

Strategies to Curb Substance Addiction among Emerging Adults in Ongata Rongai Sub County, Kajiado County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Curbing Substance addiction is significant to the well-being of emerging adults. This qualitative study aimed at exploring the strategies to curb substance addiction among emerging adults in Ongata Rongai Sub County, Kenya. The study utilized exploratory research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 participants for the study. Interview Guide was used to collect data from the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data from the participants. The findings identified guidance and counselling, empowerment with skills, sensitization and creation of job opportunities as strategies that can be used to curb substance addiction among the emerging adults. The study recommends to the government and other stakeholders to sensitize emerging adults on the impact of substance abuse to their well-being. Also, the addiction counsellors and psychologists need to come with preventive measures to substance abuse among emerging adults and suggest appropriate interventions to those already addicted and need rehabilitation. Finally, government need to enforce laws on those who are involved with drugs selling and trafficking.

Key Words: Strategies, substance addiction, emerging adults

INTRODUCTION

Family functioning plays a critical role in the prevention and treatment of substance addiction. Poor family functioning such as communication problems, conflict, and lack of support, can contribute to substance abuse and addiction among youths. Suburban families are not immune to these problems and may even face unique challenges due to their environment. According to Smith and Estefan (2014), substance addiction is widely viewed as the dependent individual issue but the family is equally affected by their members' addiction. Smith and Estefan (2014) state that, there is need to understand the experiences of parents whose children are in dependence of substances of addiction and explore the experiences of the parents and especially the mother who is mostly viewed as the primary care giver. This exploration gives deeper understanding of the familial and social complexities that are involved in parenting addicted youths. According to UN office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) the global initiative should be to allocate necessary resources and adequate attention to intervene on the aspects of drugs problems in the world. It should also provide good care for those in need, share knowledge on how drug use not only affects the user but inter plays with other challenges for example conflicts and degrading the environment. UNODC, putting a joint effort in the international community, governments, civil society and other benefactors can enhance the efforts of strengthening and protecting people from destructive substance addiction, prevent and tackle the rising supply of drugs to the youths.

There is a need to ensure proper family functioning from a global system that ensures youths population in the sub-urban communities gets proper access to education, health, and justice. Through the education strategy, youths get informed about classroom family engagements, knowing all the contexts of involvement and participation in family growth and cultural engagements (García-Fernández et al., 2023). Cultural engagements, for instance, play a significant role in the global sub-urban population and area developments

and progress. Efficacious socially responsive practices for domestic engagements facilitate and enhance family functioning from a global state and position.

Family therapy is a proven effective strategy to enhance family functioning among suburban families. This intervention can help family members to improve communication, resolve conflicts, and build stronger relationships. The therapist works with the family members to identify their strengths and weaknesses, set goals, and develop strategies to achieve those goals. Family therapy has been shown to reduce substance use and improve mental health outcomes (Kumpfer et al., 2014). Parenting programs can be another effective strategy to enhance family functioning. These programs aim to improve parenting skills, increase parent-child communication, and promote positive family relationships. These programs may include topics such as effective communication, setting boundaries, and managing emotions. Parenting programs have been shown to reduce the risk of substance use among adolescents and improve family functioning (Dakofet al., 2015).

Community-based programs can be a valuable resource for suburban families to enhance family functioning. These programs can provide support, education, and resources to families affected by substance addiction. Community-based programs may include support groups, educational workshops, and recreational activities. These programs can also help families to develop social connections and a sense of community. Community-based programs have been shown to improve family functioning and reduce substance use (Hawkins et al., 2019). Education and awareness campaigns can be an effective strategy to enhance family functioning among suburban families. These campaigns can increase knowledge and awareness of substance addiction, its risks, and its impact on families. Education and awareness campaigns can also help to reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviours. These campaigns can be delivered through various channels, including social media, schools, and community centres. Education and awareness campaigns have been shown to improve family functioning and reduce substance use (Winstanley, et al., 2018).

A multidisciplinary approach can be an effective strategy to enhance family functioning among suburban families. This approach involves a team of professionals working together to provide comprehensive care to families affected by substance addiction. The team may include mental health professionals, medical professionals, social workers, and community leaders. This approach can provide a range of services, including counselling, medical treatment, case management, and community support. A multidisciplinary approach has been shown to improve family functioning and reduce substance use (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine, 2019).

Education has been identified as an effective strategy for improving family functioning and reducing the risk of substance addiction. In a study conducted in Ghana by Aboagye et al. (2021), found that providing education to parents about the risks and consequences of substance use was associated with a decrease in adolescent substance use. Similarly, Foster et al. (2013) found that parental education was associated with a decreased likelihood of substance use among Black youth in Los Angeles. Also, parenting skills training has been found to be effective in improving family function and reducing the risk of substance addiction. In a study conducted in Nigeria by Ojonuba et al. (2023) found that parenting skills training was associated with a decrease in substance use among adolescents. Similarly, a review by Rowe (2012) found that family therapy interventions that included parenting skills training were associated with improved outcomes for substance-addicted youths.

Family therapy has also been found to be an effective strategy for improving family function and reducing the risk of substance addiction. In a study conducted in South Africa, Kaminer et al. (2013) found that family therapy was associated with a decrease in substance use and improved family functioning. In a study conducted in Nigeria by Chakraborty, et.al. (2017) found that community-based interventions, such as support groups and counselling services, were associated with improved outcomes for substance-addicted

youth. Strengthening cultural values that prioritize family and community can improve family function and reduce the risk of substance addiction. In a study conducted in Nigeria, Akinola (2015) found that cultural values that emphasized the importance of family and community were associated with improved outcomes for substance-addicted youth. Similarly, Okonkwo et al. (2020) argued that cultural values that prioritize family and community can help reduce the stigma associated with substance addiction and promote shared responsibility for addressing the problem. Addressing underlying socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and unemployment, can improve family function and reduce the risk of substance addiction. In a review of substance addiction in Africa, Nadkarni et al. (2023) argued that addressing socioeconomic factors is essential for reducing the risk of substance addiction.

A study by Yahaya (2019) found that family and community interventions were associated with reduced rates of substance abuse among young people in Nigeria. According to McCarthy (2023) the Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) program was developed to reduce drug and alcohol use among young people. The program involved working with community-based organizations, schools, and health facilities to deliver evidence-based interventions that focused on promoting healthy behaviours and discouraging substance abuse. According to a study by Omina (2021), family intervention was associated with reduced rates of substance abuse among young people in Kenya. Family functioning is an important aspect of family life that determines the quality of relationships and interactions among family members. In Kenya, as in many other parts of the world, families face a range of challenges that can affect their functioning, including poverty, violence, and lack of access to education and healthcare. Enhancing family functioning can be a critical step towards improving the well-being of families and communities in Kenya. One strategy for enhancing family functioning is family therapy. Family therapy is an evidence-based approach that is designed to improve communication, resolve conflicts, and enhance relationships among family members. A study by Maitha et al. (2013) found that family therapy was effective in improving family communication, cohesion, and flexibility among families in Kenya. According to Swan et al. (2022) involved Somali refugee mothers with PTSD and their children, and it found that group-based therapist-assisted exposure plus parenting-focused treatment was effective in improving the mental health and functioning of both mothers and children. The study suggests that family therapy can be an effective strategy for enhancing family functioning in Kenya.

Another strategy for enhancing family functioning is parenting programs. Parenting programs are designed to provide parents with skills and strategies for improving their parenting practices and enhancing their relationships with their children. A study by Okari et al. (2018) found that a parenting program was effective in enhancing parental involvement, communication, and discipline practices among Kenyan parents. The study involved parents of children aged 6-14 years, and it found that the parenting program led to significant improvements in parenting practices and family functioning. Economic empowerment is another strategy that can enhance family functioning in Kenya. Economic empowerment interventions, such as microfinance and vocational training, can provide families with the resources and skills they need to improve their economic well-being and reduce financial stress. A study by Gikandiet et al. (2021) found that economic empowerment interventions improved family cohesion and communication in Kenya. The study involved households in two slum areas in Nairobi, and it found that microfinance and vocational training interventions led to significant improvements in family functioning. The study suggests that economic empowerment interventions can be an effective strategy for enhancing family functioning in Kenya which can play a significant role in curbing substance addictions among youths.

Community-based interventions can also be effective in enhancing family functioning in Kenya. Community-based interventions can provide families with support and resources to improve their relationships and communication. A study by Puffer et al. (2021) found that a community-based intervention that included parenting education and family counselling improved family communication and cohesion. The study involved adolescents and their parents in rural Tanzania, and it found that the

intervention led to significant improvements in family functioning. According to NACADA (2015) there is need for parents to be actively involved in the fight against substance addiction among their children. Efforts need to be made by families to be involved in the youth's lives even when they do not consider their children to be at risk. NACADA report(2015) states that parents who are abusers themselves are not good role models to their children. NACADA (2015) recommended enhancing family functioning by helping families learn how to address the issue of substance addiction by creating groups where parents can support each other and share experiences. The current study aimed at exploring the strategies to curb substance addiction among emerging adults in Ongata Rongai Sub County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The current study employed exploratory research design. According to Yilmaz (2013) exploratory approach refers to a useful tool to provide assistance in the understanding of the respondent's behaviour and complex attitude and interaction. It involves gathering information and insights to gain a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation, often without a specific hypothesis or research question in mind. Exploratory research design is characterized by flexibility, openness, and a focus on generating new ideas or hypotheses for further research. The design was suitable for this study because it aims at exploring the strategies to curb substance addiction among emerging adults in Ongata Rongai Sub County, Kenya.

The study utilized purposive sampling technique. It involves deliberately choosing individuals who possess certain characteristics or have firsthand knowledge of the phenomenon under study. This sampling method is commonly used in qualitative research, where researchers aim to gain in-depth insights and understanding of a particular topic. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants who can provide rich and meaningful information, based on their expertise, experiences, or unique perspectives. The study utilized a sample size of 20 participants which comprised of 13 emerging adults, 3 parents, 2 religious leaders and 2 government administrators.

The study employed Interview Guide as instrument of data collection. The Interview Guide consisted of open ended questions which aimed at gathering qualitative data from the objective of the study. The Interview Guide had two sections. The first part captured the demographic details of the participants including age, gender, religion and educational level. The second section captured open ended questions on strategies to curb substance addiction among emerging adults. Thematic analysis was used to identify and report themes that emerged from the data.

RESULTS

The study was set out to explore strategies to curb substance addiction among emerging adults in Ongata Rongai Sub County, Kenya. Using thematic analysis, the themes from the data collected was identified and supported by verbatim from the participants. Before presenting the findings, the study presented the demographic details of the participants.

Demographic details of the participants

The study presented the demographic of the participants who were interviewed. The demographic details were age, gender, religion and educational level. The study had two categories of participants for interviews which were emerging adults and key informants. The demographic details for emerging adults' participants were presented first followed by the Key Informants.

Demographic Details for Emerging Adult Participants

The study presented the demographic details of the emerging adult participants that were interviewed. The

results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Details for Adult Emerging Participants

Participant Number	Age	Gender	Religion	Educational Level
1	23	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
2	20	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
3	22	Male	Muslim	Vocational Training
4	20	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
5	23	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
6	21	Male	Traditional	Vocational Training
7	19	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
8	18	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
9	22	Male	Muslim	Vocational Training
10	27	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
11	17	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
12	19	Male	Christian	Vocational Training
13	20	Male	Christian	Vocational Training

Table 1 show that participants were between ages of 17 years to 27 years. The average age of participants was 20 years. All the participants were males and were in recovery from substance addiction. Almost all the participants were Christian except two participants who were Muslims and one participant who belonged to traditional religion. All the participants had vocational training in their level of education.

Demographic Details of the Key Informants

Table 2. Demographic Details for Key Informant Participants

Participant Number	Age	Gender	Religion	Level of Education
1	30	Male	Christian	Technical College
2	26	Male	Christian	Higher Polytechnic
3	27	Male	Christian	Higher Polytechnic
4	51	Male	Christian	Masters Level
5	39	Female	Christian	BA
6	53	Female	Christian	BA
7	44	Male	Christian	BA

Table 2 showed that the youngest key informant was 26 years while the oldest was 53 years old. The average age for the Key Informants was 39 years old. Majority of the participants were males compared to their female counterparts. All the participants were Christians and had college training, and BA except one participant who had a Master’s degree.

Strategies to curb substance abuse among Emerging Adults in Ngong sub-county, Nairobi Guidance and counselling

Almost all the participants identified guidance and counselling as a strategy to curb drug and substance

abuse among the young adults in sub-urban families. Government has a responsibility of creating rehabilitation centres to offer counselling to young adults with problem of substance abuse. Parents have a responsibility to bringing up their children in responsible manner. The society need to play a significant role in mentoring young people and guiding them in their daily lives. The theme was supported by a young adult, who said,

“Yes, when organizations or government come up with rehabilitation centres or even projects to help the young adults its easier to reduce and overcome substance addiction. One is to ensure that all the young adults are given guidance and counselling and ensuring that no youths are idle in the society. The society should also come up with programs to help the youths to change their mindset and focus on the important things in life” (Participant 2).

Another young adult participant echoed the theme by emphasizing that parents have a responsibility of providing guidance and counselling to their children when said *“Parents should give advices and counselling to their children, they should look or create jobs to satisfy their families, implementation of family rules which if broken should be followed by severe consequences and the family should be more open to their kids”* (Participant 12). The same theme was supported by a Key Informant participant who said *“The family can recommend counselling and therapies to young people who are already addicted, parents can create awareness to their children, enhance good interrelationships between minors and their parents, relatives and guardians”* (KI 2). Furthermore, the theme was emphasized by another key informant who said *“As I mentioned earlier society and culture should be proactive, create multiple for a where young adults can seek counsel and guidance. They should shun promotional materials that encourage alcohol and substance abuse in addition there should be counselling services that are available and affordable”* (KI 4).

Empowerment with skills

Empowerment of young people with different skills emerged as a theme from the majority of the participants as one way of preventing young people from abusing drugs. If young people are trained in skills and have good role models from the society, that can curb them from drug abuse. Empowering young people with skills provides them with opportunities to have jobs and be able to meet their basic needs. The theme of empowerment with skills came out clearly from a young adult, who said,

“Substance addiction could have been prevented if young adults were engaged with productive activities, be trained on life-skills in school, have role models and be guided when they go wrong. Improving family functioning to mitigate young adults from substance addiction there are things that can be done these are; empowering the family, training them on counselling skills, business skills and providing funds to start business” (Participant 4).

In addition, the theme was supported by a key informant participant who emphasized that youths need to be empowered by giving them responsibilities and making education affordable to all when said *“By providing platform for empowering youth in the society and by giving them responsibilities, mentoring them to become better citizens. Reducing educational fee so that all youths can access education at a cheaper cost”* (KI 5). Furthermore, the theme of empowerment of young people with skills was echoed by another key informant who said,

Give education and training aligned to future purpose; create jobs for young people, put in place punitive sanctions for substance distributors. Offer education to empower communities to say no to drugs. Promote counselling/psycho-education for public places like hospitals, churches and local government spaces. Need to encourage local community groups to work with challenged families and provide support. Youth sports and projects to provide social support and income generation for youths. Enabling youths to put their voice

on how to fight drug menace and champion for a drug free society and involve religious communities to collaborate in fighting drugs situation in the society”.

Sensitization

Most of the participants expressed the need to sensitize young people on substance abuse either through seminars and workshops. The local administration and educators have a responsibility to create self-awareness to youths on the effects of substance abuse. This awareness creation can play a significant role in curbing drug and substance abuse among the young people. This is emphasized a young adult participant who said *“Of course substance addiction could have been prevented among young adults by educating the public against the use of drugs, arresting and punishing the perpetrators as well as providing job opportunities for the youths”* (Participant 7). The theme was also supported by another young adult who said *“Through youth forums, engaging the youth often and educating them on drug abuse and substance addiction and also by creating job opportunities for the young adults”* (Participant 10). Likewise, the theme was supported by another young adult who said *“The local Chiefs to bring people together and share talks on issues affecting the families and young adults, create jobs through National Youth Service, offer safety and security for everyone”* (Participant 8). In addition, the theme was supported by key informants. For instance, *“Creating awareness on effects of substance abuse, training and showcasing them on skills to enable them learn and practice good family functioning skills”* (KI 2). Also, another key informant participant supported the theme when said *“To have some regulation and guidance in the village, have some psycho-education seminars on the impact of substance addiction on ones wellbeing. Also making sure that all children in the village go to school through the assistance of ‘Nyumba Kumi”* (KI 5).

Creation of job opportunities

Almost all the participants indicated creation of jobs to young people as a way of preventing them in getting to substance abuse. When job opportunities are availed to young people based on their skills and talents, they are likely not to get involved with drugs and substance abuse. The government can create jobs to young people by giving the affordable loans with lower interest rates. The theme is expressed by a young adult who said *“Offering job opportunities to youths, families loving their children and supporting the youth get opportunities for their talents like playing football are my opinion for preventing young adults from substance addiction”* (Participant 13). The same theme was supported by another young adult who said *“The society can offer jobs to the young adults and training them with the right skills which can help them create their own employments and be self-sustaining”* (Participant 9). Similarly, the theme was still echoed by key informant who said *“By offering job opportunities, free education and engaging and equipping them with skills that will make them independent, involving young people in activities which can make them busy so as to keep their minds busy and educating them on good morals”* (KI1). Also, the theme was emphasized by another key informant participant who said,

“Creation of jobs, making education affordable or free to all, builds recreational facilities, build centres and hire staff for guidance and counselling services accessible for all. The government should develop an environment enabling enough for talented young people to earn a decent living through sports. Establishing programs that can create meaningful engagement between parents and their children. It is also the work of the government to build rehabilitation centres accessible to all. Further, the government should inculcate in the education syllabus subjects that enlighten the learners on the dangers of substance abuse. Coming up with restrictions through the proper legislation the advertisement of potentially addictive substances. It should also work in improving country’s economy to ensure the citizenry experience less pressure that would easily lead them to anxiety. Legislative policies that would do away with the forms of discrimination that potentially disposes one to indulge in intoxicants and promote as well strengthen the social fabric among families” (KI 4).

DISCUSSION

The study was set out to explore strategies to curb substance addiction among emerging adults in Ongata Rongai Sub County, Kenya. Almost all the participants identified guidance and counselling as a strategy to curb drug and substance abuse among the young adults in sub-urban families. Government has a responsibility of creating rehabilitation centres to offer counselling to young adults with problem of substance abuse. Parents have a responsibility to bringing up their children in responsible manner. The society need to play a significant role in mentoring young people and guiding them in their daily lives. The findings were in agreement with the findings of Kumpfer et al.(2014) who found family therapy to be proven effective strategy to enhance family functioning among suburban families. This intervention can help family members to improve communication, resolve conflicts, and build stronger relationships. The therapist works with the family members to identify their strengths and weaknesses, set goals, and develop strategies to achieve those goals. Family therapy has been shown to reduce substance use and improve mental health outcomes.

Moreover, the findings were supported by the findings of National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2019) which found multidisciplinary approach to be effective strategy to enhance family functioning among suburban families. This approach involves a team of professionals working together to provide comprehensive care to families affected by substance addiction. The team may include mental health professionals, medical professionals, social workers, and community leaders. This approach can provide a range of services, including counselling, medical treatment, case management, and community support. A multidisciplinary approach has been shown to improve family functioning and reduce substance use.

Empowerment of young people with different skills emerged as a theme from the majority of the participants as one way of preventing young people from abusing drugs. If young people are trained in skills and have good role models from the society, that can curb them from drug abuse. Empowering young people with skills provides them with opportunities to have jobs and be able to meet their basic needs. The findings were in line with the findings Dakofet et al.(2015), who found such programs are an effective strategy to enhance family functioning. These programs aim to improve parenting skills, increase parent-child communication, and promote positive family relationships. These programs may include topics such as effective communication, setting boundaries, and managing emotions. Parenting programs have been shown to reduce the risk of substance use among adolescents and improve family functioning. Also, the findings were supported by the findings of Aboagye et al. (2021) who found education can be an effective strategy for improving family function and reducing the risk of substance addiction. Furthermore, the findings resonated with findings of Ojonuba et al. (2023) in Nigeria who found that parenting skills training was associated with a decrease in substance use among adolescents.

The findings were also in agreement with the findings of Gikandiet et al. (2021) who found economic empowerment interventions, such as microfinance and vocational training, can provide families with the resources and skills they need to improve their economic well-being and reduce financial stress. The study involved households in two slum areas in Nairobi, and it found that microfinance and vocational training interventions led to significant improvements in family functioning. The study suggests that economic empowerment interventions can be an effective strategy for enhancing family functioning in Kenya.

Most of the participants expressed the need to sensitize young people on substance abuse either through seminars and workshops. The local administration and educators have a responsibility to create self-awareness to youths on the effects of substance abuse. This awareness creation can play a significant role in curbing drug and substance abuse among the young people. The finding of this study was in agreement with findings of Winstanley et al. (2018) who found education and awareness campaigns can be an effective

strategy to enhance family functioning among suburban families. These campaigns can increase knowledge and awareness of substance addiction, its risks, and its impact on families. Education and awareness campaigns can also help to reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviours. These campaigns can be delivered through various channels, including social media, schools, and community centres. Education and awareness campaigns have been shown to improve family functioning and reduce substance use (Winstanley et al.2018).

Also, the findings resonated with findings of Khosa et al. (2017) who conducted a study in South Africa on Ke Moja Program in Gauteng Schools for substance use prevention designed to reduce drug and alcohol use among young people through education and awareness campaigns. The program provided information about the consequences of substance abuse and strategies for avoiding addiction. Likewise, the findings were supported by findings of Omina (2021) who conducted a study in Kenya and found that community reinforcement and training program was helped to reduce drug and alcohol use among young people. The program involved working with community-based organizations, schools, and health facilities to deliver evidence-based interventions that focused on promoting healthy behaviours and discouraging substance abuse. The program was associated with reduced rates of substance abuse among young people in Kenya.

Almost all the participants indicated creation of jobs to young people as a way of preventing them in getting to substance abuse. When job opportunities are availed to young people based on their skills and talents, they are likely not to get involved with drugs and substance abuse. The government can create jobs to young people by giving the affordable loans with lower interest rates. The findings were consistent with the findings of Nadkarni et al. (2023) who found that by addressing underlying socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and unemployment, can improve family function and reduce the risk of substance addiction. Similarly, the findings were supported by the findings of Okonkwo et al. (2020)who argued that addressing poverty and unemployment can help reduce the stressors that contribute to substance addiction and improve family functioning.

CONCLUSION

Guidance and counselling can play a big role to curbing drug and substance abuse among the young adults in sub-urban families. Government has a responsibility of creating rehabilitation centres to offer counselling to young adults with problem of substance abuse. Parents have a responsibility to bringing up their children in responsible manner. The society need to play a significant role in mentoring young people and guiding them in their daily lives. Empowering young people with skills can provide them with opportunities to have jobs and be able to meet their basic needs. When job opportunities are availed to young people based on their skills and talents, they are likely not to get involved with drugs and substance abuse. The government can create jobs to young people by giving the affordable loans with lower interest rates. Finally, the local administration and educators have a responsibility to create self-awareness to youths on the effects of substance abuse. This awareness creation can play a significant role in curbing drug and substance abuse among the young people.

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