



# Impact of Level of Education on Alcohol Abuse among Teachers in Nyeri County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

Education is important for the effective functioning of society and plays a key role in every individual's behaviour. Alcohol abuse is defined as an alcohol use disorder. Alcoholism and alcohol dependence among teachers in Kenya have increased exponentially. The study thus sought to assess the influence the level of education on alcohol abuse among public school teachers in Nyeri County, Kenya. A mixed method approach employing self-administered structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews was used to undertake the study. The target population consisted of teachers employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in public primary and secondary schools. A sampling frame was obtained from the TSC providing a list of all teachers in the county and the schools they teach in. The study utilized the stratified sampling methodology to select participants, where strata used was the subcounty and type of school (primary/secondary) after which a random sample was used to identify the teachers who participated in the research. A sample of 385 teachers was selected from a population of 6,264 from Nyeri County. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. An interview schedule was presented to the TSC County Director to capture the views concerning the alcohol situation in the county. Data was coded and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results on the prevalence of alcohol use revealed that 59% of teachers use alcohol while 32.7% fall under the category of hazardous use. The Chi square test and t-test for independence of means were used for inferential analysis. The level of education was noted to have a significant effect on alcohol abuse with the number of teachers with lower educational qualifications being associated with alcohol abuse. The study recommends urgent interventional strategies targeting the enhancement of personal growth through higher education in the management of alcohol abuse among teachers.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2010) defines alcohol abuse as the irresponsible use of alcoholic drinks that results in ill health and general malfunction to the abuser. The WHO reiterates that the global alcohol abuse has reached alarming levels with an estimation of 2 billion (33%) people worldwide consuming alcoholic beverages. Alcohol abuse is considerably rampant among teachers as evidenced by various prevalence studies. In the United Kingdom, a survey by the National Heads Association (2007), reported that up to 25% of teachers were engaging in alcohol abuse (Calhoun & Warren, 2007). In Botswana, South Africa and Malawi, alcohol abuse among teachers was reported to be leading to high mortality among teachers and thus hampering the provision of quality education (WHO, 2010). Studies in Kenya such as TSC (2009) and Chege (2013) investigated and found high prevalence of alcohol abuse among teachers. Studies have been conducted among public school teachers that explored mainly the causes and effects of alcohol abuse.

A study conducted in Great Britain found better educated individuals are better at managing risky behaviours such as alcohol abuse by stopping or keeping consumption low before the problem worsens (National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, 2011; Thombs, & Osborn, 2013).

The study by Caldwell *et al.* (2008) and Houston *et al.* (2014), indicated that education was negatively associated with heavy drinking. Teachers enter the profession at different levels depending on the level of education. Some are deployed to primary schools and others to secondary schools. Ahmed (2012) opined that lack of knowledge about the effects of alcohol abuse, education and income influenced alcohol abuse among people. Therefore, there is a need to identify the underlying causes on level of education among teachers that contributes to alcohol abuse. The level of education imparts self-worth among teachers with regards to recognition and responsibilities given to the teachers. Educational achievements can influence alcohol use and abuse among teachers.

According to Yoruk & Yoruk (2012), a correlation exists between education levels and alcohol abuse and that alcohol abuse is frequently accompanied by mental health challenges. In Ghana, people take alcohol to manage problems while others take alcohol to enhance work performance (Akwasi, 2013). In Uganda, it was reported that over consumption of alcohol affects a teacher's job and career where by it causes poor performance, neglect and loss of jobs (Rukundo & Magambo, 2013). In Kenya, Oteyo and Kariuki (2009) found that most of the respondents with a lower educational

back ground had a higher risk of abusing alcohol. According to Patrick, Wightman, Schoeni & Schulenberg (2012), many possible factors that influence alcohol abuse are lower socio-economic status and levels of education. Goldstein (2014) and Palmer (2017), observed that the most discouraging factors for a teacher's morale were remuneration and stagnation in one grade and hence alcohol abuse. However, there is a limitation in empirical studies that show how stagnation in one job group could lead to frustration that may lead teachers into alcoholism.

According to studies by the TSC (2009), Oteyo & Kariuki (2009) and Chege (2013) showed that school teachers in Kenya have a high prevalence of alcohol abuse. Chege (2013), acknowledges increasing alcohol usage and abuse by school teachers, which demands special attention through preventive measures. This study sought to examine the influence of level of education on alcohol abuse among teachers, which is the existing gap in knowledge in Kenya.

## 2.0 Statement of the Problem

Level of education attained plays an important role of protecting individuals from engaging in socially undesired behaviour such as alcohol abuse. Alcohol abuse has been found to be rampant among teachers in Kenya. Nyeri County has been reported to have high alcohol abuse rate (NACADA, 2012). The persistent episodes of alcohol abuse in Nyeri County prompted this study on 'education level and alcohol abuse among teachers. Some of the studies on alcohol abuse among school teachers are: The prevalence, characteristics and patterns of substance abuse in learning institutions (TSC, 2010). Effects of alcohol abuse on teachers' professionalism (Chege, 2013). There is limited data on education level and alcohol abuse among teachers, which the study sought to find out.

## 2.1 Research Objective

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of the level of education on alcohol abuse among teachers in Nyeri County, Kenya. Education is essential in enhancing career development and research. The study focused on the teachers' level of education in order to evaluate the increasing alcohol usage among teachers in Nyeri County, Kenya.

## 3.0 Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Nyeri County which was chosen due to the several cases of alcohol abuse reported from the area both among teachers and the general population by the National Authority for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA, 2007). Nyeri County lies between the Aberdare Ranges and Mount Kenya. It has eight sub counties, 37 locations and 194 sub-locations. Nyeri County has the highest literacy levels at 91.8%. This study targeted all primary and secondary teachers in public schools in the County. According to the office of the Nyeri County Teachers Service Commission Director, there are 367 public primary schools and 212 public secondary schools in the county and a total of 6,264 teachers. The county was selected because a national baseline survey on prevalence of alcohol abuse in Central Kenya found a high prevalence of 60.8% among males and 8.6% among females (NACADA, 2012). The research used the mixed method design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study involved both the correlational and phenomenological designs. The correlational aspect established the existence of the association between the impact of level of education on alcohol abuse. The phenomenological component established the perception of teacher managers and teachers on the alcohol problem among teachers in the county.

## 3.1 Research Instruments

The study employed questionnaires and in-depth interview schedules to collect data on the impact of level of education on alcohol abuse among teachers in Nyeri County. An interview schedule was presented to the TSC County Director to capture the views concerning the alcohol situation among teachers in the County. Questionnaires were filled by both primary school and secondary school teachers.

## 3.2 Data Analysis and presentation

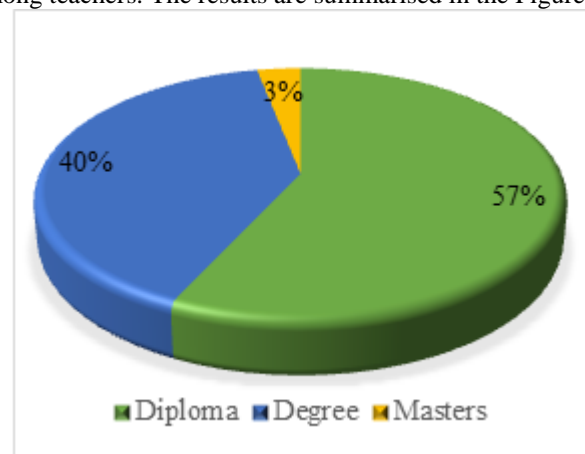
Quantitative data collected was coded, summarized and analysed by Statistical Package for Social Scientist (version 20) software. Inferential analysis was done using the t-test for comparison of means to compare different mean categories and Chi-Square test for independence for comparison of variations between the teachers' education level and responsibilities against alcohol abuse. Data was presented in graphs.

## 4.0 Results and Discussion

The results presented and discussed are; highest level of education attained, education achievement in relation to alcohol abuse, and teacher's responsibilities in the school.

### 4.1 Highest Level of Education Attained

The study sought to find out the level of education of teachers in Nyeri County (primary and secondary). Assessing level of education was important for measuring alcohol abuse among teachers. The results are summarised in the Figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1. Highest Level of Education Attained.**

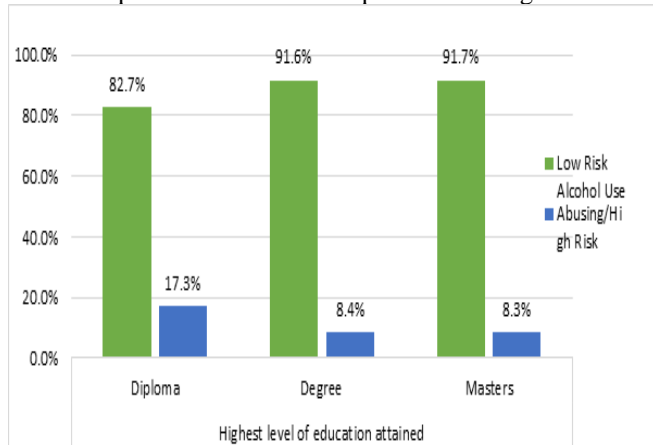
Majority of the respondents had up to a Diploma (57%) level of education, followed by those with an Undergraduate degree (40%) as the highest level of education achieved. Three percent (3%) of the respondents had a Master's degree level of education while 16% had other qualifications which included secondary and P1 Certificates of Education.

According to Regulation 41 of the Code of Regulation for Teachers (2015), a person entering the teaching service must possess relevant qualifications prescribed by the TSC which include a PI certificate for primary school teachers and diploma or degree in relevant subjects for secondary school teachers. This compares well with teacher qualifications in other countries across the world. In the United Kingdom teachers need to have an undergraduate degree while teachers in Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Tanzania and Uganda are required to possess qualifications of certificate, diploma and degree to teach pre-primary, primary and secondary education respectively (Kaye, 2012; Buniyi, Wangia, Magoma & Limboro, 2017).

However, there is evidence that points to the relationship between lower levels of education and alcohol addiction (Muriungi & Ndeti, 2013). Moreover, the study found that people with the lowest level of education are heavy smokers, heavy drinkers, and frequently inactive.

#### 4.2 Educational Achievements in Relationship with Alcohol Abuse

The study sought to establish the relationship between educational achievements in relation with alcohol abuse. Educational achievement is an indicator of personal growth and development. The results are presented in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2. Educational Achievement in relation with Alcohol Abuse.**

Lower Educational achievements were found to be significant contributing factors to hazardous consumption of alcohol. The teachers who had up to a diploma level of education had the highest level of alcohol abuse (17.3%) as compared to those with undergraduate (8.4%) and master's degrees (8.3%). This showed that higher levels of alcohol abuse were found among teachers with lower educational achievements leading to lower personal growth and development as compared to teachers who were not abusing alcohol. Teachers who were stagnated at one level for long probably due to lower levels of education and limited chances of progression were also found to be abusing alcohol.

Drawing on a life span developmental contextual approach, educational achievement in relation with heavy adult alcohol use combine to diminish individual's social wellbeing and career growth (Wang & Gordon, 2012). The influence of the level of education on alcohol abuse was also noted by the teachers from the in-depth interview. In depth interviews from the teachers gave the following information which also supports the assertion;

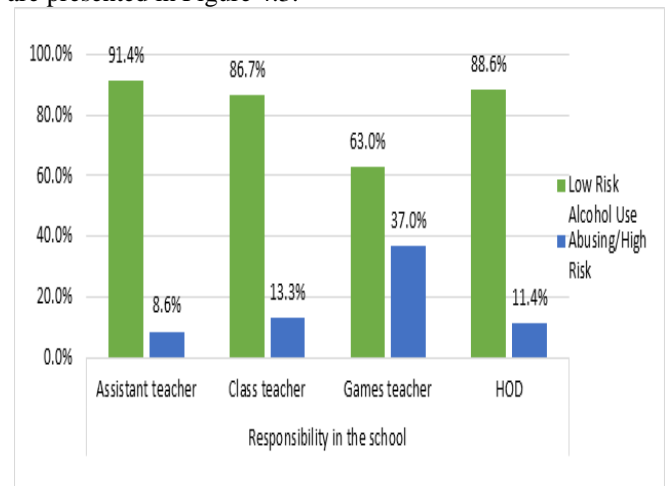
*“Teachers who have graduated from college at higher education level tend to be given more responsibilities and don't have time to go and drink and because most of them are young they tend to be eager for promotions so they want to further their education. Older teachers who started teaching with lower education qualifications mostly get frustrated because of limited professional advancement at work and low salaries that come with it and some resort to alcohol abuse. Some teachers have not taken time to go back to further their studies so they do not get promoted and hence stagnate professionally. Many of them get by-passed by younger teachers in terms of salaries and responsibilities. Some resign to their fate while others get frustrated and run to alcohol for solace”*

The quote above shows that teachers who have attained higher levels of education tend to get more responsibilities therefore boosting their chances of getting promoted at the work place. Getting promotion means that they have limited time to engage in alcohol abuse. This may not be the case with teachers who remain at the same grade due to lower

qualifications. Such teachers have fewer chances of promotion hence lower pay which may lead to job dissatisfaction and harmful coping methods. The frustration may be more in older teachers when they are by-passed by younger teachers in promotion and pay. These findings resonate with a study by Rukundo & Magambo (2012) in Uganda which found excessive use of alcohol among teachers of lower socio-economic status and income. Tenario (2011) found that white males in America who were lesser educated and living in poverty were more likely to indulge in substance abuse. Teachers in Kenya have had many strikes as an indication of poor pay, thus limited chances of receiving acknowledgement due to lower education level discourages teachers.

#### 4.3 Responsibilities in School

The responsibilities held by teachers were assessed as a measure of personal development. This was in order to assess the influence of responsibilities held in school by teachers and alcohol abuse. The study sought to establish the influence of responsibilities held in school on alcohol abuse. The results are presented in Figure 4.3.



**Figure 4.3. Alcohol Abuse by Responsibilities in School.**

Results from the study showed that teachers with more responsibilities were less prone to alcohol abuse. Alcohol abuse by Heads of Department was at 11.4% as compared to class teachers at 13.3%. This study found responsibility to be a protective factor probably due to more workload and less time to indulge in drinking.

The importance of responsibility is that it helps teachers exploit their full potential and become creative in their executing duties. Moreover, responsibilities have internal and external rewards being the face of the school in a particular department.

Teachers with more responsibilities draw respect from those who look up to them as role models and are therefore cautious of what they do. More responsibilities are given only to teachers with higher qualifications and added skills which in turn serves as an affirmation thus boosting morale. Teachers without extra responsibility apart from classroom teaching may feel left out and demoralized which may put them at risk of indulging in alcohol consumption. Gold & Roth (2013), found that stress among teachers was related to how they perceived themselves, either to be effective or if they receive recognition for their work. In Finland, the wellbeing of teachers was linked to feeling engaged and supported by the employer (Hakanen & Bakker, 2006; Klassen et al., 2012). Low levels of education among teachers is the key risk factor to alcohol abuse.

The above findings resonated with in depth interviews with the teachers that found low levels of education having significant influence on alcohol abuse and affecting the ability of teachers to fulfil their given responsibilities.

*“Some teachers are not prioritized when responsibilities are given to others. They therefore have a lot of time to idle which many use for alcohol consumption. Some teachers who were promoted and continue or start taking alcohol are at times demoted because they cannot be able to fulfil their responsibilities at a senior level, so you will find many teachers with very little responsibilities also indulging in alcohol abuse. They no longer are role models to the students as they start influencing them into alcohol abuse.”*

The quote above shows that the teachers who are overlooked when giving out responsibilities feel left out and because of frustration, some resort to alcohol abuse. Others who are demoted feel demoralized and engage in harmful coping methods including alcohol abuse. The new demoted status makes them feel like they have let their students down and they look for solace in alcohol.

According to Tangney, Boone & Baumeister (2018), individuals with well-defined life goals have more life achievements and are at lower risk of alcohol abuse. The lack of higher educational achievements imparts highly on teacher's self-worth that may lead to alcohol use and abuse. Games teachers were noted to have a significantly higher level of alcohol abuse (37%) while assistant teachers had the least.

Baffour & Achemfuor (2013) concluded that the most discouraging factors for teacher morale were remuneration and stagnation in certain job grades which cause psychological and professional frustrations. This may mean that when teachers perceive stagnation and lack of growth, they get frustrated and this may push them into harmful coping behaviours including alcohol abuse.

### 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, low education levels were the main contributing factors of alcohol abuse among teachers. Higher levels of responsibility and level of education were important inhibitors of alcohol abuse where, teachers with more responsibilities and those with higher education had significantly lower levels of alcohol abuse. The study recommends that schools come up with modalities of enhancing professional growth and development with regards to education level to avert alcohol abuse among teachers.

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