



# **Psychoactive Substance Abuse among Secondary School Students in Tanzania: Exploring Perception and Understanding of Its Impact on Academic Achievement**

**Kamanda Betese<sup>a\*</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> *University of Iringa, Tanzania.*

## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study was to explore perceptions and understanding of the impact of drug and psychoactive substance abuse among Secondary School students Kilolo district of Iringa Tanzania. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to identify the commonly used psychoactive drug and substances; to explore students' perceptions on psychoactive substance use; to examine students' knowledge of the impact of psychoactive substance abuse on academic achievement; and to explore the strategies used in preventing use of drugs and substance abuse at Secondary School level. The study was guided by the Self-Medication Theory of Addiction. The theory that provides a valuable investigative and clinical paradigm to address the challenging issue of drug addiction. The study used a quantitative approach with a cross-section descriptive design. Employing simple random sampling, a total sample of 400 respondents were drawn from five secondary schools of Kilolo district. The data were obtained through questionnaire-based survey. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics version 20. The findings revealed that the commonly used psychoactive substances by secondary school students were alcohol, marijuana, snuff, and cigarettes. The students had the knowledge of drugs and substance abuse and perceive that they are not good for their academics and health. The study further unveiled that some students used the substances sparingly and while others used them on a daily basis. The findings showed that students had knowledge of the impact of psychoactive substance abuse on academic achievement. The findings also revealed that

\*Corresponding author: Email: kamandabetese894@gmail.com;

mechanism are in place at the school level to prevent drugs and psychoactive substance abuse. In view of the findings of this study it is recommended that families should be involved in the fight against use of drugs and psychoactive substances and provide counsel for the students. Schools should strive at encouraging positive peer relationships and networks among students who do not use psychoactive substances.

*Keywords: Academic achievement; psychoactive substances; drugs and substance abuse.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Drugs and substance abuse among Secondary School students is a global concern [1]. African countries have been and continue to be affected by this problem [2]. In Tanzania, many regions are challenged by the vice and the impact is felt among both primary and Secondary School students [3]. Ideally, parents and guardians expect that children who are at school use their time constructively for studying and learning. They believe that education for their young ones is a sure investment that will benefit these children in the future. Children who are committed and actively engage in studying and learning are more likely to perform better in their academic work and consequently have better future prospects. However, in reality some students indulge in actions and behaviours that distract serious learning. Drugs and substance abuse among such students has been a destructive behaviour that cause students not to use their full potential for their academic issues [4]. Motivated or influenced by their peer groups, Secondary School students use illegal drugs and substances which consequently deter them from performing well in academics and also endangering their health and social relationships [5]. Despite being prevalent, with profound impacts, psychoactive substance abuse in Secondary Schools in Tanzania attracts limited attention. Moreover, no studies seem to have been undertaken to explore the Secondary School students' perceptions and understanding of the impact of psychoactive substance abuse on academic achievement in Secondary Schools in Kilolo district. This situation demanded for a study that would ascertain students' perceptions and understanding of the impact of psychoactive substance abuse on academic achievement in secondary schools in Tanzania specifically at Kilolo district. The outcome of the study would provide more insight on the problem and be a springboard for policy debate and general community awareness of the seriousness of the problem.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was underpinned by the Self-Medication Theory of Addiction. The Self-Medication Theory (SMT) or Self-Medication Hypothesis provides a valuable investigative and clinical paradigm to address the challenging issue of drug addiction. SMT is a theory that gets at the human psychological underpinnings of addictive disorders. The self-medication hypothesis, a theory about addiction, was first published in 1985 as a cover article in *the American Journal of Psychiatry*. It focused on how and why individuals are drawn to and become dependent on heroin and cocaine. An updated version was published in *the Harvard Review of Psychiatry* in 1997 with application to conditions that had not been previously considered.

The hypothesis of self-medication derives from clinical evaluation and treatment of thousands of patients (practice-based evidence) spanning five decades [6]. The theory holds that students are abusing substances in order to escape or reduce feelings of distress. Some individuals are more prone to substance use because they are less able to handle or cope with negative feelings [7]. Furthermore, the theory assumes that students acquire their beliefs about substance abuse and other delinquent behaviours from their role models, friends and parents. This theory of Self-Medication underpinned this study in that it sought to determine why individual secondary school students are drawn to and became addicted to drugs.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

Various studies have been conducted to ascertain commonly used substances by secondary school and university students. A study by Soyibo and Lee indicates that in Jamaica high schools the substances that are used widely are Marijuana, Cocaine, Heroin and Opium [8]. The drugs are used by both girls and

boys in secondary schools regardless of their age. A wide spectrum of drugs used by secondary students in Nigeria is listed by Ilo and Nwimo to include: analgesics, stimulants, anti-malaria, alcohol, worm expellants, nasal decongestants, sleeping pills, laxatives and antibiotics [9]. The use of wide spectrum of drugs means that young people, school students in particular, who are human resources for our countries are in a huge risk of destroying their future life. Odhiambo investigated drugs, substance abuse, and their effects on academic performance of girls in Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya [10]. The study sort among other to establish sources and types of drugs and substances used by Secondary School girls. The findings reveal that the sources of drugs and substance were chemists, pharmacies, fellow students, peddlers, and members of communities neighbouring schools while emergency pills, contraceptives, painkillers, alcohol and antibiotics were the commonly used drugs.

According to Kemenderi the age of initiating the different drugs and substances abuse among Secondary School students was 13 to 15 years [11]. Their findings pinpointed that alcohol was the most commonly used substance of abuse by students (23.4%), followed by khat / miraa (17.0%), prescription drugs (16.1%), tobacco (14.5%), bhang / marijuana (7.5%), inhalants (2.3%), heroin (1.2%) and cocaine (1.1%). The findings concluded that the Secondary Schools in Kenya were not drug free environments and therefore there is need to entrench life skills in the school curriculum, enhancing parenting skills and positive role modelling, and capacity building of guidance and counselling teachers to effectively deal with the challenges of students' drugs and substances of abuse.

According to Chan while some students perceive psychoactive substance as bad some do not perceive it that way [12]. In their study they found out that some students in urban areas knew what substance abuse was and could identify some common drugs such as cannabis, marijuana and ecstasy pills. In contrast, among number of students from the rural schools only a small number of students could identify a few types of drugs but most of them knew that smoking was an offence in schools. They also had limited knowledge of the misconduct and misbehaviours arising from psychoactive substance abuse in their schools. From such findings it is obvious that students in the urban area have better exposure to substance abuse prevention than

students in the rural area. Masibo study indicated that majority of secondary school students at Dodoma Municipality in Tanzania understood psychoactive substances and were able to define correctly various terminologies and mentioned different types of psychoactive substances found in their areas [13]. Some of them had a history of psychoactive substance use.

The students perceived that psychoactive substances can negatively affect students academically. Thus, students in this study had adequate knowledge on the different types of psychoactive substances and understand the effects of the use of the substances on their psychosocial lives. Easy availability of psychoactive substances leads to the rise of their prevalence. The prevalence of the substances makes students aware of them and their impact on their academic endeavour. The common sources of these drugs are friends, middlemen, taverns. The use of the drugs is influenced by peer pressure, pressure of studies, failure in love, family problems, and experimentation of drugs. It is explicit from the study that students perceive that the use of drugs while at school brings a lot of problems socially and academically.

Substances abuse has indelible impact on the users. The impact ranges from effects on individual users to the community at large. Secondary school students in urban Secondary Schools in Tanzania have no knowledge of the dangers and risks of using psychoactive substances. Only 27% of the Secondary School students knew the complications of psychoactive substance use [14]. Students who abuse substances, marijuana in particular, are likely to obtain under average marks or failing grades [15]. Substance abuse of tobacco in particular in Secondary Schools in Tanzania leads to lack of students' concentration, sleepless, lack of appetite, dodging classes, physical weakness, and rejection from the friends [16]. Studied on the same subject agree to the fact that the adverse effect of substance use and abuse is poor academic achievement for students [17].

In view of the foregoing review of related literature, it is evident that psychoactive drug abuse among secondary school students is wide spread and a challenge to both students themselves and the community at large. The vice needs to be addressed if the community is to rescue the young people for national development. One of the ways to address such a

problem is to make thorough studies to identify the commonly used substances, the perceptions of students on their use and the impact of the vice to students and to the community and other areas that deem necessary to establish the extent of the problem and subsequently find ways to help our young generation.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Study Area**

The study was conducted at Kilolo district of Iringa region, Tanzania. The district has 24 public Secondary Schools and 15 private Secondary Schools. This study was conducted in five selected schools at Mazombe and Kilolo administrative divisions, particularly at the Secondary Schools that are located in suburban areas such as Ilula and Kilolo. These schools included those at: Ilula, Kiheka, Nyalumbu, Lulanzi, and Kilolo with a total population of 6,000 students. The motivation for selecting this area is based on the fact that the researcher's preliminary investigation has indicated that the area is affected by drug users and abusers.

#### **3.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

The study employed a quantitative research approach in soliciting and analysing data to answer the research questions. The nature of the study required the use of a cross-sectional study design that gathers data from a sample drawn from the predetermined population and data is collected on a once off basis [18]. This design is best suited to studies aimed at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, problem, attitude or issue, by taking a cross-section of the population. Cross-sectional studies are useful in obtaining an overall picture as it stands at the time of the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to draw 400 respondents for this study. 80 students were selected from each school. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather data. Descriptive statistics analysis was used to analyse data. SPSS computer assisted quantitative data analysis software was employed to aid in the analysis.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 The Commonly Used Psychoactive Substances by Secondary School Students**

A close-ended questionnaire was administered to 400 students in five selected schools. The first research objective was to find out the commonly

used psychoactive substances by secondary school students. The result is indicated in Table 1.

The results show that the respondents were of the view that the commonly used drugs and substances were alcohol (99.2%), marijuana (98%), snuff (97.8%), and cigarette (94.8%). The results further show that the sparingly used drugs and substances as per respondents' point of view are cocaine (42%), miraa (40%), inhalants (27%), heroine (26.5%), and shisha 16%). The findings revealed that all drugs and substances were used at the studied area. The extent of use differs according to the type and availability of drugs or substances. The findings suggest that the problem of drugs and substance abuse is prevalent among students and other members of the community. The problem is indeed rampant and alarming. Young people in these schools were vulnerable to this vice. The commonly used drugs at Secondary Schools at Kilolo districts are somewhat similar with a study done in public secondary schools in Kenya [19]. Their study found that miraa (khat), alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana are the most commonly abused substances among students. The study findings and those of Simatwa and Odhong are consistent with many other reviewed studies which point out to the fact that drugs and substances widely and commonly abused by Secondary School students are khat, marijuana, tobacco, miraa, inhalants, heroin, and cocaine [8].

The respondents were asked how easy it was to obtain psychoactive substances within their environment. The response to this question is depicted in Table 2.

The results show that all respondents were of the view that it is easy to obtain alcohol at their environment. Of the 400 respondents, 381 (95.25%) either agreed that it is very easy or easy to obtain cigarette; 317 (79.25%) were of the opinion that it is very easy and easy to obtain snuff; 174 (43.5%) were of the view that it is very easy and easy to obtain miraa, and 288 (72%) it is very easy and easy to obtain marijuana. On the contrary, of 400 respondents, 362 (90.5%) were of the view that it is difficulty and very difficult to obtain kuber; 328 (82%) to obtain shisha; 301 (75.25%) to obtain heroin, 282 (72.5%) to obtain cocaine and 232 (58%) were of the opinion that it is difficulty and very difficult to obtain inhalants. The findings reveal that most of psychoactive substances are readily available and accessible by students and the general

public in the study area. These drugs and substances are not permissible to students or young people under 18 years old. According to my experience most tribes in the country deter children from using these psychoactive substances. The availability and accessibility of psychoactive substances poses great risk and danger to young people at Kilolo district. Availability and accessibility of the drugs and substances makes it easier for our young generation, school children in particular to easily indulge in the misuse of the drugs and substances. A study by Chukwu also points to the fact that availability of such drugs and substances causes young students to easily use or abuse them [20].

Students from the selected schools were also asked where they obtain drugs and substances. The responses to this question are presented in Table 3.

The results show that a significant majority of respondents were of the view that drugs and substances are obtained by students from bars or premises within the neighbourhood 282 (70.5%). Further the results indicate that while 330 (82.5%) respondents were of the opinion that drugs and substances are obtained by students from fellow students within the school, 314 (78.5%) from friends, and 212 (53%) are obtained from parents. Very few respondents, 40 (10%) and 16 (4%) were of the view that such drugs and substances are obtained by students

**Table 1. The commonly used drugs and psychoactive substances by the students (N=400)**

Psychoactive substance	Response	Frequency	Percent
Alcohol	Yes	397	99.2
	No	3	0.8
Cigarette	Yes	379	94.8
	No	21	5.2
Kuber/Tamboos	Yes	12	3
	No	388	97
Shisha	Yes	64	16
	No	336	84
Snuff	Yes	391	97.8
	No	9	2.2
Miraa/Khat	Yes	160	40
	No	240	60
Bang/Marijuana	Yes	392	98
	No	8	2
Heroin/kete/kichuri	Yes	106	26.5
	No	294	73.5
Cocaine/crack/white powder	Yes	168	42
	No	232	58
Inhalants	Yes	108	27
	No	292	73

**Table 2. Accessibility of psychoactive substances within respondents' environment**

Statements	Responses				
	Very easy	Easy	Slightly easy	Difficulty	Very difficulty
To obtain alcohol	352	48	0	0	0
To obtain cigarettes	357	24	19	0	0
To obtain kuber/tamboos	4	10	24	231	131
To obtain shisha	9	39	24	266	62
To obtain snuff (ugoro)	235	82	65	5	13
To obtain jaba/khat (Miraa)	37	137	96	108	26
To obtain marijuana	129	159	66	29	17
To obtain heroin	28	5	65	181	120
To obtain cocaine	39	2	77	120	162
To obtain inhalants	112	20	31	130	107

from school workers and teachers respectively. From the findings it is apparent that the major sources of psychoactive substances are people closely related to students. Such people include but not limited to people working or using bars in students' neighbourhood, fellow students who engage in drug abuse, friends and parents.

Minimally, students get drugs and substance of abuse from school workers and teachers. It is shocking to learn that even parents are a good source of drugs and substance of abuse to their children. It is expected that parents will take a leading role in helping young people to abstain from drug and substance abuse. The acts of parents to foster drug use and abuse among children cannot be looked down if we want to have a nation free from drug and substance abuse. The findings mean that school students are at a huge risk as far as drug and substance use and abuse is concern. The findings are consistent with a study that attest to these sources of drugs and substance of abuse [10]. Additionally, Odhiambo findings reveal that other sources of drugs and substance were chemists, pharmacies, and peddlers. Multiple sources of drugs and substances imply that availability and accessibility to these destructive psychoactive drugs by secondary school students is easy [10]. The fact that leads to many students to either use or abuse them.

#### **4.2 The Perceptions of Students on Psychoactive Substance Use**

The specific objective two of the study solicited information regarding students' perception on psychoactive substance use. The objective aimed at determining the use of drugs and substances by students. The responses to questions asked for this objective are presented in Table 4.

Of the 400 respondents, 66 (16.5%) used marijuana in different times, majority of whom 34 (51.5%) were in Form Two, 8 (2%) used cocaine and all of them used it in different number of times and were in Form Two, 12 (3%) used heroin in 1-2 and 3-5 number of times and all of them were in Form Two, 13(3.25%) used sleeping pills in a number of different times, and majority of whom, 8(61.5%) were in Form Two. The results show also that no respondent indicated that he/she used drugs by injection with needles; and 45 (11.25%) used solvent or inhalants in different number of times, majority of whom 32 (71.1%) were Form Two. The abuse of

marijuana by most students who use or abuse drugs is understandable because the substance, as said earlier on, was readily available and was easily accessible by people in the rural areas when the substance can be grown.

Though the findings reveal that these drugs and substances were not commonly used by secondary school students at Kilolo, it is lamentable to note that the highly addictive and most dangerous drugs for mental health of students were being used. These drugs and substances were not given for free. Certainly, students who used them buy from suppliers, fellow friends, and peers. With meagre financial resources parents from rural area were having, they were in the danger that the resources were misused by their children who engage in such bad behaviours. In some instances, such students could be forced into robbery and theft to make sure that they have money to buy drugs. It is also shocking to learn that most of those who use these health-risk drugs were Form Two. It could be that these students were of the age of longing for independence and were curious to learn the experience that leads to abnormal behaviours. The findings are more or less similar to a study done by Ilo and Nwimo who found that Secondary School Students at Imo State in Nigeria use such dangerous psychoactive drugs [9].

Respondents were asked their years of age when they first tried or used drugs and substance of abuse. The response to this question is indicated in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that of the 400 respondents, 111 (27.75%) both females and males of 11, 12, 13 and 15 years old had drunk at least one glass of beer. The results also portray that of the 400 respondents, 230 (57.5%) drunk alcohol; majority of whom, 144 (62.6%), being respondents were 11 years old. Interestingly, 75 (52.1%) of them who were 11 years old being females. The results further indicate that both female and male respondents who were 16 years old, 90 (22.5%), and 15 years old, 35 (8.75%), drank wine at least one glass. While 12 years old respondents, 26 (7%), smoked cigarette, and 15 years old respondents, 20 (5%), smoked their first cigarette; respondents above 16 years old, 28 (7%), smoked cigarette on a daily basis. The result further shows that of 400 respondents, 84 (21%), tried marijuana, majority of whom, 43 (51%), being 15 years old; 30 (7.5%)

respondents and 26 (6.5%) respondents tried cocaine and heroin respectively.

vulnerable group in terms of drugs and substance use [11].

The findings reveal that both female and male respondents drank alcohol, smoked cigarette and tried cocaine and heroin. Though the number is not alarming, yet those involved could put pressure on peers and friends to do the same thus making the situation even worse. The findings imply that the respondents regardless of their age, educational level, and gender were involved in psychoactive substance abuse. The same findings have been indicated by Soyibo and Lee who asserts that at the age of 13 to 15 both girls and boys use drugs and substances of abuse [8]. The young in secondary schools are a

The respondents were asked when students from these schools were most likely to use drugs and other substances. The response to this question is given in Table 6.

Results from Table 6 indicate that, on the one hand, all respondents deny that it was at any time that students are most likely to abuse drugs and other substances. On the other hand, all accept that during holidays or breaks students abuse drugs and other substances. Out of 400 respondents, a significant majority, 390 (97.5%), and 381 (95.25%), were of the opinion that

**Table 3. Place and people where the students obtain drugs and substances (N=400)**

Statements	Responses	
	Yes	No
Bar/premise within the neighbourhood	282 (70.5%)	118 (29.5%)
Fellow students within the school	330 (82.5%)	70 (17.5%)
Friends or peer groups	314 (78.5%)	86 (21.5%)
School workers	40 (10%)	360 (90%)
Teachers	16 (4%)	384 (96%)
Parents or guardians	212 (53%)	188 (47%)

**Table 4. Number of times respondents used drugs and psychoactive substance abuse (N=400)**

Statements	Response	Class Level of respondents				Total
		Form II	Form III	Form IV	Form V	
Number of times respondents used marijuana	0	134	147	41	12	334
	1-2	3	13	1	2	19
	3-5	5	4	8	2	19
	6-9	4	0	0	0	4
	10-19	24	0	0	0	24
Number of times respondents used cocaine	0	162	164	50	16	392
	1-2	4	0	0	0	4
	6-9	4	0	0	0	4
Number of times respondents used heroine	0	158	164	50	16	388
	1-2	8	0	0	0	8
	3-5	4	0	0	0	4
Number of times respondents used sleeping pills	0	163	160	49	16	387
	1-2	0	4	1	0	5
	3-5	4	0	0	0	4
	40 or more	4	0	0	0	4
Number of times respondents used drugs by injection with needles	0	170	164	50	16	400
	1-2	0	0	0	0	0
Number of times respondents used solvents or inhalants	0	138	164	37	16	355
	1-2	4	0	0	0	4
	3-5	24	0	13	0	37
	40 or more	4	0	0	0	4

**Table 5. Respondents age when first tried or used drugs and substances (N=400)**

Gender	Statements and responses							
	Never	11 years old or less	12 years old	13 years old	14 years old	15 years old	16 year old	Above 16
<b>Years old when respondents drank beer at least one glass</b>								
Female	132	11	14	19	0	19	0	0
Male	125	21	5	11	0	11	0	0
Total	257	32	19	30	0	30	0	0
<b>Years old when respondents got drunk on alcohol</b>								
Female	69	75	15	3	2	6	0	0
Male	64	69	26	11	22	1	0	0
Total	133	144	41	14	24	7	0	0
<b>Years old when respondents drank wine at least one glass</b>								
Female	134	0	0	3	0	18	34	0
Male	133	4	0	1	0	17	56	0
Total	267	4	0	4	0	35	90	0
<b>Years old when respondents smoked his/her first cigarette</b>								
Female	154	10	9	0	0	14	0	0
Male	142	9	17	0	0	6	11	0
Total	296	19	26	0	0	20	11	0
<b>Years old when respondents smoked cigarette on a daily basis</b>								
Female	184	0	0	0	3	0	0	2
Male	180	0	4	0	1	0	0	26
Total	364	0	4	0	4	0	0	28
<b>Years old when respondents tried marijuana or hashish</b>								
Female	153	0	14	0	0	8	14	0
Male	163	0	8	0	0	35	5	0
Total	316	0	22	0	0	43	19	0
<b>Years old when respondents tried cocaine</b>								
Female	177	0	0	3	0	0	9	0
Male	193	0	0	1	4	0	13	0
Total	370	0	0	4	4	0	22	0
<b>Years old when respondents tried heroin</b>								
Female	172	14	0	3	0	0	0	0
Male	202	4	4	1	0	0	0	0
Total	374	18	4	4	0	0	0	0
<b>Years old when respondents tried solvents or inhalant (glue)</b>								
Female	184	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Male	184	4	0	0	0	22	0	1
Total	368	4	0	0	0	24	0	4

students were most likely to use drugs during inter-school competitions and weekends respectively. A small majority of respondents, 263 (75%), and 217 (54.25%), were of the view that students were most likely to use drugs during break time and after evening classes respectively. During holidays, inter-school competitions, weekends, after evening classes, and break time secondary school students are free and no one monitors their whereabouts. The experience shows that parents are busy with their daily activities and their role as parents is vested on teachers even when the students are at home during holidays and after classes for day

Secondary Schools. At school, the teachers are busy teaching, marking tests and assignments and preparing lectures for various classes. The only persons who deal with students' affairs are discipline teachers and teachers on duty for every week or month. Two people cannot be able to monitor the movements of all students at the school. Given this, students have ample time to do what they want. The findings mean that parents, teachers and community at large have to work together to ensure that the young generation do to fall pray of drug addiction.



The respondents were asked about the relationship of the students with people who use or abuse drugs and substances. The responses to these questions is summarized in Table 7.

Results from Table 7 show that majority of the respondents, 203 (50.75%), have parents or guardians who use or abuse the drugs and other substances. Further the results indicate that a significant majority of respondents, 320 (80%), have friend who use or abuse drugs and other substances. The fact that most parents or guardians and friends of students use or abuse drugs and other substances imply the most students at selected schools at Kilolo are of the danger or risk of using or abusing drugs and other substances. This is due to the fact that most students or children learn from peers and people whom they live with. The findings are supported by Soyibo and Lee who observed that family economic status and peers have a huge influence on an individual's drug abuse habits [8].

#### 4.3 The impact of Psychoactive Substance Abuse on Health and Academic Achievement

The third objective solicited information regarding the risk factors or impact associated with drugs

and substance abuse and other related abuses by Secondary School students. Respondents were asked about their thoughts on trying and abusing drugs and psychoactive substance if they risk harming the abusers. The respondents' responses to this question are presented in Table 8.

Regarding the knowledge of respondents on the risk associated with drugs and substance abuse, Table 8 presents that majority respondents, 392 (98%), 306 (76.5%), 396 (99%), and 392 (98%) have the knowledge that regular use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and solvents respectively risks harming respondents' health. The table further shows that respondents think that periodical use of such drugs and substance do not have adverse impact on respondents' health. The findings revealed that generally respondents have adequate knowledge of the impact of drugs and psychoactive substance abuse on their lives.

Drugs and psychoactive substance abuse are capable of harming students' mental health, academic achievement, and social life as well. Despite their knowledge of the impact of drugs and substance abuse, some students think that trying and using such drugs and psychoactive

**Table 6. Time when students most likely to use drugs and other substances (N=400)**

Statement	Response	Gender	
		Female	Male
Any time students	Yes	0	0
	No	189	211
During break time	Yes	117	146
	No	72	65
After evening class	Yes	136	181
	No	53	30
Weekends	Yes	179	202
	No	10	9
During inter-school competitions	Yes	188	202
	No	1	9
During holidays/breaks	Yes	189	211
	No	0	0

**Table 7. Relationship of students and people who use or abuse drugs (N=400)**

Statements	Response	Gender of respondents		Total frequency
		Female	Male	
Parents or guardian	Yes	104	99	203 (50.75%)
	No	85	112	197 (49.25%)
Friend or peer group	Yes	144	176	320 (80%)
	No	45	35	80 (20%)

**Table 8. The risks associated with drugs and substance abuse (N=400)**

Gender	Statements and responses				
	No risk	Slight risk	Moderate risk	Great risk	Don't know
<b>Smoking cigarette occasionally</b>					
Female	17	156	2	14	0
Male	10	181	8	12	0
Total	27	337	10	26	0
<b>Smoking one or more parks of cigarettes per day</b>					
Female	0	0	0	186	3
Male	0	4	0	206	1
Total	0	4	0	392	4
<b>Having one or two drinks of alcohol nearly every day</b>					
Female	10	25	104	50	0
Male	0	27	122	62	0
Total	10	52	226	112	0
<b>Having four or five drinks of alcohol in a row every day</b>					
Female	3	13	17	143	13
Male	1	13	25	163	9
Total	4	26	42	306	22
<b>Having five or more drinks of alcohol in a row each weekend</b>					
Female	0	3	152	34	0
Male	0	4	150	57	0
Total	0	7	302	91	0
<b>Trying marijuana or hashish</b>					
Female	3	160	3	23	0
Male	5	170	0	36	0
Total	8	330	3	59	0
<b>Smoking marijuana or hashish regularly</b>					
Female	0	0	0	189	0
Male	0	4	0	207	0
Total	0	4	0	396	0
<b>Trying solvents or inhalants once or twice</b>					
Female	3	134	37	3	12
Male	5	170	29	0	7
Total	8	304	66	3	29
<b>Taking solvents or inhalants</b>					
Female	0	0	0	186	3
Male	0	0	4	206	1
Total	0	0	4	392	4

substances sparingly have meagre impact on them. Studies done on drugs and substance abuse among Secondary School students also attest to the fact that drugs and substance abuse impact negatively to the lives of students. The negative impact range from poor academic performance and physical wellbeing. The behaviour leads to poor participation in learning and truancy, behavioural change, indiscipline, health problems that may lead to deaths, physical weakness, and rejection by friends and community [21].

Various statements were given for respondents to respond to regarding the impact of drugs and

psychoactive substance abuse on students' academic achievement. The responses are indicated in Table 9.

The data shows that of 400 respondents, 373 (93.25%); 388 (97%); 350 (87.5%); 371 (92.75%) agree that drug abuse lowers academic ability, affects mental health, decreases concentration in classes, and increases truancy respectively. A small majority of respondents, 19 (4.75%) agreed that drug abuse makes students attain higher grades. The findings imply that overall students have the knowledge of the impact of psychoactive substance abuse on academic achievement. Drug abuse not only affects mental

health of students who abuse the drugs but also lowers the ability to concentrate in classes. They cause students who abuse drugs to fail to participate in classes on a regularly basis which ultimately makes them attain lower marks. Drug abuse, the driver of human self-destruction, is rapidly increasing among students and is emerging as a global health concern. Students who abuse drugs are lagging in respect of academic performance, achievement, and other co-curricular activities. Substance abuse leads to lack of studies' concentration, sleepless, lack of appetite, dodging classes, physical weakness, and rejection from the friends [21]. Similar studied agree to the fact that the adverse effect of substance use and abuse is poor academic achievement for students [17].

#### 4.4 Strategies on Drugs and Substance Abuse Prevention

The fourth specific objective solicited data to ascertain the participation of respondents on drugs and substance abuse awareness and prevention programmes geared at prevention of the vice. The responses are presented in Table 10.

The results for this section indicate that out of 400 respondents, 324 (81%) agreed that forums on drugs and psychoactive substance abuse awareness prevention programmes are provided and participate in them; 387 (96.75%) also accepted that awareness talks on drugs and psychoactive substance abuse interventions are offered to respondents. Further, 368 (92%) agreed that peer counselling interventions are offered to address the problem of drugs and

substance abuse. The result also shows also that Out of 400 respondents only 31 (7.75%) and 19 (4.75%) respondents agree that sobriety clubs' interventions are offered to address the problem of drugs and psychoactive substance abuse, and random checks for drugs and psychoactive substance abuse interventions are offered to address drugs and substance abuse respectively. All respondents rejected that referral treatment and rehabilitation services interventions are offered to address drugs and psychoactive substance abuse. The findings uncover that interventions strategies regarding prevention of drugs and psychoactive substance abuse among Secondary School students at Kilolo district are in place. As such active interventions strategies include: forums on drugs and psychoactive substance abuse awareness prevention programmes, awareness talks on drugs and psychoactive substance abuse prevention, and peer counselling interventions to address the problem of drugs and psychoactive substance abuse.

All these preventive measures suggest that students' education on drug and psychoactive substance use are critical for the promotion of drug abuse prevention. These will be geared at enhancement of factual information to generate requisite knowledge on drug and psychoactive substance abuse and their impact to students' lives. Peer education intervention to promote drug abuse prevention has positive effect and significantly enhances knowledge, self-efficacy and attitudes of Secondary School students [22]. Considering that, the number of students who use drugs and substances are somehow very low, probably such interventions are the reason

**Table 9. The impact of psychoactive substances on academic achievement (N=400)**

Statements	Response	Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Drug abuse lowers students' academic ability	Yes	168	195	373
	No	11	16	27
Drug abuse affects mental health of students	Yes	185	203	388
	No	4	8	12
Drug abuse increases the ability to concentrate in class	Yes	15	35	50
	No	174	176	350
Drug abuse makes students leave school (truancy)	Yes	169	202	371
	No	20	9	29
Drug abuse makes students attain higher grades	Yes	10	9	19
	No	179	202	381

**Table 10. Strategies on drugs and substance abuse prevention (N=400)**

Statements	Response	Education level of respondents				Total
		Form II	Form III	Form IV	Form V	
Participated in forums on drugs and substance abuse awareness prevention programmes	Yes	137	128	48	11	324
	No	33	36	2	5	76
Awareness talks on drugs and substance abuse interventions are offered to respondents	Yes	157	164	50	16	387
	No	13	0	0	0	13
Guidance and counselling services interventions on drugs and substance abuse are offered	Yes	157	159	49	14	379
	No	13	5	1	2	21
Sobriety clubs interventions are offered to address the problem of drugs and substance abuse	Yes	10	21	0	0	31
	No	160	143	50	16	369
Peer counselling interventions are offered to address the problem of drugs and substance abuse	Yes	159	143	50	16	368
	No	11	21	0	0	32
Referral to treatment and rehabilitation services interventions are offered to address drugs abuse	Yes	0	0	0	0	0
	No	170	164	50	16	400
Random checks for drugs and substance abuse interventions are offered to address drugs abuse	Yes	7	9	1	2	19
	No	163	155	49	14	381

why the number of students who use drugs and substances are few. Absence at these Secondary Schools of sobriety clubs' interventions and referral treatment and rehabilitation services interventions may imply that there were no students who were adversely addicted to the drugs and psychoactive substances to require such interventions. Provided that random checks for drugs and psychoactive substance abuse interventions are not provided, it follows that students may time to time use drugs and substances.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Drug and psychoactive substance abuse is a problem to young people not only in urban areas but also in rural areas like Kilolo district of Iringa region, Tanzania. The problem affects both girls and boys who are in Secondary Schools. A wide range of drugs and substances are used by school students at Kilolo and they obtain such drugs and substances from peers, friends and peddlers in the students or school neighbourhoods. Although students were knowledgeable about the impact of drugs and psychoactive substance abuse to their health and academic performance, still some use and abuse such drugs and substances. Therefore,

the drug and psychoactive substance abuse may affect student's behaviour, which almost is detrimental to their education life and in the whole society. One important approach of reducing the use of drugs among Secondary School students is through provision of useful information on drug and substance abuse. It is when students are provided with accurate information about psychoactive substances and their impact that they become knowledgeable and well able to make informed decisions whether to abstain from or indulge in the vice. Education alone is not very effective, thus, the results of the study suggest further that there may be need for monitoring of and prevention efforts aimed at reducing drug use among students.

## CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

To ensure that this study is ethical, the researcher adhered to all university guidelines of ethical research including securing an

introduction letter that allowed the researcher to do a research at the selected area. The permission was given by Kilolo Education Officer for Secondary School and Kilolo District Administrative Secretary to conduct the study at schools.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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