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## **Emotional stability as a predictor factor of drug abuse among youths in informal settlements: A case study of mathare slums, Nairobi County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

The emotional stability of individuals has an influence on the drug abuse aspects amongst the youth. Emotional instability come with many consequences of abusing drugs among the youths which require intervention that help the youths stop abusing drugs. Given the impact of substance misuse on public health (specifically the youths) and the increased risk for long-term medical consequences, including substance use disorders, it is important intervene in early to curb substance abuse from initial stage and to identify those individuals have already begun to misuse substances. This study sought to examine the emotional stability as a predicting factor on the drug abuse among youths in informal settlements with a focus on the Mathare slums, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study used the descriptive research design. The unit of observation was 11 villages of Mathare informal settlements. Mathare informal settlement was selected since it is the second largest slum in Africa after Soweto in South Africa and has a relatively high prevalence of drug use among the youths. The study used a sample size of 450 respondents. The findings led to conclusion that emotional stability factor influenced drug abuse among youths in the informal settlement of Mathare. Emotional stability contributes to drug abuse cases among youth in Mathare informal settlements. In view of the conclusion of this study there is need for interventions to reduce and stop drug abuse among the youths in informal settlements. The information of this study might be of great help to parents, youths, the governments, non-government, researchers and scholars, as it will contribute to new ways of controlling youths from indulging in drug abuse in the other informal settlements.

**Keywords:** youth, peer pressure, informal settlements, emotional stability, drug abuse

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### **Introduction**

The emotional stability of individuals has an influence on the drug abuse aspects amongst the youth. Schwabe, Dickinson and Wolf (2011) <sup>[1]</sup> undertook a study that examined the role of stress on drug abuse amongst the youth. The study was a metadata study that examined the secondary literature relating to the influence of stress and drug abuse aspects. The study noted that prolonged exposure to stressors led to the vulnerability to drug abuse. In this context, Schwabe *et al* (2011) <sup>[1]</sup> noted that stress related psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder increase the probability of drug abuse incidences. There are diverse ways in which youths may find themselves separated from loved ones in early life within the slum contexts. Cases of crime within the slum set up including membership to gangs for the purposes of thefts and other general crimes including rape, robbery with violence and gun crime are often high. This leads to cases of police arrests leading to long periods in jail as well as police shooting them dead.

The youths face challenges in two dimensions with the loss of their parents especially the fathers because of their crime activities. There are episodes of acute stress because of death of a loved one, which may make them susceptible to drug abuse. The specific types of stressful experiences in early life may increase the vulnerability to drug abuse (Brady & Sonne, 2009). The youths growing up in Informal Settlements are exposed to diverse challenges in early life that elevates their stress levels. The youths may be exposed to episodes of domestic violence often associated with secondary factors prevalent in Informal

Settlements such as general poverty conditions, parental alcoholism, and general life stresses amongst the parents. The overcrowding of the housing units within the Informal Settlements may also expose the growing youths to heightened sense of insecurity as proximity of neighbours' houses makes everyone a participant in case of violent episodes. The feeling of hopelessness to deal with such episodes may lead to drug abuse as a coping mechanism.

There are diverse situations within the slum life that lead to social separation amongst the youths (Freelon, 2013) <sup>[5]</sup>. Youths who engage in criminal activities run the risk of imprisonment or being shot dead by the law enforcement agents because of their criminal activities. This places acute stress among the remaining youths through loss of peers whom they have a shared history over a period of time and general feeling of depression as a result of social separation (Bwanika, 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>. This can lead to instances of drug abuse amongst the youths. In examining the role of emotional stability and drug abuse, Gupta & Kumar (2010) <sup>[6]</sup> undertook a study that amongst other aspects examined the role of neuroticism on drug abuse. They found that neuroticism had a mean of 43.64 in relations to drug abuse aspects. Neuroticism is associated with low emotional stability and is viewed as an influencer to drug abuse aspects. Gupta & Kumar, (2010) <sup>[6]</sup> explained this phenomenon through stating that emotional stability influences the reactions of individuals to life stressors and environmental challenges. The study noted that emotionally unstable individuals may easily be agitated leading to drug use as

a coping mechanism. In a study undertaken in Kenya amongst students in technical institutions, Okinda, Atu & ` (2015) <sup>[9]</sup> examined the role of emotional stability on drug abuse. The study found that 32.9 per cent of the respondents cited emotional instability as a leading cause of drug abuse. Stress was also cited by 43.5 per cent of the respondents as a cause of drug abuse aspects.

In a study that sought to examine the role of loneliness and emotional regulation difficulty on the drug abuse aspects, Nikmanesh, Kazemi & Kvi, (2015) <sup>[8]</sup> found different ways in which emotional stability influences drug abuse. The study found using regression analysis that feelings of loneliness and emotional regulation difficulty were significant predictors of drug abuse with regression coefficients of 0.088 and 0.086 respectively and p values of less than 0.05. These results thus indicate that a unit increase in feeling of loneliness will lead to 0.088 increase in drug abuse while a unit increase in emotional regulation difficulty will lead to 0.086 increase in drug abuse aspects. This is due to the general living conditions within the Informal Settlements characterized by extreme poverty, alcoholism, crime and general high levels of drug abuse. In this context, Sinha (2010) indicate that the individuals with early physical and sexual abuse histories are at risk to abuse substances and report an earlier age of onset of substance abuse. These incidences of abuse lead to high stress levels and hence an inclination towards drug abuse. There are diverse unanticipated and negative life events within the context of Informal Settlements that have a major influence on the emotional stability of the youths. These events may include events such as death of a loved one, a sudden failure, the sudden loss of a job, or learning of a terminal illness. Negative life events may act as stressors leading to drug abuse. In this context, Sinha (2010) indicates that adverse life events and chronic distresses is related to drug abuse. There are diverse ways in which adverse life events and chronic distresses relates to drug abuse.

There is potential harm to youth which may lead to lasting deleterious brain changes from drug abuse. These harmful effects to the youths reinforce the importance of addressing drug involvement early. The clinical science of brief intervention programs with a purpose of intervening at early-stage of drug users (for example, those meeting abuse criteria) are an effective way to stop the rise of use in a young person (Macgowan & Engle, 2010; Winters, Lee, Botzet, Fahnhorst & Nicholson, 2014). In other words, the progression of drug use does not have to and should not reach dependence levels before steps are taken to initiate change. In fact, there is increasing recognition regarding the need to screen youth for varying levels of substance use in all locations where they can be found (eg, pediatricians offices, schools, juvenile justice system) so that nonuser can be reinforced, use targeted, and youth triaged to different types of services based upon use severity, this is according to National Institute on Alcohol Abuse, (2011).

Drug abuse can be prevented by providing young people with opportunities, skill and information that advises against risky behaviour and in favour of healthy lifestyles (UNODC, 2008). One of the objectives of Alcoholic Drinks Act 2010 is to inform and educate the people on harmful health, economic and social consequences of consumption of alcoholic drinks (ADCA, 2010). Educational campaigns are a common strategy for reducing harms associated with substance use. Campaigns of this nature

historically have been targeted toward substance-using individual in order to give them information and guidance on risks associated with sharing medications or needles, how to access low or no-cost treatment services, and how to prevent a drug overdose death (Hawk, Vaca & D'Onofrio, 2015; Hunt, Ashton, Lenton, Mitcheson, Nelles & Stimson, 2016). Programs for preventing substance abuse which are family-based prevention should be encouraged and employed to enhance family bonding and relationships and include parenting skills; practice in developing, discussing, and enforcing family policies on substance abuse; and training in drug education and information (Anderson & Loomis, 2003). Bonding in the family is the pillar of the relationship between parents and children. Bonding can be strengthened through skills training on parent supportiveness of children, parent-child communication, and parental involvement (Collins, Pan, Johnson, Courser, Shamblen, 2006). Family plays an important and crucial role in preventing substance use in adolescents. Prevention interventions that are family based mainly focuses on psychosocial development rather than on prevention of target drug use. These interventions have the potential to improve several aspects of a person's development (Foxcroft & Tsertsvadze, 2011).

Mass media approaches aim to present positive role models who reject substance abuse and whose behavior the target audience may model (Hall, Lynskey, Morley, Reavley, Strang, *et al*, 2016). These approaches are powerful means for disseminating health promotion messages among a wide and diverse audience through television, the internet, mobile phones, newspapers, and roadside advertising hoardings that serve as infotainment techniques. Creating awareness against drugs may lead to shaping patterns of drug use and the intention to use drugs, as well as modifying mediators such as awareness, knowledge, and attitudes about drugs (Allara, Ferri, Gasparrini & Faggiano, 2015). The government needs to ensure that there is a continued and sustained effort by the experts informing people through electronic and print media. Cyberspace and other forms of electronic media can play a vital role in educating people regarding drug abuse problems and its consequences (Shrivastava, Kalra & Ajinkya, 2015).

The Kenya government undertook some slum upgrading programmes in the 1990s, but these were ad hoc schemes and not widely implemented. It was only in the 2004 National Housing Policy that the government committed itself to developing low-cost housing and upgrading slums to improve the housing situation in the informal settlements". The government's slum upgrading strategy of 2005 details its plans to "integrate the settlements into the formal physical and economic framework of urban centres and above all to guarantee security of tenure" according to *Kenya The unseen majority: Nairobi's Two Million Slum-Dwellers*, Amnesty International, (2009)

### Research Methodology

The study used the descriptive research design. The descriptive research design was used due to several advantages associated with the research design including the ability to describe and portray characteristics of an event or situation. The unit of observation was Mathare informal settlements which comprised the following villages; Kosovo, Village 2, Kiamutisya, Gitathuru, Mathare 3A, 3B, 3C, and 4B, Mashimoni, Mashimoni 70 (NO 10), Kwa Kariuki and Mabatini. Mathare informal settlement was

selected since it is the second largest slum in Africa after Soweto in South Africa and has a relatively high prevalence of drug use among the youths. The unit of analysis comprised of youths. The unit of analysis is often created by splitting the units of observations in order to compile more detailed and more homogeneous statistics than it is possible through the use of observation units (Orodho, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. The unit of analysis were the persons of either gender falling between 18 years and 35 years of age, though the researcher increased maximum age bracket by one year according to the constitution (2010) of Kenya Article 260 which defines a youth as a person aged between 18 and 34 years. The sample size is defined as a finite number or subgroup selected so as to be representative of the whole population with the relevant characteristics (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999).

The sample size was calculated using the Yamane (1967) simplified formula as follows;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} = \frac{17,894}{1 + 17,894(0.05^2)} = 391 \text{ respondents}$$

Where n= sample size

N=Population size = 17, 894

e= tolerable error (5per cent) at 95per cent confidence level

The researcher catered for non-responses therefore, a 15% proportion of the sample size (59 respondents) by adding to the final sample, resulting in a final sample of 450. The study used the proportionate stratified random sampling method. Each of the village formed a stratum and its proportionate strength in numbers of youths calculated relative to the total number of the youths in Mathare informal settlements. This proportionate strength in percentage was also observed relative to the sample size of each stratum. Within individual stratum, simple random sampling was used to pick individual youths to participate in the study.

### Research Results and Discussions

To examine the influence of emotional stability as a predictor factor of drug abuse among youths in informal settlements: A case study of mathare slums, nairobi county, Kenya. Respondents were to indicate on scale of 1 – 5 where *Strongly Disagree* = 1; *Disagree* = 2; *Uncertain* = 3; *Agree* = 4; and *Strongly Agree* = 5. The research findings are presented in Table 4.13.

**Table 1:** Perceived Influence of Emotional Stability on drug Abuse

Emotional Stability Aspects	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Sd
Teenage pregnancies make the youths use drugs	132(31.7%)	147(35.3%)	56(13.5%)	29(7%)	52(12.5%)	3.668	1.323
Guilty after abortion leads the youths to use drugs	130(31.3%)	162(38.9%)	64(15.4%)	22(5.3%)	38(9.1%)	3.779	1.210
Stress due to job loss compels youths to use drugs	155(37.3)	154(37%)	62(14.9)	15(3.6%)	30(7.2%)	3.935	1.141
Problems in teenage marriage makes youths to turn to drugs	137(32.9%)	160(38.5%)	57(13.7%)	32(7.7%)	30(7.2%)	3.822	1.181
When the relationship breaks up, youths resorts to drugs	146(35.1%)	137(32.9%)	59(14.2%)	38(9.1%)	36(8.7%)	3.767	1.259
When the married youths divorce or separates, they turn to drugs	152(36.5%)	126(30.3)	51(12.3)	38(9.1%)	49(11.8%)	3.707	1.354
Terminal disease contraction makes youths turn to drugs	122(29.3%)	102(24.5%)	58(13.9%)	36(8.7%)	98(23.6%)	3.274	1.542
When the youths drop out of school, they turn to drugs	175(42.1%)	109(26.2%)	32(7.7%)	43(10.3)	57(13.7%)	3.726	1.440
Death of Loved one makes the youths turn to drugs.	115(27.6%)	105(25.2%)	44(10.6%)	43(10.3%)	109(26.2%)	3.178	1.576

According to data presented in Table 4.10, respondents who strongly agreed with the statement '*teenage pregnancies make the youths use drugs*' accounted for 132(31.7%) compared to 147(35.3%) who agreed. It was also established that 130(31.3%) of respondents strongly agreed that '*Guilt after abortion leads the youths to use drugs*' compared to 162(38.9%) who agreed. In addition, respondents who strongly agreed with the statement '*Stress due to job loss compels youths to use drugs*' accounted for 155(37.3%) while those who agreed accounted for 154(37%). Respondents who strongly agreed with the statement '*Problems in teenage marriage makes youths to turn to drugs*' were 137(32.9%) compared to 160(38.5%) who agreed while those who strongly agreed that '*When the relationship breaks up, youths resorts to drugs*' accounted for 146(35.1%) and those who agreed accounted for 137(32.9%). An observation was made that respondents who strongly agreed with the statement '*When the married youths divorce or separates, they turn to drugs*' were

152(36.5%) and those who agreed were 126(30.3%). Those who strongly agreed that '*Terminal disease contraction makes youths turn to drugs*' accounted for 122(29.3%) and those who agreed accounted for 102(24.5%). Finally, respondents who strongly agreed that '*When the youths drop out of school they turn to drugs*' accounted for 175(42.1%) of total sample and those who agreed accounted for 109(26.2%) compared to respondents who strongly agreed with the statement that '*Death of Loved one makes the youths turn to drugs*' who accounted for 115(27.6%) and 105(25.2%) agreed. On average scale according respondents' perspective they agreed that all factors under emotional stability aspect contributes to youths in Mathare informal settlements to abuse drug except two that is; youths contracting terminal disease, a mean of 3.274 and death of youths' loved one, a mean of 3.178. The respondents agreed that job loss is the major influence of drug abuse among youths in Mathare informal settlement with a mean of 3.935.

**Hypothesis Testing**

The H<sub>0</sub> for the study; emotional stability has no significant influence on drug abuse among the youths in Mathare informal settlements in Nairobi County, Kenya was tested. The researcher conducted a regression analysis on the two variables to establish the contribution of emotional stability on drug abuse among the youth of informal settlements in Mathare. Table 2 presents the summary of responses to 9 items measuring emotional stability among the youths in Mathare informal settlements.

**Table 2:** Influence of Emotional stability and Drug Abuse among the Youths

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.081 <sup>a</sup>	.006	.004	.493

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Stability

Regression data presented in Table 2 indicates that R<sup>2</sup> = 0.004 which implies that 0.4% of drug abuse among youth in Mathare informal settlements can be explained by emotional stability. In other words, emotional stability contributes to 0.4% of drug abuse cases among youth in Mathare informal settlements. So as to establish whether the model could be able to predict drug abuse, an ANOVA analysis was run and results are as presented in table 3.

**Table 3:** Influence of Emotional stability and Drug Abuse among the Youths – ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	.658	1	.658	2.707	.101 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	100.571	414	.243		
	Total	101.228	415			

a. Dependent Variable: Drug Levels  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Stability

ANOVA model from the regression analysis is shown in table 4.20. The results indicate that the model was not a significant predictor of the dependent variable; F (1,414) = 2.707 > .05, meaning the regression model is not a good fit for prediction.

In order to determine the individual variable contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable, a partial regression for the coefficients was analysed as shown in table 4.

**Table 4:** Influence of Emotional stability and Drug Abuse among the Youths – Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.746	.086		20.186	.000
	Emotional Stability	.074	.045	.081	1.645	.101

a. Dependent Variable: Drug Levels

Table 4 presents the coefficients that resulted from the regression analysis. From the unstandardized coefficient table, it can be observed that a one-unit change in the abuse of drugs could be explained by a change of .074 on emotional stability levels, t (415) = 1.645; β = .074, P >.05. This therefore implies that emotional stability did not significantly influence the abuse of drugs in the study region. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that emotional stability has no significant influence on drug

abuse among the youths in Mathare informal settlements in Nairobi County, Kenya was not rejected and conclusion made that there is no significant influence of emotional stability on abuse of drugs in Mathare informal settlements.

**Conclusion of the Study**

Based on the findings, emotional stability has an influence on youths’ drug abuse in Mathare informal settlements. Further it can also be concluded that stress due economic hardship is a major factor that compels youths to abuse drugs among other factors under influence of emotional instability. The null hypothesis stated that emotional stability has no significant influence on drug abuse among the youths in Mathare informal settlements in Nairobi County, Kenya. Regression analysis was used to test this hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The value of significance (.101) was more than .05 which implied emotional stability did not significantly influence the abuse of drugs in the study region. This hypothesis was not rejected and conclusion made that there is no significant influence of emotional stability on abuse of drugs in Mathare informal settlements.

**Recommendations of the Study**

Emotional stability is simply ability to withstand difficult situations, handle it and go through it. Youths in Mathare informal settlements are forced to abuse drugs by the influence of emotional stability based on the findings of this study. One of the ways that can be used to prevent drug abuse by the influence of emotional stability is to consistently organizing for seminars targeting youths in Mathare informal settlements. The seminars should address on the best ways to handle difficult, unfortunate or unplanned occurrences that befall the youths which compels them to resort to drugs as a solution. Professional counsellors can also be involved to train parents and guardians on handling issues affecting youths like early pregnancies, guilty after abortions, divorce among other issues. These measures will help in handling root cause of drug abuse rather than focusing on outcome

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