



## AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY LEVELS AND ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE: A CASE OF MOSORIOT TEACHERS COLLEGE AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

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### ABSTRACT

Alcohol abuse among the youth in Kenya has increasingly been reported. In the community surrounding Mosoriot Teachers Training College, alcohol has been linked to contribute to high cases of indiscipline and anti – social behaviors and crimes. The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between Poverty levels and Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ADA) in Mosoriot Teachers College and its neighborhood.

This study adopted a survey research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. The target population for the study comprised of 800 individuals who included; students, teachers, traders, farmers, clergy, provincial administration, security personnel, and local/village elders. The study used a sample of 80 respondents who were drawn from the College and surrounding community; comprising of 20 students, 13 teachers, 13 farmers, 15 business community members, 11 youths, 2 clergy, 1 chief, 2 security personnel, 1 provincial administrator, and 2 community elders. Purposive sampling was used to obtain the sample on which the study was carried to ensure that views were collected from a cross – section of community representation. Study findings revealed that Alcohol brewing is a source of livelihood in most households in the area, majorities of the people drink so as to reduce stress related problems and the youth indulge in alcoholism excessively and irresponsibly which contradicts the cultural norms. The study recommended that there is an urgent need to address joblessness among the youth, legislation to ensure local pubs do not sell alcohol to the youth and security personnel to be at the forefront in the fight against ADA in communities where they serve.

**Keywords:** *Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ADA), Poverty levels*

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

***“In military science, it is a well known fact that war must be won in the minds of the soldiers long before it is won on the ground. This explains the rationale behind all military drills, simulated war games and other exercises, for the reason that the soldiers’ mind must be trained to go for the kill otherwise they would not endure the risks involved. Every success, every invention and other great things start in the mind, for that is where it matters”***

It is more than a saying that our youth are the hope of tomorrow. It is a fact that we rarely think about, but for sure, they are the future adults who will decide the destiny of a society and there is no better time to destroy them than when they are young. As the saying goes, ***“the enemy is just nipping promise in the bud”***. This is not directly, of course, but indirectly through deception and uncontrolled indulgence in the so called fun and pleasures which are turned into effective pathways to snare and destroy them. Young minds are easily twisted and swayed.

Many people have shown concern on the need to strengthen our defenses at the family level. Unfortunately, many parents have abdicated their responsibilities to teachers and learning institutions. The enemy forces have grabbed that chance. Literary speaking, our modern youth are an endangered species. With the rapidly changes and disintegration of the family unit, the modern youth has to cope with more distressing conditions than his counterpart of a few generations ago. They are poorly equipped to cope with modern problems and frustrations. The consequences and causalities are manifest. Without the benefit of experience and stable families, today’s youth, in some cases, have to cope with many stressing conditions that even the adult finds hard to deal with.

The prevalent use and abuse of alcohol among young people is closely connected with religious, social, economic, and cultural factors. The alarming spread of alcohol consumption and more particularly among teenagers is a characteristic of both wealthy countries and developing nations (Doninger, Sygradsson and Bowman, 1988). This is a major characteristic among our contemporary societies. The influence of parental socialization and societal initiation too, play a major role in alcohol abuse.

The National Agency for the campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA, 2004) conducted a survey on the scope of alcohol use and abuse in Kenya. The survey observed that the use of alcohol has indigenous roots and that it has been widely used in the indigenous societies.

In the light of this observation, the rapid spread of alcohol abuse can be traced to the breakdown of indigenous society and the introduction of foreign influences that have been made available on a large scale. This survey revealed that alcohol abuse in Kenya begins at a very young age. The survey revealed that peer pressure influences youth to use alcohol under false impressions such as alcohol stimulates appetite for food, increase strength to perform heavy tasks at school, give wisdom or instill courage to commit crime. Some youth are brought up in homes where parents use or sell alcohol, which sometimes sell on behalf of their parents. This exposure predispose the youth to alcohol use and abuse in due course.

Unfortunately, the alcohol menace affects mainly the youth. This has resulted in risky sexual behaviours whose consequences are unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS. In the absence of correct information on alcohol use and abuse, the youth have not had adequate skills and knowledge on how to exploit their new natural experiences. The trend of alcohol abuse is expected to continue unless a greater commitment to prevention is made by young people themselves, their families, their educational and cultural institutions, their religious institutions and their peers. Basing on the consequences of alcohol abuse, the study sought to establish policies and strategies that can decrease the menace.

### 1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION

Alcohol abuse among the youth in Kenya has increasingly been reported. In the community surrounding Mosoriot Teachers Training College, alcohol has been linked to contribute to high cases of indiscipline and anti – social behaviors/crimes. The consequences of alcohol abuse include withdrawal effects. To avoid this, a victim takes more of the alcohol thus reinforcing the compulsive behaviour. Alcohol abuse leads to mental impairment; judgment and intellect failure. It also results to hallucinations and illusions. Victims of alcohol become morally impaired in the society. Some of the alcohol abused may lead to ill health.

Alcohol abuse has caused great concern in the study area for the last two to three years. A number of students have been reported to having been kept in homes where alcohol brewing is the main activity, where they cohabit with old women in the villages after being sent home on suspension on ADA related cases. Consequently, completion rates and performance of such students has been affected. Some students have been reported to have exchanged all their personal belongings for alcohol. There is a corresponding moral deterioration within the community.

### 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between Poverty levels and Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Mosoriot Teachers College and its neighborhood.

#### 1.2.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To establish whether poverty levels influence ADA among Mosoriot Teachers College community members and its neighborhood.
- ii. To establish the level and effects of ADA in Mosoriot Teachers College and its neighborhood.
- iii. To establish the role of the college neighborhood on ADA behaviors among Mosoriot Teachers College community.
- iv. To establish whether a college – community linkage/partnership would help in the fight against ADA in the college and its neighborhood.

### 1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the late 1800, there existed a tradition of presenting negative information about alcohol or drugs in public educational institutions with the clear goal of prevention of use. Some of these early programs presented information that was so clearly one-sided that they could have been classified as propaganda rather than education (Oakley, R. & Charles, K. 1999). As society seeks to prevent drug abuse by limiting the availability/enforcing stringent legislation and severe penalties on those involved in drugs- thus limiting the availability of such drugs, we are forced to recognize several other factors:-

- ❖ First, as long as there is a sizeable market for these substances, there will be people to supply them. Thus only if we can teach people not to want the drugs can we attack the source of the problem.
- ❖ Second, these substances will never disappear entirely. So we should try to teach people to live in a world that includes them.
- ❖ Third, our society has accepted the continued existence of tobacco and alcohol, yet some people are harmed by them. Can we teach people to co-exist with both legal and illegal substances and to live in such a way that their lives and health are not impaired by them?
- ❖ One reason that young people might use psychoactive drugs is to produce certain feelings: of excitement, or relaxation, of power, of being in control. Helping students to know their own feelings and to express them, helping them to achieve altered emotional states without drugs, and teaching them to feel valued, accepted and wanted are all presumed to be ways of reducing drug use. The students should be taught values clarification-i.e. teaching them to recognize and express their own feelings and beliefs. In this approach, the assumption is that what was lacking in drug-using youth was

not factual information about drugs, but rather the ability to make appropriate decisions based on that information (Swisher, 1979).

The prevalent use and abuse of alcohol among young people is closely connected with religious, political and cultural activities. The alarming spread of alcohol consumption and more particularly among teenagers is a characteristic of both wealthy countries and developing nations (Doninger, Sygradsson and Bowman, 1988). This is a major characteristic among our contemporary societies. The influence of parental socialization and community initiation play a major role in alcohol abuse among today's youth.

A 1973 report indicated that four different types of drug educational programs were effective in producing increased knowledge about drugs and equally ineffective in altering attitudes or behaviour (Swisher J S et al 1973). According to this report, nationwide drug use had increased even with increased emphasis on drug education. Perhaps by giving the students information about drugs, we make them more likely to try them, but we also make them more aware of the dangers of excessive use.

Recent approach to this problem of substance use and abuse has been the "drug-free institutions and community" approach. Under this approach, institutions adopt "drug-free" policies, where students are taught to make responsible decisions for themselves. This approach wants to make it clear to the students that the society at large, the community in which they live, and the institution in which they study have already made the decision not to condone drug use and abuse. These approaches notwithstanding, it has come to the realization of institutions that there are many factors that can place a person at risk of using illicit drugs. These range from societal expectations, not doing well academically to family problems (divorce, alcoholism, etc), to depression, to having friends who drink or use drugs (peer pressure).

The National Agency for the campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA, 2004) conducted a survey on the scope of alcohol use and abuse in Kenya. The survey observed that the use of alcohol has indigenous roots and that it has been widely used in the indigenous societies. In the light of this observation, the rapid spread of alcohol abuse can be traced to the breakdown of indigenous society and the introduction of foreign influences that have been made available on a large scale. This survey revealed that alcohol abuse in Kenya begins at a very young age. The survey revealed that peer pressure influences youth to use alcohol under false impressions such as alcohol stimulates appetite for food, increase strength to perform heavy tasks at school, give wisdom or instill courage to commit crime. Some youth are brought up in homes where parents use or sell alcohol, which sometimes sell on behalf of their parents. This exposure predispose the youth to alcohol use and abuse in the due course.

#### 1.4 METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a survey research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. The target population for the study comprised of students, teachers, traders, farmers, clergy, provincial administration, security personnel, and local/village elders. The study used a sample of 80 respondents who were drawn from the College and surrounding community; comprising of 20 students, 13 teachers, 13 farmers, 15 business community members, 11 youths, 2 clergy, 1 chief, 2 security personnel, 1 provincial administrator, and 2 community elders. Purposive sampling was used to obtain the sample on which the study was carried to ensure that views were collected from a cross – section of community representation.

#### 1.4 DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS(Skills/Training after Formal Education)

The youth respondents were asked whether they had gone through any training after the formal education.

Table 1: Skills or Training after Formal Education

Skills/Training after Formal Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teaching	15	18.75
Farming	20	25
Social/community work	27	33.75

Computer	4	5
None	14	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

From the findings in Table 1, 18.75% have teaching skills, 25% have farming skills, 33.75% have had community/social work skills, 5% have basic computer skills while 17.5% have not gone through any form of training. There are some of the life skills that help the individual to effectively deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They have techniques for positive behaviour and empowering skills that affect the capacity of an individual to pursue life's goals. The skills not only enable one to understand oneself better in relation to society, but also in relation to physical environment so as to make informed choices and rational decisions.

#### RESPONDENT'S OCCUPATION

From the findings in Table 2, most of the people selected for the study were students (25%), those who were involved in business were 18.75%, Teachers were 16.25% while farmers were 16.25%, while other occupations were 10%, and those who did not have any occupation were 13.75%

**Table 2: Respondent's Occupation**

Income Generating Activity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Occupation</b>		
Student	20	25
Farming	13	16.25
Business	15	18.75
Teaching	13	16.25
None	11	13.75
Others	8	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

The study findings, report that although many people seem to have occupations, those who are not involved in any occupation is relatively high. This has implications on how these group and students spend their leisure time.

From an interview conducted, a church leader reported that many people who are not occupied spend their time in alcohol use and abuse. Students also, during weekends and when on holidays, need guidance on how to spend their leisure time in constructive activities.

#### BENEFITS FROM INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITY

Among the benefits that the people derive from their occupations include school fees payment, job creation, improving one's initiative and utilization of available resources in the locality and socio-economic development of the community.

These findings are best illustrated in table 3 below

**TABLE 3: BENEFITS FROM INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITY**

Benefits from Income generating activity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
School fees payment	24	30
Job creation	6	7.5
Improves one's initiative	12	15
Utilization of available resources	18	22.5
Socio-economic development	20	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

**ROLE OF ALCOHOL IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELFARE IN THE COMMUNITY**

Those who were involved in alcohol preparation and sale were asked to state the role of alcohol in their socio-economic welfare.

**Table 4: Role of Alcohol in Socio-economic Welfare in the Community**

Role of alcohol in socio-economic Welfare	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Income generating	31	38.75
Reduces stress levels	20	25
Traditional ceremonies	8	10
Socializing/leisure activity	11	13.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings in the table 4 above show that people brew alcohol so as to have income 38.75%. The study findings argue that alcohol brewing is a source of livelihood in most households. 25% of the people drink alcohol so as to reduce stress related problems such as failure in examination, lack of source of livelihood, joblessness. While 10% prepare and use alcohol for socio-cultural functions such as circumcision ceremonies, traditional marriage ceremonies, cleansing ceremonies among others.13.5% take alcohol as a leisure activity.

**Age Bracket of those who mostly indulge in Drinking Alcohol**

Table 5 below shows that, those who mostly indulge in drinking alcohol are the young females (48.75%) and males (63.75%) respectively. The youth indulge in alcoholism excessively and irresponsibly. This contradicts the cultural etiquette of alcohol use.

**Table 5: Age bracket of those who were allowed to drink alcohol in the past**

Age bracket allowed to drink alcohol in the past	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Elderly	39	48.75
Adults and Elderly	51	63.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

The implication is that traditionally there were the age groups that were allowed to drink alcohol. This was defined by culture in the past and people had to go by culture dictates. This is not the case, today since some children have been found to start alcohol drinking at a very early age as 8-10 years.

**1.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS TO THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ADA**

1. In order to address ADA effectively, there is an urgent need to address joblessness among the youth, with clear strategies of empowering them economically.
2. Policy legislation needs to put in place stringent legislation to ensure that local pubs do not sell alcohol to underage children, which encourages use and abuse.
3. The provincial administration, in conjunction with institutions should create partnerships in the fight against ADA.
4. The security personnel should be at the front in the fight against ADA in communities where they serve. The personnel should be guided by a clear code of conduct to ensure compliance.
5. The local community members urgently need economic empowerment through skills training alternative activities as a source of livelihood, instead of alcohol business.

**1.6 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE FINDINGS**

From the interviews conducted alcohol problems partly stem from an attempt to cope but an underlying problem such as stress, unemployment, relationship difficulties, depression or bereavement. The result can be that the underlying problems rather than being addressed are exacerbated by drinking and the alcohol use itself becomes a problem.

Young people reported that alcohol is freely available, from a variety of different types of outlets, to underage adolescents who wish to purchase it. The study findings inform that, earlier onsets of drinking have been linked to increased risks of alcohol and drug problems in later life.

It was observed that children of problem drinkers can suffer from emotional and psychological problems. But how a young person responds to a parent's drinking depends on factors such as the young person's personality, strong external support systems and a harmonious family environment. Responses from key informants confirmed that alcohol abuse poses a threat to future of the youth, both inside and out of the college. It was established that alcohol use and abuse provoke social, economic, psychological and family effects among the people involved.

Due to high unemployment rates, idleness among the youth was observed to be very common among the youth in the community surrounding Mosoriot Teachers Training College. Therefore, in an attempt to temporarily forget the stress associated with joblessness despite having completed formal education and training, the youth seek solace in alcohol and other substances.

Use of alcohol in Mosoriot Teachers College surroundings is quite high. Majority of those indulging in the vice are the youth. Therefore, concentrated culture of co-operation, support and a positive relationship with the security personnel, policy makers, college, and community in the prevention of alcohol abuse is of paramount importance. The findings will provide information on the special needs and their therapeutic management of the alcohol addicts.

From the findings, risky sexual behaviors such as prostitution and engaging in unprotected sex have resulted into contraction of sexuality transmitted infections including HIV and AIDS. Most students who have engaged in alcohol abuse so as to reduce stress, whose use has indigenous roots in the indigenous societies.

### 1.7 RESEARCH GAPS

Areas for further research should include, but not limited to:-

1. Disintegration of the traditional/cultural values and ADA among Kenyan communities.
2. The influence of the work environment and ADA related behaviors among organizational employees.

### 1.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Based on the research findings, the paper makes the following recommendations:

- A way forward should be established to assist the victims of alcohol by providing them with alternative source of livelihood such as employment opportunities, offering skilled courses like computer business skills guidance and counseling among others.
- In order to provide young people with the necessary skills to overcome difficulties and to empower them to create a future for themselves and their families, the government should provide a range of programmes that are aimed at:
  - i. Preparing young people for life after school by raising their awareness of economic issues.
  - ii. Educating young people in business management and career planning by providing them with practical business experiences
  - iii. Improving the level of employability of young people and encouraging personal growth by developing leadership, team work and self management skills.
  - iv. Enforcing moral education in schools since the youth spend most of their time there.

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