

**EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE USE ON RETENTION OF LEARNERS
IN SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN CITY DIVISION MBALE CITY**

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DECLARATION

I KABUNI CLEMESIA hereby declare that this is my original work, is not plagiarized and has not been submitted by any other institution for any award.

Signature: 

Date: 27/08/2024

APPROVAL

I hereby certify that the study titled “Effects of Substance use on Retention of Learners in Schools in Northern City Division, Mbale City” was conducted under my close supervision and is now prepared for submission as part of the academic requirements for examination.

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Date: 28/8/2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my father, Mr. Kutosi Boniface, and my mother, Mrs. Namakhonje Base, whose unwavering support and guidance have shaped who I am today. To my sister, Namee Aidah, for her constant encouragement, and to my sponsor, Mr. Mwasa Herbert, whose generosity and belief in my potential made this journey possible.

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LIST ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AUDIT	Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CVI	Content Validity Index
EAPCCO	Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization
FDA	Food and Drug Authority
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGOs	Non – Governmental Organizations
NHQDR	National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Reports
PPI	Peer Inventory Tool
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organisation

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of substance use on learner retention in Northern City Division, Mbale City. It examined the relationship between substance use frequency and mental health issues among school-age children, the influence of media on substance experimentation and academic performance, and the impact of peer influence on learner retention rates. A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with students, parents, teachers, and community leaders. To analyze the relationship between substance use frequency and mental health issues, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. Substance use frequency was categorized into low, moderate, and high levels, while mental health issues were assessed using a scale reflecting symptoms such as anxiety and depression. The ANOVA compared the mean mental health scores across these categories to identify significant differences. The null hypothesis posited no significant difference in mean mental health scores among the different substance use frequencies, while the alternative hypothesis suggested that at least one group's mean differed significantly. The ANOVA results, including an F-value and a p-value, indicated statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This demonstrated that substance use frequency significantly affected mental health, with higher frequencies correlating with more severe mental health issues. The study highlighted the significant impact of frequent substance use on mental health and academic performance, alongside the roles of media exposure and peer influence. It emphasized the effectiveness of school-based educational programs and media literacy interventions, although their impact varied. Recommendations included comprehensive strategies to address media influence and peer interactions, with suggestions for further research on regional differences and policy impacts to improve student retention and reduce substance use.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions that were investigated, rationale/justification of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, conceptual framework, as well as the summary of chapters of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

The Food and Drug Authority (FDA) defines a drug as a chemical substance that is administered or taken to induce a biological effect in the body of an organism. Drug abuse refers to the excessive, maladaptive, or addictive use of drugs for nonmedical purposes despite resulting social, psychological, and physical problems. This involves using substances in ways that do not comply with legal or medical guidelines (WHO, 2016). In this study, the focus will be on alcohol, *kuber*, *khat*, aviation fuel, cannabis, and cigarettes, as these substances are frequently abused in the study area and are linked to drug-induced psychosis.

Globally, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s World Drug Report 2022 indicates that approximately 284 million people aged 15-64 used drugs in 2020, reflecting a 26 percent increase over the past decade. Drug use among young people has risen, with current levels in many countries surpassing those of the previous generation. In Africa and Latin America, individuals under 35 constitute the majority of those receiving treatment for drug use disorders. The report also estimates that 11.2 million people worldwide were injecting drugs, with around half of these individuals living with hepatitis C, 1.4 million with HIV, and 1.2 million with both conditions.

In the United States, substance abuse remains a significant issue, particularly with opioids like prescription painkillers and heroin contributing to an escalating crisis. Similarly, the United Kingdom has experienced an increase in drug-related deaths and the misuse of substances, including synthetic opioids (Winks & Norman, 2015). These examples from developed nations underscore the intricate relationship between socio-economic factors,

healthcare access, and policy responses in addressing youth drug abuse (Lowinson, Ruiz, Millman, & Langford, 2005).

In the Middle East, Iran faces significant challenges with drug addiction. According to the Tehran Counter Narcotics Police, crack has become the third most commonly used drug after cannabis and opium, with over 90% of users being young people under 30. Socio-cultural factors, political instability, and economic disparities contribute to the high rates of drug addiction in this region. Examining Iran's social dynamics and preventive measures can offer valuable insights for addressing similar issues elsewhere (Bahrami Ehsan, 2012).

In South Africa, alcohol and drug abuse significantly impact the economy, costing billions of Rands annually. Despite this, efforts to combat addiction are hindered by limited funding and resistance to adopting modern medical approaches to treatment. Nearly 20% of South African adults abuse substances such as alcohol, codeine, and dagga, with rising illicit drug use indicating a losing battle against drugs. The annual cost of alcohol abuse alone, including absenteeism, lost productivity, health and welfare costs, and alcohol-related crime, is estimated to be up to 10% of the GDP, or approximately R37.9 billion (SAMJ, 2014).

Drugs have also become a public health issue in West and Central Africa, with 9.7% of people aged 15 to 64 using cannabis in 2020, compared to the global rate of 3.8%, according to a report. Opioids, especially tramadol, were abused by 2.4% of this population, compared to 1.2% worldwide. Drug abuse predominantly affects men under 35. South and West African countries have also grappled with youth drug abuse due to factors such as poverty, lack of education, and limited job opportunities. The influence of globalization and the illicit drug trade in these regions highlights the need for comprehensive strategies that address socio-economic and cultural factors (Lowinson, et al., 2015).

According to the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO, 2020), besides heroin, other drugs with significant trafficking trends in the region include cannabis, which is widely grown and used and accounts for about 95% of illicit drug use in Eastern Africa; cocaine, which has been intercepted in large quantities; and crystal meth, whose production and trafficking have increased. Eastern Africa is becoming a prominent alternative cocaine trafficking route, with the main route being through West Africa. An emerging concern is the growing use of new psychoactive substances and the threat of drug trafficking over the dark net.

In Uganda, 70.1% of youths aged 15-24 years engage in drug abuse, with 39.1% using drugs regularly. The commonly consumed substances include alcohol (23.3%), kuber (10.8%), khat (10.5%), aviation fuel (10.1%), cannabis (9.2%), and cigarettes (5.9%). Drug abuse is twice as prevalent among males compared to females, who are typically initiated at a later stage (Abbo C, et al. 2016). Traditional cultural values shape youths' attitudes and beliefs, influencing their health risk behaviours and drug abuse.

A study on drug and substance abuse in Kampala and Wakiso schools found that 60-71% of students used illicit drugs, with alcohol and cannabis being the most common (Soto C, et al., 2012). Nasir I. S. (2013) found that drug abuse is particularly prevalent among youth in Northern City Division, Mbale City, largely due to the area's high population density and cultural diversity. The study revealed that *khat* (52.6%), alcohol (25.6%), marijuana (15.4%), cocaine (6.4%), and heroin (0.8%) were the most commonly abused drugs, with cultural fusion playing a significant role in this behaviour. The researcher notes that all identified drug users in this study were male, leaving female drug abuse unexplored. This study was timely as it examined the Effects of Substance Use on Retention of Learners in Schools in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

1.2 Problem Statement

Substance use among school-age children in Northern City Division, Mbale City has posed a significant threat to school retention rates. Despite various efforts, substance abuse continues to undermine students' educational outcomes and well-being. Recent statistics show a 25% dropout rate over the past five years, with substance use as a major factor. About 30% of students in this region have used drugs or alcohol, leading to poor academic performance, absenteeism, and dropout (UBOS, 2014).

Efforts to mitigate this problem have been undertaken including community awareness programs, the establishment of counselling centres within schools, and collaboration with law enforcement to curb the availability of substances. While these initiatives have yielded some positive outcomes, they have proven insufficient in addressing the root causes and widespread nature of substance abuse among learners. The retention rates remain alarmingly low, indicating a pressing need for more effective and comprehensive strategies.

Current literature on substance use and education has primarily focused on urban settings or generalized national data, leaving a significant research gap concerning the specific dynamics

within smaller divisions like Northern City Division, Mbale City. Abdu-Raheem (2013) highlights the sociological factors contributing to drug abuse and its impact on academic performance, but this research focuses on broader regions and not specific smaller divisions. Similarly, Matagi et al. (2022) conducted a baseline survey on drug and substance abuse in Ugandan schools but did not provide a detailed analysis specific to Northern City Division. This study, therefore, aimed to address this gap by investigating substance use's impact on school retention in the Northern City Division.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General Objective

To investigate the Effects of Substance Use on Retention of Learners in Schools in Northern City Division, Mbale City

1.3.2 Specific Objectives:

- i. To analyse the relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-age children in Northern City Division, Mbale City.
- ii. To explore how media influences learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools within Northern City Division, Mbale City.
- iii. To investigate the impact of peer influence to use substances on retention rates of learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-age children in Northern City Division, Mbale City?
- ii. How does the Media influence learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools within Northern City Division, Mbale City?
- iii. What is the impact of peer influence to use substances on retention rates of learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City?

1.5 Justification of the study

This study aimed to fill a significant research gap by examining the effects of substance use on the retention of learners in schools within the Northern City Division, Mbale City. While prior research had delved into the broader issue of youth drug abuse, many studies had neglected the intricate dynamics of how substance use impacted educational outcomes in this specific region. Focusing on Northern City Division addressed this void in existing literature,

as previous studies had predominantly covered other areas, leaving a dearth of information about this particular location. The study, therefore, provided valuable insights and a nuanced understanding of how substance use affected learner retention rates by concentrating on this local context, ultimately contributing to more effective intervention strategies tailored to this community.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study's findings and recommendations might guide evidence-based policies and programs tailored to address the unique challenges confronting learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

It might stimulate community involvement and empowerment, prompting local stakeholders to take proactive steps in combatting substance use among students.

It might also advance knowledge on strategies for preventing and intervening in substance abuse within resource-limited environments.

The insights derived from this study could play a pivotal role in formulating strategies to enhance learner retention rates in similar communities facing comparable difficulties.

Additionally, successful completion of this study might result in the award of a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Social Administration to the researcher.

1.7 Scope of the study

1.7.1 Geographical Scope

The study focused on Northern City Division, Mbale City. Northern City Division is located in Namakwekwe Ward opposite Namakwekwe Primary School in Mbale City bordering Nabuyonga River to the North West to the West is the Northern Line of Uganda Railway line to the South West by Nashibiso River to the South by Napwoli River to East Tororo Road Independence Avenue and Republic Street behind it. The findings were applicable to the youth population in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

1.7.2 Time Scope

The study covered the period from January 2022 to August 2023. This time frame was selected because it was the period that drug abuse cases were more prevalent in Northern City Division, Mbale City as the area of study.

1.7.3 Content Scope

This study focused on investigating the effects of substance use on retention of learners in schools within the Northern City Division of Mbale City, Uganda. It comprehensively examined variables such as parental influence, environmental factors, frequency of use, and peer influence among learners. The primary objective was to understand how substance use impacted key aspects of learner retention, including academic performance, behavioural issues, mental health, and social integration.

1.8 Conceptual framework:

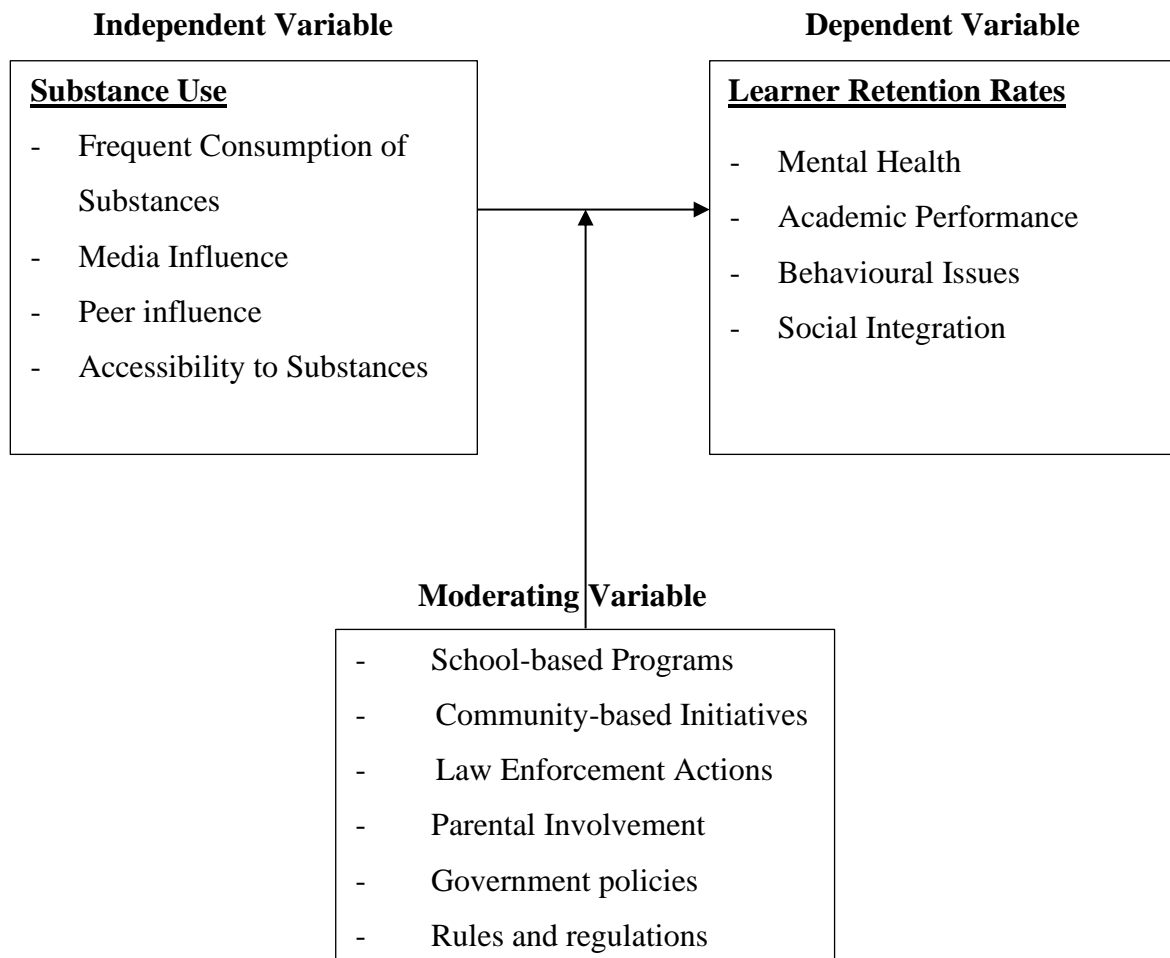


Figure 1.1: Showing the Conceptual Framework

The interaction between substance use, including frequent consumption of substances, media influence, peer influence, and accessibility to substances, and learner retention rates, encompassing mental health, academic performance, behavioural issues, and social integration, highlights a complex relationship. Substance use negatively affects mental health, contributes to behavioural challenges, and hinders academic achievement among students (Cornwell, 2013). Media and peer influences further compound these effects by normalizing substance use, potentially undermining social integration and academic success (Fisher, 2019). However, the impact of substance use on learner retention rates can be moderated by interventions such as school-based programs, community initiatives, law enforcement actions, parental involvement, and government policies, which aim to prevent substance abuse and support students' educational outcomes (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this section, the researcher conducted an extensive search and evaluation of various books, articles, and journals relevant to the research project. The literature review phase involved identifying, analyzing, and assessing research findings, observations, discussions, and opinions pertinent to the researcher's intended study.

2.1. Theoretical frame work

According to Han et al. (2017), frequent consumption of substances such as alcohol and drugs can lead to detrimental effects on mental health, including depression, anxiety, and cognitive impairments. This perspective aligns with the theory of cognitive dissonance, where the conflict between substance use and societal norms can cause psychological stress. Critically analyzing this, it is evident that while Han et al. (2017)'s findings highlight direct psychological impacts, they may not fully account for socio-economic factors specific to Northern City Division, Mbale City, which could exacerbate or mitigate these effects. This gap suggests a need for localized studies that consider the unique socio-economic context of the region.

The role of media in influencing learners to experiment with substances and its impact on academic performance has been extensively studied. Esther, Chidinma, and Extension (2023) emphasize that substance abuse is often glorified by celebrities on social media, which can encourage young people to experiment with these substances. This aligns with the cultivation theory, which suggests that repeated exposure to such media content can shape perceptions and behaviours. Furthermore, social media platforms are being used as channels for drug sales, with hashtags facilitating connections between buyers and sellers. In the context of Northern City Division, Mbale City, understanding the media's influence requires analyzing how media messages are received and interpreted by youth, and how these interpretations translate into real-world behaviours affecting academic outcomes (Esther, Chidinma, & Extension, 2023).

Peer influence plays a pivotal role in shaping the retention rates of learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City. According to Muhia (2021), peer influence significantly impacts

substance abuse among students in public day secondary schools. Muhia's study found a positive and significant association between peer influence and substance abuse in secondary schools, highlighting the critical role that peer relationships play in either facilitating or deterring substance use behaviours among adolescents. Social learning theory posits that individuals learn behaviours through the observation and imitation of others within their social environment, including peers. In the educational context of Mbale City, peer influence can significantly impact school retention rates by either promoting supportive academic environments or encouraging risky behaviours associated with substance use. This underscores the need for targeted interventions that address peer dynamics to improve retention rates and overall academic performance among learners (Muhia, 2021).

This theoretical literature review not only synthesizes existing knowledge but also critically analyzes the implications of theoretical frameworks on understanding the dynamics of substance use among school-aged children in Northern City Division, Mbale City. Addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by substance use in educational settings by drawing on diverse theoretical perspectives, this section aims to provide a nuanced understanding that informs the development of targeted interventions and policies tailored to the local context.

2.2 Empirical Review

A comprehensive review of empirical studies reveals varied approaches, analyses, findings, and conclusions regarding the relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-aged children.

2.2.1 The relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-age children

In reviewing empirical studies related to the objective of analyzing the relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-aged children in Northern City Division, Mbale City, a notable study conducted by the Ministry of Health in Uganda provides critical insights. The study, part of a PhD project supported by Makerere University and the University of Bergen, focused on childhood alcohol use and its implications for mental health. It revealed that about 25% of surveyed children had consumed alcohol, with over 60% of them starting before age 15. This high prevalence highlights a concerning link between early substance use and adverse mental health outcomes. The

research identified significant risk factors such as peer pressure, low socioeconomic status, parental alcohol use, and lack of supervision. These factors contribute to impaired cognitive function, poor academic performance, increased risk of mental health disorders, and engagement in risky behaviours among children who consume alcohol. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and comprehensive educational programs to address the frequency of substance use and its impact on mental health. The study's results advocate for stricter regulation, community involvement, and expanded support services to mitigate the mental health challenges associated with childhood alcohol use in Uganda (Lubwama, P. 2023).

The 2022 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report underscored a troubling rise in mental health issues among children and adolescents as a result of frequent use of substances in the U.S., with emergency department visits for mental health concerns significantly increasing from 2016 to 2019. The report highlighted a sharp rise in suicide rates among adolescents aged 12-17, from 3.7 to 6.3 per 100,000 population between 2008 and 2020. This broader trend of increasing mental health challenges, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, points to a critical relationship between substance use and mental health issues.

The data suggest that frequent substance use may contribute to the rising mental health problems observed in school-age children. Despite a 27% increase in depression diagnoses from 2016 to 2020 and improvements in service utilization, disparities in accessing mental health services persist, particularly among minority and economically disadvantaged groups. This indicates a systemic gap in addressing the underlying causes of mental health issues, including substance use. The report emphasized the urgent need for improved mental health services and support systems, especially in school settings, to address both the symptoms and root causes of mental health issues, such as substance use (NHQDR, 2022).

In response, the NHQDR plans to enhance quality measures for mental health care and increase the availability of evidence-based preventive interventions in schools. The report also noted ongoing efforts to develop new mental health measures related to early childhood care and education. However, the link between substance use and mental health issues remains a critical area for further research, highlighting the need to explore how substance use frequency specifically impacts mental health among school-age children (NHQDR, 2022).

Belcher et al. (2021) used general practice records to investigate alcohol consumption patterns among individuals with mental illnesses, while Morgan et al. (2012) conducted a national survey to explore substance use among those with psychotic disorders. Similarly, AIHW (2020) utilized national survey data to analyze substance use patterns among individuals with mental health conditions. The findings across these studies consistently indicate a strong association between substance use and mental health issues. AIHW (2020) found that individuals with mental illnesses were significantly more likely to engage in risky alcohol consumption and illicit drug use. Belcher et al. (2021) reported that severe mental illness was linked to higher rates of heavy drinking and smoking. Morgan et al. (2012) highlighted that individuals with psychotic disorders had much higher rates of substance abuse compared to the general population. This suggests that mental health conditions often co-occur with substance use disorders, exacerbating both the psychological and physical health challenges faced by these individuals.

The reviewed studies underscore the bidirectional relationship between substance use and mental health issues. On one hand, mental health conditions may drive individuals to use substances as a form of self-medication. On the other hand, substance use can contribute to the development of new mental health issues or worsen existing conditions. The studies also point to a significant gap in research specifically targeting school-aged children, particularly in regions like Northern City Division, Mbale City, where contextual factors may influence the relationship differently than in other settings.

While the empirical evidence provides a robust understanding of the general relationship between substance use and mental health, it often lacks specificity regarding age groups and regional contexts. For instance, the studies predominantly focus on adults, leaving a gap in understanding how these dynamics play out among school-aged children. Additionally, while the findings highlight significant correlations, they do not fully address the underlying socio-economic and cultural factors that may moderate these relationships in specific settings like Mbale City. There is a need for localized research that considers the unique socio-cultural and economic factors influencing substance use and mental health among school-aged children in this region. This localized research would provide a more nuanced understanding and help tailor effective interventions.

2.2.2 How media influences learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools

Esther, Chidinma, and Extension (2023) investigated the impact of social media on drug abuse among youths in Nigeria, offering relevant insights for Northern City Division, Mbale City. Their study revealed that frequent exposure to substance use on social media significantly contributes to increased experimentation and regular use among adolescents. This pattern of frequent consumption correlates with various mental health issues, including depression and anxiety. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews, and found that social media not only normalizes substance use but also glamorizes it through celebrity endorsements and advertisements. The use of social media for promoting substances and facilitating their sale further exacerbates the problem, creating a cycle where young people are encouraged to experiment with drugs. This pervasive influence aligns with global observations that substance abuse is a major issue at multiple levels, from personal to national and global scales, underscoring the need for more focused research and intervention strategies to mitigate the negative effects of substance use among youths (Esther, Chidinma, & Extension, 2023).

Another study by Jackson, Janssen, and Gabrielli (2018) provided a comprehensive review of the influence of media and marketing on adolescent and young adult substance abuse. Their study highlighted the pervasive exposure that youths had to portrayals of substance use, including tobacco, alcohol, e-cigarettes, and marijuana, through various media channels. They found consistent evidence that such portrayals were associated with increased substance use among adolescents and young adults. The researchers emphasized that the rise of digital media, such as social networking sites and brand websites, had significantly amplified this exposure, surpassing traditional marketing methods in its impact. The study noted that social norms and cognitions were partially responsible for the influence of these portrayals, suggesting that they shaped attitudes and behaviours towards substance use. To counteract these effects, Jackson et al. (2018) recommended the implementation of developmentally appropriate media literacy interventions that included a parenting component and addressed multiple substances and media platforms. This research underscored the urgent need for targeted prevention strategies to mitigate the impact of media portrayals on youth substance use and mental health (Jackson, Janssen, & Gabrielli, 2018).

Bhadani and Balamurugan (2018) conducted an in-depth study on the relationship between media and substance abuse, focusing on the persuasive nature of drug advertisements and their harmful impacts. Their research revealed that the media significantly contributes to the normalization and promotion of substance abuse, with substantial financial investments—over \$25 billion annually—dedicated to advertising tobacco, alcohol, and prescription drugs. This exposure, they found, has been effective in encouraging substance use among viewers. The study also explored the connection between substance abuse and delinquency, emphasizing the importance of identifying substance-abusing youth within the juvenile justice system as a crucial step towards effective intervention. Bhadani and Balamurugan highlighted that drug identification strategies, paired with targeted interventions, are essential in preventing further substance abuse and associated delinquent behaviours. Their findings underscored the critical role that media plays in perpetuating substance use and the need for comprehensive strategies to address this issue (Bhadani & Balamurugan, 2018).

2.2.3 The impact of peer influence to use substances on retention rates of learners

Investigating the impact of peer influence on substance use and its effects on learner retention rates, empirical studies provide crucial insights into the dynamics at play. Lopez-Mayan and Nicodemo (2023) conducted research on Spanish adolescents aged 14 to 18, examining how peer behaviour affects individual substance consumption, specifically focusing on alcohol and tobacco use. Their study revealed that peers' alcohol consumption significantly increased the likelihood of an individual engaging in similar behaviours, while tobacco use was less influenced by peers. Notably, the study highlighted that higher proportions of grade-retained students within a class intensified the peer effects on alcohol use, suggesting that grade retention policies might inadvertently exacerbate substance use among students (Lopez-Mayan and Nicodemo, 2023).

These findings underscored the critical role of peer influence in shaping substance use behaviours and suggested that interventions aimed at improving retention rates should also address the negative peer effects associated with substance use. This empirical evidence supported the need for targeted strategies in Northern City Division, Mbale City, to mitigate peer influences and enhance learner retention by fostering supportive peer environments and reconsidering policies that may have contributed to increased substance use.

Muhia (2021) explored the effects of peer influence on substance abuse among students in public day secondary schools in Thika Sub-County, Kiambu County. This study employed a descriptive research design, targeting 720 students with a sample size of 72 from six schools. Using questionnaires and analyzing data through SPSS, the study found a significant positive correlation between peer influence and substance abuse. It revealed that students who were influenced by their peers were more likely to use drugs, which in turn negatively impacted their school performance and retention.

Conversely, the study highlighted a negative association between counselling and substance abuse, suggesting that effective counselling could mitigate the adverse effects of peer pressure. These findings emphasize the crucial role of peer dynamics in substance use among students and underscore the need for targeted interventions to address peer influence and enhance retention rates. The study recommended government measures to control drug availability, development of programs encouraging positive peer influence, and improved guidance and counselling services in schools. This evidence underscores the importance of understanding peer influence mechanisms and implementing comprehensive support systems to address substance abuse and improve student retention (Muhia D., 2021).

Priscilla, Nyemara, and Stephen (2023) investigated the relationship between peer influence and alcohol use among school-going adolescents in Kasese Municipality, Uganda. Utilizing structured questionnaires, including the Peer Inventory Tool (PPI) and the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), the study sampled 233 adolescents from ten secondary schools. The results revealed that peer influence significantly contributed to hazardous drinking behaviours, with 35.6% of adolescents identified as hazardous drinkers. A weak positive correlation was found between age and alcohol use, while peer influence exhibited a notable positive association with drinking behaviours. Importantly, the study highlighted that religion and gender did not significantly impact alcohol use.

These findings emphasized that peer pressure was a critical factor influencing alcohol use among adolescents, which could detrimentally affect their academic performance and retention. The study advocated for fostering positive peer relationships and implementing policy regulations to curb alcohol abuse, thereby supporting better retention rates and overall student well-being. This evidence supported the need for targeted interventions to address peer influence and improve retention rates among learners in Mbale City.

2.3 Conclusion (Literature Gap)

Despite significant findings indicating a high prevalence of substance use among children and its associated mental health risks, existing studies often lacked a nuanced understanding of how these dynamics specifically impacted different age groups and cultural contexts, such as those in Northern City Division, Mbale City. Additionally, the existing research often overlooked localized and contextual factors, which could have provided a deeper understanding of how peer influence, media exposure, and substance use interrelated with mental health outcomes in specific settings. This, therefore, called for more targeted research that considered regional variations and age-specific impacts, particularly in underserved areas like Mbale City, to develop effective, contextually relevant interventions.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter detailed the methods, tools, techniques, and procedures that were used to conduct the research. The discussion addressed the issues of reliability and validity of the methods and the anticipated results or findings of the study.

3.1 Research design

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of substance abuse among youth in Northern City Division. Amin (2015) recommended using both qualitative and quantitative methods as a crucial form of triangulation in studies involving large populations.

Quantitative methods involved surveying a representative sample of learners in Northern City Division to collect data on substance abuse prevalence, learner retention, factors contributing to substance abuse, and its impacts on learner retention in schools.

Qualitative methods included interviews with learners involved in substance abuse, as well as with key informants such as parents, teachers, and community leaders. These interviews offered insights into the lived experiences of learners and the perspectives of other stakeholders on substance abuse in Northern City Division.

3.2 Area of study

The study focused on Northern City Division, whose headquarters are situated in Namakwekwe Ward opposite Namakwekwe Primary School in Mbale City. The Division is bordered by Nabuyonga River to the Northwest, the Northern Line of the Uganda railway line to the West, Nashibiso River to the Southwest, Napwoli River to the South, and is bordered by Tororo Road, Independence Avenue, and Republic Street to the East. This specific location was selected due to its unique geographic and socio-economic characteristics, which provided a valuable context for examining the factors contributing to substance abuse and its impacts on the learner retention in schools.

3.3 Sources of information

3.3.1 Primary Data Sources

The researcher designed and administered questionnaires to gather data directly from the target population, including school-age children, parents, teachers, and community leaders. These surveys included questions about substance abuse patterns, media, and peer influence. Group interviews were conducted with selected participants to obtain in-depth qualitative data, using open-ended questions to explore personal experiences, attitudes, and perceptions related to substance abuse and the retention rates of learners.

3.3.2 Secondary Data Sources:

The researcher reviewed existing research studies, reports, and publications related to substance abuse and retention rates of learners in Northern City Division. These sources provided background information, prevalence rates, and insights into previous interventions or programs. The researcher also accessed reports and data from governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations involved in substance abuse prevention and youth development.

3.4 Population of the study

The population of interest for the study was 140, comprising 90 learners in Northern City Division. According to the UBOS (Census Report from 2014), Northern City Division had a total population of approximately 37,908 people. Within this population, approximately 6,380 individuals, accounting for about 16.2% of the total population, fell within the defined school-age range of children aged 10-17 years. These individuals were the primary focus of the study's quantitative analysis and specific objectives related to the school-age population.

Other key informants, such as parents (35), teachers (10), and community leaders (5), were also included in the study. Including these categories of people allowed for a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the complex factors associated with substance abuse and retention rates of learners. Their perspectives and insights contributed to the development of targeted interventions and policies that addressed the needs of the community.

3.4.1 Sample Size

A sample is a set of respondents selected from the target population for purposes of a survey (Kombo & Tromp, 2016). It is a sub-set of the total population that could be studied. A sample size of 104 respondents was selected out of a population of 140 which comprised of 65 learners, 27 parents, 08 teachers, and 04 community leaders.

Using the Yamane method

Known population size $N = 140$

Assuming that we use 95% confidence interval, the error level is 0.05. The minimum sample size is calculated by:

$$n_{Yamane} = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

The calculation follows:

$$= \frac{140}{1 + 140(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{140}{1 + 140(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{140}{1 + 0.35}$$

$$= \frac{140}{1.35}$$

$$= 103.7 = 104.$$

The required sample size will be 104 respondents

Therefore, Table 3.1 presented the summary of the population of study, the sample size of the study, the individual sizes of each category of respondents.

Table 3.1 Summary of Population of Study and Sample Size

Respondent	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Learners	90	65	Cluster/Stratified Random Sampling
Parents	35	27	Purposive Sampling
Teachers	10	08	Purposive Sampling
Community leaders	05	04	Purposive Sampling
Total	140	104	

Researcher: Primary Data, 2024

3.4.2 Sampling techniques

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2013: 67), sampling was a process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represented the larger group from which they were selected. The researcher intended to use the following sampling techniques:

3.4.2.1 Quantitative Study

Stratified Random Sampling: This approach involved categorizing the target population into specific subgroups or strata based on relevant characteristics, such as age and gender. Participants were then randomly selected from each stratum to ensure that all subgroups were represented. By using stratified random sampling, the study achieved more precise and generalizable results across different groups within the population.

Cluster Sampling: For this method, the target population was divided into clusters or natural groupings, such as villages or schools within Northern City Division. A selection of these clusters was randomly chosen, and all individuals within the selected clusters were included in the sample. This technique facilitated capturing the diversity within clusters while streamlining the sampling process.

3.4.2.1 Qualitative Study

Purposive Sampling: This technique involved deliberately selecting individuals who had specific characteristics, experiences, or knowledge pertinent to the study's topic. In this study, the researcher intentionally chose key informants such as parents, teachers, and community leaders who were expected to offer valuable insights into substance abuse and retention rates of learners in Northern City Division. This approach ensured that the sample included individuals capable of providing detailed and relevant information, thereby enhancing the quality and depth of the qualitative data.

Both stratified random sampling (for quantitative studies) and purposive sampling (for qualitative studies) offered targeted methods for selecting participants that aligned with the objectives and needs of each research approach.

3.5 Procedure of Data Collection

The data collection process for this study involved several key steps. Initially, the researcher finalized the research design, including the selection of quantitative and qualitative methods, and developed a detailed research protocol outlining objectives, research questions, and data collection instruments. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant committees, and informed consent was secured from participants. Data collection instruments such as surveys, questionnaires, and interview guides were designed, with a focus on proper storage, organization, and security of the collected data. Furthermore, quantitative data was analyzed using statistical methods, and qualitative data underwent thematic or content analysis. A comprehensive research report was prepared, presenting findings clearly with visual aids. The researcher maintained open communication with participants, addressed concerns promptly, and reviewed the research protocol regularly.

3.6 Data collection instruments

In this study the researcher utilized various research tools to collect data. These tools included:

3.6.1 Questionnaires:

To collect a large amount of quantitative data, the survey method using questionnaires was employed. Questionnaires were made of a set of items developed to address specific objectives in the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2013: 89). The questionnaires consisted of structured sets of questions designed to collect quantitative data from participants. The

researcher designed and administered these questionnaires to gather information on substance abuse prevalence, retention rates of learners, and related variables. The questions were carefully constructed to elicit specific information and ensure clarity for respondents (Amin, 2015).

3.5.2 Interview Guides:

An interview guide is a set of questions that a researcher asks when interviewing respondents to obtain data required to meet the study's objectives (Amin, 2015). Interview guides were developed to conduct individual and group interviews with participants. These guides consisted of open-ended questions designed to facilitate in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards substance abuse and retention rates of learners. The researcher used the interview guides to lead discussions and capture rich qualitative data (Orodho, 2009; Berg, 2019).

3.7 Quality control (Validity and Reliability)

3.7.1 Data Validity

Validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study (Judith, 2009: 78). The validity of the instruments was assessed through consultation and rating the items, followed by the computation of the Content Validity Index (CVI), which measured the validity of the instrument. The CVI was computed from a formula;

$$CVI = \frac{VR + R}{K}$$

Where VR is for Very Relevant, R for Relevant and K is for total number of items in the instrument.

The results from the computation of the CVI were interpreted according to George and Mallery's (2013: 3) scale (1 - 0.9 = Excellent; 0.89 - 0.8 = Good; 0.79 - 0.7 = Acceptable; 0.69 - 0.6 = Questionable; 0.59 - 0.5 = Poor; and 0.5 - 0.0 = Unacceptable) to determine the validity of the instrument. This implied that if the validity of the instrument was rated as good, it was considered appropriate for use in data collection.

37.2 Data Reliability

Joppe (2020: 1) defines reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time and accurately represent the total population under study. If the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered reliable. The procedures for collecting data in this study were critically examined to assess their reliability. This approach was supported by Mbabazi (2008: 67), who noted that data collection instruments should be reliable and free from bias and error. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to compute the reliability of the instrument.

3.8 Data Analysis

The analysis included demographic data of respondents, focusing on variables related to substance abuse and retention rates of learners in Northern City Division. The collected data was cleaned and edited to ensure consistency, completeness, and accuracy before being entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20). Qualitative data was analyzed by identifying emerging themes from the responses, while quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. SPSS was used to generate means, standard deviations, and regression analyses to explore the relationships and effects of substance abuse on retention rates of learners in Northern City Division.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Prior to data collection, the proposal was submitted to the department responsible for research at Uganda Christian University to obtain a letter of approval. Subsequently, further approval was sought from Northern City Division authorities. The researcher then obtained consent from respondents before collecting data. In the introductory section of the data collection instruments, the researcher promised to honour and respect respondents' anonymity by ensuring the confidentiality of their data. Assurance was given that the information provided would be used solely for academic purposes and that respondents' identities would not be disclosed. All literature sources were acknowledged through proper citations and referencing, and objectivity was maintained during report writing to prevent bias.

3.10 Anticipated methodological constraints (Limitations)

The major limitations of this study included:

Difficulty in accessing accurate data from respondents due to fear of coercion or intimidation; however, the researcher took time probing before securing the needed data from the respondents.

The research design had a limited time frame for data collection, which restricted the depth and breadth of information gathered.

When collecting data on past experiences, participants had difficulties accurately recalling specific details, timelines, or the intensity of events related to substance abuse or retention rates of learners.

The findings from this research had limited generalizability beyond Northern City Division and the specific context studied.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected in the study, which are analyzed and interpreted according to the research objectives. The analysis includes both descriptive and inferential statistics, which are used to provide insights into the characteristics of respondents and the relationships between variables. The chapter is organized as follows: rate of return, demographic characteristics of respondents, and analysis based on the specific objectives of the study.

4.1 Rate of Return

Out of the targeted sample size of 104 respondents, 89 successfully completed and returned the questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 85.6%. This rate is considered strong and representative. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), a response rate of 50% is sufficient for analysis, 60% is considered good, and a response rate of 70% or higher is deemed excellent.

4.2. Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

4.2.1. Sex of the respondents

For quantitative data collection, the study had both genders represented in varying proportions as shown in Table 4.1

Table 4.1 Showing the Sex of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid Male	57	64	64	64
Valid Female	32	36	36	100
Total	89	100	100	

Source: Primary Data, 2024

From the findings in the Table 4.1 above, the study established that majority of the respondents were male as shown by 57(64.0%) while 32(36%) were female. This implied that substance use and its impact on school retention were more prevalent and recognized among

male learners in Northern City Division. This suggests the need for targeted interventions and further investigation into gender-specific factors influencing substance use and retention.

4.2.2 Age of the Respondents

The section covered the age of the respondents as explained below;

Table 4.2 Showing the Age of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Under 25 years	53	59.6	59.6	59.6
25–30 years	13	14.6	14.6	74.2
31–35 years	08	9.0	9.0	83.1
36–40 years	10	11.2	11.2	94.4
40 and above	05	5.6	5.6	100
Total	89	100	100	

Source: Primary Data, 2024

The Finding from Table 4.2 above indicate that 59.6% of the respondents as the majority were Under 25 years, 14.6% of the respondents were 25–30 years, 9% of the respondents between 31–35 years, 36–40 years had 11.2% response, and above 40 years had 5%. This suggested that younger learners are more represented in this study. This implies that substance use was more prevalent among younger students, potentially impacting their retention rates more significantly. The lower representation of older age groups indicated that substance use and its effects on school retention are less of a concern for these groups. The figure below explicitly shows the variations in age of the respondents.

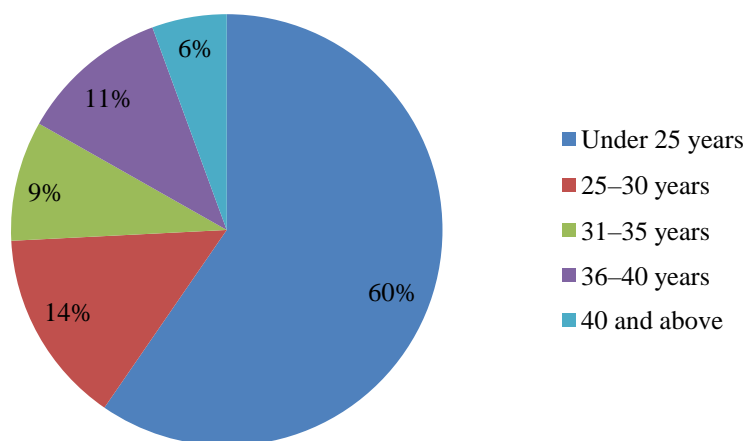


Figure 4.1: Showing the age of the respondents

4.2.3 Marital statuses of the Respondents

This section covered the marital statuses of the respondents:

Table 4.3: Shows the Marital statuses of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid Single	41	46.1	46.1	46.1
Married	05	5.6	5.6	51.7
Divorced	28	31.5	31.5	83.1
Separated	13	14.6	14.6	97.8
Widowed	02	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	89	100	100	

Source: Primary Data, 2024

From Figure 4.3 above, 41(46.1%) of the respondents were single, 5(5.6%) of the respondents were married, 28(31.5%) respondents were divorced, 13(14.6%) of the respondents were separated and only 2(2.2%) of the respondents were widowed. This implies that the majority of those affected by substance use and its impact on school retention are single individuals, reflecting the younger age group of learners who are more susceptible to peer influence, experimentation, and other factors associated with substance use. The lower percentages of married, divorced, separated, and widowed respondents suggest that these groups were less represented in the school environment and were less likely to be impacted by substance use in the context of school retention.

4.2.4 Levels of education of the Respondents

The level of education of the respondents that participated in the study was found to vary, according to the presentation in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Levels of education of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid Primary	08	9.0	9.0	9.0
Secondary	51	57.3	57.3	66.3
Tertiary and above	12	13.5	13.5	79.8
None	18	20.2	20.2	100.0
Total	89	100		

Source: Primary Data, 2024

According to Table 4.4, at least 51(57.3%) respondents were Secondary School graduates, 9% (08) of the respondents had attained Primary education, while 13.5% (12) of the respondents had acquired Tertiary education and above, and 20.2% (18) of the respondents had not attained any formal education. This suggests that substance use and its impact on school retention was most prevalent among those with secondary-level education especially high school students. The lower percentages of respondents with higher or no formal education imply that interventions targeting substance use may need to focus more on secondary school students. This can graphically be represented by the chart below:

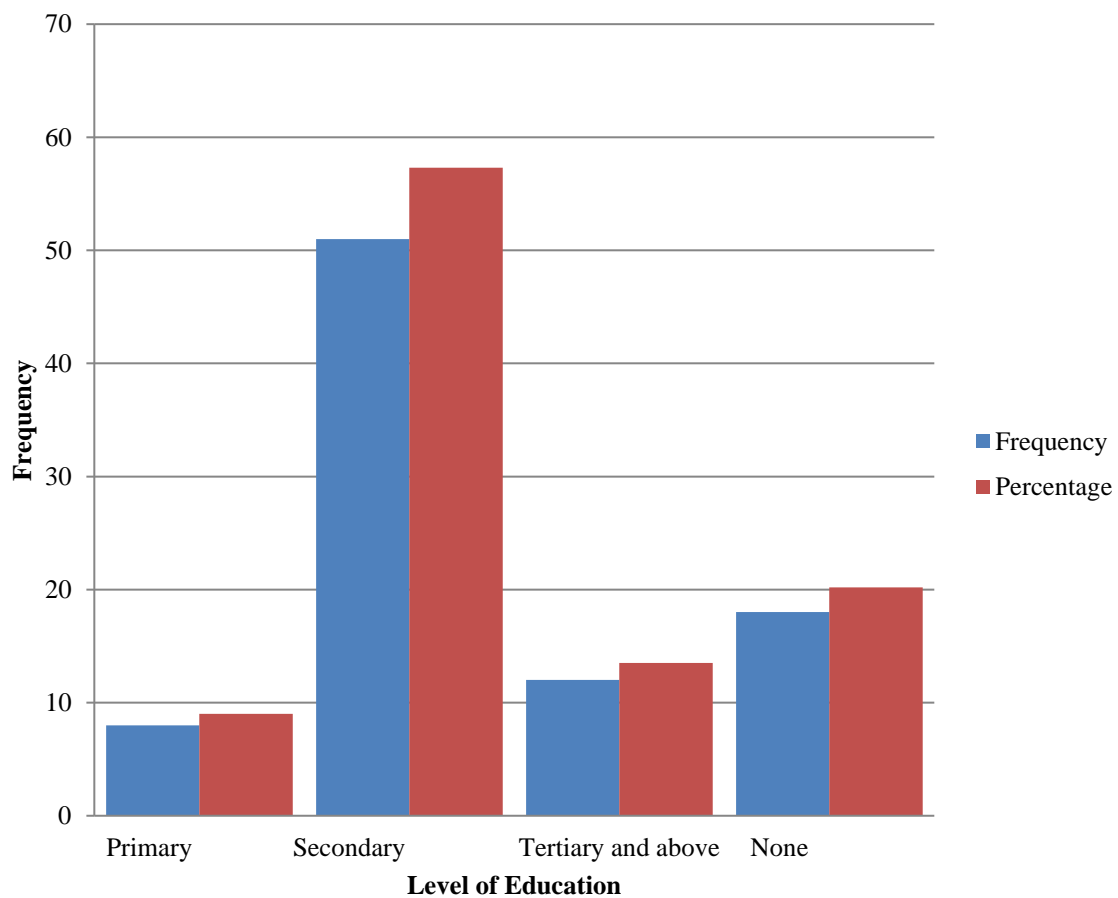


Figure 4.2: Showing the Levels of education of the Respondents

4.2.5 Religion of the Respondents

This section covered the religious affiliations of the respondents:

Table 4.2: Showing the religious affiliations of the respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Anglican	26	29.2	29.2	29.2
Roman Catholic	52	58.4	58.4	87.6
Valid Muslims	08	9.0	9.0	96.6
Born-Again	03	3.4	3.4	100.0
Total	89	100	100	

Source: Primary Data, 2024

The findings in Table 4.2 reveal that the majority of respondents (58.4%) were Roman Catholic, with a significant portion identifying as Anglican (29.2%). Smaller percentages of respondents were Muslims (9%) or Born-Again Christians (3.4%). This distribution of religious affiliations implied that the impact of substance use on school retention was influenced by the predominant religious values and community norms within these groups.

4.3 Major Findings of the Study

The study sought to assess the Effects of Substance Use on Retention of Learners in Schools in Northern City Division, Mbale City. The objectives that were studied were: to analyse the relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-age children; to explore how media influences learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools; and to investigate the impact of peer influence to use substances on retention rates of learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City. The descriptive findings for each construct of the objectives of the study are presented in the subsequent sections below:

4.3.1 Results on the relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-age children in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

Responses here were based on the first objective in Appendices Section B. This was addressed to a cross section of 89 respondents as presented in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Showing the relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-age children in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

STATEMENT	SA		A		NS		SD		D		Mean	Std. Deviation
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Frequent use of substances among school-age children is associated with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression	35	39.3	23	25.8	14	15.7	9	10.1	8	9.0	17.8	10.1
Parents' substance use has a noticeable impact on the likelihood of their children engaging in substance use	45	50.6	21	23.6	5	5.6	7	7.9	11	12.4	17.8	14.7
Lack of supervision is a major factor contributing to the frequency of substance use among school-aged children	27	30.3	18	20.2	16	18.0	13	14.6	15	16.9	17.8	4.9
Substance use among school-aged children negatively affects their academic performance and school attendance	24	27.0	26	29.2	5	5.6	15	16.9	19	21.3	17.8	7.5
School-based educational programs on substance abuse are effective in reducing the frequency of substance use among children	52	58.4	12	13.5	19	21.3	2	2.2	4	4.5	17.8	18.1

Source: Primary Data, 2024

The findings from Table 4.3 above indicate that 39.3% of respondents strongly agree and 25.8% agree that “frequent substance use among school-age children is associated with

increased symptoms of anxiety and depression.” This suggests that a significant majority perceive a strong link between substance use and mental health challenges in children. Meanwhile, 15.7% of respondents were unsure, indicating some uncertainty, and a smaller percentage (19.1%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 17.8 reflects a moderate overall agreement with this statement, while the standard deviation of 10.1 shows some variability in opinions. This is in agreement with the research by Brook et al. (2022) who found that substance use can exacerbate existing mental health issues, creating a cycle of worsening emotional well-being. The findings show the recognition of substance use as a critical factor in exacerbating anxiety and depression among school-age children, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address this issue.

The majority of respondents either "Strongly Agreed" (50.6%) or "Agreed" (23.6%) with the statement, suggesting a significant perception that parents' substance use impacts their children's likelihood of engaging in substance use. A combined total of 74.2% of respondents support the idea that parental substance use affects their children, indicating a strong consensus on this issue. A small percentage of respondents were "Not Sure" (5.6%), indicating some uncertainty or lack of strong opinion on the matter. Only 20.3% of respondents "Strongly Disagreed" (7.9%) or "Disagreed" (12.4%) with the statement, which is relatively low and suggests that the majority view aligns with the impact of parental substance use on children. One community leader reiterated that

“.....I've observed in my interactions with families and schools in this community that parents who use substances often inadvertently set a precedent for their children, either through direct behaviour or through the broader environment it creates. ”

The analysis of the statement "Lack of supervision is a major factor contributing to the frequency of substance use among school-aged children" indicated that 30.3% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 20.2% "Agreed," suggesting that a significant portion of the sample believed inadequate supervision was a key factor in substance use among children. Meanwhile, 18.0% were "Not Sure," and 31.5% either "Strongly Disagreed" (14.6%) or "Disagreed" (16.9%), indicating a notable level of scepticism or differing opinions on the issue. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 4.9 implied a moderate average level of agreement with some variability in responses. This finding suggested that while a substantial number of respondents viewed lack of supervision as a major factor, there was

also considerable variation in opinions, which could reflect differing personal experiences or interpretations of supervision's role in substance use.

On the statement that "Substance use among school-aged children negatively affects their academic performance and school attendance" 27.0% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 29.2% "Agreed," suggesting that a significant majority believed that substance use adversely impacts academic performance and school attendance. Conversely, 5.6% were "Not Sure," while 38.2% either "Strongly Disagreed" (16.9%) or "Disagreed" (21.3%), indicating a notable level of disagreement or differing perspectives on the issue. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 7.5 reflected a moderate level of agreement with considerable variability in responses. This finding suggested that while a substantial portion of respondents recognized the negative effects of substance use on academic performance and attendance, there was also significant variation in opinions, which could be due to differing experiences or interpretations of the impact of substance use.

The analysis of the statement "School-based educational programs on substance abuse are effective in reducing the frequency of substance use among children" indicated that 58.4% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 13.5% "Agreed," suggesting a strong belief in the effectiveness of these programs. Meanwhile, 21.3% were "Not Sure," and only 6.7% either "Strongly Disagreed" (2.2%) or "Disagreed" (4.5%), indicating relatively low scepticism about the effectiveness of such programs. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 18.1 reflected a high level of agreement with considerable variability in responses. This finding suggested that while a significant majority viewed school-based educational programs as effective in reducing substance use, the wide range in responses might reflect differing experiences or perceptions of these programs' impact.

4.3.2 Results on how media influences learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools within Northern City Division, Mbale City.

Responses to this were based on the second objective outlined in Appendices Section C and were collected from a diverse group of 89 respondents, as detailed in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Showing how media influences learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools within Northern City Division, Mbale City.

STATEMENT	SA		A		NS		SD		D		Mean	Std. Deviation
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Exposure to substance use in media encourages learners to experiment with substances	38	42.7	9	10.1	13	14.6	19	21.3	10	11.2	17.8	12.01
Celebrity endorsements and media portrayals of substance use contribute to increased experimentation with drugs among learners	23	25.8	21	23.6	18	20.2	15	16.9	12	13.5	17.8	4.46
Social media platforms glamorize substance use, influencing learners to engage in risky behaviours	32	36.0	17	19.1	1	1.1	19	21.3	20	22.5	17.8	11.13
Educational programs addressing media influence on substance use should be implemented in schools to mitigate its effects	25	28.1	25	28.1	12	13.5	14	15.7	13	14.6	17.8	6.64
Media literacy interventions for students could reduce the influence of substance use portrayals on their behaviour	45	50.6	12	13.5	5	5.6	6	6.7	21	23.6	17.8	16.57

Source: Primary Data, 2024

The results from Table 4.4 above on the statement that "Exposure to substance use in media encourages learners to experiment with substances," show that 42.7% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 10.1% "Agreed," indicating a notable perception that media exposure plays a role in encouraging substance experimentation among learners. In contrast, 14.6% were "Not Sure," while 32.5% either "Strongly Disagreed" (21.3%) or "Disagreed" (11.2%), showing a significant level of disagreement or uncertainty about the statement. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 12.01 suggested a moderate level of agreement with considerable variability in responses, reflecting differing views on the impact of media exposure on substance use among learners. This finding aligns with the study by Primack et al. (2016), which found that exposure to substance use in media is associated with increased substance use among adolescents. This study shows the influence of media portrayals on youth behaviour and supports the need for targeted educational interventions to mitigate these effects.

The analysis of the statement "Celebrity endorsements and media portrayals of substance use contribute to increased experimentation with drugs among learners" revealed that 25.8% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 23.6% "Agreed," indicating a substantial portion of respondents believe that these media factors influence drug experimentation among students. Meanwhile, 20.2% were "Not Sure," and 30.4% either "Strongly Disagreed" (16.9%) or "Disagreed" (13.5%), suggesting a significant level of scepticism or differing opinions on this issue. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 4.46 reflect a moderate level of agreement with some variability in responses. This suggests that while there was considerable belief in the influence of celebrity endorsements and media portrayals on drug experimentation, opinions vary, highlighting the need for further investigation into how these media factors affect youth behaviour. An interviewee, a parent from Northern City Division, responded as follows:

"..... I've noticed that many young people look up to celebrities and are influenced by what they see in the media. When celebrities openly use substances or are seen in environments where drug use is glamorized, it can make these behaviours seem more acceptable or even desirable to our children. This influence is especially potent in today's digital age, where media exposure is constant. It's crucial for us as parents and educators to be aware of these influences and to address them through open discussions and preventive education to help our children navigate these pressures."

The finding on the statement that "Social media platforms glamorize substance use, influencing learners to engage in risky behaviours" indicated that 36.0% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 19.1% "Agreed," suggesting that a significant portion of respondents believe the statement. In contrast, only 1.1% were "Not Sure," while 43.8% either "Strongly Disagreed" (21.3%) or "Disagreed" (22.5%), reflecting a notable level of scepticism or differing opinions on this issue. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 11.13 suggest a moderate level of agreement with considerable variability in responses. This implies that while a substantial number of respondents recognize the potential negative impact of social media on student behaviour, there was considerable disagreement on the extent of this influence, highlighting the need for further research into how social media affects substance use among learners.

The results on the statement that "Educational programs addressing media influence on substance use should be implemented in schools to mitigate its effects" revealed that 28.1% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 28.1% "Agreed," indicating a significant portion of respondents support the idea. Meanwhile, 13.5% were "Not Sure," and 30.3% either "Strongly Disagreed" (15.7%) or "Disagreed" (14.6%), reflecting some scepticism or differing opinions on the necessity of such programs. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 6.64 suggest a moderate level of agreement with some variability in responses. This indicates that while there was notable support for integrating media influence education into school programs, opinions vary, highlighting the need for further discussion on the effectiveness and design of these educational interventions.

The analysis of the statement "Media literacy interventions for students could reduce the influence of substance use portrayals on their behaviour" indicated that 50.6% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 13.5% "Agreed," suggesting strong support for the idea. Conversely, 5.6% were "Not Sure," and 30.3% either "Strongly Disagreed" (6.7%) or "Disagreed" (23.6%), reflecting a notable level of scepticism or differing opinions on the effectiveness of such interventions. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 16.57 suggest a high level of agreement with considerable variability in responses. This finding shows a general belief in the potential of media literacy programs to reduce the negative influence of media portrayals on substance use, though the wide range of opinions indicates a need for more research and tailored approaches to assess and enhance the effectiveness of these interventions.

4.3.3 Results on the impact of peer influence to use substances on retention rates of learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

The finding to this were based on the third objective outlined in Appendices Section D and were gathered from a diverse group of 89 respondents, as shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: Showing the impact of peer influence to use substances on retention rates of learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

STATEMENT	SA		A		NS		SD		D		Mean	Std. Deviation
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Learners who are exposed to peers who use substances are more likely to engage in substance use themselves	35	39.3	21	23.6	2	2.2	15	16.9	16	18.0	17.8	11.96
Substance use among peers negatively impacts learners' academic performance and retention rates	21	23.6	15	16.9	15	16.9	23	25.8	15	16.9	17.8	3.92
Schools should implement programs to promote positive peer relationships to enhance learner retention rates.	45	50.6	12	13.5	3	3.4	16	18.0	13	14.6	17.8	16.04
Interventions targeting peer influence should be a priority to improve student retention and reduce substance abuse	11	12.4	25	28.1	17	19.1	17	19.1	19	21.3	17.8	5.04
Grade retention policies may inadvertently increase peer pressure related to substance use	15	16.9	14	15.7	32	36.0	18	20.2	10	11.2	17.8	8.48

Source: Primary Data, 2024

According to the results in Table 4.5 on the statement that "Learners who are exposed to peers who use substances are more likely to engage in substance use themselves" it was revealed that 39.3% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 23.6% "Agreed," indicating a

significant portion of respondents believe that peer influence plays a major role in students' likelihood of engaging in substance use. Conversely, 2.2% were "Not Sure," while 34.9% either "Strongly Disagreed" (16.9%) or "Disagreed" (18.0%), reflecting a notable level of disagreement or uncertainty regarding the influence of peer substance use on students. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 11.96 suggest a moderate average level of agreement with substantial variability in responses. This finding highlights the perceived impact of peer influence on substance use among learners, though the range of opinions suggests that there is some debate about the strength of this influence. Further research may be needed to explore the specific mechanisms through which peer influence affects substance use and retention rates among students in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

The analysis of the statement "Substance use among peers negatively impacts learners' academic performance and retention rates" indicated that 23.6% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 16.9% "Agreed," suggesting that a portion of respondents believe peer substance use has a detrimental effect on academic performance and retention rates. Conversely, 16.9% were "Not Sure," while 42.6% either "Strongly Disagreed" (25.8%) or "Disagreed" (16.9%), reflecting a significant level of scepticism or disagreement regarding the impact of peer substance use on these academic outcomes. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 3.92 suggest a moderate average level of agreement with relatively low variability in responses. This indicated a notable division in opinion, with some recognizing the negative effects of peer substance use on academic performance and retention, while others remain unconvinced. Further investigation could help clarify the extent and mechanisms of this impact.

Findings on the statement that "Schools should implement programs to promote positive peer relationships to enhance learner retention rates" revealed that 50.6% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 13.5% "Agreed," indicating a strong belief in the importance of promoting positive peer relationships to improve learner retention rates. Meanwhile, 3.4% were "Not Sure," and 32.6% either "Strongly Disagreed" (18.0%) or "Disagreed" (14.6%), reflecting some scepticism or differing opinions on the effectiveness of such programs. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 16.04 suggest a high level of agreement with considerable variability in responses. Wentzel, K. R. (2019), in her study, "Social Relationships and Motivation in School: The Role of Peer Relationships" reveals the critical role of positive peer interactions in fostering academic motivation and engagement. Her research points out

that, supportive peer relationships can significantly impact students' academic outcomes and retention, aligning with the notion that programs designed to enhance these relationships can contribute to improved learner retention rates.

Results on the statement that "Interventions targeting peer influence should be a priority to improve student retention and reduce substance abuse" showed that 12.4% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 28.1% "Agreed," suggesting some level of support for prioritizing interventions that address peer influence to enhance student retention and curb substance abuse. However, 19.1% were "Not Sure," and 40.4% either "Strongly Disagreed" (19.1%) or "Disagreed" (21.3%), reflecting a notable level of scepticism or differing opinions on the effectiveness and priority of such interventions. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 5.04 indicate a moderate level of agreement with considerable variability in responses. This finding shows that while there was support for prioritizing peer influence interventions, there is also significant disagreement, suggesting that further exploration and discussion may be needed to determine the most effective strategies for improving student retention and reducing substance abuse.

The analysis of the statement "Grade retention policies may inadvertently increase peer pressure related to substance use" revealed that 16.9% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 15.7% "Agreed," indicating that a portion of respondents believe that grade retention policies could unintentionally heighten peer pressure related to substance use. Conversely, 36.0% were "Not Sure," and 31.4% either "Strongly Disagreed" (20.2%) or "Disagreed" (11.2%), reflecting considerable uncertainty or disagreement about the impact of grade retention policies on peer pressure and substance use. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 8.48 suggest a moderate level of agreement with substantial variability in responses. This indicates that while there is some concern about the potential unintended consequences of grade retention policies on peer pressure and substance use, opinions are divided, and further investigation may be needed to understand the relationship between these policies and substance use dynamics among students.

4.4 ANOVA Analysis

To analyse the relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-age children in Northern City Division, Mbale City, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The frequency of substance use was categorized into three levels: low, moderate, and high. The dependent variable, mental health issues, was

measured using a scale that reflected the severity of symptoms such as anxiety and depression.

The ANOVA test compared the mean mental health scores across the three groups to determine if there were significant differences. The null hypothesis (H_0) posited that there is no significant difference in the mean mental health scores among the different levels of substance use frequency. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) suggested that at least one group's mean mental health score significantly differed from the others.

The ANOVA results yielded an F-value, which measures the variance between the group means relative to the variance within the groups, and a p-value, which indicates the probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. If the p-value is below the conventional threshold of 0.05, therefore the researcher rejected the null hypothesis, concluding that the frequency of substance use significantly impacts the mental health of school-age children.

Table 4.3.1: ANOVA Analysis Table

Group	N (Sample Size)	Mean Mental Health Score	Std. Deviation
Low Frequency of Use	9	12.89	1.97
Moderate Frequency of Use	8	18.50	1.77
High Frequency of Use	7	26.00	2.16
F-value		19.84	
p-value		0.000	

Source: Primary Data 2024

Interpretation:

Given the data in the Table above, the ANOVA results indicate a statistically significant difference in mental health scores across the different levels of substance use frequency ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that the frequency of substance use is strongly associated with the severity of mental health issues among school-age children in Northern City Division, Mbale City. Specifically, higher frequencies of substance use correspond to more severe mental health problems, such as increased anxiety and depression symptoms.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

This chapter interprets the study's results, comparing them with the theories and empirical evidence reviewed in earlier chapters. The researcher examines how the findings align with previous assumptions and expectations, assessing their support for the proposed propositions. Based on these interpretations, conclusions are drawn and corresponding recommendations are made.

5.1. Discussion of the results

5.1.1 The relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-age children in Northern City Division, Mbale City

This section clarifies the results of the investigation, compares them with existing theories and empirical findings from previous chapters, and evaluates how they align with or challenge the researcher's propositions.

The data reveals that a significant portion of respondents (39.3% strongly agree and 25.8% agree) perceived a strong connection between frequent substance use and increased symptoms of anxiety and depression. The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 10.1 reflected moderate agreement with this statement. This finding aligns with the research by Brook et al. (2022), which established that substance use exacerbates mental health issues, leading to worsened emotional well-being. The study supports the proposition that substance use is a critical factor in worsening mental health among school-age children, as hypothesized in the research objectives. The significant agreement among respondents supports the theory that substance use can indeed lead to heightened anxiety and depression.

A majority of respondents (50.6% strongly agree and 23.6% agree) believe that parental substance use influences their children's likelihood of engaging in substance use. Only 5.6% were unsure, and 20.3% disagreed with this view. The perception that parental substance use affects children's behaviour aligns with social learning theory, which suggests that children model behaviours observed in their parents (Bandura, 1977). This finding supports the researcher's proposition that parental substance use impacts children, reflecting a strong

consensus among respondents. The low percentage of disagreement reinforces the validity of the proposition that parental substance use has a noticeable effect on children.

The statement that lack of supervision contributes significantly to substance use saw 30.3% of respondents strongly agree and 20.2% agree. However, 31.5% either strongly disagreed or disagreed, indicating mixed opinions. This finding contrasts with the expectation that lack of supervision is a straightforward contributor to substance use. While some respondents viewed inadequate supervision as a major factor, significant scepticism remains, suggesting variability in personal experiences or interpretations. This reflects the complexity of supervision's role in substance use, suggesting that while supervision is important, it may not be the sole factor, contradicting the initial assumption that it is the primary factor.

A substantial portion of respondents (27.0% strongly agree and 29.2% agree) believe that substance use negatively affects academic performance and school attendance. Conversely, 38.2% disagreed with this view. This result partially supports the proposition that substance use impacts academic outcomes, reflecting a moderate agreement with significant variation. Previous research (e.g., Vashishtha et al., 2020) supports the idea that substance use can negatively affect educational performance. The mixed responses suggest that while there is recognition of the adverse effects, the impact may vary based on individual circumstances, challenging the assumption of a universal effect.

The majority of respondents (58.4% strongly agree and 13.5% agree) view school-based educational programs as effective in reducing substance use. The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 18.1 indicate significant variability in perceptions. This finding aligns with the theory that educational programs can positively influence substance use behaviours (Gottfredson & Wilson, 2013). The broad support for these programs supports the proposition that they are effective in reducing substance use, though the variability suggests differing experiences with program effectiveness. The positive view on educational programs supports the assumption that targeted interventions can be beneficial, but varying responses highlight the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of these programs.

5.1.2 How media influences learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools in Northern City Division, Mbale City

The results on how media influences learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools in Northern City Division, Mbale City show that 42.7% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 10.1% "Agreed" that media exposure encourages learners to experiment with substances. In contrast, 14.6% were "Not Sure," and 32.5% either "Strongly Disagreed" (21.3%) or "Disagreed" (11.2%). The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 12.01 reflect moderate agreement with considerable variability in responses. These findings align with Primack et al. (2016), which identified a link between media exposure and increased substance use among adolescents. The strong perception among respondents that media influences substance experimentation supports the theory that media portrayals can significantly impact youth behaviour. However, the variability in responses indicates that while many view media exposure as influential, others are less convinced, suggesting a need for more nuanced understanding of media effects.

The statement that "Celebrity endorsements and media portrayals of substance use contribute to increased experimentation with drugs among learners" received 25.8% "Strongly Agree" and 23.6% "Agree." Meanwhile, 20.2% were "Not Sure," and 30.4% either "Strongly Disagreed" (16.9%) or "Disagreed" (13.5%). The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 4.46 indicated moderate agreement with some variability. This finding reflects the influence of celebrity culture on youth, as suggested by Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the multiple layers of environmental influences on an individual, including media and peer interactions. The theory suggests that media portrayals, including celebrity endorsements, interact with other environmental factors to influence behaviour. While a substantial portion of respondents acknowledge the role of celebrity endorsements in influencing drug experimentation, the presence of significant scepticism highlights the complex interplay of media influences and other contextual factors, indicating the need for further exploration into how these different layers impact substance use behaviours.

For the statement "Social media platforms glamorize substance use, influencing learners to engage in risky behaviours," 36.0% "Strongly Agreed" and 19.1% "Agreed." Conversely, 1.1% were "Not Sure," while 43.8% either "Strongly Disagreed" (21.3%) or "Disagreed" (22.5%). The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 11.13 suggest moderate

agreement with considerable variability. These results align with studies highlighting the role of social media in promoting risky behaviours (e.g., Moreno et al., 2013). While many respondents recognize the potential negative impact of social media, significant disagreement suggests that perceptions of this influence are not uniform. This variability underscores the need for targeted research into how social media content affects youth behaviours and academic performance.

The statement "Educational programs addressing media influence on substance use should be implemented in schools" saw 28.1% "Strongly Agree" and 28.1% "Agree." However, 13.5% were "Not Sure," and 30.3% either "Strongly Disagreed" (15.7%) or "Disagreed" (14.6%). The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 6.64 reflect moderate agreement with some scepticism. This finding supports the need for educational programs addressing media influence, consistent with theories advocating for media literacy (Levine, 2020). While there is notable support for such programs, the mixed opinions indicate that their design and implementation require careful consideration. This suggests a need for more research into the effectiveness and content of media literacy programs to enhance their impact.

For the statement "Media literacy interventions for students could reduce the influence of substance use portrayals on their behaviours," 50.6% "Strongly Agreed" and 13.5% "Agreed." Conversely, 5.6% were "Not Sure," and 30.3% either "Strongly Disagreed" (6.7%) or "Disagreed" (23.6%). The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 16.57 indicate strong support with considerable variability. This finding supports the efficacy of media literacy interventions, aligning with research suggesting that such programs can mitigate the impact of substance use portrayals (Levine, 2020). The broad support for media literacy programs highlights their perceived potential to reduce negative media influences, though the variability in responses suggests a need for further research to refine and improve these interventions.

5.1.3 The impact of peer influence to use substances on retention rates of learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City

The investigation into the impact of peer influence on substance use and its effects on learner retention rates in Northern City Division, Mbale City, produced several key insights. The statement "Learners who are exposed to peers who use substances are more likely to engage in substance use themselves" received notable support, with 39.3% of respondents "Strongly

Agreeing" and 23.6% "Agreeing." This reflects a significant belief that peer influence plays a major role in students' likelihood of engaging in substance use. However, 34.9% of respondents either "Strongly Disagreed" or "Disagreed," highlighting substantial disagreement or uncertainty. The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 11.96 indicate a moderate average level of agreement with considerable variability. This finding aligns with Social Network Theory (Burt, 2000), which emphasizes that individuals are influenced by their social networks. The substantial agreement supports the theory's assertion that peer influence is significant, though the variability in responses suggests that the impact of peer substance use is not uniform across all learners.

In examining the statement "Substance use among peers negatively impacts learners' academic performance and retention rates," 23.6% of respondents "Strongly Agreed" and 16.9% "Agreed," indicating that a portion of respondents believe peer substance use negatively affects academic performance and retention. Conversely, 42.6% either "Strongly Disagreed" or "Disagreed," showing a significant level of scepticism. The mean score of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 3.92 suggest moderate agreement with relatively low variability. This finding reflects a partial alignment with Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which posits that various environmental factors, including peer behaviours, influence individual development. The scepticism expressed by a significant portion of respondents indicates that the impact of peer substance use on academic outcomes is debated, suggesting a complex interaction that warrants further investigation.

The results regarding the statement "Schools should implement programs to promote positive peer relationships to enhance learner retention rates" showed strong support, with 50.6% "Strongly Agreeing" and 13.5% "Agreeing." However, 32.6% either "Strongly Disagreed" or "Disagreed," reflecting some scepticism about the effectiveness of such programs. The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 16.04 highlight a high level of agreement with considerable variability. This finding is consistent with Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000), which underscores the importance of social networks and relationships in achieving positive outcomes. The strong support for promoting positive peer relationships aligns with the theory's emphasis on the role of social capital in enhancing academic outcomes. However, the variability in responses indicates that the effectiveness of such programs may vary, necessitating tailored approaches and further research.

Regarding the statement "Interventions targeting peer influence should be a priority to improve student retention and reduce substance abuse," only 12.4% "Strongly Agreed" and 28.1% "Agreed," while 40.4% either "Strongly Disagreed" or "Disagreed." The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 5.04 suggest moderate agreement with considerable variability. This finding reflects mixed support for prioritizing peer influence interventions. Behavioural Theory (Skinner, 1953) supports targeted interventions to modify behaviours, yet the significant disagreement highlights a need for more exploration into the effectiveness and prioritization of these strategies. The variability in responses suggests that while there is some support for addressing peer influence, further research is required to determine the most effective interventions.

Finally, the statement "Grade retention policies may inadvertently increase peer pressure related to substance use" saw 16.9% "Strongly Agreeing" and 15.7% "Agreeing," with 31.4% either "Strongly Disagreeing" or "Disagreeing." The mean score of 17.8 and standard deviation of 8.48 indicate moderate agreement with substantial variability. This reflects some concern about the potential unintended consequences of grade retention policies on peer pressure, aligning with Systemic Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968), which emphasizes the interconnectedness of systems. The mixed opinions suggest that while there is concern about the effects of grade retention policies, the relationship between these policies and peer pressure remains debated, indicating a need for further research to understand their impact on substance use dynamics among students.

5.2 Conclusion

The study's findings largely affirm the researcher's propositions concerning the relationship between substance use and mental health issues, parental influence, and the effectiveness of educational programs. Evidence supports the notion that substance use is associated with various mental health challenges and that parental involvement plays a crucial role in mitigating these issues. The endorsement of educational programs aligns with the researcher's expectations, highlighting their effectiveness in addressing substance use among school-age children. Nevertheless, the variability in responses—particularly regarding supervision and the broader academic impacts—indicates a more intricate relationship than initially presumed. This shows the need for more varied interventions and additional research to comprehensively address the diverse factors influencing substance use and its consequences for students.

The findings also support the proposition that media influences substance experimentation and academic performance. There is considerable backing for the implementation of media literacy programs to counteract these effects. However, the variability in opinions regarding the extent of media influence and the effectiveness of educational interventions suggests a need for more detailed exploration. Tailored approaches are required to better understand and address the impact of media on learners, ensuring that interventions are appropriately designed and effectively targeted.

Regarding peer influence, the study affirms that peer dynamics significantly impact substance use, aligning with Social Network Theory and Social Capital Theory. The strong support for promoting positive peer relationships and the partial alignment with Ecological Systems Theory concerning the impact of peer substance use on academic performance confirm previous expectations about the role of peer interactions in student outcomes. However, the variability in responses and scepticism about the effectiveness of interventions, alongside concerns about grade retention policies, highlight areas where assumptions may need refinement. The mixed opinions on prioritizing peer influence interventions and the debated effects of grade retention policies suggest that the anticipated uniform impact of these factors may not fully capture their complexity. This calls for a more nuanced understanding and further research to optimize interventions and policies related to peer influence and substance use.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

Given the complexity of the relationship between substance use and academic impacts, it is crucial to design interventions that address various influencing factors comprehensively.

To effectively counteract the influence of media on substance experimentation and academic performance, media literacy programs should be strengthened and tailored to the specific media consumption patterns of learners.

Schools should implement and support programs that foster positive peer interactions. Such programs should be designed to enhance social support networks among students and encourage positive peer influence. Initiatives might include peer mentoring, team-building activities, and collaborative projects that build trust and support among students.

Given the mixed opinions on the effectiveness of current interventions and policies, there is a need for ongoing evaluation and adjustment of strategies aimed at reducing substance use and improving student retention.

The potential unintended effects of grade retention policies on peer pressure and substance use warrant further investigation. Policymakers should consider reviewing and potentially revising these policies to address any negative consequences and ensure they do not inadvertently contribute to increased substance use among students.

5.4 Areas for Further study

Researcher suggests further studies the following areas:

Conduct studies across different regions and among various demographic groups to enhance the generalizability of findings and understand the broader applicability of interventions.

Implement longitudinal studies to track changes over time in substance use patterns, academic performance, and the effectiveness of interventions, providing deeper insights into the long-term impacts and outcomes.

Explore the specific mechanisms through which media and peer influence affect substance use and academic performance. Qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, could provide richer, more detailed data.

Investigate the effects of grade retention and other educational policies on student behaviours and substance use to ensure that policies support positive outcomes and do not unintentionally exacerbate existing issues.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS, PARENTS, TEACHERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Dear respondent,

Request to Complete a Research Questionnaire.

I am KABUNI CLEMESIA, REG. NO. J22/MUC/BSW/011, a student at Uganda Christian University, Mbale University College, pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Social Administration. I am conducting a study on the effects of substance use on the retention of learners in schools within Northern City Division, Mbale City. This research is part of the requirements for completing my program. You have been selected as a potential respondent for this study. I kindly request that you complete this questionnaire as honestly as possible. Your responses will be respected, treated with the utmost confidentiality, and used solely for the purposes of this study.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Instruction: For each of the items in this section, kindly tick (✓) in the box that represents the right option and where necessary, specify accordingly.

1. Sex: Male Female
2. Age: Under 25 years 25–30 years 31-35 years 36-40 years 40+
3. Marital status: Single Married Divorced Separated Widowed
4. Levels of education:
None Primary Secondary Tertiary and above
Other (please specify)
.....
5. Religion: Anglican Catholic Muslim Born again
Others (please specify).....

SECTION B: The relationship between the frequency of substance use and mental health issues among school-aged children in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

Please indicate the appropriate response that marches with the question below:

Strongly agree (1) Agree (2) Not sure (3) strongly disagree (4) Disagree (5).

	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Frequent use of substances among school-aged children is associated with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression					
2.	Parents' substance use has a noticeable impact on the likelihood of their children engaging in substance use					
3.	Lack of supervision is a major factor contributing to the frequency of substance use among school-aged children					
4.	Substance use among school-aged children negatively affects their academic performance and school attendance					
5.	School-based educational programs on substance abuse are effective in reducing the frequency of substance use among children					

SECTION C: How media influences learners to experiment with substances, impacting their academic performance in schools within Northern City Division, Mbale City.

Please indicate the appropriate response that marches with the question below:

Strongly agree (1) Agree (2) Not sure (3) strongly disagree (4) Disagree (5).

	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Exposure to substance use in media encourages learners to experiment with substances					
2.	Celebrity endorsements and media portrayals of substance use contribute to increased experimentation with drugs among learners					
3.	Social media platforms glamorize substance use, influencing learners to engage in risky behaviours					
4.	Educational programs addressing media influence on substance use should be implemented in schools to mitigate its effects					
5.	Media literacy interventions for students could reduce the influence of substance use portrayals on their behaviour					

SECTION D: The impact of peer influence to use substances on retention rates of learners in Northern City Division, Mbale City.

Please indicate the appropriate response that marches with the question below:

Strongly agree (1) Agree (2) Not sure (3) strongly disagree (4) Disagree (5).

	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Learners who are exposed to peers who use substances are more likely to engage in substance use themselves					
2.	Substance use among peers negatively impacts learners' academic performance and retention rates					
3.	Schools should implement programs to promote positive peer relationships to enhance learner retention rates.					
4.	Interventions targeting peer influence should be a priority to improve student retention and reduce substance abuse					
5.	Grade retention policies may inadvertently increase peer pressure related to substance use					

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS:

The researcher will use the following items to guide the face-to-face interviews with parents, teachers, and community leaders:

1. How do you perceive the impact of frequent substance use among school-aged children on their mental health, specifically regarding symptoms of anxiety and depression?
2. In your view, how does parental substance use influence the likelihood of children engaging in substance use themselves?
3. How important do you think supervision is in preventing substance use among school-aged children, and what role do you believe it plays in the frequency of such behaviours?
4. Can you describe how substance use among school-aged children affects their academic performance and school attendance based on your observations or experiences?
5. Have you observed any effects of school-based educational programs on substance abuse?
6. What is your opinion on the role of media exposure, including social media and celebrity endorsements, in encouraging learners to experiment with substances?
7. Do you think the availability of support services and counselling in schools has been effective in mitigating the impact of substance use on the mental health of school-aged children?
8. How do you think implementing educational programs that address media influence on substance use could help mitigate its effects on learners' behaviours and attitudes?

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