

Abstract

Substance use is common among secondary school students in Kenya and poses a threat to their health and academic achievement. Therefore, there is need to find out determinants of substance use so that measures can be taken to discourage it. Previous research has shown that attachment styles influence not only adolescents' adjustment but also their tendency to engage in deviant behaviors like substance use. This study investigated whether attachment styles predict substance use among secondary school students in Nairobi County. The study was based on the attachment theory and attachment security was conceptualized in terms of four attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful. A correlational design was adopted for the study. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The Attachment Styles Questionnaires was used to measure the four attachment styles and substance use was measured on an 11 item likert scale. The study targeted 10,451 Form Three students in 79 public secondary schools in Nairobi County. Three sub-counties were purposively selected and nine schools from the three sub-counties were selected using stratified random sampling. A sample of 385 students was randomly selected from the nine schools. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis and determine the prediction of substance use by the attachment styles. The main finding of the study was that attachment styles predicted substance use among secondary school students ($F = 4.954, P = .001$) and accounted for 5.6% of the variance in substance use ($R^2 = 0.56$). Secure attachment style predicted less substance use ($\beta = -.117, P = .028$) whereas dismissing attachment style significantly predicted higher levels of substance use ($\beta = .174, P = .004$). The study recommended that guidance and counseling teachers take students' attachment styles into consideration when tackling substance use and encourage parents and guardians to foster more secure attachment with their children.