Abstract

The role of parents in helping their children to face the adolescence challenges and specifically the challenge of drug abuse cannot be underestimated; however, the extent to which parenting styles predetermine secondary school students' involvement in drugs is not well understood. This study investigated parenting styles, as predictors of drug abuse among public secondary school students in Embu County, Kenya. A population of 8820 (4886 girls and 3934 boys) form two and three students distributed in 132 public secondary schools in Embu County was targeted. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 15 schools which had reported more cases of drug abuse for the last three years in the county. Stratified random sampling and systematic random sampling were used to select 399 participants (221 girls and 178 boys). Purposive sampling was used to select 15 Guidance and counseling teachers and 70 secondary school dropouts from the 15 schools. Reliability for the parenting styles questionnaires and risky behaviours were calculated an average Cronbach alpha (α) of $\alpha = 0.82$ for parenting styles questionnaires was reported and for risky behaviours $\alpha = 0.78$. Multiple linear regression showed that parenting styles significantly predict drug abuse among secondary school students, and that parenting styles accounts for, 64.4% ($R^2=0.644$, $p< 0.05$) of students' drug abuse, The study, therefore, recommends that the government through the Ministry of Education should train the teacher counselor, to identify and counsel drug abusing students and train parents on how to handle drug abusive children.