

## **Influence of Parents' Alcohol and Drug Abuse on School Participation of Lower-Primary Schools Pupils in Meru South Sub-County, Kenya**

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**Abstract:** Parental alcohol and drugs abuse is a major health concern and detrimental to the general growth, development and learning of their children. Thus, the main purpose for the study was to determine to what extent parents' drug and alcohol abuse influenced school participation of their children in public lower-primary schools in Meru South Sub County in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were: to establish the influence of alcohol and drug abuse on the school participation of early childhood pupils in lower-primary schools in terms of enrollment, class attendance and learning. The Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner's (1979), guided the descriptive survey design study. Data was collected from a sample size of 32 teachers using questionnaires which were piloted in four public lower-primary schools. Content validity was ensured by developing the research instruments according to the study objectives and the reliability determined by use of the test re-test technique at a cronbach alpha correlation coefficient of 0.7. Data was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The study findings established that parental alcohol and drug abuse influenced children's enrollment due to premature admissions and parents were not keen on their children's education, nor helping with homework which negatively affected participation in learning. In addition, schools in locations where alcohol and drug abuse was rampant had low enrollment rate of pupils. Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents usually experienced domestic squabbles which contributed to their going to school late or even irregularly. It was also observed that most children of alcohol and drug abusive parents were inattentive in class and had problems in participating in class discussions which directly affected their learning. They also usually lacked basic learning requirements because their parents would rather spend money on alcohol and drugs. It was however agreed that guidance and counseling for children and their parents can help them cope with the difficult circumstances surrounding them. It could also help parents recover from their addiction thus their children's school participation may be enhanced.

**Key Words:** Enrolment, Attendance, Learning activities and Interventions

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Drug abuse and alcoholism are a phenomena experienced worldwide and it is a concern that many countries have had to put up with for centuries, (Gupta, 2008; Velleman (2008); WHO, 2004) and in particular, it interferes with the general growth, development and learning of their children. Unfortunately many parents worldwide take alcohol and drugs excessively (Garland,2009)regardless of the effects associated with the vice. Studies by Hansen (2003) indicates that children of parents affected by addiction with alcoholism and drug abuse are prone to a high degree of confronting a host of constraints such as bodily illness, psychological/emotional disturbances and risks indulging alcoholism as well as drug addiction in their later years. The study further observes that, children in families of addiction to a large extent risk facing a physical and emotional neglect and abuse.

In United States Velleman (2008), reveals that more than 15% of addicted adults, were themselves children of alcoholic parents or they faced challenges that resulted from alcoholism or drug addiction in their families. A research by Buckley (2007), in Canada, also concurs that parental alcoholism and drug abuse influenced child maltreatment and altered children's multiple stages development. In UK, Haller, Handley, Chassin and Bountress (2010) also revealed that when parents indulge in drug or alcohol abuse, their children can suffer from a host of maladaptive outcomes stretching from developmental issues which encompass the cognitive, behavioral, psychological, emotional and social domains. Such children have expressed being socially isolated, frequently neglected and with a feeling or a sense of being hated, low self-worth and low self-esteem.

A study carried out by Gitari (2013) in Tharaka Nithi County secondary school female students revealed that parents who take a lot of alcohol or abused other drugs adversely influenced their social economic status and in a way it affected the academic lives of the girls. Children in early years unlike those in secondary school require support from caregivers in order to excel in academic performance since aspects of growth and development as Piaget (1983) notes are inter-related. Further, alcohol and drug abuse are detrimental to the welfare of families and children. It is against this background that the researcher was interested in establishing the extent to which parent substance abuse influenced school participation of early childhood pupils in lower primary schools in Meru south sub county, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

## **II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of the study was to establish the extent to which parental alcohol and drug abuse influence early childhood pupil's school participation in Meru South Sub-County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

## **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The intensity of substance misuse and the length of time the parents have been involved in misuse directly influences the impacts of parental alcohol and drug abuse on children and families. This was revealed by a recent research by Haller, Handley, Chassin, and Bountress, (2010). This research went further and revealed that parental alcohol misuses as well as the levels of parental functioning, parental education and stimulation of children at home do influence the adverse cognitive outcomes in children.

Earls, Reich, Jung and Goninger (2008) denotes that, children members of families characterised by substance abuse are most of the time seen as having impulsive behaviour. This happens mainly due to the fact that they do things for themselves and have not well established structure or routine at their home. Sdorow (2000) observed children growing up in households with a substance abusing parent demonstrated higher levels of adjustment problems, emotional/ behavioral misconduct and attention-deficit disorders.

Wanja (2012) points out that the decision to enroll and keep a child in school involves considering many variables, including parental beliefs and expectations about the value of schooling. Asani (2005) observes that performance of children, depends greatly on the quality of care given by parents. In addition, children who receive adequate and quality nutrition will grow healthy and these will less likely become sick, miss school and fall behind in class.

Children of alcoholic and drug abusing parents need information that is accurate about alcohol, diseases of alcoholism and other drugs. Giving kids these critical actualities during a time fitting way is urgent, so they are not overpowered, loaded, or further confounded. According to Moss, Vanyukov, Majumder, Kirisci and Tarter (2004), children of alcoholic and other drug-dependent parents are at greater risk for many emotional and behavioral problems.

In Meru South sub county, there are high cases of drug and alcohol dependence amongst parents of children of school going age. Many children enrollment, attendance and learning activities are poor. Many children are always seen at home having dropped out and the few who continue with education are being supported by the extended family members. Thus in the current study, efforts were made, to establish the influence of parental alcohol and drug abuse on the school participation of early childhood pupils in lower primary schools in Meru South Sub-County in Kenya.

## **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study used the mixed method research design which (Kathuri and Pals, 2003) shows that it encompasses two methods that complemented each other. The design allowed the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret the findings without manipulating any study variables. Purposive sampling was used to get 2 teachers per school and proportionate random sampling method was utilized to select standard three classrooms in public lower primary schools. As such, using proportionate random sampling in order to give every school a chance to participate, 16 schools were sampled representing 30% as per Kathuri and Pals (2003) recommendations. As for the teachers two of them per school were selected purposively but where there were more than two teachers in a school random sampling by rotary applied, ending up with 32 teachers from the 16 schools. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically according to the study objectives and presented in narrative manner. Quantitative data on the other hand was analyzed by using descriptive statistics namely frequency counts, means and percentages with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). The results of the analyzed data have been presented using tables, pie charts, histogram and bar graphs.

**V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of parents' alcohol and drug abuse on school participation of lower-primary schools pupils in Meru South Sub-County, Kenya as characterized by enrolment, attendance, learning and intervention measures. In this study out of 32 teachers sampled, 31 (97%) responded. This is in line with the findings of Orodho (2009) who asserted that a response rate of at least 70% is adequate for a social scientific study. This implied that the response rate of 97 % was very adequate for reporting in this study. To establish information regarding the influence of alcohol and drug and abuse by parents on the school participation of their children as per the four objective, the teachers were given a list of items in a tables and were required to rate their agreement levels of questions provided. The items were based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

**5.1 Rating on Influence of substance Abuse on enrolment**

	<b>A. Enrollment</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
i.	Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents enroll to school at the recommended age	3(10%)	5(16%)	12(39%)	11(35%)
ii.	Schools in locations where alcohol and drug abuse is rampant have low enrollment of pupils	14(45%)	11(35%)	4(13%)	2(7%)
iii.	Children whose parents abuse alcohol and drugs enroll to school very late in terms of age	15(48%)	9(30%)	3(8%)	4(14%)
iv.	Alcohol and drug abusive parents are less concerned with their children's enrollment to schools	13(42%)	14(45%)	3(10%)	1(3%)
v.	In general, parental alcohol and drug abuse negatively affects the enrollment of their children in school	14(45%)	12(40%)	3(8%)	2(7%)

The analysis on table 4.3 shows that majority of teacher respondents seemed to strongly agree that parental alcohol and drug abuse had influence on children's enrollment. According to the teachers, children of alcohol and drug abusing parents did not seem to enroll to school at the recommended age with 74% confirming so. This shows that parents who abused alcohol and drug were not keen on their children's holistic development, and they would enroll their children to school whenever they chose disregarding the recommended age by the Ministry of Education. Schools in the locations where alcohol and drug abuse were rampant had low enrollment of pupils compared to none abusing locations, 80% of them strongly agreed with the statement. The finding concurs with Masinye (2013) who observed that drug abuse and alcoholism in a family creates a trend in families where the alcoholic and drug user's family is viewed as unreliable in supporting their children to participate optimally in school in comparison with their counterparts in non-abusing families.

Children whose parents abused alcohol and drugs enrolled to school very late in comparison to children where parents did not, 78% of teachers strongly agreed. This showed that many of those children in alcohol and drug abusive families experienced problems which translated into difficulty in school participation. The study further observes that, children in families of addiction to a large extent risks to face a physical and emotional neglect and abuse which affects enrollment. Alcohol and drug abusive parents were less concerned with their children's enrollment to schools 87% strongly agreed. A high risk of academic failure was noted amongst children from families in which both parents reported alcoholism or at least one parent reported significant antisocial behaviour and alcoholism. Parenting was positively related to students' participation in many ways as (McNichol and Tash , 2001) indicated in their study. For example, the frequency of parents' not checking homework was associated with greater drinking among pupils from parent or families with alcohol or drug related dependence. In contrast, this was opposite where parents did not abuse alcohol or drugs because to a great extent they closely monitored, supervised and helped their children with homework and school related activities. Other factors not mentioned above and could influence enrollment of children in the respective schools were intensity of parents' substance misuse by length of time was established to have a direct influences and impacted children and families negatively. Also parental misuse of substance was destructive to existence of family relationships and influenced school enrolment.

**5.2 Influence of Parental Alcohol and Drug Abuse on Children's School Attendance**

<b>B. Attendance</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents fail to attend school regularly	12(39%)	11(35%)	5(16%)	3(10%)
Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents are always late to school	9 (29%)	10 (32%)	7(23%)	5(16%)
Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents usually experience domestic squabbles which contribute to their attending school late	11 (35%)	10(32%)	6(19%)	4(14%)
Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents usually experience domestic squabbles which contribute to their irregular school attendance	12(39%)	11(35%)	5(16%)	3(10%)
Alcohol and drug abusive parents are usually unconcerned with the school attendance of their children	10 (32%)	10 (32%)	7 (22%)	4 (14%)
Alcohol and drug abusive parents rarely attend the school parent meetings	8 (26%)	9 (29%)	8 (26%)	6 (19%)
Parental alcohol and drug abuse negatively affects their children's school attendance in general	14 (45%)	12 (38%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)

The study established that children of alcohol and drug abusing parents failed to attend school regularly with 74% of teachers strongly agreeing to this statement. Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents usually experienced domestic squabbles which had effect on their attending school late, 67% strongly agreed. Domestic squabbles also contributed to children's irregular school attendance with 74% teachers strongly agreeing that there was high rate of irregular school attendance in the area. In agreement to the foregoing, Johnson (2009) in the review of literature also observed that children nurtured in prolonged domestic abuse were highly vulnerable to developing long-term psychological problems due to exposure to abuses both physical and psychological from their abusive parents and also lacked security and protection. The children also faced school based violence and criminal victimization.

Alcohol and drug abusive parents were usually unconcerned with the school attendance of their children, 64% of teacher respondents strongly agreed to this detail. This shows that most parents abusing alcohol and drugs were unconcerned about their children's school attendance but were more concerned with where to get the alcohol or drugs rather than their children's education.

The study correspond with Asani (2005) who observed that "the children who hailed from families subjected to use of drugs were different from their fellow none vulnerable children in school attendance. On other forms of influencing children's class attendance, socially alcohol and drug abusing parents led to break-up of families and children found themselves out of school because all recourses were spent on alcohol consumption. In economic terms, alcohol is a major contributor to impoverishing its victims and crimpling their abilities to provide for their dependents, for instance, paying school fees for children's education and associated costs leading to students not attending school.

**5.3 Rating on Influence of substance Abuse on Learning**

<b>C. Learning</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
Most children of alcohol and drug abusive parents are not attentive in class	10 (32%)	11(35%)	6(20%)	<b>4(13%)</b>
Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents have problems in participating in class discussions	12(39%)	10(32%)	5(16%)	<b>4(13%)</b>
Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents hardly do their homework	9(29%)	10(32%)	7(23%)	<b>5(16%)</b>
Children victims of alcohol and drug abuse usually in-disciplined in class.	11(35%)	9(29%)	8(26%)	<b>3(10%)</b>
Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents usually lack basic requirements to support their learning	14(45%)	10(32%)	4(13%)	<b>3(10%)</b>

Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents always want to stay at school to avoid the situation at home	12(39%)	11(35%)	5(16%)	<b>3(10%)</b>
Alcohol and drug abusive parents would rather spend money on alcohol and drugs rather than on the required materials to support their children's learning	11(35%)	10(32%)	6(20%)	<b>4(13%)</b>
Alcohol and drug abusive parents are usually unconcerned about their children doing homework	13(42%)	11(35%)	4(13%)	<b>3(10%)</b>
Parental alcohol and drug abuse negatively affects learning participation among their children in school	15(48%)	10(32%)	4(13%)	<b>2(7%)</b>

Most children of alcohol and drug abusive parents were not attentive in class where 67 % of respondent's teachers strongly agreed. On the same note children of alcohol and drug abusive parents had problems in participating in class discussions with 71% of teachers strongly in agreements. Alcoholism and drug abusing had direct effect on children learning in schools in Meru South children victims of alcohol and drug abuse were established to be in-disciplined in class. The study showed that children from alcohol and drug abusing parents did not normally do homework and they were in-disciplined in class work. Buckley and Holt (2007) also observed that children from alcohol and drug abusing parents may show less serious behaviour problems like talking back, failure to follow directions and adamant to comply. It was established that children of alcohol and drug abusing parents usually lack basic requirements to support their learning with 77% in support. On the other hand 74 % of the respondents strongly agreed that children of alcohol and drug abusing parents always want to stay at school to avoid the situation at home. Alcohol and drug abusing parents were usually unconcerned about their children doing homework where 77% strongly agreed.

**5.4 Intervention Strategies to Support Alcohol and Drug Abusive Parents,**

<b>Interventions</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
Guidance and counseling of children of alcohol and drug abusive parents can help them cope with their difficult circumstances at school and home	14(45%)	12(39%)	3(10%)	2(6%)
Guidance and counseling of children of alcohol and drug abusive parents can help them improve in their learning	13(42%)	11(35%)	4(13%)	3(10%)
Guidance and counseling programmes for alcohol and drug abusive parents may help them recover from their addiction and enhance their involvement in school activities	12(39%)	12(39%)	5(16%)	2(6%)
Isolating children from alcohol and drug abusive parents can shield them from much harm	11(35%)	9(29%)	7(23%)	4(13%)
recuperate				
Rehabilitating of alcohol and drug abusive parents is meant for restoration, can help them learn self-care strategies and skill building activities they can use to support their families	9(29%)	8(26%)	7(23%)	7(23%)
Parental education can help targeted alcohol and drug abusive ones to support their children in doing homework	8(26%)	10(32%)	6(19%)	7(23%)
Parental education can enhance the parenting styles and life style of alcohol and drug abusive parents	11(35%)	13(42%)	3(10%)	4(13%)
Programmes in self-care strategies and skill building activities can empower alcohol and	14(45%)	11(35%)	4(14%)	2(6%)

drug abusive parents to nature their children's holistic growth and development				
Seminars on community awareness on influence and effects of alcohol and drug abuse on children's school participation can empower all community members on ways they can support addicted parents and their families	12(39%)	13(42%)	5(16%)	1(3%)

Children of alcohol and drug abusive parents through guidance and counseling can help them cope with the difficult circumstances experienced both in school and at home. Also guidance and counseling of children of alcohol and drug abusive parents was established to be of help in improving on the school participation where 78% strongly agreed. It was also established that guidance and counseling programmes targeting alcohol and drug abusing parents can help the addicts recover from their addiction and enhance their participation in school activities where 78% strongly agreed. Isolating children from alcohol and drug abusive parents can shield the children from much harm both at home and school with 64% of respondent strongly agreed. Isolation of alcohol and drug abusive parents in Rehabilitation Centers can help them learn self-care strategies and skill building activities they can use to support their families. Programmes in self-care strategies and skill building activities can empower alcohol and drug abusive parents to nature their children's holistic growth and development where 80% of respondents strongly agreed. The current study agrees with Moss and Billings (2004) who argues that children hailing from vulnerable families need some assistance from everybody and most so from school staff entrusted with extracurricular activities who are endowed with golden opportunities capable of aiding in primary relationships for children emanating from addicted parents.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study results, the study concludes that parental alcohol and drug abuse was influencing children's enrollment in the sampled area. Schools in the locations where alcohol and drug abuse was rampant had low enrollment rate of pupils compared to those from non-abusing locations. Most children of alcohol and drug abusive parents were not attentive in class and these children had problems in participating in class discussions which had direct influence on their learning. These children were in most cases in-disciplined, hardly did their homework, failed to follow instructions and were adamant to comply with regulations. Isolation of alcohol and drug abusive parents through rehabilitation programmes could also help them learn self-care strategies and skill building activities to support their families. Programmes in self-care strategies and skill building activities could empower them to nurture their children's holistic growth and development. The following recommendations are made, government should consider developing a curriculum on effects of drug abuse in the core subjects. This will ensure that all students are informed about the dangers of drug abuse to enable them make informed choices. Seminars for community awareness on influence and effects of alcohol and drug abuse on children's school participation should be encouraged.

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