

## **FAMILY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE IN JUJA SUB-COUNTY, KIAMBU**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Kenya, drug and substance abuse is on the rise, with more dangerous opiates like heroin replacing alcohol and cigarettes. Children who have been exposed to drugs or alcohol are particularly vulnerable. Policies have been pushed through programs on relationships, parenting abilities, and dialogues, as well as alcohol and drug misuse education yet the burden of drug abuse still weighs on Kiambu. The study analysed the family factors that initiate the use of alcohol and drug abuse in Juja Sub-county, Kiambu. The research was anchored by Social Control Theory. A descriptive research design was adopted. A pilot study was carried out using 30 respondents from Thika town. The research targeted 104,301 households in Juja sub-county. The Yamane formula was utilized in the determination of sample size. The snowball sampling technique was used to select participants. The data was gathered using structured questionnaires. The quantitative data gathered was analysed descriptively and inferentially. The qualitative data were analysed through themes and presented in narrative form. The

analysed quantitative data was displayed in frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs. A research authorization letter was sought from Kenyatta University and a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. The findings established that favourable parental attitudes towards alcoholism lead to drug and alcohol abuse. The history of family drug abuse and marital conflict contribute to drug and alcohol abuse. The study concludes that there is substantial impact of family environment on an individual's susceptibility to alcohol and drug abuse. Factors such as parental substance use, family cohesion, communication, and parenting styles play pivotal roles in shaping an individual's risk or resilience to substance abuse. The study recommends maintenance of open and non-judgmental communication within the family members about the risks and consequences of alcohol and drug use.

**Key terms:** Drug and Substance Abuse, Family Factors, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

## **INTRODUCTION**

Drug and substance abuse in Kenya is fast increasing, progressing from alcohol and cigarettes to more dangerous narcotics such as heroin. Families play an important role in protecting children who have been exposed to alcohol or drugs harm. Policies for family-based prevention and family bonding should be strengthened through programs on relationships, parenting abilities, and debates as well as alcohol and drug abuse education (NACADA, 2011). According to Baldwin, Christian, Berkeljon, and Shandish (2012), the use of evidence-based family approaches has proven to be superior to solo or group-based therapy.

In a national survey on drug use and health conducted in 2017 in the USA, 30.5 million people aged 12 or older (i.e., current usage) used an illicit substance in the prior 30 days, which equates to around 1 in 9 Americans (11.2%). One in four young individuals (18 to 25) reported using illicit drugs in the past month. Regardless of age, marijuana use and prescription painkiller abuse accounted for the majority of 2017's estimates of current illegal drug use. An approximate of 1.4 million people misused opioids in 2017, including 886,000 heroin addicts and 11.1 million persons who misused painkillers.

A research conducted in Ghana by Asiseh, Owusu and Quaicoe (2017) revealed that family environment significantly influences children's behavior and personality. Peers or other social groups, schools, and family traits all have an impact on how much alcohol and drugs are consumed. Children's behavior in society may be influenced by their upbringing in a family with divorcing parents and child-unfriendly verbal and nonverbal expressions, attitudes, and actions. The degree of family conflict and disagreement the child experiences at home, coping techniques, and parent-child discussions about behavioral rules all seem to have an impact on how the child behaves.

In Uganda, a study by Rukundo, Kibanja and Steffens (2017) revealed that children learn from their surroundings, and peer and family norms are linked to early onset substance use. From the age of two, children are aware of alcohol, and by the age of four, they comprehend the standards and expectations associated with it. Influence from parents and peers is a significant predictor of early use, and about age 10, there appears to be a transition from influence that is mostly family-oriented to peer-oriented and from expectations toward alcohol that are primarily negative to positive.

A survey done by NACADA in Nairobi County, Kenya aims to inform programmatic and policy actions in the battle against children abusing alcohol and drugs. The findings revealed that 605 respondents (81% of whom were married), of whom 394 women and 207 males. The majority of respondents (88.1%) named alcohol, followed by cigarettes (83%), marijuana (77%), and miraa (66.3%). A total of 87.8% of those questioned confirmed that they were aware of kids abusing alcohol or other substances.

Baseline survey by CEEC in Kiambu County revealed that the age of first use of alcohol and other substances among youth in Kiambu County was as low as 11 years while 1.4% of eleven-year-olds and 28.9% of sixteen-year-olds in Kiambu County had gotten drunk on alcohol at one point in their lives (CEEC, 2018). Families in Kiambu County have noticed a decline in the standard of living for those with disabilities. The researcher identified that a study on the role of the family in the implementation of the Alcohol and drug abuse policy in Kiambu County has not been extensively undertaken. Therefore, the researcher shall focus on the above subject to build on the strategies to help implement the alcohol and drug abuse policy using the family institution.

### **Statement of the problem**

The family institution can make or break a person, parenting skills determine the outcome. Alcohol and substance abuse policies have played out important skills to help empower people in dealing with alcohol and drug abuse problems. From infancy to adolescence, parents, children, and families can benefit from skill training. As a result, children will be able to grow and develop in healthier and more supportive environments. According to Mukhandia (2014), peer pressure and inadequate parental role models are two major factors that influence student drug usage. According to People's Daily (2020), NACADA officials and Kiambu local administrators destroyed 4,000 litres of illegal brew at the Juja and Gatundu South boundary. The distillery uses the radiators from automobiles to chill the vapors used in production. According to WHO (2017), consuming illegal brews has an impact on the skin, cardiovascular system, reproductive system, gastrointestinal system and central nervous system.

According to a different study done in secondary schools in Kiambu County, drug abuse is widespread among learners. Both girls and boys have abused drugs, with boys' schools having the highest percentage. Among the sampled schools, the age group between 16 and 18 years old has the highest ratio of drug abusers to non-abusers. Age, drug usage by other family members, and ease of access to substances all have a substantial impact on substance abuse (Njoki, 2015). The researcher thus sought to examine the effect of the family factors on alcohol and drug use in Juja Sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya.

### **Research Objective**

To examine the role of the family in rehabilitation of alcohol and drug users in Juja subcounty, Kiambu

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a descriptive research design. This design allows the researcher to collect rigorous and extensive data (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). The research was done in Juja Sub-county in Kiambu County. The sub-county was selected as it is one of the most populous sub-counties in the county. NACADA has been alarmed by increasing cases of drug peddling cases in Juja especially Witeithie, in addition, to the sale and consumption of heroin and cocaine.

According to a census conducted by KNBS in 2019, there are 104,301 households in Juja Sub-county with the average household size being 2.9. The sample size was 398 respondents. The research utilized questionnaires to gather data. The questionnaire included both open-ended and closed-ended questions, joined by a list of possible answers from which the participants would pick the one they believed best fit their reality. Data was organized, coded, and summarized for simple analysis. The data gathered was both quantitative and qualitative. The objectives that directed the study's design were used to organize the qualitative data. Quantitative data were examined both descriptively and inferentially using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics like means, and standard deviations were used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Family factors that initiate the use of alcohol and drug abuse

#### Favourable parental attitudes

The results uncovered that most participants agreed that favourable parental attitudes towards alcoholism led to drug and alcohol abuse (mean = 3.56; standard deviation = 0.815). The attitudes and norms regarding substance use within a family influenced an individual's beliefs and behaviours. If alcohol and drug use are considered normal or accepted within the family, the likelihood of initiation may be higher. The attitudes and norms regarding substance use within a family influenced an individual's beliefs and behaviours. If alcohol and drug use are considered normal or accepted within the family, the likelihood of initiation may be higher.

In a similar fashion, Naitore (2022) found a strong correlation between substance abuse and domestic violence. The strongest positive connection (.603) was found between substance use and domestic violence. Family members are the ones who typically promote smoking, drinking, or doing drugs.

Gatune (2020) Permissive parenting had a significant influence on substance use to a great extent hence children were more likely to indulge in alcoholism and other illicit drugs if given the freedom to do all they wish by their parents. Counsellor 2 indicated that failure by parents to correct or punish their children amounts to child neglect and a recipe for all manner of social evils including drug abuse among children.

According to John Locke, people are born as blank slates (tabula rasa) and that their individual differences emanate from environmental influences (Psychology encyclopedia, 2017) Locke argued that association of ideas or impressions made when we are young are more significant as they are the foundation of the self (Locke, 1959) Psychological reinforcement of substance use is influenced by environmental, social and cultural factors (Tsavou & Petkari, 2020)

#### Marital Conflict

*Table 1: Family factors that initiate the uses of alcohol and drug abuse*

Statements	Mean	SDEV
Favourable parental attitudes towards alcoholism lead to drug and alcohol abuse	3.56	0.815
History of family drug abuse contribute to drug and alcohol abuse	3.68	0.896
Marital conflict contributes to drug and alcohol abuse	3.72	0.776
Poor parental monitoring lead to alcohol and drug abuse	3.59	0.847
Association with delinquent people lead to drug and alcohol abuse	3.65	0.749
Experiencing high level of stress lead to drug and alcohol abuse	3.45	0.677

*Source: Field Data (2023)*

The outcomes also show that most participants agreed that marital conflict contributes to drug and alcohol abuse (mean = 3.72; standard deviation = 0.776). 22.1% of the respondents lived separately from their spouse while 15.4% were divorced. The individuals who experience divorce or separation could be at an increased risk of drug abuse. The emotional distress and disruption associated with these events can contribute to substance use. Compared to marriage and dating relationships, being single and not in a romantic relationship was linked to binge drinking and drug usage (Umberson & Thomeer, 2020). The responsibilities and commitments associated with marriage, such as caring for a spouse and children, can discourage risky behaviours like drug abuse.

A study carried out in the recent past found that women's self and partner- reports of alcohol use were both associated with greater relationship conflict (Farrelly, Sherry, Kehayes&Stewart, 2019). Results from a study by Flanagan(2020) indicated that men who displayed more negative conflict behaviors and reported more severe psychological intimate partner violence perpetration in their relationship reported higher alcohol craving.

### **Poor Parental monitoring**

The participants agreed that poor parental monitoring lead to alcohol and drug abuse (mean = 3.59; standard deviation = 0.847). Adolescent drug use is associated with several factors, such as low self-esteem, low religiosity, subpar academic achievement, parental rejection, dysfunctional families, abuse, excessive or insufficient parental control, and divorce.

Gatune (2020) established that excessive freedom to children contributed to their substance use. (88.6%) disagreed that their parents spend time with them. The findings indicated that the majority of the youth recovering from substance use from the treatment centers in Kiambu County lacked authoritative parenting in their up-bringing. Authoritative parenting implies that parents are likely to be closer and more concerned about what their children do. Therefore, children are likely to desist from substance use.

The study by El Kazdough et al., (2018) while exploring the students, parents, and teachers' perceptions regarding substance use risks and protective factors among adolescents in treatment centers, noted that parenting style had a significant contribution to the adolescent's risky behavior. Additionally, the study found out that parent's perception and interventional measures had a significant influence in shaping the adolescent risky behavior particularly in early stages of exposure to the risky environment.

According to Bowen's theory of Family Systems, the problem of substance abuse is viewed as a family system issue and a symptom of dysfunction in the family. Kerr and Bowen (1988) stated that "acute symptoms are associated with short term disturbances in the balance of a system while chronic symptoms are associated with long term disturbances". (p 256) Substance misuse and abuse are examples of the acute symptoms while substance dependence is an example of chronic symptoms. Bowen (1974) , suggests according to the family system theory that positive parenting is a family environment resource that can support adolescents' development of personal competencies.

### **Association with users of alcohol and drugs**

The results revealed that most participants agreed that association with users of alcohol and drugs influenced them into becoming users (mean = 3.65; standard deviation = 0.749).

A study carried out by Wambui (2018) revealed that 58% of the youth were initiated into smoking by friends and peers. The results implied that friends and peers were the top influencers.

### **Experiencing high levels of stress**

The participants agreed that experiencing high levels of stress lead to drug and alcohol abuse (mean = 3.45; Standard deviation = 0.677). These participants felt that alcohol and different drugs would offer relief when they were experiencing stress emanating from family conflicts and societal expectations such as securing employment.

Epidemiological studies have identified stress as one of the main risk factors for development of drug addiction, and as a strong predictor of high craving and relapse to drug use. Preclinical models of addiction have demonstrated that exposure to stress can enhance the rewarding effects of drugs and the acquisition of drug-seeking behaviors (Mantsch et al., 2016) .

In a study that explored the relationship between acute stress and the rewarding properties of cocaine (De Giovanni et al., 2016) , it was found that glutamate N-methyl-D- aspartate receptors were involved in the development and the expression of cocaine conditioned place preference reinstatement after restraint-induced stress.

According to studies, children who have a history of trauma were 4 to 12 times more likely to experience drug dependency, alcoholism, mental health conditions and even suicide attempts. Often times, individuals who have experienced childhood trauma begin using drugs or alcohol as an attempt to self-medicate.

Childhood sexual abuse at most times leads to poor psychological outcomes including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Individuals may turn to substances such as methamphetamine to cope with the traumatic stress that may be an outcome of childhood sexual abuse (Peter Hagene & Vasquez, 2013).

Among the key tenets of the trauma model of substance abuse is that challenging patterns of substance use occur to keep painful trauma-related emotions separate from awareness therefore, preventing intrapsychic integration. Substances in this context then act as an external regulator of disturbing mental and somatic states deriving from childhood trauma, and used as a self-soothing strategy to cope with the internal state (Caretti et al., 2018)

Other psychoanalytic theorists explain addiction as intrapsychic conflict from an overly harsh superego. Substance use represents a route of escaping anxiety, fear and rage. Neo-freudians believe trauma underpins addiction and addictive behaviour develop as a way to cope with trauma.

### **Family History of substance use**

One of the most significant risk factors is having a family history of substance abuse (mean = 3.68; standard deviation = 0.896). A genetic predisposition to addiction makes individuals more vulnerable to drug and alcohol abuse.

The results were upheld by the results of research by Kanyoni (2015) who established that many teenagers who used alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana also came from homes where other family members used drugs.

Genetic theories of substance use propose that individuals who are likely to use and become addicted to drugs are characterized by genetically inherited predispositions to these problems. Inherited characteristics affect how people metabolize substances and/or experience the effects of a substance.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The research concluded that there was substantial impact of family factors on an individual's susceptibility to alcohol and drug abuse. Factors such as parental substance use, family cohesion, communication, and parenting styles play pivotal roles in shaping an individual's risk or resilience to substance abuse. Family factors especially family economic standing, and peer influence play a role in an individual's substance use. In addition, curiosity, tension release and other personal problems also contribute to a person substance use in different ways. This study also shows that a person's substance use is usually caused by a combination of factors instead of just one sole actor. Family history, genetics, parenting styles, communication, and the presence of substance use within the family all contribute to an individual's susceptibility. A family history of substance abuse increases an individual's vulnerability, but the family environment either exacerbate or mitigate this risk. Even in non-alcoholic families, parents' permissive attitudes toward alcohol consumption have a significant impact on their children

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that;

- i. Parents and caregivers should set a positive example by demonstrating responsible and healthy behavior. Children often model their attitudes and behaviors after their parents. Children look up to their parents and caregivers as role models. If parents demonstrate responsible and healthy behaviors, children are more likely to adopt these behaviors as well.
- ii. Family factors were found to be contributing to student involvement in alcohol and drug abuse. There is, therefore, a need for university counselors to involve parents in family therapy if it becomes necessary. This may help in mitigating the family factors that influence alcohol and drug abuse.

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