

Impact of Substance Abuse among Pupils: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia

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Abstract: Substance abuse means taking something often that your body does need and for wrong reasons. It also refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. In other words, Substance abuse, also known as drug abuse, is the use of a drug in amounts or by methods that are harmful to the individual or others. Substance abuse is mainly caused by peer pressure, physical and sexual abuse, early exposure to drugs, stress and lack of parental guidance. Thus, the study aimed at examining the impact of Substance Abuse among pupils in Lusaka district, Zambia. The study employed both the qualitative and quantitative methods and a descriptive survey design that sampled Head teachers, teachers, pupils and some parents from the community. Data was obtained from the respondents by means of interviews and questionnaires. Frequency, percentages, tables, graphs and pie-charts were used to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data. Data was then analyzed by the use of software MS access and MS Excel. The findings reviewed that among other many causes, the main common causes of substance abuse among pupils in secondary schools was availability of money to buy drugs, availability of substances to abuse, lack of parental care, peer pressure, influence by mass media, poor academic performance and lack of interest in studying.

Keywords: Abuse, Awareness, Exposure, Influence, Peer Pressure, Substance Abuse

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Recent studies have shown that alcohol and illicit drug use is prevalent among secondary school students in Zambia. In 2005, the who developed Global School based health Survey (GSHS) showed that 20.9% of surveyed 13 to 15-year-old secondary school students in Zambia drank so much alcohol that they were really drunk one or more times and 7.5% used illicit drugs one or more times during their lifetime. The 2010 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey conducted by the Zambia Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MOE) showed that 37.5% of students who reported alcohol use had their first drink before the age of 13 and 13.2% of the 3567 students surveyed had used marijuana during their lifetime. Alcohol use at an early age is a concern due to its negative effects on the health, wellbeing, and development of young people. For example, students in several lower to middle income countries who have engaged in alcohol use are at higher risk for psychological distress. Alcohol use in early adolescence is also associated with a higher risk of developing mental health disorders and alcohol related problems later in life. Alcohol and drug use is also associated with

an increase in other risky behaviors such as early sexual debut, unprotected sex, drunk driving, violence and truancy.

Substance abuse pose a very big problem in the world today and it is ruining the lives of many millions of people both in adolescent and general population. The use of illegal drugs has spread at a high rate and has penetrated every part of the world. No nation has been spared from the devastating problem caused by drugs and substance abuse. Zambia has not been spared either and in most cases it has been as a transit point of hard drugs especially through Lusaka. Trafficking of hard drugs into developing countries has not spared Zambia the drug consumption and dependence among secondary and college students and has led to unrest and consequently wide ranging destruction of life and property. Factors influencing students to drug use have been identified among them parental influence whereby it has been noted that children from homes where parents take drugs tend to imitate their parent's behaviors and by modeling they also start using drugs (Ngesu, et al 2008).

It appears that substance abuse affects behavior and its effects on secondary school students whose prevalence was assessed in this study, is a worldwide problem with no exception secondary students. Use of drugs has led to many health problems in the youth, especially among the secondary school pupils. The youth experience many special problems and considerations. This is the period of adolescence which is full of many challenges such as stress of physiological and physical change, competition in school and life in general, generation gap, unjust and cruel world among other problems. Psychologically, the adolescents have serious developmental tasks to handle such as peer identification and individualization from their family. Sexual identification; societal and vocational role identification and negotiating issues of authority power and independence are primary (Oketch, 2008).

A survey by National Council against Drug Abuse (NACADA, 2006) shows that substance abuse is widespread. It affects the youth mostly although it cuts across all social groups. Many young people especially the unemployed have resulted to using drugs like heroin and cocaine which are injectable. This has been a major contributor to the spread of HIV/AIDS due to the fact that they share syringes. Other drugs like alcohol can lead to risky sexual behavior as they affect judgment and decision making. A drunkard is unable to assert himself or herself especially when it comes to saying no to unprotected sex thus resulting to exposures to sexually transmitted infections.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

problem of Substance abuse seem to be very growing concern globally as well as in our contextual setting among youth in secondary schools. (Joseph, 2009), have shown that consumption of substance by school going youth do not only decrease their academic performance, but also lowers their Intelligence Quotient and make them vulnerable to crime. Furthermore, substance abuse exposes them to health risks among other myriad problems. In connection to that, academic performance in secondary school pupils especially in Lusaka District has also remained low for a couple of years despite the efforts put by the government in discouraging illegal use of substance, still there is a great challenge among the pupils in Zambia schools. Despite the fact that the government of Zambia fights against substance abuse, but there is little study conducted in Lusaka district to examine the impact of substance abuse among pupils in secondary schools since most of substance abuse victims are secondary school pupils. Although several preventive measures have been suggested it has not effectively led to the desired results of curbing the drug and substance abuse in Lusaka district, more especially in secondary schools. This is because apart from the youth

facing a lot of challenges as individuals, the family and society including the church and school have not come out wholly to initiate methods of helping the youngsters. There is always a conflict of interest on who has the upper hand in helping the youth.

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Substance Abuse among pupils at the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- Identify common types of substances abused by pupils in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district.
- Explore the causes of substance abuse among pupils in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Learning Theory which emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling and imitating the behaviors, attitudes and emotional responses of others. Substance abuse leads pupils to have behavioral problems such as fatigue, stress, anxiety, bullying and even committing murder Maithya (2009). Pupils under the influence of drugs could even beat up their teachers, rape them or kill their colleagues Kyalo and Mbugua, (2011). This hinders them from improving their academic performance. Declining grades, absenteeism from school and other activities, and increased potential for dropping out of school are problems associated with adolescent substance abuse. A study by Hardwood et al., (2010) on cannabis use and educational achievement; findings from three Australasian cohort studies found that low level of commitment to education and higher truancy rates appear to be related to drug abuse among students. Again drugs abused affect the brain; these results in major decline in the functions carried out by the brain (Abot, 2015). Drugs affect the student's concentration span, which is drastically reduced and boredom sets in much faster than for nondrug and substance abusers. The students will lose concentration in school work including extra-curriculum activities. Most of the psychoactive drugs affects the decision making process of the students creative thinking and the development of the necessary life and social skills are stunted. They also interfere with the awareness of an individual's unique potential and interest thus affects their career development. Cognitive and behavioral problems experienced by drug using youths may interfere with their academic performance and also present obstacles to learning for their classmates (UN, 2008). Drug abuse is associated with crime maintenance of an orderly and safe school atmosphere conducive to learning. It leads to destruction of school property and classroom disorder.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The findings of the study would provide more understanding of the impact of substance abuse among pupils in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. Therefore, the findings obtained are useful to the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Vocational Training, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs as well as the Office of the President in guiding programs in substance abuse among the pupils in

secondary schools in Lusaka district and Zambia as whole. The study provides useful information to the policy makers on possible ways in dealing with substance abuse, not only in secondary schools but also in other learning institutions extending to different communities within the country. Finally, the study would help the school administrators and counselors to come up with the way forward in reducing the impacts of substance abuse in Zambia schools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Substance Abuse

Substance abuse means taking something often that your body does not need and for wrong reasons or Substance abuse is when you take drugs that are not legal. It also means when someone use alcohol, prescription medicine, and other legal substances too much or in the wrong way (Aden, 2016). According to Johnson (2009) there are five different types of substance abuse. The first is psychological dependence. This is when a person has become psychologically dependent on a drug when he or she feels a strong craving for the harmful substance because it produces pleasurable feelings or relieves stress or anxiety. The second type is physical dependence. A person has become physically dependent on a drug when he or she needs larger and larger doses to achieve the same desired effect. The person usually needs to take more and more of the drug since the body has built up a tolerance to the effects of the drug. In some cases, a person takes so much of a drug that it can cause intoxication or an overdose.

The third type is substance dependence. A person becomes intoxicated or high on a regular basis, whether it be every day, every weekend or just a few times a year. The person may try to stop taking the drug but will fail even though the person knows that the drug is affecting their health, family life, relationships and work. The person may even realize that with continued use of the drug, he or she is putting themselves in danger. The fourth type is classified as substance abuse. A person may continue to take drugs because his or her body does not build up tolerance or go through withdrawal. The person will continue using drugs despite their harmful consequences. The last type of substance abuse is withdrawal. Withdrawal is a state of acute physical and psychological pain with symptoms ranging from mild to life threatening. A person suffers from withdrawal when he or she reduces or stops using a drug.

2.2. Impact of Substance Abuse on Pupils

Substance abuse have far reaching ramifications for instance, according to the survey by NACADA,(2012) with a sample of 632 children, it was found out that 6 percent have engaged in sex while on drugs 7.3 per cent for boys and 4.4 per cent for girls and the median age at sexual debut being estimated at 11 years. An assessment of the situation during the first sexual intercourse indicates the 30 percent had sex unwillingly. Further, about 20 per cent were given incentives. To lure them into sexual act, with a further 80 per cent reporting having taken drugs before their first sexual encounter. These early introductions into illicit sex goes a long way in impacting negatively on their self-esteem exposing them to dangers of early pregnancy, contracting STIs and AIDS, declining academic performance and ultimately dropping out of school all together Maithya, (2009). According to Desmone et al., (2006) carried a study on drinking and academic performance in high schools found out that by introducing a large vector of covariates which control for heterogeneity between alcohol consumers and non-consumers; the negative causal relationship between alcohol and academic performance remain

significant for heavy drinking. In line with these results, Kariuki and Oteyo, (2009) report that heavy drinking has an impact on schooling achievements by reducing time spent studying.

Advanced brain scan imaging has proven that the human brain is not fully developed at puberty, as previously thought with maturation occurring as late as twenty-four years as observed by Eisenstein, (2009) in his study on youth and drugs in Brazil. Common drug use has the effects on the brain that impact academic learning which include, difficulty in concentrating, inability to process information and problem with working memory United Nations, (2013). Getting intoxicated can have negative impact on cognitive function that is, concentration, memory, attention for forty-eight hours. Another study conducted by Kinyua, (2011) on critical success on factors that influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mansa District, Zambia observed that the ability to study is impaired by drug and substance abuse hence could give negative impact on the ability to perform in exams. Heavy drinking by students lead to positive blood alcohol level affecting them whether they can get up for class and if they do the quality of how information is processed and ultimately stored. Sleeping of buzz, a common practice interferes with sleep cycle, resulting to increased anxiety jumpiness and irritability the next day Maithya, (2009). The use of Marijuana suppresses neural activity in the hippocampus resulting in problem with attention, memory and concentration. It significantly increases heart rate, weakens the heart muscle and affects blood pressure (Ansary et al., 2009). Substance abuse has social and emotional implication with multiple risk factors is more likely to lead to addiction and affect the academic standing. The people whom students associate with and how they behave are often visible indicators or risk trying drugs as well as possible signs of current drug use. Stealing, cutting off from school, cheating and general disregard for social norms are common behaviors.

Substance abuse is a major public health problem all over the world (UNODC, 2005). The use and abuse of drugs by adolescents have become one of the most disturbing health related phenomena in whole parts of the world (NDLEA, 2019). Several school going adolescents experience mental health problem, either temporarily or for a long period of time. Some become insane, maladjusted to school situations and eventually drop out of school. NAFDAC, (2009) explained the term drug abuse as excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. It could also be viewed as the use of a drug to the extent that it interferes with the health and social function of an individual. Odejide, (2010) warned that Substance abusers who exhibit symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, behavior changes, fatigue and loss or increase in appetite should be treated by medical experts and counsellors to save them from deadly diseases. The alarming evidence in the prevalence of drug abuse, the effects and consequences of substance abuse among students has called for concern and challenge to all helping professions to mount strategies of equipping youths with skills of living devoid of substance abuse. In Kwara State today, the consequences of substance use are diverse, including acute and chronic health, social as well as psychological problem. There is disruption of interpersonal relationships particularly within the family, marginalization, criminal behaviour, school failure, vocational problems and failure to achieve normal adolescent milestones, yet these adolescents are expected to be the leaders of the country in the future when they do not even have any focus for the future. Several studies carried out among the colleges of education students in Benin City by Omage and Oshiloya, (2011), found out that students and youth of easy virtue in the community are involved in cannabis abuse and stimulants such as amphetamines and cannabis.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions. The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research. It was aimed at collecting information from respondents on the impact of substance abuse among pupils in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district of Zambia. It highlighted the risks involved when someone abuses substances, the most common types of substances which are abused as well as the causes for substance abuse among pupils in secondary schools. Structured open-ended interviews were conducted and questionnaires were used to respondents.

3.2. Research Site

The research was conducted in Lusaka district in Zambia at some selected secondary schools from which respondents were also sampled.

3.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of Head teachers, Teachers, learners and some community members at the selected secondary schools. The target population was 600. The sample size involved a total of 60 respondents which included two (2) head teachers, one from each selected school. Eight (8) teachers, four from each selected school. Forty-two (42) pupils, Twenty-one (21) from each selected school. Eight (8) parents from the community. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants from the selected secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used on pupils, teachers and parents from the community whereas purposive sampling was used on the Head teachers.

3.4. Data Analysis

In this research, data was analyzed qualitatively as the semi structured interviews and observation schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the semi structured interviews and observation schedules. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study, the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the interview guide was analyzed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyze data.

3.5. Ethical Issues

The researcher avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the researcher was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden. Additionally, the researchers got permission from Lusaka DEBS office, council chairperson as well as the head teachers on behalf of the independent schools.

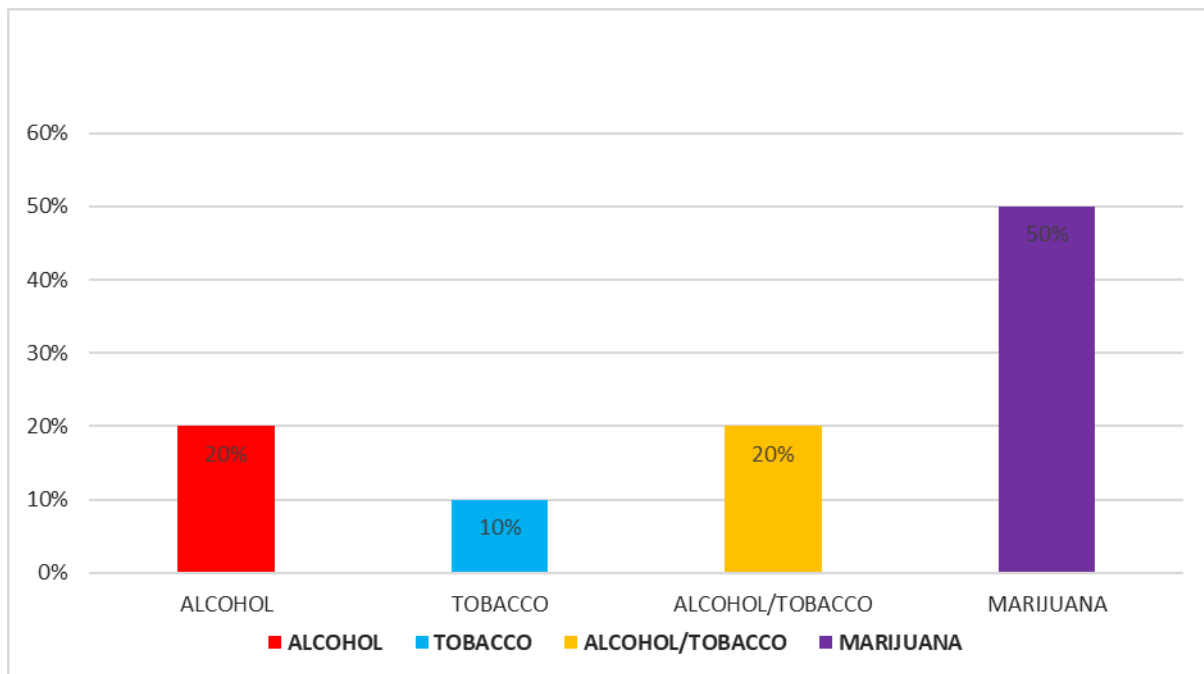
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

4.1. Common types of Substance Abuse among Pupils

(20%) of the respondents stated that alcohol was commonly used in secondary schools. (20%) of another set of respondents added that, tobacco was being abused by pupils in secondary schools.(50%) of respondents alluded that, alcohol, heroin and marijuana was common abused by pupils in secondary schools and (10%) of respondents said that cocaine and tobacco was being abused by pupils in secondary schools.

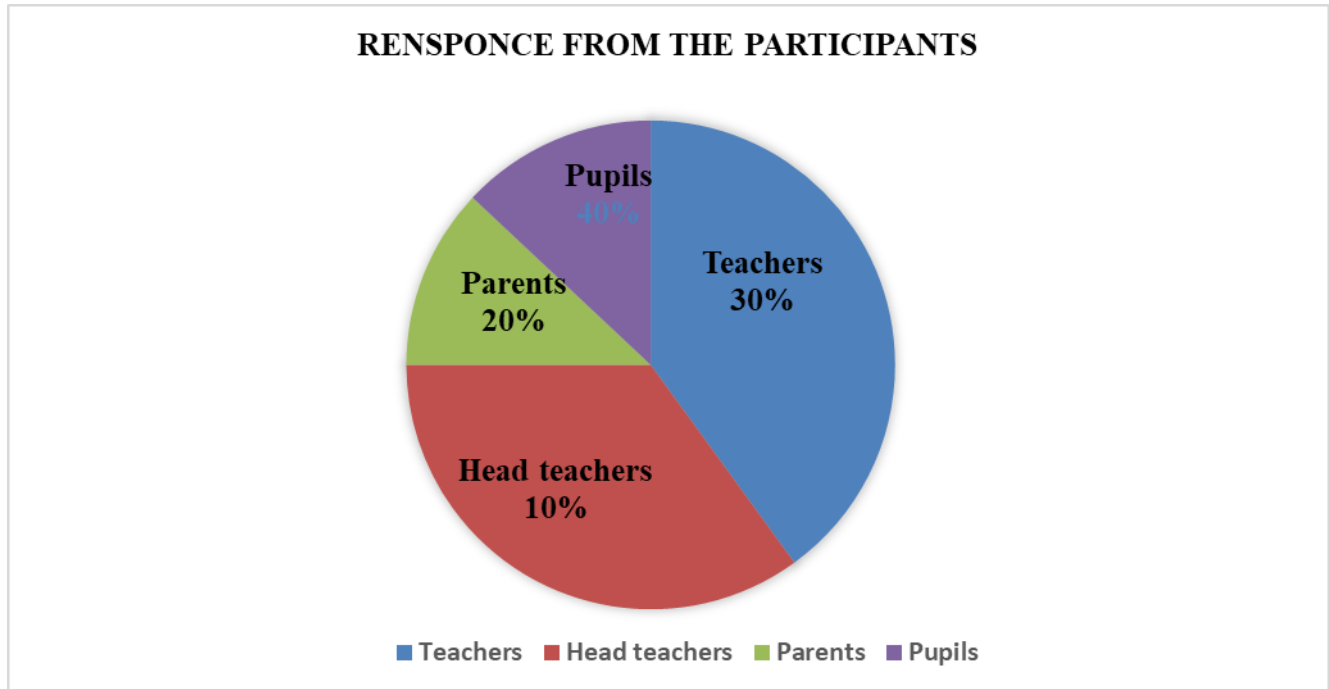
Chart 1: Common types of Substance Abuse among Pupils



4.2. Causes of Substance Abuse among Pupils

(10%) of respondents reported that, the main causes of substance abuse among pupils in secondary schools was availability of money to buy drugs, availability of substances and lack of parental care. (30%) of another set of respondents added that some of the causes of substance abuse among pupils are; peer pressure and influence by the media. (40%) of respondents said that some of the causes of substance abuse among pupils are; the need for energy to study for a long time and peer pressure. Lastly but not the least, (20%) of respondents mentioned that some of the causes of substance abuse among pupils in secondary schools are; family background for example parents also drinks, bad environment and lack of parental care.

Figure 1: Causes of Substance Abuse among Pupils



5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that, alcohol was found to be the most frequently abused substance in the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district and the major source of this substance in schools was the pupils themselves. Most pupils sneak the substance into their respective schools and supply to others and small kiosks or shops in the schools/ neighborhoods. Additionally, most factors such as peer pressure, stress at home especially due to lack of school fees, frustrations at home, family breakups, and conflict with parents, availability of the substance abuse, availability of money to buy and family background for example the parent also drinks contributed to the pupil’s abuse of substances. Substance abuse among the pupils caused school drop-outs, strained relationship with other pupils, lack of interest in schooling, low concentration span and declining grades hence abuse of substance had a negative effect on the academic performance of the pupils in the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. Administering punitive punishments such as expelling pupils caught abusing substances, arresting, locking up and imposing heavy fines to individuals selling substances would be helpful in reducing the substance menace. The measures put in place to curb the impact of substance abuse among pupils contributed to poor academic performance. This is evident due to the effects they had on the student’s general academic performance. The researcher further concluded that these measures were ineffective in helping to improve academic performance among the pupils. All the education stakeholders should take the initiative to save the pupils and the society from substance abuse through awareness campaigns. Poor academic performance ruins the future of the youth hence cooperation is needed among all the parties involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The Government through the Ministry of Education should enforce the children Act (2001), legal notice No.8 (16).
- School administrators should set up guidance and counselling offices and involve professionals to counsel students who indulge in Substance abuse.
- Parents and teachers should monitor the pupils' peer in order to ensure they do not involve themselves with pupils or non-students who abuse Substances.
- Local administration and community leaders should take immediate action on people involved in drug trafficking and those breaking the rules governing the substance use in the country.

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