

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUBSTANCE USE AND EARLY ONSET OF SEXUAL ENGAGEMENT AMONG ADOLESCENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MBEYA CITY

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Abstract: The study adopted convergent parallel research design, a mixed research approach that involved both the qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. A total of 104 respondents were involved in this study. The participants were selected using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Data was collected using interviews and questionnaires. Its include two Secondary School in Mbeya city .Both secondary school data source were utilized in the study, primary data was obtained through questionnaires, which was used to acquire quantitative data while qualitative data was obtained through a semi- structured in depth questionnaire and interview. Quantitative data was analyzed through the SPSS and presented as frequencies, percentages, and correlation output on table, and while qualitative data were sorted, placed under broader themes and presented as direct quotation upon content. Data findings reveal that over all there is a great correlation between substance use and early onset of sexual engagement in Urban Mbeya city. It is also clear from the finding that, risk factors have directly or indirectly impacts on students' academic achievement and destroy their better future but they differ in the level of occurrences. The study recommends that, it is the time for the government to introduce the curriculum on Psychological and Psycho-social skills

Keywords: adolescents, substance abuse, substance use, early sexual engagement and risk sexual behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Murray *et al.*(,2017). Substance use is a global problem which poses great danger to the health of the individuals, the society and to a greater extent, the political stability and security of many countries. Approximately, more than 200 million people use drugs in the world. This is the number across all societies of the world which includes the urban and rural professionals snorting cocaine in down town entertainment clubs, the slum dwellers in developing countries, farmers addicted to the opium that they grow and the teenage ecstasy user in comfortable homes.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services in USA reported that half of all teens – and 60% of adolescents reported that drugs were used, kept, or sold at their schools. Students at these schools are three times more likely to smoke, drink, or use illicit drugs than students whose schools are substance free. Of those students who tried cigarettes in school at some times, 86% is still smoking as seniors. Of these who have been drunk, 83 percent continue to get drunk as seniors. Of those who have tried marijuana even once, 76% are still using it in the twelfth grade. By the completion of high school, 70% have smoked cigarettes, 81% have drunk alcohol, 47% have used marijuana, and 24% have tried other illegal drugs (Swendsen, *et al.*, 2019). The United States of America was found to have citizens who were four times more likely to

report using cocaine in their lifetime than the next closest country, New Zealand (16% vs. 4%), Marijuana use was more widely reported worldwide, and the U.S. also had the highest rate of use at 42.4% compared to 41.9% of New Zealanders (Warner, 2018).

A study in Canada found that prevalence use of substance is typically initiated during adolescence. Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among adolescents, with 64% of 18 years old youths endorsing lifetime alcohol use, followed by marijuana (45%) and cannabis use (31%) (Johnston et al., 2022). Overall, rates of adolescent substance use have remained relatively stable over the past several years, with a few notable exceptions. Cigarette use has declined dramatically over the past several decades, while e-cigarette use has become more prevalent in recent years (Bunnell, et al., 2015). Thirteen percent of teens have reported using e-cigarettes recently compared to 3% reporting cigarette use, with a concerning increase in the number of never-smoking youths reporting e-cigarette use (Bunnell et al., 2015). Another recent trend includes increased frequency of marijuana use, with 6% of 18 year olds youths reporting using marijuana daily (Johnston, et al., 2022

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Region and the WHO Region of the America report the highest proportions of drinkers among adolescents while the WHO South-East Asia Region and the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region have the lowest. In general, adolescent boys drink more alcohol than adolescent girls. However, the sex difference is smaller at the younger ages. Cannabis use is associated with a decline in intelligence quotient scores before age 18 years and an increase in the risk of negative consequences among adolescents. Unlike other substances, in many countries, boys and girls show similar prevalence of ever-using cannabis, alcohol and tobacco. Substance use contribution to the global burden of disease has been shown to be higher than that of many mental disorders and higher than that of all maternal conditions lumped together (Murray, et al., 2017). Research has shown that drug use starts during adolescence or in early adulthood; and that substance use leading to addiction usually starts in teenage (Swendsen, et al., 2019). The use of drug has adverse effects on the users (Gryczynskiet, et al., 2018). The National Agency for the campaign Against Drug use (NACADA, 2006) shows that up to 92% of adolescents aged between 16 and 26 are reported to have experimented with drugs in many countries in the world.

In Tanzania, the lifetime prevalence of substance abusers among school-age youth (aged 11 to 17) was 7%; the most common drugs taken were marijuana, amphetamines, and methamphetamine (3.1%), with alcohol coming in second at 4.5%. Cigarettes (15.5%), alcohol (9.2%), and marijuana (3%) were the most popular drugs used by school-age adolescents in the Kilimanjaro region. Tanzania has few studies on adolescent substance use. Therefore, there is a lack of evidence to support actions and policies (Francis et al., 2015). There are many factors associated with adolescent drugs and alcohol experimentation and abuse such as personal values and personality traits.

The early onset sexual activities are a predictor of alcohol and drug use among adolescents Tanzania. The study found that 27% of adolescents who engage in early onset sexual activities were more likely to use drugs and alcohol than those who did not engage in early sexual activities. A similar found that early onset sexual activity was associated with increased alcohol use among the young women (Athman, S. 2017). These findings suggest that early onset sexual is a risk factor for substance use. The interventions aimed at reducing early sexual activity may also be effective in reducing substance use among adolescents. Therefore, it is important to continue researching this correlation and develop targeted interventions to address both issues (Athman, S. 2017).

Adolescents in Tanzania face a range of health risks, including early onset of sexual engagement and substance use. Previous studies have suggested that early onset of sexual engagement is a significant predictor of substance use among adolescents in other countries. However, little is known about this relationship in the Tanzanian context. This study aimed to address this gap in the literature by investigating the relationship between early onset of sexual engagement and substance use among adolescents in two regions of Tanzania, and by exploring the role of psychosocial factors in this relationship. The findings of this study were expected to contribute to a better understanding of the health risks faced by adolescents in Tanzania and may inform the development of interventions to prevent or reduce substance use among this population. In light of this context, this paper sought to answer the following questions.

i What is the relationship between substance use and early onset of sexual engagement among adolescents at secondary school in Mbeya City?

ii What are the risk factors associated with substance use and early onset of sexual engagement among adolescents at secondary school in Mbeya City?

iii What is the impact of substance use and early onset of sexual engagement among adolescents at secondary school in Mbeya City?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study used a convergent parallel design which involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data separately and then integrating the results to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem. This design is particularly useful when exploring complex social phenomena and gave a researcher an opportunity to collect the two types of data correctly

Targeted population and sampling technique

The research targeted all the adolescents from secondary school the population of the study were 1600 population and consist only 104 participants who are selected secondary schools to participate in the study. The choice made based on the case that schools have a larger number of students, also aggressive and isolation among students has been high at school, asserts that most secondary school students are adolescents between 11 to 24 years. Thus, the sample will be drawn from the list of students aged 11 to 24 years old. Sampling technique is concerned with the selection of the sub set of individuals from within a statistical population to represent the whole population. Purposeful samplings were used to select a sample of secondary school adolescents in Tanzania who are at risk of substance use and early onset of sexual engagement. This type of sampling allowed for the selection of participants who have specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research question. The researcher uses a list of secondary schools students in the study area as the sampling frame and randomly selects schools to participate in the study. From each selected school, a random sample of students selected to participate in the study. (Kothari, 2017).

Instrumentation

The study used questionnaire to collect quantitative data this because questionnaire covers large population within short period of time while qualitative data were collected by using semi structure interview.

Reliability and Data validity analysis

To establish reliability in the study by applying methods consistently method are planned carefully to make sure they carry out the same steps in the same way for each measurement in conducting Interview. One hundred and four (104) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. were clearly define how specific behaviors or responses were counted, and make sure questions are phrased the same way each time also conditions of this research were standardized by making sure that during data collection. Data obtained were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences research (SPSS) version to determine reliability of the instrument. Validity refers to the accuracy of a measure or whether the results really do represent what they are supposed to measure (Hamberstone & Heather, 2020). To ensure validity, the researcher administered questionnaires and made sure that a same question is phrased using different wordings and this enabled the researcher to get the important information. The instrument was considered valid.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic approach in a narration form. While Quantitative data, other hand the data was analyzed through frequencies and percentages with the help of the SPSS.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher makes sure that ethical considerations are considered since social researchers are bound to ethical considerations in their studies. Confidentiality, right to withdraw and informed consent is also be highly observed by the researcher as data and all information collected from the respondents participants were briefed about the study and make informed decision to participate and any identifying information of participants were not shared anywhere. Also, the researcher are collected the information in the field after asking for a permission letter from the University of Iringa (UOI) where she is currently studying as well as from regional commissioner and school management were data are collected.

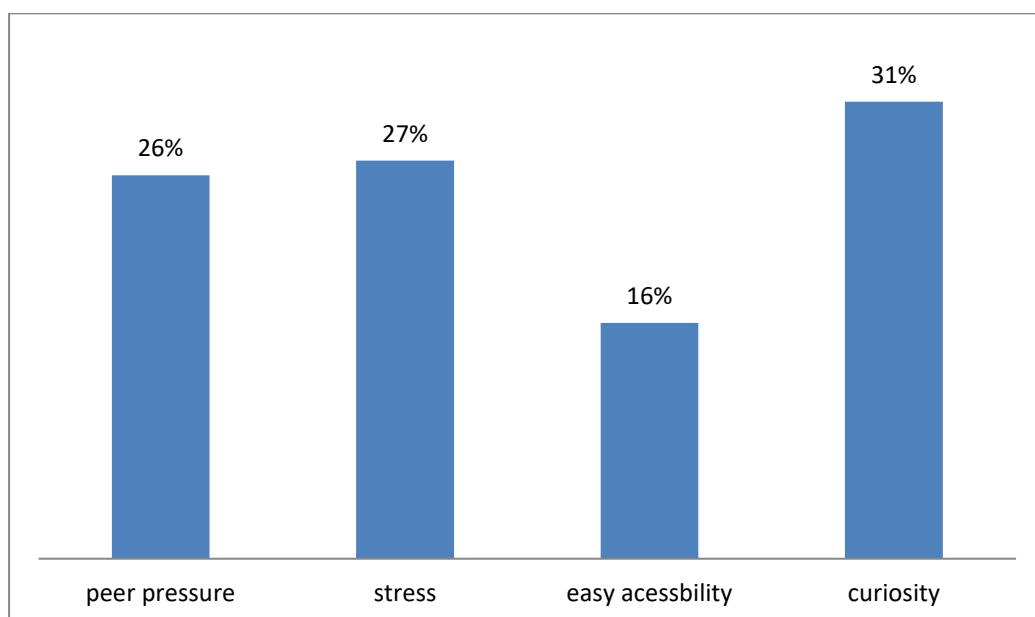
Table 1. Students Engaged into Substance use and Sexual Activities

Variables	Male (52)	Female (52)	Total (104)
Age at first sex			
None	33	31	64 (61.53%)
Less than 10	2	4	6 (5.7%)
9-14 years	1	3	4 (3.8%)
15-19years	13	11	24 (23.07%)
20-24years	3	3	6 (5.7%)
Sexual active in past 12 months			
Yes	23	12	35 (33.65%)
No	29	40	69 (66.34%)
Alcohol drinking			
Yes	22	10	32 (30.76%)
No	30	42	72 (69.23%)
Ever used other substances			
Yes	14	3	17 (16.34%)
No	49	38	87 (83.65%)

The information in table 3 shows that the prevalence use of drugs is consistently higher among the male students compared to their female counterpart. The proportion of girls who had sex at the age less than 10 was 4 = 3.84% boy’s proportion of 2=1.9%. The result revealed that more youth (male and female) had sexual experiences by age 15–19. The result of the analysis also revealed that over 33% of the youths were sexually active (within the past 12 months of the survey). The younger age group (14 years and below) is positively related to risky sexual behaviors compared to older ages (20 years and above). Alcohol intake at whatever level or stage is positively related to risky sexual behaviors. Based on the findings presented in the Table 3, it shows that considerable number of the respondents (30.76%) agreed that alcohol was of the substances which the adolescent students used as a matter of refreshment. In using alcohol, they learned different habits which spoil their behaviors towards their goals. Hence after a moment they got into contact with the substance use. Excessive use of alcohol causes great damages within their bodies, therefore, after being familiar with the alcohol use, adolescents started to use other kinds of substances which resulted to some kind of mental disorder.

To assess risk factors associated with substance use and sexual engagement among adolescents at Secondary School in Mbeya city.

Figure 1: Causes of Students Engagement into Substance Use (N=104)



Source: Research data (2023) Figure.1 indicates that the majority of students (31%) mentioned curiosity as the major reason for them to engage in substance use. Again, (27%) respondents mentioned that students engaged in substance use as a solution for reducing stress. On the other hand, (26%) respondents reported other factors such as peer pressure and examination failure as the factors that motivated students to engage in substance use. Only (16%) respondents felt that accessibility of drugs in our community is also a factor which contributes to students to engage in substance use. However, during interviews with students, it was pointed out that students had engaged in substance use due to peer pressure.

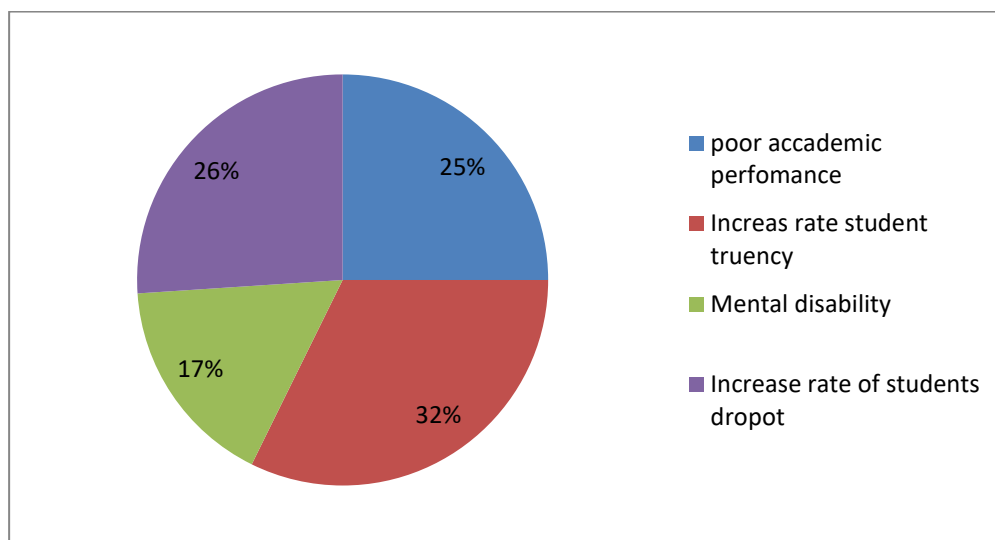
The figure above illustrate that 26% of students agreed that peer pressure is among the reasons for students' engagement in substance use. These findings are supported by the argument given by Maithya (2016) who found that peer pressure is one of the leading factors that contributes to the substance use in secondary schools. Therefore, peers age groups approved of such habit of substance use. It could be difficult to escape from being prone to substance use habit, therefore the facts of being likely to increased drug use among students. It has been researched that peer pressure always makes the students engage in using substances and final engaging in sexual activities.

The findings in figure 1 show that 27% of the respondents agreed that stressful condition has resulted to the change the adolescent's habits into unacceptable behaviors especially of using substances. This objective also got the results of stress reduction as a cause of students engaging in substance use. Stress may influence students to engage in drug abuse as the way of solving such kind of problems. This statement is supported by Henderson (2017) who states that other aspects of school anti-substance programs address problems that put students at greater risk in substance involvement, such as academic failure, dropping out, teen pregnancies and involvement in gangs and petty criminal activities.

The figure above mentioned easy accessibility as a reason behind students 'involvement in substance use. The findings show that 16% of the respondents supported the statements. But all in all, accessibility of substances may also influence students to engage into substance use. Particularly, easy accessibility and affordability is high prevalence in use compared to other kinds followed with smokeless cigarettes. If they could be sold at higher prices, students could not dare using them because they could not afford the marked prices. The argument is supported by Magill (2011) who clearly described that the availability of drugs in a person's home, schools or community, is one of the key factors for a person indulging into substances problems. Similarly, the study of Tuwei (2014) cements on this state that easy access to drugs at homes or at school influence students be addicts.

To determine the impact of Substance use and Early Onset of Sexual Engagement among Adolescents at Secondary school in Tanzania

Figure 2: Impact of Substance Use on Students' Academic Performance (N=104)



Source: Research data 2023

Findings from the students gave views that the use of drugs affected their academic performance. Students pointed out that drug use is among the factors that hinders effective learning of the students. The figure 2 above show that poor academic performance is impact facing adolescents in accessing secondary education; the study showed that 25% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement of poor academic performance is negative consequences of substance use that makes student fail to attend secondary education. This finding is consistent with the findings reported by Morales,*et al.*, (2008) on the reason for reported adequate knowledge on substance use and their effects in academic performance of students. The findings showed that substance use could be danger in the students' study lives. Also, the available information from the public through different media is considered to contribute, however repeated information provided by teachers is also likely to contribute to these results of improved knowledge.

The findings showed that 17% of the respondents strongly agreed that mental disabilities were another impact to a person who has made the excess use of drugs. A person gets mental confusion in solving his or her personal needs, for example being always addicted in drugs, not working and regular sleep among others. Hence, a drug is more dangerous to human health since it totally removes a person's consciousness to act accordingly to any motives of development. This is lined with the study by Hattie (2009) that when facing difficult materials or subjects, the students' levels of concentration is higher leading to an increase in the unsatisfactory sensation. Drugs interfere with an individual's mental awareness of their unique potentials and thus their interests in their career development such as learning or studying activities.

Based on the findings presented in the figure above it shows that most of the respondents, 32% of the students explained that substances use is a big problem for students because it makes them not to achieve their goals in their lives. If the students engage in drugs, it leads to them not to attend in school on regular basis, they always escape the classes. Increase of truancy in this study found that students with habits of using drug appear to have poor attendance in schools compared to non-drug abusers. These findings are in line with Chesang (2013) who described that drug use is closely tied to being truant and those using drugs are mostly likely to skip schools. The reasons behind of 85% decreasing the attendance rate to school was fear of being arrested by teachers and police force. Also, some students become shy participating with non-drug abusers. Truancy could result into poor academic achievement, losing friends and partners, and disturbances in class.

Based on the findings presented in the figure above, it shows that most of the respondents representing 26% agreed with the statement that students' dropout from school is one of the impacts of using substances. Most of them are unable to work. So, instead, they start practicing theft as a replacement of their working places. Apart from being expelled from schools, students can feel overconfidence not to proceed with training because most of drugs drive individuals out of their minds. Nchimbu (2005) described that the characteristics of drug abusers include dropouts and being provocative as well as argumentative

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The study is examined the relationship between substance use and early onset of sexual engagement among adolescents at Secondary School in Mbeya city. The study sought to find out as why substance use and early sexual engagement persists despite the measures taken by the government of Tanzania. The study also assessed the risk factors of substance use and sexual activity among adolescents at secondary school particularly the impact of substance use and early onset of sexual engagement among adolescent at secondary school. Data was analyzed quantitative using tables, frequency percentage and discussion as well as qualitative using thematic analysis. The findings illustrated that the students' involvement in substance use and sexual activities affected their academic performance in secondary schools, either directly or indirectly.

Although Peer group pressure was found to lead to students engaging in substance use, their environment also caused students to engage in substance use activities. Schools with no barriers have trouble in controlling students who engage in substance use, also the distance from home to school poses challenges and difficult to handle such students. This is because as they walk a long distance, they on the way encounter these different temptations. The researcher found out that substance use associated with early onset of sexual engagement among adolescents at secondary school is a huge problem for adolescents who are still studying for their future accomplishments. The study also obtained that some of the students engage in this problem substance use and sexual activity due to the influence of peers and hard living conditions in their homes. Guidance and counseling should be given to such students by the psychologists, parents and teachers to fight against substance use and sexual behavior which lead to the negative impact to adolescents and their future.

Recommendations

These findings hold practical implications to prevent substance use government needs to build hostels for public schools so as to allow students to stay at schools in order to avoid to be tempted to be involved into drug abuse. It is recommended that the government and the NGO's need to organize frequent education campaigns to students and parents to raise their awareness about the effects of drug abuse and how it relate with early sexual behaviors towards students in school life. It is recommended to students who are engaged and those who desire to get involved to stop the use of drugs and sexual behaviors because their effects and cure is very expensive which leads to family economic disturbance and national economic problems for saving the budget for more treatment. It is recommended that teachers' punishment especially painful punishments are not good in the training field of education. Guidance and counseling can be provided on the effects of drug use and sexual behaviors on human beings and all victims. It is recommended that parents should take care of their children especially from age 14 to 19, which is puberty age where the findings indicate that this is the age, which is prone to drug use and they experience emotional changes and desire to engage in sexual behaviors.

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