STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION IN THE EASTERN AFRICA REGION: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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The Impact of Drug Abuse Sensitisation Campaigns in Kenya by Donald Kisilu Kombo

Abstract
The use of drugs for purposes other than therapeutic ones by youths in Kenya is a worrying issue. This is made more complex by the fact that drug abuse is on the increase. This study sought to find out why drug abuse was on the increase among youths despite sensitisation campaigns. Specifically, the study sought to find out the concept youths, teachers and parents had on drug abuse, their awareness of the type of drugs on the Kenyan market and the associated dangers and why drug abuse was on the increase despite sensitisation campaigns. The study utilised qualitative research methods. Sixty youths, ten teachers and ten parents participated in the study. Questionnaires and interviews were used.

The study findings indicated that although the majority of respondents were aware of the term drug abuse, and viewed drug abuse as a serious problem in Kenya, they were reluctant to take individual responsibility in its eradication as it was felt this could cause unnecessary collision and it wasn't their responsibility. Bhang was regarded by respondents, as more prevalently abused than alcohol and tobacco. Peer group influence was seen as a major contributor to drug abuse. Drug abuse sensitisation campaigns were regarded as not successful due to poor targeting; lack of focus on causative factors; poor implementation and they were boring. Recommendations included effective sensitisation campaigns, emphasis on individual and parental responsibility, guidance and counselling programmes, incorporation of drug related topics in school curriculum, and stern measures taken by government on drug trafficking and abuse.

Introduction
The history of the human race has also been a history of drug use. Since earliest times, herbs, roots, bark, leaves and plants have been used to relieve pain and help control disease. However, what began as the use of drugs for medical purposes and relaxation has evolved in time into a problem of drug dependence and abuse (Kerachi, 1994). In Kenya, drug abuse among the youth is of major concern, particularly when it is considered that the population is heavily skewed towards young people, with those below 25 years constituting 18.8 million, which represents 66% of the total population (M.O.H, 2003). Drug abuse among the youth is a national development concern as it has devastating effects on the country's development in all spheres. The study aimed at finding out why drug abuse was still prevalent among the youths in Kenya despite various sensitisation campaigns.
Based on this theory, responses that are rewarded in a particular situation tend to come under the control of stimuli present in that situation. The stimulus, which follows a response, determines whether or not it will be repeated. If it is pleasant it is repeated, if unpleasant it is avoided. According to Operant theory, organisms behave but they do not behave haphazardly. There is some property of the organism, which guides it into action and guides the course of action. (Skinner, 1953).

Based on this theory it can be deduced that drug abuse might be based on some search and “hunger” to fill a vacuum in the abuser’s life. This search is temporarily supported through reinforcement schedules within the environment. It is possible that there may be a need among many youths that is not fully addressed by family and society and therefore, drug taking becomes the alternative. This may be so considering that drug abuse is acquired through learning and is not random. The abusers have preferences (e.g. whether to take beer, whisky, kumi kumi, tobacco- Sportsman/ Horseman/ Sweet Menthol/ Embassy, Bhang, miraa , Guiness or Tusker etc), which are presumed to be consequences of their motivational states. They believe in taking drugs that will bring about certain outcomes and avoid others. In order to do this, they must consistently make different responses to different stimuli in their environment. They discriminate or make discriminations among stimuli preferences and discriminations. This may be a fundamental concept in the study of drug abuse.

However, operant behaviour can be controlled. Even though the rat gets food by pressing the lever, it does not do this if it is not hungry. Skinner’s theory is applicable in this study in that in order to curb drug abuse among the youths in Kenya, society may have to look for ways of not making the youths “hungry” for drugs. In addition to this, when reinforcement is no longer forth coming, a response becomes less frequent therefore, when youths engage in behaviours that boost their self esteem, help them avoid idleness and know the danger of drugs, they may be less inclined to abuse drugs. It is possible that the reversibility of drug abuse among the youth in Kenya may lie in the reversibility of the reinforcement relation since reinforcement increases the probability of the preceding response. This study will help us find out whether youths take on drugs because they find the consequences pleasant and satisfying or whether drug taking helps reduce some state of deprivation.

The Global Perspective on Drug Abuse
Drug abuse, illegal drug selling and the negative impact of drugs have been with Mankind since time immemorial. There exists evidence to indicate that the Chinese knew about drugs in 2700 B.C. (Yusif 1983). Heroin has been known and used since 1890s, Morphine since 1800s, Cocaine since 1855, Marijuana since 2800 B.C. and Hashish since 2800 B.C. (New Mark 1968). Violence associated with selling illicit substances has been evident since the opium wars in China and the illegal whiskey importation into the American Colonies (Musto, 1989).

By 1976, alcohol consumption in Britain had reached such alarming heights that the department of Health and Social Security issued a warning of the repercussions pointing out that about 500,000 people were victims, with serious drinking problems. Besides alcohol, there were around 20,000 persons who were dependent on drugs by 1980. In 1981, the British customs service seized a record amount of 86 kilograms of heroin. In 1982, The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs reported that there were about 40,000 people in Britain with serious drug problems frequently involving heroin (Advisory Council 1982). In the twenty first century, drug problems among the Youth is a pertinent issue in Britain.

In the twentieth century there were between 8-10 million alcoholics and about 15 deaths from liver cirrhosis for 100,000 of the population in the United States of America (Garagliano et al, 1979). Thailand has 300,000-400,000 inhabitants dependent on opium or heroin. Alcoholism kills 40,000 people in France annually while Russia blames 60% of their countries murderers on alcohol. Assessment of the number of people dependent on heroin (mostly imported from the East) ranged in the mid 1970s from 10,000 to 30,000 in Holland, 15,000 in West Germany, 5000-6 000 in France, 3,000 in Belgium and 3,000 in Britain (The Times, 1976).

In 2002 more than 4.9 million people died of tobacco related diseases worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, if nothing is done to control drug abuse, over 10 million people will be dying every year by the year 2020 due to tobacco related ailments. Seven out of every ten of these deaths will be occurring in developing countries, including Kenya and this is mainly because tobacco companies are moving from their countries in Europe and America where their governments have blocked their trade and are getting a ready market in third world countries (W.H.O 2003).

The Drug situation in Kenya
The frequent seizure of drugs at Jomo Kenyatta International airport is sufficient proof of the fact that large quantities of drugs particularly heroin are moving through Kenya (Opala; 2003). The United Nations International Drug Control Programme world drug
Kenyans and South Africans are better known for nations that feature prominently on the global anti-report (2000), groups Kenya among four African Tanzanians have been arrested at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport with heroin sachets, while Kenyans and South Africans are better known for dealing in Mandrax.

In 2003, a Kenyan was seized with 10,000 tablets of Mandrax on his way from the airport while a Kenya Airways stewardess was arrested with 27 kilos of heroin from India. In 2000, 28 kilos of heroin was seized and four kilos of cocaine. It is noteworthy that the authorities seize less than a third of the drugs that come through Kenya. Almost Sh.3 billion worth of heroin was seized in Mombasa and Nairobi between 1994 and 1998, all linked to Kenyan drug barons at the Coast (Daily Nation; 2003).

There have been claims that Hashish is disguised in Kenya as tomato sauce, instant coffee or chocolate before it is moved to South Africa and Europe. Kiambu and Nairobi have been cited as the packing points for hashish from Afghanistan, Egypt and Pakistan. Bhang, whose large amounts have overwhelmed authorities, is produced in Kenya, especially in the Mt Kenya Region, and comes also from Uganda through Lake Victoria and the Kenya/Tanzania border via Kuria and Namanga. This happens despite stiff penalties based on the Kenya Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1994, which provides for life imprisonment for peddlers. (Daily Nation, 2003).

More than a fifth (22.7 per cent) of primary school children in Kenya and more than ¾ (75 per cent) of university students have taken alcohol. A large number of learners across all age groups have been exposed to alcohol, tobacco, miraa (Khat), glue sniffing and even hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine (National Baseline Survey On Drug and Substance abuse Among The Youth In Kenya, October 2002).

In Kenya, there have been cases of students losing lives due to drug abusers. A case in point is the 1999 Nyeri High School arson in which colleagues believed to be on drugs burnt four prefects to death. In 2001, a fire started by arsonist believed to be on drugs at Kyanguli Secondary School claimed the lives of 67 students. This high mortality rate has a negative implication on the countries development as it contributes to wastage of valuable human resource. However, unlike the above studies that point out how rampant drug abuse is in Kenya this study made attempts to find out why with all the awareness, youths still indulged in drugs. In this respect the study deviated from simply pointing out the effects of drug abuse to delve deeply into the causes of these abuses.

Research Methodology
The study was descriptive and adopted qualitative research methodology. Purposive sampling was used to select Kenyatta University as a study site based on the fact that over 68% of University students abuse alcohol. (NACADA Report, 2002). Random sampling was used to select 60 youths, ten teachers and ten parents as respondents. Questionnaires and interviews were used in the study. Content analysis was used to examine the interpretations and implications of the information, while percentages and frequencies were utilized to analyse and interpret data.

Research Findings and Discussion
Understanding of the term Drug Abuse
Exactly 90% of the youths, 100% of teachers and 70% of parents understood the term drug abuse to refer to the misuse of drugs. However, 10% of the youths did not have a clear definition with some indicating that drug abuse was the taking of drugs that did not agree with one’s body mechanism or a useless habit. 30% of parents defined drug abuse as overindulging in negative vices. The result of the study showed that the majority of the respondents were aware of what was meant by the term ‘drug abuse.’

Whether or not drug abuse is a problem in Kenya
About 85% of the youths in the study indicated that drug abuse was a critical problem in Kenya. It was a major contributor to school strikes, dropouts, early pregnancies, crime, misunderstandings in families and death among the youth. It was pointed out that the seriousness of drug abuse had been compounded by the fact that sensitisation campaigns were not effective. 100% of the teachers pointed out that drug abuse was a serious problem. Youths were moving from beer drinking to complex drug abuse such as the use of cocaine and heroine, even within learning institutions. Drug abusers were also involved in complex crime such as the selling of guns. Drug abuse had resulted in some of the most promising students loosing sight, dropping out of school, or dying particularly those abusing cheap liquor such as kumi-kumi. Drug abuse was viewed as a problem based on the fact that the government lacked a strict policy to regulate the use of drugs particularly for the underage. 90% of parents indicated that drug abuse was a serious problem. It had resulted in many youths becoming impotent, useless, “dependent”, “parasitic” and an embarrassment to their community.
Identification of a drug abuser
Approximately 70% of the youths in the study were able to identify a drug abuser by physical and character identification. Physical identification included appearances such as one having red eyes, burnt fingers and clothes, being untidy, withdrawn and poor health. Character identification included violent acts, unpredictable behaviour, bad language use, lying and being loners. More than 30% of the youths indicated that at times it was very difficult to identify an abuser, as some abusers were very discreet, tidy and law abiding. About 80% of the teachers said it was possible to identify drug abusers. They are usually untidy, sickly looking and decline in academic performance. Approximately 50% of parents said one could identify a child on drugs due to money disappearance at home, the company the abuser kept, quarrelsome, always eavesdropping and tiptoeing around to listen to what people were saying about him/her and always in opposition of what the family wanted. The abuser always tries to divert people’s attention from real issues and portrays the concept that everyone is unfair to them. However 50% of parents felt that it was not always easy to identify abusers, as some were very secretive.

The results of the study show that the majority of respondents were aware of ways of identifying a drug abuser based on physical and character traits. However a new concept brought in was that the concept of a drug abuser being seen as untidy is changing to one neat and discreet. This is a worrying trend.

Assistance to drug abusers
The results of the study indicate that though members of society feel they have a role to help those abusing drugs, the majority feels they are not empowered to do so and it is not their responsibility. Some feel the repercussions of such attempts can be very severe. This may be a contributory factor to the docility of society in general towards this vice.

Drugs commonly abused by the Youths
Youths indicated that drugs commonly abused in Kenya in order of prevalence were Bhang (55%), Alcohol 25%, Cigarettes 10% and Miraa 10%. Teachers indicated that drugs commonly abused were Bhang 40%, Changaa 30% and Cigarettes 30% while parents indicated that drugs commonly abused by the youths were Bhang 60%, Cigarettes 30% and beer 10%. The results of this study seem to contradict various studies in Kenya such as the one carried out by the National Baseline Survey on Drug and Substance abuse Among The Youth In Kenya in October 2002. The study indicated alcohol and Tobacco as the most abused drugs by youths in Kenya. From the results of this study it is possible to deduce that since alcohol and cigarettes are regarded as licensed products, many youths do not regard their misuse as an abuse.

Factors contributing to drug abuse
Youths indicated that major factors contributing to drug abuse were peer influence 55%, frustrations 20%, idleness 5%, Parental negligence 10%, Media influence 5% and ignorance 5%. Frustration was caused by factors such as family misunderstanding, divorce, favouritism, unemployment, poor school performance, hostile learning environment, authoritative administrators and poor student relationship. Other factors that led to frustration were lack of pocket money, no one visiting them at school, being bullied or always assigned duties such as the cleaning of toilets and bathrooms. Teachers indicated that parental negligence 40%, poor school administration 20%, competitive and materialistic society 20% and peer pressure20% were the main contributors to drug abuse. Parents felt youths were abusing drugs due to peer pressure 60%, unemployment 25% and stress related factors 15%.

The results of the study show that peer pressure and frustration particularly associated with parents were some of the major contributors as to why youths abused drugs. This finding is in support of Skinners Operant theory where the lack of certain fulfilment are likely to result in youths abusing drugs as they are regarded as temporarily helping them forget their stress. Although various studies have pointed out Media influence, as a major contributor to drug abuse the respondents in this study did not think so.

Effect of Drug sensitisation campaigns in Kenya
More than 70% of the youths felt drug sensitisation campaigns were not successful in Kenya. This was based on the fact that the number of drug abusers among the youth was on the increase. Poor sensitisation was attributed to improper targeting of the audience, resource personality and venue (the use of KICC as a venue discourage some people from attending such forums).

Reasons why youths still abuse drugs despite sensitisation campaigns
The results of the study show that respondents felt drug awareness campaigns have not been successful because drug abusers are hardly targeted, causes of drug abuse are hardly addressed, delivery methods are not appealing nor aggressive, there is easy accessibility to drugs and the government has not taken stern measures against drug abusers.
Ways of curbing drug abuse
The youths indicated that drug abuse could be reduced through the following: encouraging drug abusers to share their problems instead of stigmatising, ridiculing and making them feel worthless and lawless. The government should ensure that people who head organizations involved in drug awareness campaigns such as NACADA have a background in sociology or psychology. Drug awareness campaigns should be more frequent and the government should create job opportunities.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendation
Summary
The results of this study corroborate those of other studies that drug abuse among the youths in Kenya is a serious problem. From the study, it is evident that the youths, teachers and parents have an idea of what drug abuse is and evidence of the effects of drug abuse as the majority of respondents could recall someone (youth) they knew who was abusing drugs. However, the worrying factor in the study is that though there is an awareness of the problem, the majority of respondents felt it was not their responsibility to discourage the abusers. In addition to this, none of the respondents felt individual responsibility was a major deterrent in drug abuse.

It was evident from the study that drug abusers were hardly incorporated in drug awareness campaigns, nor were they at the forefront in this fight. The fact that peers greatly influenced each other to take drugs is an indication that efforts should be made to find out what void the peers fill in an abusers life and if it is possible to have the void filled in other ways. It is also clear from the study that drug sensitisation campaigns in Kenya have not been successful due to wrong targeting, lack of aggressiveness and unappealing delivery approach. The respondents suggested proper targeting, parental involvement in children upbringing and the government involvement in job creation and law enforcement are some of the measures that can curb drug abuse among the youths.

Conclusion
The study results reaffirms that drug abuse is a pertinent problem in Kenya. However, a lot of caution is needed in present day society, as there is a shift in outward appearance of the abusers. Drug abusers are no longer only the untidy, ruthless, academically challenged youths but some of the abusers portray an image of well-organized, obedient and bright students/youths. There is also a shift where the abusers are no longer involved in petty crimes but complex ones such as robbery and violence. Efforts should be made by all members of society in the creation of zero tolerance for drug abuse as stopping drug abuse has its long-term benefits for the individual and society as a whole. From the study it is clear that though Kenya has made progress in its effort to control drug abuse, more needs to be done. School administrators, teachers, parents, youths and the entire society should play their rightful roles in sensitising the youths on the dangers of drug abuse and taking individual responsibility in avoiding the abuse.

Recommendations and Way forward
Based on this study, the following recommendations were made: in view of the fact that sensitisation campaigns play an important role in discouraging drug misuse, these campaigns should be well-planned, more aggressive, youth friendly and properly targetted. Effective sensitisation campaigns can be achieved through clear identification and address of factors that cause or aggravate drug abuse. The war against drug abuse must be won by the youths at the individual personal level before it is won countrywide. Emphasis must be put on individual responsibility in fighting drug misuse. The youths must be made to realize through parental guidance, schools and community in general that drug abuse is a serious problem that can affect anyone. They should be assisted as individuals to develop zero tolerance as far as drug misuse is concerned. This can be through guidance, counselling and seminars. The youths should be made to realize that their bodies are valuable assets that should not be misused. Parents must work together to support the youth’s healthy development by arming them with skills, knowledge and confidence to resist pressures to use drugs. Parents need to realize that at a time when most youths see themselves an invincible and invulnerable, they still need clear and reasonable limits to protect them.

In schools, drug abuse can be countered through guidance and counselling and making the school experience pleasurable and rewarding. Counselling problem students rather than castigating them gives positive results. Teachers can help students abusing drugs to understand their own problems so that solutions can be arrived at. Good classroom and school management will reduce undesirable behaviour in learners. Teachers should be equipped with the skills and knowledge of identifying drug abusers among students and counselling them. School administrators should be in serviced on skills of detecting the vice among students. Unemployment is one of the major contributors to idleness, drug peddling and abuse among the youth. The society and by extension the government should erase that state of hopelessness. This could be
attained through job creation. The government should introduce the study of drugs and their effects as a compulsory course in schools and colleges. This would make students more aware of the dangers associated with the vice.

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