



**INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE ON MARITAL STABILITY AMONG
SPOUSES IN MURANG'A COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of alcohol and drug abuse on marital stability among spouses in Murang'a County, Kenya. The objective of this study was to establish the types of drugs and alcohol abused in Murang'a County, Kenya. This study was a descriptive survey. The population of the spouses during the study was 253'463. The accessible population was comprised of 554 spouses where one or both spouses were on alcohol or drug abuse. One hundred and twenty (120) spouses were proportionately sampled from three sub-counties. Ten (10) chiefs from the selected locations were selected as part of the sample. The study found out that alcohol was the most common abused substance in Murang'a County Kenya. This study recommends that alcohol and drug counselling centres, rehabilitation clinics need to be established in the county to avert the negative influences of alcohol and drugs on the family, loss of life and human resource wastage.

Keywords: drug abuse, marital stability

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse refers to the recurrent use of illegal or legal drugs resulting to changes in body functions (Miller, 2002). Drug abuse affects the abuser negatively in ways such as physiologically, economically, cognitively and socially. The World Health Organization (2004) reported that globally, about 2.5 million people die annually and many more succumb to illnesses and injury as a result of harmful alcohol and drug use. Drugs are grouped by their most characteristic attributes or major effects on human behaviour and the destruction of the body organs. The classification consists of stimulants which stimulate the central nervous system and speed up the function of the brain. Common stimulants include tobacco product and cocaine and depressants. Other types of drugs abused are depressants, hallucinogens, inhalants and cannabinoids which have analgesic effects. Alcohol and drug abuse have hazardous effects on human being and their marital relationships (Escandon &Galvez 2006). Abuse of alcohol and drugs has social and economic consequences, they results in failure to fulfill major roles and obligations at home, work place, repeated absences or poor work performance (Winstock, 2014). Alcohol and drug related absenteeism and suspensions from work injure the marital status of the spouses and bring about negligence of house hold roles.

In Namibia and South Africa, marital instability is characterized by marital violence, 30 % of ever married women experienced emotional violence from their husbands, while 37 % reported physical violence (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana & Rose-Junius, 2005). These percentages were reported by spouses who were abusing alcohol and drugs. The same study reported 25% of violence was initiated by women against their husbands. Violence was 2-3 times more prevalent among spouses who abuse alcohol and drugs. This indicates that alcohol and drug abuse is a societal problem that is steadily growing and contributes to the destruction of families and communities (Rivers, 1994). The percentage is higher among low income bracket families (Kingori, 2013). The excessive consumption of alcohol and other drugs leaves a trail of misery, wastage of resources and crime in families.

Alcohol and drug abuse have adverse negative social and health consequences on the abusers. They can lead to family conflict, misunderstanding and breakdown in communication. Alcohol and drugs attack the vital body organs causing diseases such as cancer, heart ailments, liver cirrhosis, kidney complications, mental retardation, learning disabilities, memory loss and ultimately death (Melgosa, 2004). These conditions can use a lot of spouse's finances due to the

hospital bills and rehabilitation programmes. Due to the addictive nature of alcohol and drugs abused, the culprits can be involved in crime to keep up the habit. Spouses have fought and even injured each other when quarrels start especially when the person addicted to alcohol or drugs need to be financed to satisfy their craving. This financing of alcohol and drug abuse has implication on marital stability, in relation to the finances misused to maintain the habit. These finances could be used in better ways that can develop the family (UNFPA, 2005).

All Counties in Kenya have high incidences of alcohol and drug abuse with Nairobi, Mombasa and Muranga on the lead. Report from the Sub County officers in Murang'a County indicate that some of the families member's who abuse alcohol and drugs spend time in the local markets places and get involved in criminal activities. This is making the district lag behind in development. NACADA (2004) carried out studies on alcohol and drugs abuse and the, effects of drugs on the person and society. From this study recommendations were made but still alcohol and drug abuse is increasing among families especially in Murang'a County. However limited studies have factored specifically into the influence of alcohol and drug abuse on marital stability. The future of the Kenyan society in terms of innovation, provision of human resources, socio-economic status and political development depends on those who are sober and are involved in developmental activities within the society of the Kenya population. The way families view the drug and alcohol problem is important even during counseling and when an individual is dealing with life's general issues.

Intervention on drugs and alcohol abuse is vital if Kenya was able to achieve her vision 2030 (NACADA, 2008 & Kingori, 2013).

Marital instability reflects and reinforces disinterest between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It can lead to human rights violations, including sexual, psychological, economical and physical abuses (Jewkes, Levin, and Penn-Kekana, 2002). Accordingly, the Vienna Human Rights Conference and the Fourth World Conference on Women gave priority to this issue, which jeopardizes human life, bodies, psychological integrity and freedom. Where marital instability is characterized by violence this may have profound effects direct and indirect on the person that is receiving the violence. The problems could be death, health issues, and unsafe abortion after unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS and Psychological problems (UN, 2006).

From the foregoing background to the study on influence of alcohol and drug abuse on marital stability among spouses, it is notable that most of the programmes have focused on administrative strategies of curbing the menace of alcohol and drug abuse. Counselling and rehabilitation centers should be included in the fight against alcohol and drug abuse.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to establish whether the high incidences of marital instability reported in Murang'a County are influenced by alcohol and drug abuse. Despite all efforts by government and other organizations alcohol and drug abuse remains a major problem in Murang'a County.

Objective of Study

This study was guided by the following objective.

- i. To establish the types of drugs and alcohol abused by spouses in Murang'a County Kenya.

Research Question.

This study aimed at answering the following research questions.

- i. What are the types of drugs and alcohol abused by spouses in Murang'a County in Kenya?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study have vital information about the influence of alcohol and drug abuse on marital stability in Murang'a County. It also provides data that can be used for prevention and rehabilitation of alcohol and drug abusers. This study may help the government of Kenya and Non-Governmental Organizations in designing appropriate policies and programmes for alcohol and drug abuse. The study also provides useful data to counselors and policy makers on the mitigation and counseling services to be provided to drug and alcohol abusers in order to arrest its adverse negative effects on the family.

Scope of the Study

The study was focused on the influence of alcohol and drug abuse and its influences on marital stability among spouse in Murang'a County. The respondents were married spouses who abuse

alcohol and drugs. Also chiefs from the selected locations formed the sample of respondents. Three sub-counties of Muranga County constituted the location of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Perspectives on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

According to the Medical News Today (2013) of Australia, 200 million people abuse illicit drugs worldwide. High income nations have the highest rates of drug abusers where one in every ten people between 15-62 years is either abusing drugs or alcohol (Degenhart, 2013). Since the use of illicit drugs is illegal, the statistics could be higher than this. Australia and America are the continents experiencing a lot of drug addiction problems. This problem is also increasing in the African countries. The challenge of the world governments is to get the accurate and reliable data due to the secrecy of drug users (WHO, 2010). The global statistics as at 2012 indicates that 125-302 million people abuse cannabis. This is a large number of people abusing such a drug. This same report also shows 14-50 million abuse amphetamines while 14-21 million abuse cocaine.

Types of Drugs and Alcohol Abused.

The United Nations 2013 world drug report estimates on alcohol and drug abuse was 236 million people were involved in the abuse. Alcohol was the most abused substance followed by nicotine based products like cigarettes, marijuana was the third most abused drug followed by types of other stimulants. According to the United Nations, 158.8 Million people around the World abuse Marijuana. Tobacco is a public health priority. WHO (2010) recent report on (*tobacco free initiative*) indicated that smoking is an outstanding preventable cause of death in the world, 8 million people die every year globally because of smoking cigarettes. China is the largest abuser of cigarettes in the world with 360 million smokers. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (2000) alcohol is the most abused psychoactive drug in the United States. About 90% of family members use it before they even understand the effects of alcohol and drugs in their body.

Alcohol and drug abuse is on the rise in Africa. Uganda has the highest per capita consumption of alcohol in the world. Alcohol production and consumption are integral part of the Ugandan culture and economy.

In Kenya a report by NACADA (2008) indicated that alcohol is the most commonly abused drug by about 61% of the population. The same report indicated that 50.9% of the adults were abusing alcohol in Nairobi County and 46.3 % in Central region. In Murang'a County 68% of the adult population abuse alcohol and this has been worrying even the county leaders. The other types of drugs abused include marijuana, Khat and Kuber. These types of drugs abused include hallucinogens, stimulants, inhalants, and depressants.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study on influence of alcohol and drug abuse among spouses was based on the family systems theory by Bowen (1985). Bowen family systems theory of human behaviour views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit. The conceptual framework depicts the independent variables and how they influence the dependent variables of the study. The independent variables of the study were types of alcohol and drugs abused. The prices, cultural factors and community interactions were the extraneous variables of the study. Some of the cultural factors encourage alcohol abuse while other cultures are totally against taking of alcohol. Religious groups also view alcohol and drugs in diverse ways where some religion are against alcohol taking while other religion have no issues with alcohol. The outcome of alcohol and drug abuse may influence marital stability which is the independent variable and may be manifested in physical, psychological, sexual abuse and homicide.

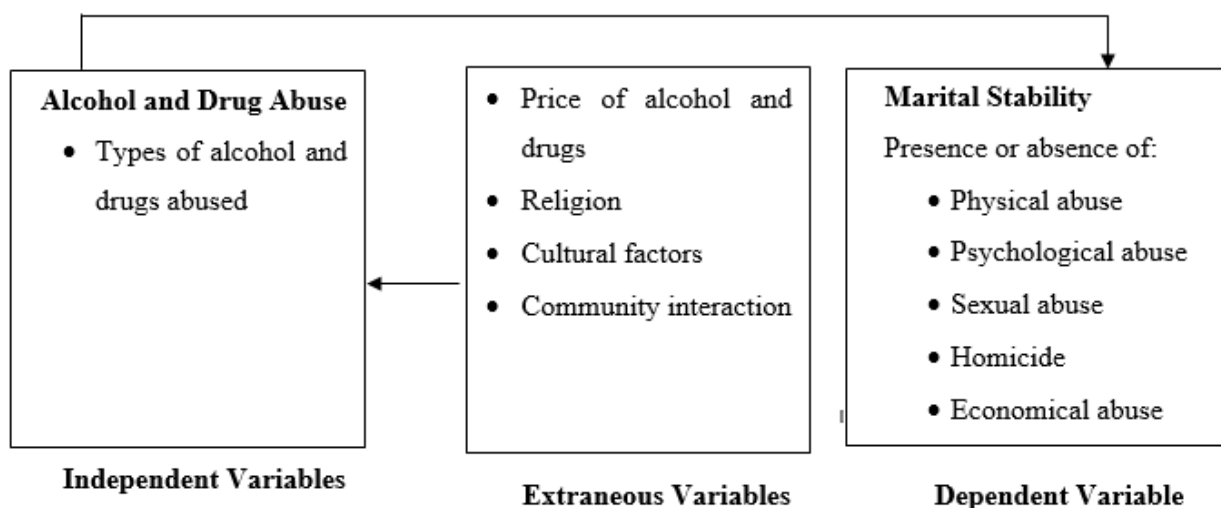


Figure 1: Influence of Drugs and Alcohol Abuse on Marital Stability

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Suitability of a research design depends on the type of a study required that was done. This study intended to determine the influence of alcohol and drug abuse on marital stability among spouses in Murang'a County. The research design was descriptive survey. It allowed the use of interview schedules in order to determine the opinion of the respondents on the area of study (Kathuri & Pals 1993). This study thus used this design because the independent variables alcohol and drug abuse has already occurred influencing the dependent variable marital stability.

Location of the Study

The study was carried out among the spouses in Murang'a County in the central region of Kenya. The Nyeri, Embu, Meru highway passes through the county making it to be very accessible. Alcohol and drugs can easily be brought to the county from other regions. The county comprises of eight Sub-Counties and seventy seven Locations. The area is an agricultural region with large coffee estates, some of the drugs are grown alongside with coffee. Local brews are also brewed in those plantations. All the Sub Counties experience the same kind of life style. Murang'a County has been identified as an area of study because of the reports from NACADA (2010) and by occasioned media reports on drug prevalence and spousal violence, homicide and also suicide.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research findings were based on the following study objective.

- i) To establish the types of drugs and alcohol abused in Murang'a County, Kenya.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

The individual factors examined in the study included the spouse's gender, highest level of education attained, employment status, whether he spouses are together or separated and duration of the self or the spouse on alcohol and drug abuse.

Types of Alcohol and Drug Abused by Spouses in Muranga County

The main objective of the study sought to establish the types of alcohol and drugs abused by the spouses in Murang'a County. Reports from the spouse's respondents and the chiefs indicated that various types of alcohol and drugs were abused in the County. A base line survey by NACADA (2012) tended to agree with these findings that husbands and wives were engaged in alcohol and drug abusing behaviour at the peril of their marital relationship. The study aimed at establishing the major types of alcohol and drugs spouses abused and what each spouse respondent or the partner abused/abusing.

The types of alcohol and drugs abused as reported by the spouses and the area chiefs.

Table 1: *Common Types of Alcohol and Drugs Abused by Spouse According to the Area Chiefs*

	Spouses		Chiefs	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
ALCOHOL	87	72.5	9	90
i) <i>Changa'a</i>				
ii) 2 nd generation				
iii) Kane				
Tobacco				
i) Cigarettes				
ii) Local snuff	19	15.8	1	10
Marijuana	11	9.2	0	0
Khat	3	2.5	0	0
Kuber	0	0	0	20

From table 1 it is clear that alcohol in form of *changa'a* (local illicit brew), 2nd generation and kane a type of legal beer from Kenya breweries with a very high alcohol percentage (40%) are highly abused by spouses in Murang'a County. The local illicit brew "*changa'a*" was reported by the chiefs to be brewed in certain zoned areas and then sold to the rest of the County. The brew is transported in jelly cans together with milk to disguise the contents. The availability of this local brew contributed to the high percentage of the abusers.

The promotion of various alcohol brands through advertisements and sponsorship uses images that depict alcohol as being glamorous, sophisticated and relaxing also led to an increase in abuse of alcohol. NACADA in their survey of 2014 had the same findings. Mangel (2004) in his study in medical science reported that alcohol is the most commonly abused substance in Canada and the United States of America.

Summary of the Findings

The following are therefore the key findings of this study.

- i) The type of alcohol mostly abused by spouses in Muranga County is the illicit brew (*changa'a*) followed by the second generation brands. The drugs abused include cigarettes of all types and marijuana. Other forms of drugs like *khat* and kuber are Alcohol and drugs are readily, legally and culturally accepted drugs were the most abused they included cigarettes and *khat*, illegal alcohol and drugs were also abused and the sellers were using code language to their customers..

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations in the effort of trying to curb the problem of alcohol and drug abuse based on the above conclusions.

- i. Alcohol and drug abuse counselling centres need to be established in the county to address the problem.
- ii. There is need for more awareness among the spouses on effects and treatment of alcohol and drug abuse. This can be done through religious bodies and also mass media.

Suggestion for Further Research

- i. Factors influencing the effectiveness of the information given on alcohol and drug abuse to spouses.
- ii. Family systems roles in curbing alcohol and drug abuse.
- iii. Relationship between poverty and alcohol and drug abusing behavior

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