

Impact of Substance Use on Students in Urban Public and Private Universities in Uganda.

Asingwire Richard

PhD Candidate. Affiliated to Kampala International University.

Definition of Risky health sexual behavior: Substance abuse, also known as drug abuse, is the use of a drug in amounts or by methods which are harmful to the individual or others. It is a form of substance-related disorder (Ksir & Oakley, et al., 2002).

Examples of Substance use: Sedatives e.g. ketamine and prescription drugs such as Ativan, Valium, Xanax, etc. Stimulants e.g. cocaine, meth, speed, ecstasy / MDMA / molly, etc. Hallucinogens e.g. LSD/acid, PCP, magic mushrooms. Opiates e.g. heroin, oxys, fentanyl, etc.

Abstract: *The study was on Substance use on students in public and private universities in Uganda. It was conducted in urban public and private universities in Uganda. Students were the unit of analysis. Informants were studied for some good period of time. Occurrences - culture, characteristics and substance use behaviors were noted. The study was of Qualitative in nature and used a Positivism philosophy backed with Health Belief Model (HBM) by Rosen stock, supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which was proposed in 1975 by Martin Fishbein. Students perform a health behavior having reasoned about the positive and negative consequences. Terms like Susceptibility, Perceived benefits, Perceived barriers, Self efficacy and Clue to barriers were borrowed from HBM. Preventive, Illness and Sick-role behaviors that were pathways to the substance use behavior were borrowed from HBM. These pathways were used in studying related literature, designing research instruments, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting it. The study found out that: Students have created their own new life where there are no outsiders like elders. When in groups, in their privacy, students do all sorts of manner, substance use inclusive. Students don't care about their future. They have lost hopes. University dropouts don't go back to their homes in the countryside. They always remain around the university premises struggling to survive. Students accept their substance use behavior as part of their life. HIV is being transmitted because of substance use influence. The use of alcohol and illicit drugs has greatly increased the risk of STDs/STIs among students. The study recommended that: There should be enough programs of substance use awareness (Expected barriers). The government should identify, empower and equip peers. Peers be the pathways of educating, guiding and controlling students. Religious leaders should come in to give hope. Health service providers should target communities (ghettoes) around the university premises, where students are, always. HIV awareness, testing, prevention and treatment should be put in more effort. Students should develop a habit of health seeking behavior especially for medical checkup or where never they suspect any sort of disorder.*

Keyword: Health behavior, Substance use, students

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the situation of substance abuse in United States and the rest of the world. 30% of alcohol users has increased their consumption since the pandemic.^[1] 30% of drug users has increased their activity. Since August 2020, the amount of people who died due to overdoses has been increased about 27% (Agovino & Theresa. 2021). In 2010 about 5% of people (230 million) used an illicit substance (World Drug Report 2012)

Of these, 27 million have high-risk drug use—otherwise known as recurrent drug use—causing harm to their health, causing psychological problems, and/or causing social problems that put them at risk of those dangers (EMCDDA, 2026). Among teenagers and students, the situation of substance abuse remained the same. From July 2020 to August 2020, the rate of cannabis use among high school seniors did not change drastically compared to past years. From 2019 to 2020, the rate of nicotine use declined among high school seniors. (National Institute on Drug 2022). About 38% of drug users has the risk of increasing drug usages (Eurek. 2022). Drug abuse are used in public health, medical and criminal justice contexts. In some cases, criminal or anti-social behaviour occurs when the person is under the influence of a drug, and long-term personality changes in individuals may also occur (Ksir & Oakley, et al., 2002). In addition to possible physical, social, and psychological harm, the use of some drugs may also lead to poor performance and in the end, failing to graduate in the due time according to the admission or even dropping out. It's from this background that the study came up to find out what effects of Students' health behavior on course completion in public and private Universities in Uganda.

Methodology: It was conducted in urban public and private universities. Students were the unit of analysis. Informants were studied for some good period of time. Occurrences - culture, characteristics and substance use behaviors were noted. The study was of Qualitative in nature and used a Positivism philosophy backed with Health Belief Model, supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Preventive, Illness and Sick-role behaviors that were pathways to the substance use behavior were borrowed from

HBM. These pathways were used in studying related literature, designing research instruments, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting it.

Findings: Students have created their own new life where there are no outsiders like elders. When in groups, in their privacy, students do all sorts of manner, substance use inclusive. Students don't care about their future. They have lost hopes. They spend any money that comes their way on accessing substance use instead of basic needs. University dropouts don't go back to their homes in the countryside. They always stay around the university premises struggling to survive. They don't go back to their homes for fear of being blamed and judged that they didn't graduate. Students accept their substance use behavior as part of their life. HIV is being transmitted because of substance use influence. The use of alcohol and illicit drugs has greatly increased the risk of gonorrhea, Chlamydia, trichomoniasis, hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS among students.

Recommendations:

There should be enough programs of substance use awareness. The government should identify, empower and equip peers. These peers should part of the drug users because they know where to find them and how to deal with them. Peers be the pathways of educating, guiding and controlling students. Religious leaders should come in to give hope instead of judging and blaming. Health service providers should target communities (ghettoes) around the university premises. That's where students are, always. A health App should be designed and be used as online health services. HIV awareness, testing, prevention and treatment should be put in more effort. Students should develop a habit of health seeking behavior especially for medical checkup or where never they suspect any sort of disorder.

References:

- Ksir & Oakley, R. et al. (2002). *Drugs, society, and human behavior* (9th ed.). Boston [u.a.]: McGraw-Hill. ISBN 978-0072319637.
- Agovino & Theresa. 2021. The COVID-19 Crisis Has Brought Substance Abuse to Light. *SHRM*. Retrieved 2022-04-30.
- National Institute on Drug. (2022). COVID-19 & Substance Use. *National Institute on Drug Abuse*. Retrieved 2022-04-30.
- Eurek, A. (2022). Large numbers of regular drug users report increased substance use during COVID-10. Retrieved 2020-04-30.
- World Drug Report 2012. UNITED NATIONS. Retrieved 27 September 2016.
- EMCDDA. (2026). Information on the high-risk drug use (HRDU) - formerly 'problem drug use' (PDU). Key indicator. *emcdda.europa.eu*. Retrieved 2016-09-27.