hear some students steal money from others to purchase the commodities. This school is bad. I cannot dare take my son there”.

This shows that school workers pose a challenge to the cessation efforts.

5.0: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of findings

The findings demonstrated that students in secondary schools in Machakos Municipality mostly abused alcohol followed by Khat (Miraa) and the most prevalent was alcohol. In most mixed schools, the study found out that the day scholars and school workers were the means of sneaking drugs to schools. The findings revealed that students experienced a myriad of individual, and school challenges in their efforts to quit substances and drug abuse. The individual challenges ranged from withdrawal syndromes. Alongside the individual challenges in the students’ cessation efforts, there were also school challenges which the study identified as by involvement of school workers in supplying the drugs. The study also found that counseling was

the major intervention used in schools to help students involved in drug and substance abuse though it seemed not to been effective as a high number of the abusers were still in the process of contemplating to come out of abuse. Some of the reasons the students pointed out for the ineffectiveness of counseling were, role confusion, for instance, some teachers doubling as discipline masters and as counselors which led to lack of trust of the teacher. The study also found that the Trans theoretical model of behavior change could be effective in helping abusers move from contemplation to action and maintenance stages and eventually be drug free.

5.2 Conclusions

Drug and Substances Abuse is a complex phenomenon in secondary schools. The findings showed that counseling was the most prevalent intervention used in schools to address abuse of drug and substance. However the strategy seemed not to bear fruits due to role confusion/dual relationship whereby a teacher served as a discipline master and a counselor. This left the students with mistrust of the teacher counselor and created fear of seeking help to quit abuse. It was also realized that most of the students' challenges towards quitting of abuse were emanating from the family and school environments.

REFERENCES

- Amrock S.M., Zakhar J., Zhou S., Weitzman M (2015). *Perception of e-cigarette harm and its correlation with use among U.S. adolescents*. Nicotine Tob. Res. 2015; 17:330–336
- Bracchi, P. (2010, October8). *I'm nine years old and I sold drugs: Confessions of a primary school playground dealer*. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1318941>
- Cheloti, S. K. (2013). *Effectiveness of head teachers' administrative strategies in curbing drug and substance abuse in secondary schools in Nairobi county, Kenya*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. University of Nairobi.
- Clayton D.; Sigillo, Alexandra E.; Green, Morgan; Miller, Monica K. (2012). *Friendship and Conformity in Group Opinions: Juror Verdict Change in Mock Jurie Sociological Spectrum*. 32 (2): 178–193. doi:10.1080/02732173.2012.64616
- Cookson, H. (2010). *Alcohol Use and Offence Type in Young Offenders*. British Journal of Criminology, 32(3): 352-360
- Doumen S, Smits I, Luyckx K, Duriez B, Vanhalst J, Verschueren K, Goossens L. Identity and perceived peer relationship quality in emerging adulthood: The mediating role of attachment-related emotions. *Journal of Adolescence*. 2012;35:1417–1425. [PubMed]
- Fidler J.A., Shahab L., West O., Jarvis M.J., McEwen A., Stapleton J.A., Vangeli E., West R. 'The smoking toolkit study': a national study of smoking and smoking cessation in England. *BMC Public Health*. 2011;11:479.
- Hitchman, SC; Fong, GT; Zanna, MP; Thrasher, JF; Laux, FL (December 2014). "The relation between number of smoking friends, and quit intentions, attempts, and success: findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey.". *Psychology of*

- addictive behaviors.: *journal of the Society of Psychologists in Addictive Behaviors*. **28** (4): 1144–52. PMID
- Jax, C. (2015) What Is Erikson’s Theory Regarding Peer Influence in Adolescent
- Kaguthi, J. (2006). *Drug Abuse in Nairobi Province and nationally, with specific reference To Educational institutions*. Nairobi, Kenya. UNDCP.
- Lochman, C(2012). *The Coping Power Program at the middle-school transition: Universal and indicated prevention effects*. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 16(45):S40–S54, 2002.
- Moodie, C., Mackintosh, A. & Hammond, D. (2010). *Adolescents’ response to text-only tobacco health warnings: Results from the 2008 UK Youth Tobacco Policy Survey*. *European Journal of Public Health*, 20 (4), 463–469. doi:10.1093/eurpub/ckp199
- Mugenda, O. and Mugenda, A. (2003). *Research Methods. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. NRB-ACTS
- NACADA, (2013). *Report on Rapid Situation Assessment of drug and substance abuse in Kenya*. Nairobi. Standard Newspaper, (June, 2014). Drug abuse in schools.
- NIDA (2014). *Preventing Drug Abuse among Children and Adolescents: A Research-Based Guide for Parents, Educators, and Community Leaders (Second Edition)* (NIH Publication. Rockville, MD, 2014
- Portnoy, D. B., Wu, C. C., Tworek, C., Chen, J., & Borek, N. (2014). *Youth curiosity about cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and cigars: Prevalence and associations with advertising*. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 47(2), S76--S86.