

FIGHTING THE EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE BY ADOLESCENTS: A CASE STUDY OF ZENZEZA 4 HIGH SCHOOL IN CHITUNGWIZA, ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to identify the effects of drug use and abuse at Zengeza 4 High School in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. The research design for this study was a descriptive survey design. The study employed a mixed method approach. The study used interviews and surveys as data collection tools. The study revealed that poor academic performance, school drop-outs, early marriages, aggressive and violent behaviour are the major effects of drug use/abuse by adolescents in schools. The study recommended that both parents and teachers should strongly educate and encourage adolescents in school to desist from all forms of drug use or abuse for whatever reasons. Adolescents should always seek help from caregivers and parents whenever they face any life threatening situations.

KEYWORDS

Adolescents, Drug abuse, School performance, Aggressive

1. INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse cases are on the rise. This has called for intense attention from public health care practitioners, the various government departments and society at large in both the developed and developing countries worldwide. This means that drug abuse negatively affect both the drug abuser and normal life of the society. According to Johnston et al (2011), the effects of drug abuse apart from addiction can cause dangerous changes in the mind, body and spirit. Many people around the whole world are more and more become addicted to dangerous substances which include street drugs and prescription drugs. Little research has been done in developing countries of statistics of drug abuse. Nevertheless, developing countries have the undesirable consequences of drug abuse. At the end, affected people would develop health complications which seriously affect development of these countries Gunda and Mbwirire, 2020). Drug abuse of substances such as alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, cocaine, and amphetamine seriously affect the abuser and the community in which the abuser lives. The negative effects of drug abuse can be very complicated to bear. This is one of the reasons as to drug abuse and drug addiction needs attention and treatment the earliest possible time.

The adolescence has become the market target for drug sellers/dealers. A study by Kirby (2006) indicates that adolescence that takes drugs are more likely to commit suicide. This happens of fearing the harmful effects of drug abuse. The effects of drug abuse affect the adolescence socially, psychologically and physically. These effects also affect school performance badly. Adolescence in high schools constitutes a good source of right wealth, human capital and are the

critical agents for technological innovation, socio-cultural development, economic performance and political development of every country (Adu-Mireku, 2003).

Newcomb, Maddahian and Bentler (2011) grouped the mainly used drugs and substances into five groups. These included cigarettes, alcohol (beer, wine, and liquor, cannabis (marijuana and hashish), hard drugs and most adolescents would be experimenting with cheaper drugs such alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana (substances including sedatives, barbiturates, amphetamines, LSD, cocaine, heroin, and PCP), and non-prescription medication (over-the-counter sleeping pills, stimulants, cough medicine, and cold/allergy medicine).

According to The Zimbabwe Republic General Headquarters Statistical Bureau (2017), in representative sample in hospitals reports that most people become abusers from self-treatment of physical ailment and could result in ignorance for they do not know the accurate dosage which can affect him/her mentally. Chitungwiza Central Hospital reported in 2016 that 60% of its mental patients were adolescents between 15 -24 years and these are shocking figures which need everybody's attention (Gunda and Mbwire, 2020)

Chitungwiza is the largest high density town in Zimbabwe, it is popularly known for its hospital named Chitungwiza Central Hospital which is located in Zengeza 4 a suburb in Chitungwiza. Chitungwiza came into existence in the late 1970s with most black people who stayed in oldest high density towns like Highfield migrating to Chitungwiza. Chitungwiza has several suburbs. The oldest of the suburbs is St Mary's which is divided into two sections, Manyame Park (New St Mary's) and Old St Mary's, St Mary's is popularly known for being the oldest suburb in Chitungwiza. There is Zengeza, which is divided into 5 sections which are Zengeza 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Zengeza 4 is relatively the largest section (Gunda and Mbwire, 2020).

The world over, many nations are fighting the drug trade. Trading in drugs has become a big income generating project. Drug substances normally affect the young person and adolescence. High school students and even university students are not spared from the harmful effects of drug abuse. If the situation fails to be properly addressed and managed, there are high chances that the future of both the youth and the society would be characterized by stress as well as individual problems such as education problems, the lack of education facilities and psychological disorders as well as behavioural problems.

There are other school factors which too influence students towards drug use and drug abuse. These factors include: the way the school administration manages students' affairs which may lead to drug abuse, methods of punishment, lack of freedom and lateness in addressing challenges faced by students can create stress. This would lead into the use of drugs as stress reliever (Kingala, 2000). Regrettably the world over and throughout time, drug abuse among both the young and adult population has manifested itself in various forms.

It appears that drug abuse affects behavior and its effects on secondary school students whose prevalence was assessed in this study, is a worldwide problem with no exception of Zimbabwean secondary school students. Use of drugs has led to many health problems in the youth, especially among the secondary school students.

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 report by United Nation Drug Control Programme (UNDCP, 1998) shows that 60% of student's abuse drugs. 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 injectables. 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.

Research findings indicate that there is a direct linkage between drug and substance abuse and HIV and AIDS prevalence (NACADA, 2006). According to Siringi and Waihenya (2001), 22% of secondary school students are on drugs and it has been found out that males have high exposure to miraa and inhalants than females. Poverty also encourages drug use among students due to absenteeism and idleness (Adelekan et al 2002). As a result of lack of school fees, with availability of and access to drugs in the village kiosks the idleness may in one way or another encourage high prevalence of drug use among students aged 14-24 years old. This study therefore investigated the causes and effects of drug and substance abuse among secondary school students in Starehe Sub County, Nairobi County.

Despite various efforts to curb drug abuse in secondary schools in many countries (including Zimbabwe), the effects of drug are dangerous. The effects of drug abuse have negatively strangled youthful population both secondary school students and non-students reducing them to dummies, zombies and drooling figures as well as wasting their lives at the age which they are most needed in society (Ngesu, et al 2008). Although the youth have been educated on the dangers of the drug abuse, most of the secondary school students have little or no knowledge of how dangerous the vice is (Ngesu et al 2008).

Drug abuse has developed into a threat to the lives and success of the adolescents (Abdu-Raheem 2013). Abdu-Raheem explained further that this has obviously become a source of distress to the parents, guardians and relatives of the adolescents and has also become a big challenge to the nations. In addition, the study by Abdu-Raheem (2013) also confirmed that there is a substantial relationship between family cohesiveness and drug abuse among adolescents. This was in support of the study by Ngesu et al (2008) who recognised that children from broken homes who are often characterized by child abuse, intolerance, violence, insecurity, and hostility are potential members of secret cults and anti-social behaviour and vulnerable.

It was also discovered that drug abuse leads to poor student academic performance in adolescents in secondary schools (Abdu-Raheem 2013). European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2007) explained that there was a study carried out on the relation between school performance and early drug use by adolescents and the results indicated that there is an association between the risk of drug use and early school leaving, school truancy, poor school performance and expulsion or exclusion from school. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2007) indicated that illicit drug use among adolescents is limited to a small minority who experiment with drugs at a very early age. Among those who start using substances at a tender age, evidence suggests that early experimentation with psychoactive substances,

including alcohol and tobacco, is associated with an increased risk of developing drug problems later in life (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction 2007). Regular drug use among the adolescents is most often found among a highly problematic group of the population, in whom drug use is combined with other concurrent or preceding psychological and social disorders and might often be a marker of social problems or of an underlying neurobehavioral pathway (Clark et al., 2005).

Even though a number of researchers have suggested preventive for drug abuse, the researchers have not successfully led to the desired results of curbing the dangers of drug use and abuse in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. This is could be a result of the youth facing many life challenges at individual level, the family level and society level. The life challenges even go up to include the church and school.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Sadly, researchers have not come out completely to instigate methods of helping the adolescents. Care-givers, the school, various government departments and non-governmental organizations always have conflict of interest on who has the upper hand in helping the adolescence. Based on this, this study identified effects of drug abuse among secondary school students Zengeza 4 High School in Zimbabwe. The study suggested realistic measures to effectively curb this danger.

1.2 Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

To identify types of drugs or substances that are abused by high school adolescents;

To explore the effects of drug or substance abuse on high school adolescents

2. METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was a descriptive survey design. The study employed a mixed method approach. The population under study was derived from Zengeza 4 with a total of 300 target population of Zengeza 4 High School adolescents, parents, and teachers. The sample of this study was selected among students, teachers and parents. Stratified sampling technique was used on quantitative data and purposive sampling was used on qualitative data. Survey data was collected from 150 adolescents (students) while interviews were conducted with 5 teachers and 5 parents.

3. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Effects of drugs on students as observed by teachers

Figure 1 below shows that when there is drug and substance abuse, there is high rate of poor performance which is 60% as indicated by the teachers. Most students who abuse drugs perform poorly both in teacher developed tests and the national examinations. Violent and or aggressive behaviour 20% is also noticed in some students, some withdrawals or dropouts, 12% also results from abuse of drugs are early marriages 8% as students indulge in early sexual activities this

impacts negatively as some of the students may not continue to higher institutions of learning while some risky contracting the deadly HIV/AIDS disease.

N=150

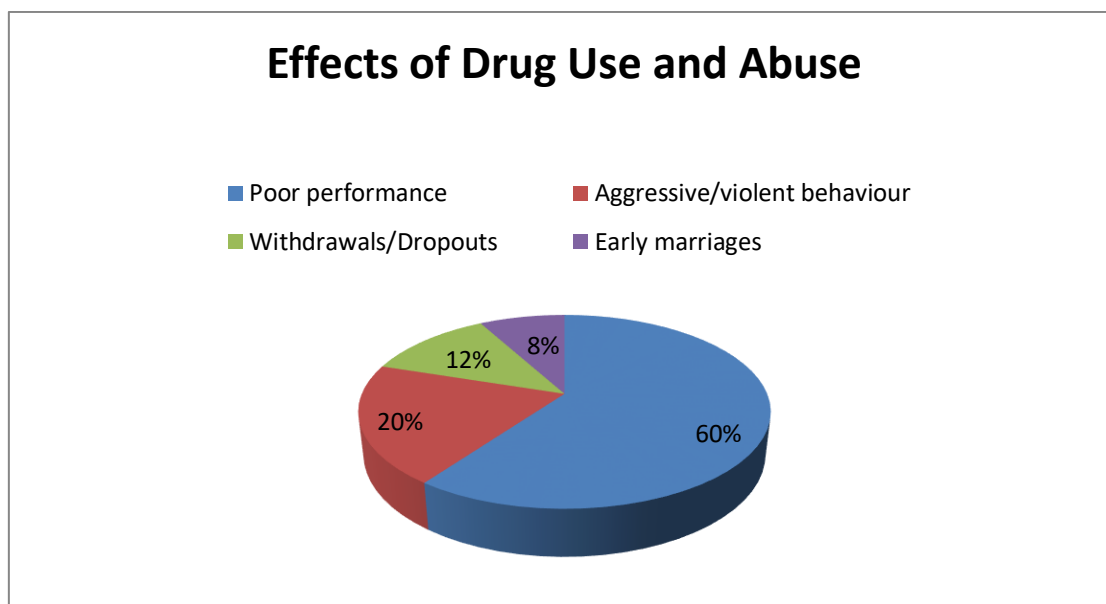


Figure 1: Effects of drugs on students as observed by teachers

Source: Primary data 2019

The interviews pointed out that substance abuse strongly impacts adolescents behaviour negatively. One key informant said “Adolescents who abuse drugs are more likely to struggle with addiction later in life and have permanent and irreversible brain damage”. All interviewees highlighted that drug abuse can cause or mask emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, mood swings, suicidal thoughts and schizophrenia. Another key informant indicated that “..... adolescents who use drugs would lose concentration on their school work and this would also negatively affect their pass grades and in most cases they become rude”.

Data gathered through interview alluded that ICT benefits adolescents through easy access of information helps them to stay up to date with the advancing in technology but at the same time adolescents are abusing this privilege by finding suppliers of drugs on the internet and also they will imitate whatever their heard on the internet they do not mind if it's for their benefit or not because will be trying to imitate their role models. One key informant said “Misuse of technology by these youngsters is a disaster which causes life-time damages which are irreversible though we can put efforts to stop or minimize the damage”.

Substance and drug abuse can negatively influence behavioural problems because have an increased risk of social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts and violence. This concurred with a survey by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (2016) teens who abuse drugs are more likely than teens who don't abuse drugs to engage in delinquent behaviours such as fighting and stealing.

3.2 Awareness Campaigns of the Effects of Drug Abuse

All respondents indicated that campaigns being carried out by the school authorities and the teachers themselves in alerting all students about the dangers and effects of abusing drugs. On Table 1 below, most students indicated that they were aware of the effects as well the dangers that result from drug abuse. 65% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the effects of drug abuse, 25% were not very sure while 10% were unaware of the campaigns nor the effects and dangers of drug abuse.

Table 1: Awareness campaigns on the effects of drug abuse by students

N=150

Do you agree that awareness on drug use/abuse were held?	Response %
Yes	65
Not Sure	25
No	10

Source: Primary data 2019

Figure 2 below summarises the response of the school authorities and the resultant effects of drug abuse.

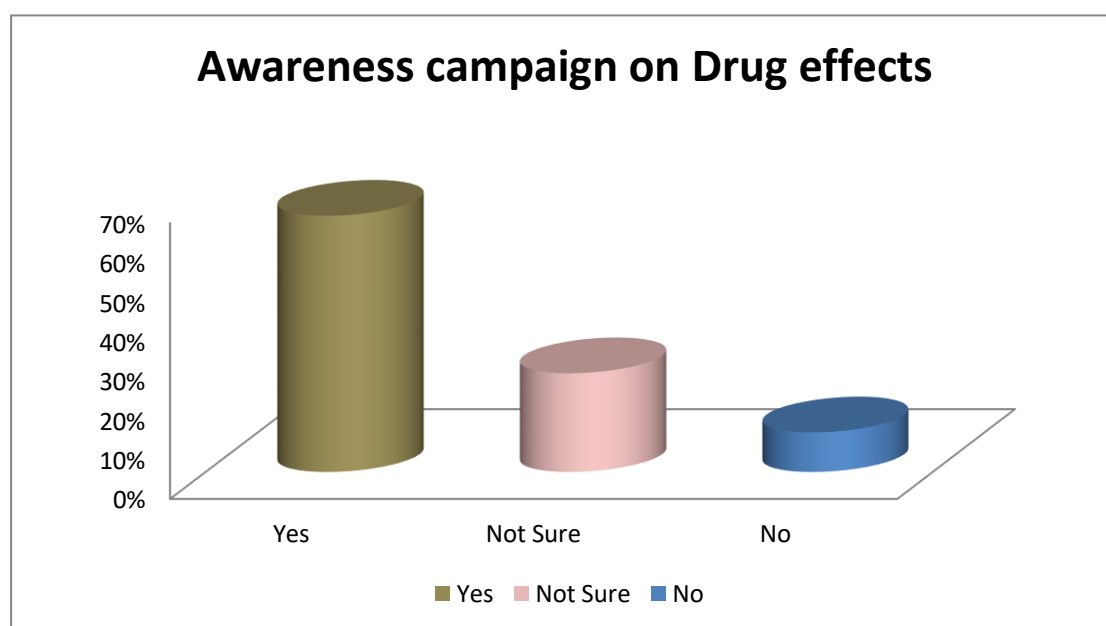


Fig 2: Awareness campaign according to school authorities.

Source: Primary data 2019

Substance abuse by people worldwide, particularly adolescents, has long been of scientific, political and public concern (Stevanovic et al. 2015; Kalsi 2015). This concern is due to the potential short- and long-term adverse effects associated with the use of substances such as cigarettes, drugs, cannabis (dagga) etc., on individual well-being (Tshitangano and Tosin 2016).

Oketch (2008), as well as Abdu-Raheen (2013) discovered that the prevalence rate of cigarette smoking was higher amongst boys in compared to girls. One possible reason given for such difference is that, in most cultures, substance abuse such as cigarette smoking is tolerated amongst males and often not tolerated amongst females, especially in black communities.

3.3 Fighting Drug and Substance and Drug Abuse

Table 2 below shows that guidance and counseling at school took the highest percentage followed closely by as the community suggested engaging in public awareness campaigns. This could be through mass media like radios and television or through public gatherings or the school might facilitate awareness campaigns through dramas. It was also noted that punishing or taking drug abusers to law enforces was at 14%. Expulsion from school was the least with 7%. This showed that teachers prefer guidance and counseling to any other remedy.

Table 2: Measures taken to curb drug and substance abuse

N=150

MEASURES TAKEN BY STUDENT	Response %
Playing games	14.2
Membership in clubs	28.5
Reading Novels	47.6
None	9.5
TOTAL	100
MEASURES TAKEN BY SCHOOL AUTHORITIES	%
Guidance and counseling	40
Corporal punishment	40
Expulsion from school	20
Total	100

Source: Primary data 2019

The findings concur with the headmaster's view which established that guidance was key towards minimizing drug related incidences in school.

Data gathered through discourse analysis indicated that that 60% of teachers have gone for in service training on guidance and counselling while 40% have not. Notwithstanding the researcher felt that there was need to train more teachers in guidance and counselling because of increasing enrolment figures and for them to be able to offer professional help to students. It was also noted that more teachers should be trained in guidance and counselling because it was rated high among other strategies in minimising substance abuse and other negative behaviours such as bullying, deviant and theft among high school adolescents. The findings coincide with the Headmaster's view which recognised that guidance and counselling was the best solution towards minimising drug related cases at school.

Data gathered through interviews indicated that the removal of corporal punishment and substitute it with guidance and counselling alone is inadequate. All key informants indicated that children were given light punishment to like cleaning the school yard, digging a pit with the same depth with the student's height. But teachers disagree with the removal of corporal punishment because some students are not afraid of these types of behaviour modification. One key informant

said “in the past, incidences of drug abuse by the youngsters were very low. This was because we were using both corporal punishment together with guidance and counseling”.

The minority of the interviewees believed that punishment shaped behaviour of adolescents because it sends a message to others so that they don't misbehave. But the majority of interviewees believed in using guidance and counselling can effectively shape behaviour without causing pain to students.

Nowadays, drug abuse has become a major concern for the school, parents and the community. The level of drug abuse is upsetting because of the fact that many youths are getting agitated on drugs on a daily basis. Alcohol, bhang and tobacco are more and more abused by school going children. In recent times the most commonly abused substances by the youth were tobacco and alcohol but today opium, cocaine and heroin have added to the list. Use of sleeping pills, tranquilliser, cough mixture, inhalants such as glue and petrol is now rampant especially among the street youngsters (Gill et al, 1996). The study concurs with Stevanovic et al. (2015) and Kalsi (2015) that measures to reduce the negative effects of drug abuse among the adolescence, there should be education on the effects of drug abuse, drugs abusers should be counseled and that there should be laws to ban certain drugs.

4. FINDINGS

The study revealed that poor academic performance, school drop-outs, early marriages, aggressive and violent behaviour are the major effects of drug use/abuse by adolescents in schools.

Findings of the study indicated that there are efforts put at school level to fight against drug abuse. However, the efforts are not holistic in nature as they are only from school authorities. The study found that other extracurricular activities other than academic activities are another way of avoiding drug use in schools.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that both parents and teachers should strongly educate and encourage adolescents in school to desist from all forms of drug use or abuse for whatever reasons. Adolescents should always seek help from caregivers and parents whenever they face any life threatening situations.

This study also recommended that curbing drug abuse in schools require a holistic approach which should include parents, children, school authorities, health personnel, law enforcement departments and non-governmental organizations.

In addition to this, it is important for students, teachers and educational authorities to encourage or promote extracurricular activities as a way of fighting drug abuse.

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