

## ABSTRACT

Many youths living in the slums of Kenya grapple with drug abuse challenges. Drug use among the youth presents a grave concern, especially to parents, the government and non-governmental organizations advocating for mental health and social welfare. This study investigated the influence of psychosocial factors on drug abuse among the youths in Mathare slums of Nairobi County, Kenya. The objectives of this study were to determine the effect of peer pressure, emotional stability, family structure, and stress levels on drug abuse among the youths in Mathare slums. The study was anchored on the Social strain and Psychodynamic theories. The study used a descriptive research design due its ability to describe and portray characteristics of an event or situation. The target population was 17,894 youths, from which a sample of 450 respondents was selected using a proportionate stratified random sampling method. Data were collected using structured questionnaires. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was utilized to validate the research instruments by examining experts' opinions from the School of Education at Laikipia University. The reliability coefficients for the questionnaires were estimated through Cronbach's alpha. The resultant alpha for the youth questionnaire was  $r = 0.827$ . The questionnaires were considered reliable after yielding a reliability coefficient of alpha of at least 0.70. Both descriptive statistics- the mean, standard deviations and frequency distributions and inferential statistics were used in the study. According to the study results, it was established that peer pressure contributes to 2.6 % of drug abuse cases among the youths in Mathare informal settlements. Emotional stability, family structure and stress levels contribute to 0.4%, 1.5% and 2.8%, respectively. The findings led to the conclusion that psycho-social factors influence drug abuse among youths in the slums of Mathare slums, but there are other factors which call for further research on future. The study findings might be of significance to personnel in Ministry of Youth and Sports, and other stakeholders engaged in rehabilitating youths who are addicted to drugs, especially those living in the informal settlements. Researchers interested the area of drug abuse, policy makers in the government and non-governmental organizations fighting drugs abuse might also benefit from the findings of this study. Therefore the study recommends that interventions are needed to reduce and stop drug abuse among the youths in slums of Mathare. It is further recommended to have various psychosocial intervention programmes implemented by government and non-governmental organizations with the view of having better results with regard to addressing substance use in slums of Mathare.