

# Relationship between Exposure to Mass Media and Drug Abuse among Adolescent Students in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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## **Abstract**

*The media serves the function of connecting people and therefore has an enormous effect on people's attitudes and behaviours. It is a contributor to socialization process. Media is the major source of information especially news, education, entertainment, fashion and trends. It can also be used for changing people's attitudes and behaviours. The globalization and propagation of media are among the key factors that have defined and shaped the current generation of young people. The changes in the media industry may have resulted in the many social changes being realized globally, Kenya included. It has been easy for students in Bungoma Central Sub-County to access electronic media (television, radio, video and mobile phones) in cyber cafes in market places which in most cases has destructive content and actions which influence their behavior. Despite intervention from the Ministry of Education, school Principals and NGOs that have sensitized students on proper use of media, anti-social behavior within Bungoma Central Sub-County is on the increase with over 35% of the students abusing various types of drugs. This study therefore sought to establish whether there is a relationship between exposure to mass media and drug use in secondary schools in Bungoma Central Sub-County.*

**Key words:** Mass media, Drug abuse, Adolescent students

## **Introduction**

Mass media refers to any printed or electronic media designed to carry messages to large audiences (Kumar, 2014). Mass media comprises those channels of communication which are used in receiving heterogeneous audiences simultaneously. Examples of electronic media include radio, television, cinema, internet, e-mail, mobile phones among others. Print media include: Newspapers, magazines, billboards, exhibitions, posters etc.

Alcohol consumption continues to be one of the most risk behaviors engaged in by adolescents (Arata, Stafford & Tim, 2003) and it is one of the common habits among peer groups that cause psychological and social problems. The world over, alcohol consumption and intake of other drugs is increasingly becoming a social problem of phenomenal proportion (Hewitt, 1988). About 54% of all adolescents have drunk an alcoholic beverage at least once in their life time (Buddy, 2008). Durant et al., (1997) examined the content of tobacco and alcohol use behavior on television. The results showed that a high percentage (26%) of MTV videos portrayed tobacco use. The percentage of alcohol use on MTV was still the highest at 27%, but differences with other networks were not statistically significant. Of note, given the influence of modeling and imitation in young people, videos that portrayed alcohol and tobacco use depicted the lead performer as most often the one observed to be smoking or drinking.

Subsequent studies of older ages considered the influence of various advertising and marketing techniques and later susceptibility to smoking. Evans, Farkers, Gilpin, Berry and Pierce (1995) examined data on 3, 536 adolescents who had never smoked to determine their susceptibility to smoking; they surveyed two indices: 1) a 5 point index of an individual's receptivity to advertisement, naming e brand, buying, owning a tobacco-related promotional item, and willingness to use tobacco-related promotional item; and 2) an index classifying the individual's reported exposure to family and peer smoking. The relationship of receptivity to advertising and susceptibility to smoking was stronger than the relationship of family or peer smoking and susceptibility, indicating that advertising is

a more powerful influence than exposure to peer or family smoking. Other researches were conducted to look at the relationship between tobacco promotional items and smoking susceptibility.

Each study has documented a strong association between an awareness and involvement with tobacco promotions and subsequent susceptibility to tobacco use. Pierce's study was the only longitudinal examination of the link between advertising, exposure to promotional tobacco items and later smoking. Spanning a 3 year period from 1993 to 1996, the study found that adolescents who had a favourite cigarette advertisement in 1993 compared with those who did not, were twice as likely either to have started smoking by 1996 or to be willing to start and those who owned or were willing to own a promotional item were three times as likely to have started smoking by 1996 or to be willing to start.

Studies from the 1980s showed significant correlation between exposure to alcohol advertising and drinking beliefs and behaviors (Atkin & Block, (1981). In the 90s two major studies examined the effects of alcohol advertising on children and adolescents. Grube and Wallack (1994) looked specifically at the relationship between television beer advertising and drinking knowledge, beliefs and the intention to later drink. The sample queried was a random group of 468 fifth and sixth graders, using a self administered questionnaire and structured interviews. They measured television viewing, awareness of beer advertising, knowledge of beer brands and slogans, alcohol beliefs (both positive and negative) intention to drink as an adult, perceived parental and peer approval of drinking, and demographic and background variables. Children with more knowledge of beer brands and slogans held more favorable beliefs about drinking and more frequently tended to drink as adults. The positive values associated with drinking included romance, sociability and relaxation.

Findings from a descriptive study conducted by Gikonyo (2005) on drug abusers and parental knowledge on factors predisposing the youth to drugs and substance abuse in Nairobi, Kenya showed that people who smoke are portrayed as being either great sportsmen or socially successful, wealthy or important people. He also adds that social pressure from media and friends is a universal risk factor for substance abuse among adolescents in developed and developing Countries. This study did not address the influence of social media on drug abuse. The current study considered the great influence social media has on drug and substance abuse, hence filled the gap in knowledge. Advertisement of drugs is especially common in urban areas through radios, television and billboards. Although these media do not usually promote drug use explicitly they can reinforce a child's impression that the use is normal (NACADA, 2011).

King and Stones (2013) noted that use of social media by middle school students and college students makes sharing of information about the use of drugs among students more readily available. Another study done by Okombe and Ondiek (2013) on patterns of deviant behavior among urban primary school children in Nigeria highlighted that drug abuse among teenagers has been on the rise in the recent years as a result of the advent of internet usage. The authors argue that drug users have created groups in social media networks that show partaking in drug abuse as 'cool' thing among teenagers hence increasing uptake of drugs. A study by Kiragu (2010), investigating the extent to which selected factors contribute to alcohol and cigarette use among male students in public day secondary schools in Nakuru Municipality, established that peer groups influence had the greatest contribution to high school students' use of cigarettes, followed by family factors. The findings also indicated that exposure to pro- alcohol and mass media content was significantly related to levels of alcohol and cigarette use. The findings also indicated that 52% low drug users reported low mass media exposure as compared to 9.3% who reported high mass media exposure. For high alcohol and cigarette users, 58.2% had mass media exposure. This is compared to 42% high alcohol and cigarette users who had low mass media exposure. The results indicated that 15.7 of the respondents had seen or heard pro- alcohol and cigarette advertisement on the internet.

A study done by Maina (2012) showed that outside their classrooms, students often use internet especially for chatting and sending videos, messages in social media sites to other students during school hours, weekend and even late at night. He further indicated that abuse of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana, mostly accessed at home and school, is widely prevalent in public schools. Other studies done by Sidze, Elungata, Maina and Mutua (2015) within Nairobi's informal settlements show that many of Nairobi's youths not only from poor families, but also some from middle and upper class families are being drawn into substance abuse, sexual immorality and association with criminal gangs. However, the above study focused on youths in general; it did not take into account adolescents in secondary schools. The current study emphasized how students are being lured into drug and substance abuse through the use of social media.

A study by Kembo (2012), on the factors associated with drug use among a standard eight primary school pupils in Mathare Division, Nairobi Province, indicated that gender has a significant influence in the pupils drug use. It was found that where both parents use drugs, the father's use of drugs had significant influence on the pupil's drug use. Friends and siblings' use of drugs were also significant in the pupil's drug terminology. On the other hand, socio- economic status, family environment, availability of drugs and having knowledge of drugs were found not to be statistically significant in influencing the pupil's drug use. A study conducted to investigate the factors influencing drug use among boys in high school within Nakuru North Sub – County, revealed that drug use among boys in high school is influenced by factors such as peer pressure, curiosity, influence from family members and celebrities, lack of knowledge about dangers of drug abuse, easy availability of drugs, low cost of drugs, excessive pocket money, lack of good

role models in teachers and parents. Girls were not included in the study. The role of mass media was not examined. The current study aimed at filling these gaps.

Kinywa (2011) conducted a study to investigate the causes of indiscipline and violence by adolescents in Kenyan public secondary schools. The study targeted students, teacher counselors and head teachers. The study sample comprised of 50 students, 5 teachers and 5 head teachers from five secondary schools in Central Embu Division of Embu Sub- County. The study established that drugs and substance abuse among secondary school students in Central Division of Embu Sub- County is on the increase. Among the students who took part in the study, 40% admitted that they were abusing various drugs, which is higher than the global proportion of 13.5% of the youths aged 15-24 who have tried drugs at least once as reported by UNODC (2000). This indicates that the efforts schools have been putting in place to fight drugs and substance abuse has not been working effectively. Consequently, drug and substance abuse has led to the increase in cases of indiscipline, as reflected through strikes, theft, truancy, sneaking out of school, disobedience to teachers and general indiscipline. On the overall this has led to poor academic performance in the schools. In view of the above findings, the current study therefore sought to establish the possible link between drug abuse in secondary schools and students' exposure to mass media.

### Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. According to Kothari (2008) descriptive survey at times is the only means through which views, opinions, attitudes, and suggestions for improvement of educational practices and other data can be collected. The choice of descriptive survey was made based on the fact that in the present study, the researcher used a sample to represent the whole population and described the current characteristics of the population. No variables were manipulated to establish the influence of mass media on problem behavior. The researcher also used questionnaires and interview which are characteristic of a survey design to adequately get information from a sample in order to describe the population under study. This involved self report on opinion and attitudes of respondents on the influence of mass media on problem behavior among adolescents. This was in line with Kumar (2011) who observed that survey research design is the most appropriate for obtaining self- reported opinions, attitudes, beliefs and values. The study was conducted in Bungoma Central Sub- County in Kenya. This is one of the eight Sub- Counties in Bungoma County. The Sub- County was purposively selected because it has many public secondary schools which are a mixture of girl's only schools and boy's only schools as well as mixed schools. This was essential for comparison purposes.

The target population of the study was 40,000 students in all public secondary school in the Sub- County. A considerable high proportion of problem behavior reported in the Kenyan school system occurs at secondary school level, hence the choice of secondary school students as part of the study population (Makabila, 2010). The teacher counselors were selected because they handle problem behaviors of students. The Deputy Principals were selected because they are in charge of discipline. In this study, both probability and non-probability sampling was used to select study samples. Non probability was used to select Bungoma Central Sub-County. Purposive sampling was used to select the 10 schools and form two class of students enrolled in public secondary schools. To select the specific sample from the population of form twos who took part in the study, simple random sampling was used to select the student respondents. The deputy principals and teacher counselors were selected proportionately to the 10 selected schools for the study. Thus the study selected 10 deputy principals and 10 teacher counselors for the study.

The sample size of students in form two was determined using a formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) which assumes:

$$S = \frac{x^2 NP (1-P)}{1 - d^2 (N-1) + x^2 P (1-P)}$$

Where

S = required sample size

X = the table value of chi- square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level.

For a significance level of @ =0.5, x =1.96

N = The population size = 10,000

P = The population proportion (assumed to be 100 since this would provide the maximum sample size) = the degree of accuracy expressed as proportion (0.5)

Using this formula, 370 students in form two were obtained where the researcher used simple random sampling to obtain 37 student respondents per school. Deputy Principals and teacher counselors (1) were selected proportionately to the sampled schools. According to Mcneil (1990) data in a large study intended for statistical analysis should be collected from at least a sample of 10% of the population. This view was taken into consideration in the selection of the sample for schools, deputy principals and teacher counselors. The qualitative and quantitative data was extracted from students', teacher counselors' and deputy principals' questionnaires and presented as follows:

### Results

As already mentioned, data for this study was obtained from deputy principals, teacher counselors and the pupils. From the questionnaire given to the deputy principals, it was discovered that there have been cases of drug abuse in the schools as shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Prevalence of drug abuse**

Type of Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	6	60
No	4	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

It can be noted that most the respondents agree that they have experienced drug abuse amongst the students they are supervising in their schools while just only 40% of the responds who do not agree to this. In fact, this information is quite similar to that given by the professional teacher counselors who note drug abuse as one of the most common behavior among secondary school students as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Prevalent behaviors among students in schools**

Problem behavior	Frequency	Out of (number of respondents)
Fighting	4	10
Bullying	5	10
Destruction of property	5	10
Drug abuse	4	10
Irresponsible sexual Behavior	6	10
Student riots	5	10
Vandalism	4	10
Disrespect for teachers and prefects	7	10

The deputy principals who indicated that there are cases of drug abuse in their schools noted the following (as shown in table 2) as how often the behavior is manifested in their school.

**Table 3: Frequency of manifestation of drug abuse**

Type of Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Never	1	10
Once in a while	1	10
Pretty often	4	40
Very	4	40
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

40% of the interviewed deputy principals believe that drug is so often manifested in the schools they are administering. Besides, collectively 80% of the respondents agree that there is existence of such behaviors in their school. Nevertheless, 10 percent of the deputy teachers seem to have a different view within the school they are administering. Most of the deputy principals noted the following methods as dominant in terms of correcting the drug abuse behavior in schools: Suspension, expulsion, disciplinary and guidance and counseling.

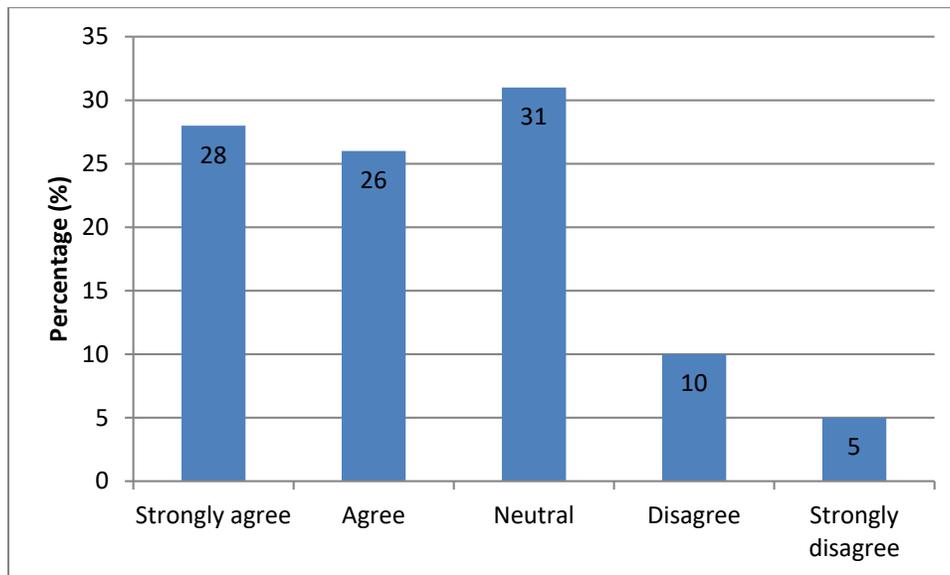
In relation to as to whether the sharing of pro drug messages in social media sites has increased the abuse of drugs among secondary school students, the students responded as follows:

**Table 4: Pro drug messages and drug abuse**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	100	27
Agree	84	23
Neutral	64	17
Disagree	72	19
Strongly disagree	50	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

Most of the respondent (27%) agrees that sharing of pro drug messages in social media sites has increased the abuse of drugs among secondary schools students, however some object and don't believe that just sharing of pro drug messages in social media can ever tilt, change and influence them.

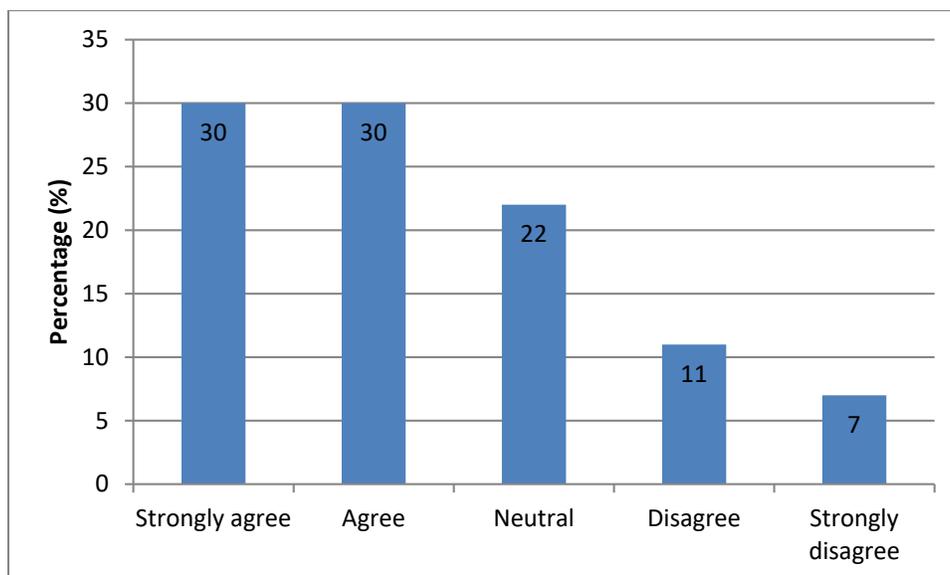
The study also established that majority of the students are not sure whether through sharing of pictures in social media sites while abusing drugs has put pressure on others to idolize smoking as indicted in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Sharing of pictures when using drug and idolization**

Further, about 28% of the respondents strongly agree that sharing of pictures in social media sites while abusing drugs has put pressure on others to idolize smoking. Also 5% of them object and don't believe that just sharing of pictures in social media can ever put pressure on them.

The researcher also established that lack of monitoring of social media sites usage by school authorities has led to creation of pro drug use groups in secondary schools. This was indicated by most of the students agreeing and strongly agreeing on the same as exemplified in the following figure.



**Figure 2: Monitoring of social media by school authorities and drug use**

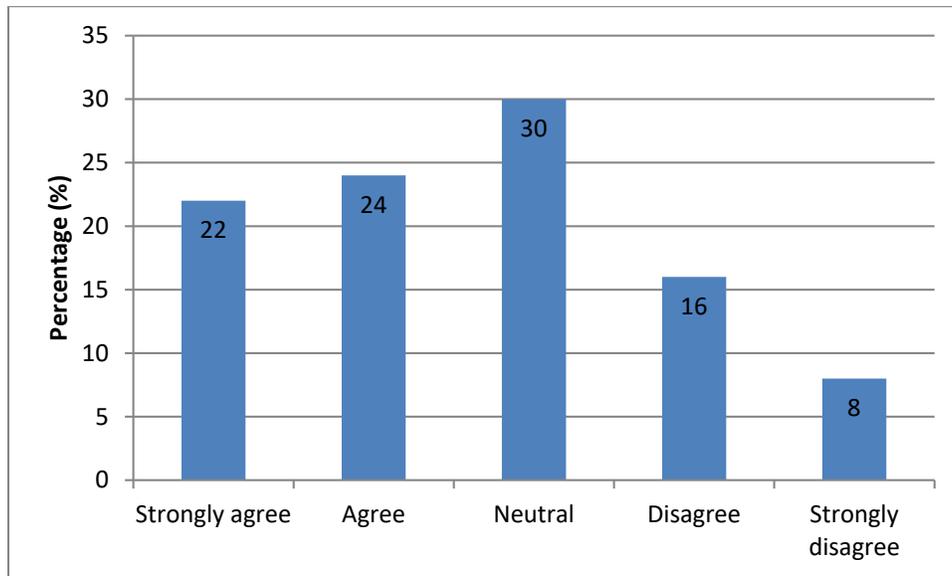
A lower number of respondents (7%) disagreed that lack of monitoring of social media sites usage by school authorities has led to creation of pro drug use groups in secondary schools. The study also sought to find out if lack of monitoring of social media sites usage by security agencies has led to creation of pro drug use groups in secondary schools. The results are indicated in table 5.

**Table 5: Monitoring of social media by security agencies and drug use**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	120	32
Agree	102	28
Neutral	82	22
Disagree	42	11
Strongly disagree	24	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

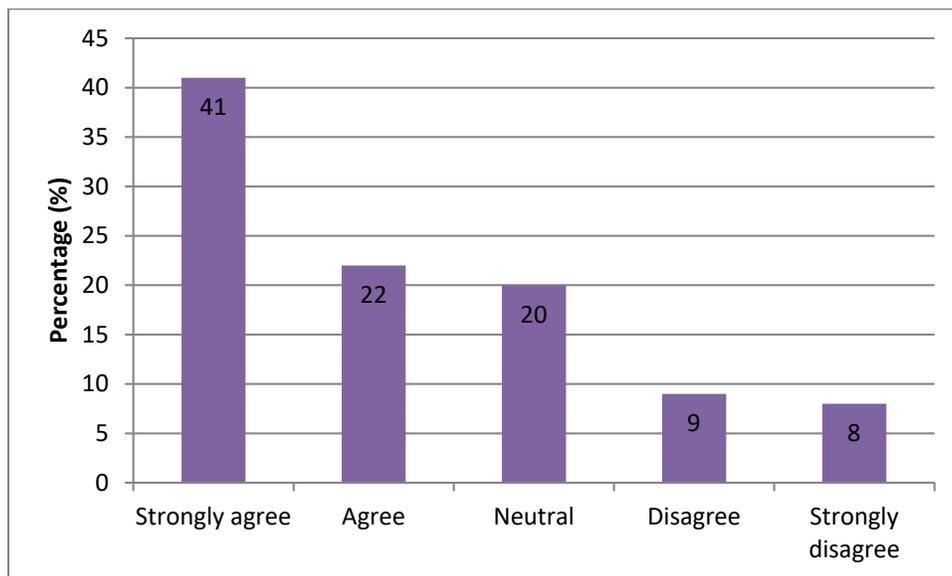
Majority of the respondents (32% and 28%) agree that lack of monitoring of social media site usages by security agencies has led to creation of pro drug use groups in secondary schools, however some do not agree to these opinions, they object and have a divergent opinions in regard to this.

Although most (30%) of the respondents are not sure if due to fear of intimidation by other students some students actively engage in drug abuse to fit into the social media cliques, a combination of 46 % agree and strongly agree while 16% disagree. This is shown in figure 3.



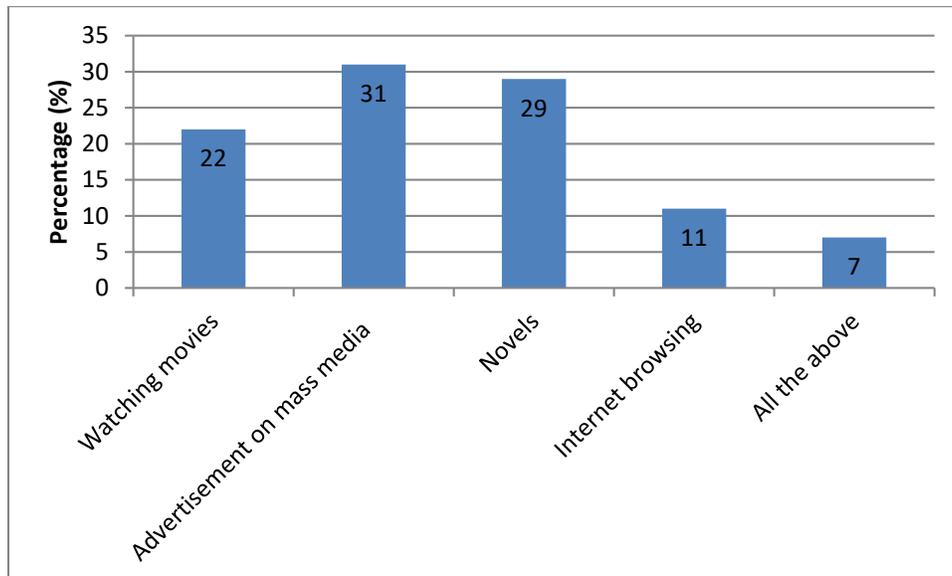
**Figure 3: Drug abuse and fitness in social media cliques**

In establishing the role of peer pressure in forcing most students to abuse drugs and alcohol, 41% of the respondents strongly agreed that peer pressure played a big role. Those who disagreed were 8% of the respondents as shown in figure 4.



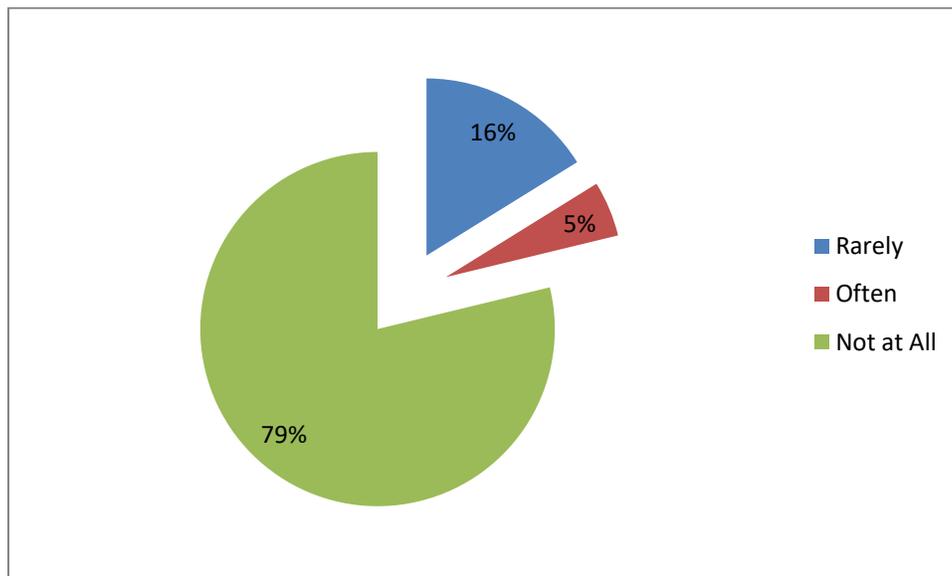
**Figure 4: Response on role of peer pressure and drug abuse**

The researcher also aimed at finding out the factors that the students consider most important in influencing smoking or drinking. The results obtained were as follows:



**Figure 5: Factors influencing smoking and drinking**

Most of the students highly rate advertisement, novels, and watching movies as some of the most factors considered in influencing smoking or/ and drinking among the students. Internet browsing is considered as the list factor in influencing the students. In relation to how often the respondents smoke cigarettes, the results obtained were as follows.



**Figure 6: Frequency of smoking cigarettes**

From data sampled from the respondents, most of the students do not smoke cigarettes at all, but still there exist a significant number of the students (21%) who smoke cigarettes.

Correlation was done to determine the relationship between mass media and drug abuse and the results are manifested in the following table.

**Table 6: Correlation on relationship between mass media and drug abuse**

		Mass Media	Drug abuse
<b>Mass media</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.324**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
<b>Drug abuse</b>	Pearson Correlation	<b>.324**</b>	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	370	370
<b>**.</b> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

From the correlation (Pearson Correlation -approaching 1 from the positive ) of response by the students on exposure to mass media, it depicts drug abuse behavior among the students can intensely be influenced by their exposure to mass media. The positive value .324\*\* of Pearson Correlation implies that the drug abuse among the students in secondary schools heavily relies on their exposure to mass media, as it can be seen from the data collected from the respondents. The low number of students who engage in drug and substance use, clearly and equally reconciles with the number of students exposed to mass media. Ideally it shows how drug addict behave while exposed to mass media contents that promote use of drug.

Through this study, there is a positive response on the effect of media on drug abuse and this ascertains a research done by Durant et al., (1997) who examined the content of tobacco and alcohol use behavior on television. The results showed that a high percentage (26%) of MTV videos portrayed tobacco use. The percentage of alcohol use on MTV was still the highest at 27%, but differences with other networks were not statistically significant. Of note, given the influence of modeling and imitation in young people, videos that portrayed alcohol and tobacco use depicted the lead performer as most often the one observed to be smoking or drinking.

### Recommendation

There is need to enhance awareness among parents about the media influence in the psychological development and consequently, the educational outcomes of their children as not the sole responsibility of the government and teachers.

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