

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Church of Uganda in Fighting Drug Abuse and Crime Rate in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study was set to assess the effectiveness of the church of Uganda in fighting drug abuse and crime rate in Uganda. This study applied qualitative approach on a sample size of 91 respondents. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected by use of a structured interview guide since the nature of the data was qualitative. The secondary data was obtained from the church reports and library which were reviewed for completeness and consistency for thematic analysis. The study findings revealed that the church of Uganda plays a vital role in fighting against drug abuse and crime rate in Sheema Municipality including training and awareness programs, counseling and supports, community engagement and partnerships and collaboration and that Church of Uganda faces significant challenges in efficiently fighting against drug abuse and crime rates such as limited access to limited financial resources for organizing workshops, seminars and conferences aiming at fighting against drug abuse and crime rates, poor mindset change especially among the youths and limited skilled personnel to provide counselling and guidance services among the youth. To address these challenges, this research proposed for the provision of counseling services and support groups to help young people struggling with addiction, offering a safe and non-judgmental space for them to share their experiences. This study recommended that the church should design mentorship programs that aim to bring people especially young people closer to the church and this reduces on rate of drug abuse as a pair youth with positive role models who can guide and support them in making healthy life choices also that church should also create opportunities for youth to engage in positive activities, such as sports, arts, and community service, to keep them occupied and focused on constructive pursuits.

Key words: Drug abuse and crime rate

INTRODUCTION

The issue of drug abuse with increasing crime rates has been coined as one of the most hitting challenges affecting urban areas in Uganda. According to WHO (2021), cannabis remains the most widely used illicit drug in the African region and the highest prevalence and increase in use is being reported in east and central Africa with rates between 5.2% and 13.5%. This has attracted various stakeholders including the church of Uganda aiming at fighting drug abuse and crime rate especially in Ugandan urban areas. The church of Uganda has to that effect provided religious prescriptiveness, social support, holistic care and moral guidance, and sensitization on the dangers of drug abuse. Despite the above-mentioned strategies put in place by the church of Uganda to prevent drug abuse and crime rate in Uganda, the abuse of drugs has continued to be a rampart vice most especially in Urban areas in the country causing public outcry since it affects a big portion of the population therein. This has not spared the youth of Sheema Municipality who are involved in using marijuana and other drugs (Sheema Municipal Mayor's report, 2024).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study adopted biopsychosocial theory which contend that the desire to use psychoactive substances is an innate and universal drive-in human being analogous to the hunger or sex drive (Weil, 1986; Weil & Rosen, 1998). The foremost proponent of the contemporary nature perspective of substance use is Andrew Weil, a medical doctor and well-known expert on alternative medicine. Regarding the innate human drive toward

consciousness alteration, this perspective recognizes that, from infancy, humans engage in behaviors that produce alterations in their consciousness. Weil claims that early in life, this desire for consciousness alteration is manifested in behaviors such as infants rocking themselves into calm, blissful states and children “spinning” themselves or purposefully hyperventilating to produce dizzying mental states. However, as people grow older, “they find that certain available substances put them in similar states” (Weil & Rosen, 1998, p. 15). Drugs become a commonly used mechanism for achieving the goal of consciousness alteration not because they are distinct in their capacity to alter consciousness, but because they offer a quick and convenient means to achieve this goal (Weil & Rosen, 1998). Supporting Weil’s position is the ubiquity of psychoactive substance use in human societies and the fact that drugs have been used to alter consciousness for thousands of years despite their potential harms. Supporters also point to the fact that altered consciousness is pursued by people in many nondrug ways, including the behavior of children discussed above; meditation; intense physical activity (e.g., runners report being “addicted” to the high associated Self-inflicted pain is one method by which people alter consciousness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The prevalence of drug abuse and crime rate

According to Ali, Mouton, Jabeen, Ofoemezie, Bailey, and Shahid (2011), the abuse of drugs and substances has been a serious problem that has led to the development of mental disorder to youth.

According to Taylor (2018), drug and substance misuse is a problem that affects people of all ages, but the youth is most susceptible to it. According to the World Health Organisation (2019), the rate at which youth are taking drugs and substances has been rising in all communities, regardless of the assistance which churches provide or put solutions into place to lessen the problem. According to Nitescu (2019), most youth are taking drugs and substances such as depressants, stimulants, opioids, hallucinogens and cannabinoids.

According to Nitescu (2019), children who have a propensity to abuse drugs and substances exhibit unpredictable behavior, and they have both physical and emotional issues such as violence, depression, and hostility. According to Smith, Estefan, and Caine (2018), there are instances in which children begin acting in an unusual manner and are perceived to be hostile and irritated whenever they take drugs and substances. According to Ali et al (2011) youth who engage in drugs or substances may feel having more energy.

Peer influence is one of the first reasons as to why the youths get involved in drug abuse Sullivan (2021). The youths see lots of people consuming various drugs, they see other adults drinking alcohol smoking and trying other drugs. Therefore, the youths gain morale of drinking and using these illicit drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, shisha among others. Sometimes friends urge one another to have a drink or smoke pot, but it is just common for the youth to start trying these drugs because they are readily available and they see all their friends enjoying them. In their minds, they see drug use as part of the normal youth experience. According to Morrel et al., “teenagers seem to have more problems with peer pressure because they are just beginning to learn about whom they are and what their belief systems are”.

Most youths also get involved in drug abuse because of depression. Most youths who get involved in drug abuse are students who are packed with schedules of advanced classes and extra-curricular activities.

Depression is a common mental health issue among youth and is notoriously difficult to treat effectively. Consequently, many young people turn to alcohol and other substances as a form of self-medication, which often leads to substance abuse (NIDA, 2023). Research shows that a significant number of individuals with depression do not receive appropriate diagnosis or treatment, further contributing to the reliance on substances such as alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine to cope with their emotional distress (SAMHSA, 2022).

Modeling parents’ behavior can also be portrayed as one of the reasons as to why the youths get involved in drug abuse. Teens that grow up with parents who abuse alcohol or drugs often follow suit. After all, that is what they know and what they have learned. Not to mention, if one or both parents are actively involved in drug abuse, then the youths can have easy access as well.

Most youths also get involved in drug abuse because they have become addicted and they cannot do without alcohol. The youths do not use alcohol or drugs with the intent of becoming addicted. Most parents, teachers and concerned people have always talked to most youths on the dangers of alcohol and drugs but they have failed to leave. Most parents have talked to their children with unconditional love, genuine concern, understanding, and heartfelt compassion, recognizing the challenges and temptations that are so insidious and prevalent at that age but they have failed to adjust and leave alcohol. Most youths are vulnerable and easily influenced by others when they see them taking and hence being addicted.

The consequences of drug abuse.

Drug abuse can affect the physical and internal health of an individual. Physical injuries can be caused to the body due to accidents, such as car accidents, physical disabilities and diseases and the effects of possible overdoses are among the health-related effects of drug abuse. Internal injuries are caused to the body organs and may end up failing to work. Although alcohol-related traffic fatalities for youth have declined, young people are still overrepresented in this area. In 1995 alone, more than 2,000 youths of 15 to 20 years were killed in alcohol-related car crashes (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1997).

Youths who get involved in alcohol rarely or do not indulge in family affairs. In addition to personal adversities, the abuse of alcohol and other drugs by youths may result in family crises and jeopardize many aspects of family life, sometimes resulting family dysfunction. Both siblings and parents are profoundly affected by alcohol and drug involved youth (Nowinski, 1990). Drug abuse can also drain a family's financial and emotional resources especially by those involved in the act and this forces them to get in criminal acts such as robbery in order to get funds for buying more drugs.

Youths who get involved in drug abuse tend to become violent in nature and do not want to associate with other people in society (Marvin et al 1998). Alcohol or other drug abuse problems combined with poor adherence to medication may signal a higher risk of violent behavior among the youths who get involved in drug abuse and this has become an increasing focus of concern among the policy makers and the general public. This has been so because of the result of tragic, albeit uncommon events that occur in a society such as unnecessary fights, increased gender-based violence in families among others.

Death as a result of drug abuse is yet a major source of concern. Excessive consumption of alcohol by an individual can result to failure of the body organs to function which can lead to death of an individual. Recent informal estimates are that perhaps 200,000 drug-injecting-related deaths may occur per annum based on the estimated size of the current world population of injecting drug abusers of approximately 5.3 million (UNDCP 2, p. 4). WHO has reported as follows: "Existing data indicated a several-fold increase in drug-related deaths over the past decade, the yearly mortality rates among intravenous drug users or drug addicts on treatment Programmes ranged between one and two percent in Europe and the United States" (UNDCP 3, p. 1). Drugs commonly associated with drug abuse-related deaths are cocaine, heroin (and other opiates), barbiturates and amphetamines.

Continuous consumption of drugs has resulted the youths to drop out of school and this has prompted most of them to become criminals through stealing people's property so as to get some income for their living. The effects of these drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, cannabis, the most widely used illicit drugs, have been reviewed by many scholars. Chronic or acute use of cannabis may result in preoccupation with the immediate present, an impairment of short-term memory and other mental functions, impaired tracking ability in sensory and perceptual functions, adverse emotional and social development of children and adolescents, and impaired classroom performance. The degree of impairment follows the dosage amounts used, everything else being equal. Drugs can decrease cognitive operations, making it difficult for the youth to develop a functional set of values and ideals. Reduced cognitive efficiency also leads to poor academic performance and a resulting decrease in self-esteem, contributing to instability of the individual's sense of identity. Drugs may preoccupy and come to dominate the person's thinking as providing a solution to problems that need, in reality, non-drug solutions. Youths therefore end up leaving school due to low self-esteem caused by poor performance.

Increased rates of unemployment are projected to occur among the youths due to loss of jobs caused by excessive drug abuse. Add to this the fact that many of the jobs that are available are separated from the community and the family support network necessary to sustain workers, and the ingredients for intensification of social problems are clear. Education and training, often mentioned as solutions to unemployment, may be part of the problem rather than the solution since the existing supply of educated and trained persons frequently exceeds the demand in many countries. The relationship between drug and alcohol abuse and the workplace is significantly influenced by national, social, cultural, ethnic, and religious and gender issues. Cultural or group practices may also facilitate drug or alcohol abuse. Drinking or drug abuse cultures exist in some workplaces and some of them set a standard that may be imposed on the non-user. In addition, conditions in some workplaces involve exposure to harmful or dependence-producing drugs, such as glue in shoe factories.

Measures put in place by the church in fighting drug abuse and crime rate

It is important to note that religious organizations, such as churches, play a crucial role in shaping individual behavior since they act as a proxy for information distribution centers and social relationships (Ziriva, 2020). There is a promising but underexplored potential for the church and other religiously linked organizations to provide social support services for the treatment of substance use disorders in places where there is a limited availability of substance use treatment services (Rwafa, 2019). There is a possible pathway that is being underutilized to combat the plague of substance use, and it is highlighted by the fact that there is a synchronicity between the increase in churches within the local communities and the increase in drug and substance abuse among young people. On the other hand, believers, who are expected by society to live a revered lifestyle, are more susceptible to the shame that is associated with drug and substance misuse (Nhapi, 2019). Consequently, the individual who engages in substance misuse is confronted with the anticipated tension that arises between the desire to live a holy life and the threat of societal shame. The fear of being stigmatized causes people to avoid disclosing their addiction problem, which in turn decreases the possibility that they will seek treatment (Jakaza & Nyoni, 2018). Abuse that leads to substance use disorders can be made worse by the stigma that is associated with social rejection, which is something that is frequently anticipated. The scientific evidence that is now available demonstrates that social support, which can take the form of emotional comfort and knowledge about treatment alternatives acquired from significant others, is beneficial to the process of recovery from substance use disorders over the course of time (Rwafa, 2019).

Practitioners because of their generalist training, frequently hold off on making the choice to discharge their clients because they believe that non-specialized providers, such as self-help groups and religious organizations, may not be adequately qualified to deal with substance use disorders (Mazikana, 2020).

Furthermore, individuals who provide these services in settings that are not considered to be specialised settings may have fewer resources to adequately emphasize the outcomes of treatment. Research evidence suggests that working with faith-based organizations in the battle against drug and substance misuse is a protective factor, particularly during recovery. This is the case despite the fact that addiction professionals in clinical practise are divided on the issue. Some churches in Zimbabwe have been subjected to abuse for the purpose of obtaining political and personal gains, as well as extortion and moral immorality (Rwafa, Mangezi & Madhombiro, 2019).

Numerous religious organizations, on the other hand, have been actively involved in mediating and resolving conflicts on a variety of levels, ranging from the individual to the national level. Additionally, these organizations have developed community initiatives, including social safety nets, educational facilities, and health facilities (Coleman, Stevelink,

Hatch, Denny & Greenberg, 2017). Participation in religious activities has the potential to reduce the likelihood of engaging in the use of illegal substances and the negative consequences that result from such behavior (Hochschild, Capece, Gunn & Glenn, 2018). Peer support groups were formed by the African University Clinical Research Centre (2020) in order to provide assistance to church-going teenagers and young people who are recovering from substance misuse and drug abuse. Through the provision of spiritual advice, support, and education to individuals who are afflicted with substance misuse, the church plays a significant role in confronting the issue of substance abuse (Dryzek & Honig, 2016). Churches have the potential to offer

a secure setting in which persons who are battling with substance misuse can seek assistance without fear of being judged or feeling ashamed. They provide counselling services that enable individuals to discuss their issues with addiction in an open and honest manner and to work towards recovery through devotional practices such as prayer, meditation, and the study of scripture (Coleman, Stevelink, Hatch, Denny & Greenberg, 2017).

Moreover, churches are responsible for organizing activities such as community outreach programs, which provide individuals with access to resources that they might not otherwise have access to (Mazikana, 2020). These resources include treatment centers and information on how to get assistance for their addiction difficulties. The purpose of these events is to raise awareness about the hazards of substance misuse while also providing solutions to people who are affected by it. This allows those who are affected to regain control of their lives and break free from the attachment to addiction (Rwafa, 2019). Educating young children before they reach maturity, when there is a greater risk for them to experiment with drugs or alcohol, is one of the most significant roles that church play in avoiding substance misuse (Rwafa, 2019). In addition to providing assistance to individuals who are already struggling with substance abuse, churches also play an important role in preventing substance abuse.

Young people should be taught by churches how to make healthy choices, which are crucial

components in avoiding risky behavior linked with drinking or taking drugs later in life. Churches should primarily focus on teaching young people about these topics (Nyoni, 2020). The implementation of this preventative approach will allow churches to make significant progress towards eliminating future instances of drug addiction not only within their own congregations but also throughout the entirety of the communities in which they are located.

The effectiveness of church in fighting drug abuse and crime rate

Kutter & McDermott (2018) conducted a study on the role of the church in adolescent drug education in United States of America. Substance abuse among adolescents in the United States is on the rise, despite the fact that there are efforts being made to educate and prevent drug use (Kutter & McDermott, 2018). During the course of Kutter & McDermott (2018) study into the factors that are associated with substance abuse and the elements that constitute an efficient drug education program, three aspects of religiosity come to light: religious prescriptiveness, involvement in church activities, and the significance that an individual places on church activities.

In the context of the use of alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, and other drugs by adolescents, the presence of religious prescriptiveness was found to interact with church involvement and with the significance of the church. Furthermore, among adolescents who had ever consumed alcohol, a positive correlation was found between religious prescriptiveness and binge drinking (Kutter & McDermott, 2018). This correlation was so strong that those who were affiliated with proscriptive religious groups reported the greatest prevalence of binge drinking. In the realm of drug education, the church may prove to be a significant vehicle. According to Kutter & McDermott (2018) the church provides a protective environment which offer counselling services for young people recovering from drug and substance abuse. Meanwhile the church-based interventions are not that effective in curbing drug and substance abuse (Kutter & McDermott, 2018).

The difficulties associated with alcohol and other drugs need to be addressed as a social, economic, spiritual, and health issue by society (Volkow, 2020). As a result, this presents a chance for all those who are participating in the battle against this threat to refocus their efforts on eliminating or minimizing the erratic behavior associated with the use of drugs and alcohol in society. When it comes to the promotion of the foundations that form a solid foundation upon which alcohol and drug abuse are dealt with in society, religious organizations are prominent pillars among the other pillars (Ziriva, 2020).

The reality of the situation is that there are individuals who are battling with substance use problems in churches today, even if they are doing so in a quiet manner (Earnshaw, 2020). The fact of the matter is that within the bounds of each religious organization, there is always someone who is suffering in silence, completely imprisoned by some addictive substance or behavior. It is vital that the leaders acknowledge this

fact in order to make it possible for religious organizations to take a stance in the fight against substance abuse and addiction (Kulak & Griswold, 2019). Religion has been demonstrated to be a significant protective factor against substance abuse and an important support for individuals who are in the process of recovery (Mazikana, 2022).

Religious leaders are less likely than other people to engage in drug use, and they are also less likely to experience adverse effects that are associated with drug use. As a result, this provides them with a platform from which they may exercise their enormous power in the fight against the threat of substance misuse and alcoholism within their respective spaces (Corrigan, 2021). The application of spirituality and religion in the treatment and prevention of substance abuse is a practise that has been well established all across the world.

According to study by Mazikana (2020) the potential ways in which religion may influence substance use and recovery include the establishment of moral order, the provision of opportunity to gain learnt competencies, the establishment of support groups, and the provision of social and organizational linkages. This suggests that faith-based organizations in Zimbabwe have the potential to collaborate with other organizations in order to combat the problem of substance misuse and drug abuse. The provision of basic, secondary, and higher education in Zimbabwe has been strongly influenced by the role that Christian churches have played historically. Through this extensive network of educational institutions, the church is in an excellent position to spread awareness about the campaign against alcohol and drugs to the hundreds of thousands of students who are currently enrolled in these establishments for the purpose of obtaining an education.

According to the findings of a study that was conducted by Peterson Kabugi (2020) of Laikipia University the role of the church, as described in the Bible, is not solely focused on the promotion of the spiritual well-being of the members of the community. Jesus took personal responsibility for the people he served to, ensuring that they were fed, healed, and even raised from the grave while he was there. The church and other organizations that are based on faith have chances to play a role in the battle against substance misuse in society, particularly in light of the current situation, which is characterized by an increase in the prevalence of substance abuse, particularly among young people (Kabugi, 2020). In general, research indicates that young people who are spiritually agile, participate in activities that involve their faith group, and participate in other activities that are related to their religion are less likely to use or abuse substances like alcohol and drugs. Teenagers who have a great appreciation for the significance of religion in their day-to-day life are less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as smoking, binge drinking, and using marijuana. On the other hand, individuals who do not regard religious belief to be central are more likely to engage in these behaviors. The shift in emphasis from punishment to prevention and therapy is one of the most important contributions that the church can make to the process of reshaping the public discourse on alcohol and other drugs. This is deeply rooted in the Christian concept that there is the potential for behavior to be altered in the life of each individual and, eventually, in the lives of communities. Annual conferences should be highly encouraged by religious organizations in order to offer chances for leadership training and resources for local religious leaders and congregations. These resources should assist these groups in providing counselling services to people and families who are struggling with issues connected to alcohol and related substances. There is no doubt that a church may be of assistance to the community in the fight against substance misuse. In point of fact, programs and services that are expressly geared to assist individuals who are battling with addiction are available at a great number of churches. Churches have the potential to play a significant role in assisting addicts in their recovery and in leading lives that are healthy and productive by providing support and advice.

Additionally, churches have the ability to assist in the dissemination of information regarding substance abuse and the risks associated with it, which can assist in preventing others from developing an addiction. Some church-organized organizations offer vital support and aid to individuals who are in need, and they can be an excellent resource for anyone who is looking for assistance with overcoming addiction, as well as for the loved ones of those who are in need of such treatment.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a case study design where qualitative approach was used so as to get the vital data as related to the study. The unit of inquiry was Sheema Municipality that was used to investigate the effectiveness of the

church of Uganda in fighting against drug abuse and crime rate in Uganda. The choice of a case study allowed for an intensive, descriptive and holistic analysis of a single entity or a bounded case (Oso & Onen, 2009). This design enabled the researcher to study drug abuse and crime rate in Sheema Municipality in-depth to obtain insights and contextual descriptions and explanations. Qualitative approach was used to interpret the responses of the interviews and was descriptive in nature in order to meet the objectives of the study.

Sample size and sampling technique:

The researcher used a sample size of 91 since the study was explorative seeking to explain the phenomena. The sample size included, 61 youths who were suspected to be taking drugs within Sheema Municipality, 10 parish priests from the 10 parishes within Sheema Municipality, and 20 lay leaders from the 20 local churches church of Uganda within Sheema Municipality.

Sampling techniques

Snowball sampling technique

With snowball sampling, the researcher did not know the elements to be studied and therefore picked one of them who led him to others. Therefore, one drug abuser showed him others who involve themselves in drug abuse. The youths who get involved in most of the illicit drugs were selected by researcher so as to provide necessary data for the researcher. For example, youths who smoke, take alcohol, marijuana among other drugs tend to know themselves and led the researcher to each of them.

Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling method was used because it allows engaging the respondents who were knowledgeable about drug abuse and crime rate in Sheema Municipality. This entailed interviewing youth that were more lured into drug abuse and church leaders who were involved in fighting against drug abuse. This was able to provide first-hand information to the researcher. **Data analysis**

The presented data was analyzed qualitatively. The data on the effectiveness of the church of Uganda in fighting against drug abuse and crime rate in Uganda was analyzed using thematic analysis where researcher identified, categorize, analyze and interpret patterns in qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

In this study out of 91 participants targeted for interviews, 77 were interviewed giving a response rate of 85%. All targeted respondents for the study were contacted and consent was taken; but due to non-cooperation it was not possible to conduct all interviews.

Background Information Of Respondents

This section draws demographic characteristic information about the respondents who were part of the study. These characteristics are presented in terms of age, gender and level of education.

Age of Respondents

Table 1: Age of Participants

Age of respondents	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	18–25	52	67.53%
	26–40	15	19.48%

	Above 40	10	12.99%
	Total:	77	100.00%

Source: Primary data, July 2025

The majority (52) 67.53% of respondents indicated that their age ranged between 18-25 years, followed by (15) 19.48% who indicated that their age range was above 26 - 40 years. The findings also revealed that only (10) % of respondents were aged above 40 years. These results show that the majority of study were found within the productive age range and were therefore still capable of dealing with and improving Crime rates challenges over time.

Gender of Respondents

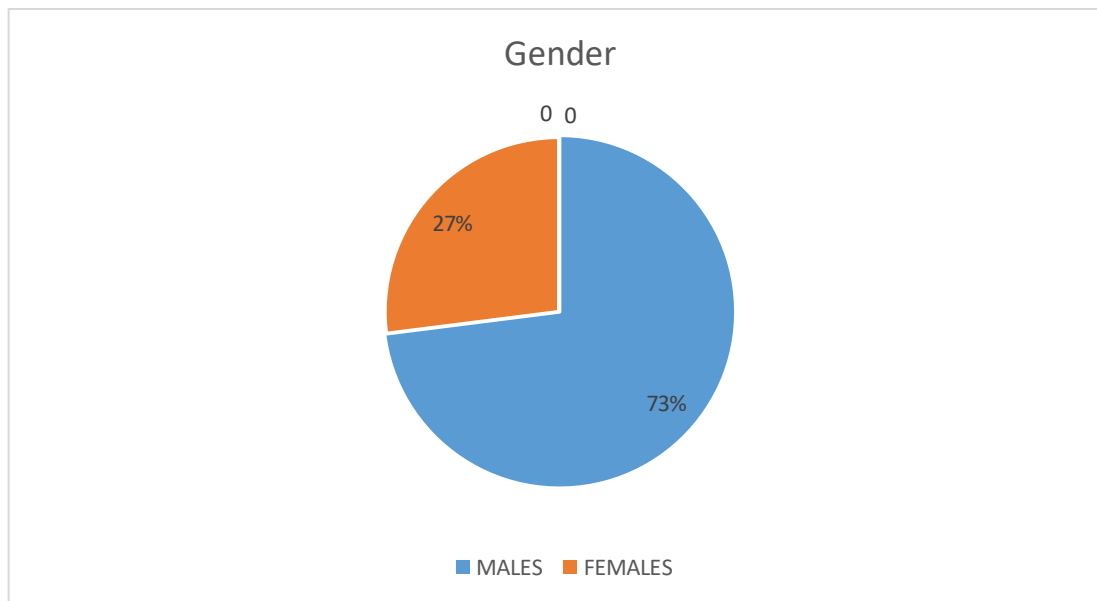
Table 4: Gender of Participants

Gender of respondents	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Male	56	73%
	Female	21	27%
	Total	77	100%

Source: Primary, July 2025

The study explored the gender distribution of participants. As shown in findings presented in Table 4 above, 77 participants were covered of whom male respondents were reported to be a majority of 56 or 73% and female respondents were 21 or 27%. This shows that there were more male stakeholders than female stakeholders involved in the different activities carried out by the different sectors of the municipality.

A pie chart showing the gender of respondents



Level of Education

Table 2: Participants' Level of Education

Level of Education	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Primary	27	35.06%
	Secondary	20	26.98%

	Diploma	14	18.18%
	Degree	10	12.99%
	Post-graduate	5	6.49%
	Master's and above	1	1.30%
	Total	77	100.00%

Source: Primary, July 2025

The study established the different qualifications attained by participants. As shown in Table 2 above, majority of participants 27 (35.06%) had completed primary level, followed by 20 (26.98%) who had completed secondary followed by 14(18.18%) who had completed Diploma and 10(12.99%) had completed degrees, 5(6.49%) and 1(1.30%) had completed post graduate and master's degree respectively. These results indicate that all of the study participants had a qualification of primary and above, a level of qualification that determines that participants had the skills and equipped with necessary knowledge in their respective areas of work and specializations. This is something that was reflected in their understanding and their ability to provide relevant and reliable information needed in the study.

The prevalence of drug abuse

Meaning of drug abuse

In this section the study examined the prevalence of drug abuse in Sheema Municipality. For measuring different indicators and dimensions of the different study factors, participants were asked to respond to give their understanding of drug abuse, mention different types of drugs taken by the youth in the area and the reasons why most youths get involved in drug abuse and commit crimes to that effect.

Different types of drugs

The respondents were able to give the meaning of drug abuse and a number of drugs that were taken by most people in the area. Youth involvement in drug abuse in Sheema Municipality was reported to prevail, as most participants comprehend drug abuse as the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. The participants reported that 40 youths to be involved in using various alcoholic drinks and other substances. The researcher however, met only 25 of those who were involved in drug abuse. The most common examples of drugs taken by youth in Sheema Municipality included; waragi, marijuana, mijagi, and shisha. These drugs are taken through various ways including injection, inhalation and ingestion.

Participants report that due to the influence of peer groups resulting into peer influence, most youth are lured into drug abuse and this results into poor behaviors and juvenile delinquency among young people in particular. These drugs have had negative effects among the people in the area which among others have severe and long-lasting effects on the drug abusers, affecting their physical and mental health, relationships and academic performance.

Consequences of drug abuse

Consequences of drug abuse on youths

In this section the study examined the effects of drug abuse on youths in Sheema Municipality. It was also noted from the majority of the respondents that drug abuse has a number of effects on youths living in Sheema Municipality. The participants asserted that drug abuse has various consequences on the youths that included but not limited to health issues, like organ damage, increased risk of infectious diseases, and poor nutrition, mental health issues, family Problems straining family relationships, emotional stress, and communication breakdowns.

Participants stressed that drug abuse results into mental health effects like anxiety and depression which trigger or worsen mental health issues, mood swings and emotional instability which cause emotional instability, making it difficult for young people to manage their emotions, increased risk of suicidal thoughts leading to suicidal ideation and attempts, especially in individuals with preexisting mental health conditions.

Participants further commented that drug abuse declines academic performance by impairing cognitive function, leading to poor academic performance and increased risk of dropping out among young people in Sheema Municipality. Drug abuse can disrupt peer relationships and cause social isolation, pushing young people towards negative influences.

Other participants cited that drug abuse results into financial burdens on individuals and families, affecting their economic stability. This results into loss of productivity due to absenteeism reduced job performance, and workplace accidents, ultimately decreasing productivity.

Participants highlighted that drug abuse is associated with higher crime rates, including theft and violence. This causes security risks making individuals more susceptible to violent extremism and exploitation.

Some participants stressed that substance abuse can lead to emotional stress, communication breakdowns, and long-term damage to family dynamics

Consequences of drug abuse on the society

In this section, steps were taken in order to develop a well-established relationship between drug abuse and crime rates in Sheema Municipality. The respondents were able to give a number of effects of drug abuse in Sheema Municipality. The respondents were able to explain the effects of drug abuse and their explanations were appropriate standard based on their scale of operations.

It was also noted from the majority of the respondents that Sheema Municipality has been facing high crime rates most especially among the youth. Some youths are engaged in drug abuse and this has influenced them into committing certain crimes that include robbery, murder, burglary and theft (Interview with Archdeacon Kabwohe, Archdeaconry, July 2025)

However, the council of Sheema Municipality and church of Uganda work together in ensuring that crimes are controlled youths are molded into responsible future leaders of the Community by sensitizing them about dangers of associated with drug abuse (Interviews with Parish Priests, Kabwohe, Archdeaconry, July 2025)

The municipality was found poor in knowing why they are involved in drug abuse and that it was not adequately supporting their parents and they didn't know their roles and responsibilities in the community.

Most Participants asserted that drugs have adverse effects on work and academic performance noting most youths interested in drug abuse register poor performance both at their places of work and in universities as some of them fail to complete their studies due drug additions (interviews with youths, July 2025).

Measures to control crime rates

Measures church has put in place to mitigate drug abuse and crime

The concern of this theme was to examine measures put in place by the church in mitigating drug abuse and crime rate. The participants highlighted how the church of Uganda implements various measures to mitigate drug abuse and crime among youth in Sheema Municipality.

Training and awareness Programs

It was noted from the majority of the participants that the church organizes training sessions for youth leaders to educate them on substance abuse prevention and provide practical skills to manage and support victims. This is normally done by holding youth sensitization and training meetings sessions whereby the youths are

grouped and taught different life skills to help them cope up with the pressure and the influence of drug abuse that would result them into certain health and social problems. Such trainings include but not limited to coping up with emotions, decision making and problem-solving skills (Archdeacon Kabwohe Archdeaconry, 2025)

Counseling and support services

It was noted from the participants that churches offer counseling services, support groups, and mentorship programs to help young people struggling with addiction. It was from the participants that churches also provide guidance and support to help youth develop a sense of purpose and direction. This is done by guiding them on what they are supposed to do and they are also encouraged to that that is right. This serves to mold youth into responsible citizens that serve to their communities amicably. The youths to that effect are involved in doing productive activities that aim to ensure economic development of the country adopting restorative practices that focus on repairing harm rather than punitive measures, promoting healing and redemption. The involvement of youths in doing productive activities reduces the rate at which crimes are committed in the area thus creating peace and harmony.

Community Engagement

It was also noted from the church leaders that churches engage with the community through outreach programs, workshops, and campaigns to promote awareness and education on substance abuse prevention. This was said to be done through workshops and campaigns

The participants further stressed that it was also through community outreach programs that community members are counselled and advised on doing what is right instead of doing what is evil as this is contrary to the faith of Christianity.

Partnerships and Collaborations

The study established that churches partner with organizations and stakeholders to address substance abuse, sharing resources and expertise to support their efforts. Participants reported that church of Uganda has been partnering with community-based organizations and other organization to support youth and engage them in income generating activities and this keeps them busy not to engage themselves in drug abuse. This has kept the youth in doing right things thus health life styles.

Faith-Based Solutions

The study established that churches emphasize spiritual growth, moral guidance, and a supportive community to help youth build resilience against substance abuse. This has shaped the youths into responsible citizens and thus are not susceptible to drug abuse that would otherwise into high crime rates. Moral guidance given to the youth promotes discipline among them and this results into living to the expectations of the community and working to reduce stigma around substance abuse within the church community, encouraging open discussions and support for those affected.

Youth Ministry Programs

It was noted that churches offer engaging programs, such as Bible studies, worship nights, and service projects, to keep young people connected and supported thus keeping them royal to doing what the church wants and there they are not easily tempted to do satanic things. Churches also provide resources and support for youth navigating the challenges of raising teenagers. Providing education about the dangers of drug abuse within a moral and spiritual context, guiding individuals toward healing and recovery.

Ways the youth can avoid the use of drug

The participants highlighted various ways that youth can employ building self-esteem and Confidence: Develop a positive self-image and confidence to resist peer pressure. Developing Healthy Coping Mechanisms: Find healthy ways to manage stress, emotions, and challenges, such as exercise, mindfulness, or

creative activities. Surround Yourself with Positive Influences: Spend time with friends and family who support and encourage healthy choices.

Participants also said that establishing clear goals and priorities, and focus on achieving them rather than being redundant which would result into youths resorting to use of drugs and reaching out to trusted adults, such as parents, teachers, or mentors, for guidance and support would be the best ways of avoiding drug abuse.

Participants also said that youth should stay learn about the risks and consequences of drug use, and stay up-to-date on the latest information, engage in activities that bring joy and fulfillment, such as hobbies, sports, or creative pursuits, practice Assertiveness and Refusal Skills: Learn to say "no" confidently and assertively when offered drugs.

How the church should help the youth avoid drug abuse and crime

Participants established that the church should provide alternatives and support for affected youth through public education campaigns, community outreach programs, and rehabilitation centers, engage chiefs, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and parents in creating awareness and reinforcing moral and cultural values that deter substance abuse and provide psychological support and social services, such as employment, education, and skills training, to help individuals overcome addiction.

Challenges faced by church of Uganda while fighting against drug abuse

It was noted from the study participants that church had limited skilled personnel. Church of Uganda is limited by skilled human resources that would help in providing counselling and guidance services among the youth. Due to adolescence effect, young people need trained and skilled personnel to help them cope up with the world pressures that would easily lure them into drug abuse. This increase of drug abusers results into high crime rate. (Kasirye, R. 2016).

The study established that the church is faced by financial resource constraints. Numerous resources are needed in organizing youth conferences, workshops and seminars. These meeting sessions are very crucial in shaping the behavior of individuals and their absence results into poor behaviors among the youths especially teenagers. Church of Uganda finds it hard to organize such workshops and conferences and this limits on the messages that would be disseminated among the youth thus creating the crisis among the youth in the contemporary world.

The study established that most youth perceive church preaching as old-fashioned messages thinking they are meant for old people. This mindset makes it hard for the church to pass on the educational messages and sermons that can help the youth to avoid committing actions that are dangerous to the society. The youth do not take heed of the church sermons and they end up doing things that are diabolical and thus are permissive to the society.

Solutions put in place to address the challenges faced by the church in fighting against drug abuse and crime rates.

This section of the study presents participants opinions on solutions put in place to address the challenges faced by the church in fighting against drug abuse and crime rates. The church employed various solutions to the problems it faces while fighting drug abuse. (Shyne 2014).

The established that the church provides counselling and guidance services to soften the hearts of the youths and this helps them to soften their hearts of the youth thus making them to easily take heed of the church teachings in regard to drug abuse and some actions associated with the providing counseling services and support groups to help young people struggling with addiction, offering a safe and non-judgmental space for them to share their experiences. It was noted that that the church designs mentorship programs that aim to bring people especially young people closer to the church and this reduces on rate of drug abuse as a pair youth with positive role models who can guide and support them in making healthy life choices. (Normand & Azeni, H. 2002).

It was also noted from the study participants that the church creates opportunities for youth to engage in positive activities, such as sports, arts, and community service, to keep them occupied and focused on constructive pursuits. Collaborate with local organizations, government agencies, and healthcare professionals to provide comprehensive support services for youth struggling with addiction. (Steinberg, L. 2013).

It was also noted that church leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to address substance abuse issues effectively and provide support to affected youth. Foster spiritual growth and development among youth, helping them build resilience and coping skills that can protect them from substance abuse.

CONCLUSIONS

Effectiveness of the church on drug abuse and crime rates

The effective involvement of the church proved to affect drug abuse and crime rates and weaknesses were indicated in both factors. Building and developing capacities of youth in community planning and engaging in community activities reduces crime rates. This reduction in drug abuse increases work performance among the youths in the community.

Allocation of some of the church's resources in fighting against drug abuse enables the church to effectively and efficiently control and allocate its programs and activities like workshops, seminars and conferences providing updated and reliable information to the youths necessary for decision-making and problem solving.

Most young people living in Sheema Municipality lack guidance and counselling and this has lured them into abnormal behaviors and social actions that are deviant and socially unacceptable to the social standards and community expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that the church should work on improving its budgetary planning, financial resources management alongside with its financial accountability and monitoring systems.

The church should develop its own organizational and demand-driven capacity development policies aiming at reducing drug abuse and crime rates.

Additional consideration should be put on identifying criminals in the area which requires highly skilled staff with advanced knowledge to fill its needs and requirements.

The church should revise its strategy and strategic planning to help in clarifying its priorities, and assessing its performance and to focus more on scanning its environment to consider potential threats of criminality.

Attention is also needed regarding issues of security in the urban areas like installation of security lights and deployment of security personnel.

The church should advance on its feedback mechanism for reporting of crimes in the area, monitoring and assessing its effectiveness and efficiency of security systems.

Improvement in the youth life styles is needed to advance reduction in crime rates. Such improvement, especially in areas of sensitization and guiding and counselling service provision and reporting mechanisms, cannot be achieved only by the church's internal local capacities and limited resources but requires support from central government capabilities, guidance and resources.

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