Effects of Drug Abuse on Child Protection Outcomes of Vulnerable Teenage Girls in Laikipia West Subcounty, Kenya

Michael Muriithi Mwaniki[1]
David Gichuhi[2]
Antony Odek[3]

[1]michaelmuriithi7007@gmail.com
[2]dgichuhi@karu.ac.ke
[3]aodek@spu.ac.ke

[1,3]St. Paul's University, [2]Karatina University, [1,2,3]Kenya

…….…

ABSTRACT

Children, particularly girls, in many parts of the world, are vulnerable to abuses in different forms, exploitation, and neglect. Child protection aimed at vulnerable teenage girls has been implemented in many countries. The purpose of the study was to analyze the effects of drug abuse on child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objective: to analyze the effects of teenage drug abuse on child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls. The study was guided by the ecological systems theory. The study adopted a convergent parallel research design and was carried out in Laikipia West Sub-County, Laikipia County, Kenya, within its six administrative wards. The study targeted 10,439 community leaders and teenage girls involved in child protection outcomes. The study used the stratified and cluster sampling technique to sample community leaders and teenage girls, resulting in a total of 384 participants comprising the entire sample size inclusive of 8 community leaders and 384 teenage girls. The researcher collected responses from the chosen participants through a series of structured questionnaires and an interview guide. Quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS, with descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics-regression was also conducted, and thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. From the findings The R-squared in this study was 0.770, which shows that the variable drug abuse can explain 77.0% of child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub county, Kenya. From the findings the researcher concluded that teenage girls drug abuse is a significant issue affecting teenage girls in Laikipia West, with the majority of respondents agreeing that addiction to drugs negatively impacts their well-being and protection, as reflected in high mean scores. From the findings the researcher concluded that teenage girls drug abuse is a significant issue affecting teenage girls in Laikipia West, with the majority of respondents agreeing that addiction to drugs negatively impacts their well-being and protection, as reflected in high mean scores. The study recommends that community-based interventions should prioritize increasing awareness and education about the risks associated with drug abuse, targeting both teenagers and their families.

Keywords: Child Protection, Drug Abuse, Teenage Girls

…….…

I. INTRODUCTION

Children, particularly girls, in many parts of the world, are vulnerable to abuses in different forms, exploitation, and neglect (United Nation Internation Children Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2021). Child protection aimed at vulnerable teenage girls have been implemented in many countries, including the United States, China, India, and the United Kingdom. In the United States, child protection is a critical issue, particularly for vulnerable teenage girls. According to the Children's Bureau (2021), in 2019, there were slightly above half a million children in foster care, with the majority being teenagers. These children are at a higher risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, and exploitation, making child protection aimed at vulnerable teenage girls essential.

Teenage girls from low-income families and minority groups may face additional barriers in accessing services, thus increasing their vulnerability to abuse and neglect (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020). Another challenge pertains to the significant number of teenage girls who experience early pregnancy or parenthood. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDCP] (2021), approximately 194,377 babies were born to teenage mothers aged 15-19 in the United States in 2019.

The global growth of CBCPC (Community Based Child Protection Centers) may be traced to the 1990s and 2000s, when a significant amount of child protection efforts by international organizations focused exclusively on concerns such as child labor, street children, child sexual exploitation, and child trafficking. Despite these initiatives

aiding children, research indicates that their effectiveness in safeguarding against abuse was limited and that these treatments were disjointed (Reuben et al., 2022).

Inadequate policies and weak institutional frameworks also hinder the effective outcomes of child protection (Singh, 2021). Furthermore, child trafficking is a significant issue in India, particularly in states such as West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh. Teenage girls are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and are often forced into prostitution, domestic work, or other forms of exploitation. The government of India has implemented several measures to address child trafficking, including the Anti-Trafficking Bill and the National Plan of Action for Children (Singh, 2021).

Child protection is a critical issue in Africa, with many children, including teenage girls, facing a range of risks, including abuse, neglect, and exploitation. African governments have implemented a range of laws, policies, and programs aimed at addressing these challenges, but many countries still face significant challenges in implementing effective child protection (UNICEF, 2021). One of the main challenges is the limited resources and capacity of many African countries to implement effective child protection. This has been exacerbated by poverty, conflict, and weak governance in some countries. In addition, cultural norms, beliefs, and practices can also hinder the outcomes of child protection, particularly in rural areas where traditional practices and beliefs may be deeply entrenched (UNICEF, 2021). Despite these challenges, many African countries have made progress in developing and implementing child protection. For example, several countries have implemented child protection laws and policies, established child protection units within government institutions, and developed child helplines and other support services for children (UNICEF, 2021). However, there are still significant gaps in the outcomes of child protection across the continent. For example, many countries lack comprehensive data on child protection issues, which can hinder efforts to develop evidence-based policies and programs. In addition, the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have further highlighted the need for strengthened child protection, particularly for vulnerable children, including teenage girls (UNICEF, 2021). Efforts are being made at the regional level to address these challenges. For example, the African Union (AU) has developed a child protection framework that aims to guide African countries in developing and implementing effective child protection. The framework emphasizes the need for a multi-sectoral approach, involving government agencies, civil society, and other stakeholders, to address child protection challenges (African Union, 2021).

In Kenya, child protection remains a significant challenge, with many children facing a range of risks, including abuse, neglect, and exploitation. According to a 2018 report by UNICEF, child abuse is prevalent in Kenya, with one in every three Kenyan girls experiencing sexual violence before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018). Child marriage is also a common problem, with one in five girls marrying before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018). The government of Kenya has implemented a range of laws, policies, and programs aimed at addressing child protection challenges, including the Children Act of 2022, which provides a legal framework for the protection and welfare of children, and the National Plan of Action for Children (2015-2022), which outlines a multi-sectoral approach to addressing child protection challenges (Government of Kenya [GoK], 2015).

Several government agencies, including the Department of Children's Services, the National Council for Children's Services, and the Gender Violence Recovery Center, have been established to address child protection challenges. In addition, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations are also working to promote child protection in Kenya. Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain in the outcomes of child protection in Kenya. Resource constraints, limited institutional capacity, and weak governance continue to hinder the effectiveness of child protection. In addition, cultural practices and beliefs, particularly in rural areas, can also pose challenges to the outcomes of child protection. These challenges leave a knowledge gap that this study sought to fill. The study focuses on drug abuse that affected the outcomes of child protection. The results obtained from the study are significant in guiding organizations relating to child protection to more lasting solutions.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to a 2018 report by UNICEF, child abuse is prevalent in Kenya, with one in every three Kenyan girls experiencing sexual violence before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018). Child protection is a major concern that impacts the well-being of vulnerable teenage girls in many developing countries, such as Kenya. Factors like teenage drug abuse significantly contribute to child protection issues by increasing vulnerability to violence and neglect.

Despite efforts from various organizations such as Child and youth development centers to address this issue, the outcomes of child protection can be hindered by multiple factors (Abiddin et al., 2022). In Laikipia West subcounty Kenya, teenage girls who are already vulnerable due to poverty and other factors face further challenges such as early marriage, gender-based violence, lack of education, and poverty. Organizations such as St. Martin, CYDCs and other CCIs have implemented child protection in this region to mitigate these challenges. However, there are still many challenges facing the outcomes.

To address the knowledge gap that has contributed to the challenges of child protection outcome, the study aimed to investigate a social factor that affected the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub-county, Kenya. The study specifically explored drug abuse.

1.2 Objective

To analyze the effects of drug abuse on child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub-county, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study used one theory, which is the ecological systems theory. This theory helped inform the study.

2.1.1 The Ecological Systems Theory

Tekkas Kerman and Betrus (2018) present a valuable framework for comprehending the intricate interplay of factors that impact the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub county. This framework, known as the Ecological Systems Theory, emphasizes that individual development is shaped by various interconnected systems, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

Within the context of this study, the Ecological Systems Theory can be employed to examine the diverse levels of influence on the outcomes of child protection (Pittenger et al., 2016). The microsystem pertains to the immediate environment of the individual, encompassing family, peers, and caregivers. The mesosystem describes the interrelationships between different microsystems, such as the connection between school and family. These microsystems and mesosystems play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of vulnerable teenage girls regarding child protection.

Furthermore, the exosystem factors, which encompass external environmental influences, significantly impact the outcomes of child protection (Pittenger et al., 2016). For instance, a lack of resources or services in the community to support child protection can be considered an exosystem factor influencing their outcomes. Additionally, the macrosystem, which encompasses the broader cultural context, influences attitudes towards child protection and shapes community policies and practices related to child protection.

Overall, the Ecological Systems Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse factors, and in this case. drug abuse influencing the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West subcounty (Hajizade-Valokolaee et al., 2016). The theory highlights the significance of considering multiple levels of influence and underscores the need for a multi-level approach to address the complex and interconnected factors impacting child protection efforts.

2.2. Empirical Review
2.2 1 Drug Abuse on Child Protection Outcomes

The impact of drug abuse use on the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls in the United States has been extensively studied. Researchers have examined this relationship to understand the implications for interventions and policies in addressing the issue effectively.

The studies conducted by Straussner and Fewell (2018) and Anderson & van Ee (2018) collectively deepen our understanding of the critical intersection between parental substance use and child welfare involvement in the United States. Straussner and Fewell's rapid evidence review highlights the pervasive impact of parental substance use on child protection, stressing the necessity for targeted interventions and policy reforms tailored to address this specific issue within the U.S. context. Building on this, Anderson & van Ee's longitudinal study provides concrete evidence that substance abuse treatment can significantly enhance child welfare outcomes. By following a cohort of women over time, Anderson & van Ee not only confirm the detrimental effects of untreated substance use on child safety and family stability but also illustrate the potential for recovery and improved outcomes when effective treatment is integrated with child welfare services.

Together, these studies emphasize a critical insight: while addressing parental substance use is essential for improving child welfare outcomes, standalone substance abuse interventions are insufficient (ho & van Ee, 2022). The synthesis of findings suggests that integrated services, which simultaneously address substance abuse, mental health, parenting skills, and social support, are far more effective. This integrated approach ensures that the multifaceted needs of families affected by substance use are met, leading to more sustainable positive outcomes for both parents and children. Therefore, the research collectively underscores the importance of holistic, cross-disciplinary strategies in the formulation of child protection policies and intervention programs.

In their study, Muir et al. (2022) focused on investigating the circumstances of children who are impacted by parental substance misuse within the child protection system in the United Kingdom. The research shed light on the distinct vulnerabilities and requirements of these children, emphasizing the significance of an integrated approach involving substance abuse treatment and child protection services. The findings of the study illuminated the considerable influence of parental substance misuse on the lives of children. It revealed that children residing in households where

parental substance misuse is prevalent often encounter various adverse experiences, such as neglect, abuse, instability, and disrupted family dynamics. These children may be exposed to unsafe environments, witness incidents related to substance misuse, and suffer emotional and psychological distress as a consequence (Bosk et al., 2021). The research underscored the particular vulnerabilities of children affected by parental substance misuse and emphasized the importance of tailored interventions to effectively address their needs. It highlighted the necessity of a collaborative approach involving professionals from substance abuse treatment services, child protection agencies, social services, and other pertinent sectors. This collective approach ensures a coordinated response that acknowledges the complexity of the challenges these children face and provides comprehensive support.

In Uganda, research specifically focusing on the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls in the context of drug abuse is limited. However, broader studies on substance use among adolescents provide valuable insights into the prevalence rates and associated factors. A study conducted by Scharpf et al. (2022) examined the prevalence and correlates of substance use among adolescents in Uganda. The study explored various substances. The findings can inform efforts to design targeted interventions within the context of child protection.

In Kenya, there is a growing recognition of the intersection between drug abuse and the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls. A study by Jaguga et al. (2022) examined the prevalence and correlates of substance use among adolescents in Kenya. Furthermore, they examined the experiences of children affected by parental substance abuse in Kenya. The study highlighted the detrimental effects of parental substance abuse on children's well-being and emphasized the need for comprehensive support services to address their needs. Also, by integrating substance abuse prevention, intervention, and child protection efforts, it becomes possible to provide comprehensive support systems that address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of these girls. While international research provides valuable insights into the intersection of substance abuse and child protection, the applicability of these findings to the local context of Laikipia West subcounty in Kenya requires careful consideration.

III. METHODOLOGY

A convergent parallel research design was used and it involves combining qualitative and quantitative research methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The research was conducted within the areas under Laikipia West Sub-County in Laikipia County, one of the 47 administrative counties in Kenya. This study aimed to target teenage girls and community leaders who directly benefit from child protection services, as well as those who do not. The community leaders, including chiefs, sub-chiefs, and village elders, were included as part of the target population, totaling 204 individuals. Additionally, 10,235 teenage girls who reside in Laikipia West Sub-County, according to the KNBS 2019 census, were included in the target population. Stratified and clustering sampling techniques were the most appropriate for this study (Ames et al., 2019).

The study expected a proportion to be around 50%. Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977).), as shown below, was used to determine the sample size.

$$((1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)) / (0.05)^2 = n$$

Where n is the total sample size.

Using the formulae $((1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)) / (0.05)^2 = 384$

384 is the total sample size.

To get the proportions, percentages of each strata is used:

The percentage of girls here is 10235/10439 multiplied by 100 which totals 98%

98% of 384 is 376

2% of 384 is 8

3.1 Data Collection
3.1.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the teenage girls who are part of the respondents in the study. The questionnaire was preferred because it could gather data from a large population in a relatively short time (Blaxter et al., 2007). The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2 Validity

To establish the validity of the instrument, the questions in the study were developed based on the indicators outlined in the conceptual framework. The validity of the instrument was ensured through a systematic process involving multiple types of validity assessments, each tailored to address specific aspects of the instrument's accuracy and relevance. Face validity was assessed by presenting the interview sheet and questionnaire to a panel of experts, including the researcher's supervisors. Content validity was evaluated by mapping each question against the indicators in the

conceptual framework to ensure comprehensive coverage of the study's constructs. Experts were asked to assess whether the questions adequately covered all aspects of the constructs being measured. The panel of experts included the researcher's supervisors and other professionals with specialized knowledge in research methodology, child protection, and substance abuse.

Criterion validity was established by comparing the questions against external benchmarks or criteria known to be valid measures of the constructs. This was done by correlating the responses from the pilot test with existing validated instruments measuring similar constructs. The strength of these correlations helped determine the criterion validity of the new instrument. Questions that did not show significant correlation with the external criteria were further refined or excluded

3.3 Reliability

Reliability is defined as the degree to which a test is free from measurement errors, with fewer errors indicating greater reliability (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2013). The reliability of the questionnaire and interview guide was examined using the internal consistency method, a correlation technique that measures the reliability of alternative items in the questionnaire based on responses from the pilot study. Internal consistency refers to the extent to which measures of the same construct are consistent with each other.

The results from the pilot study were subjected to Cronbach's reliability test for internal consistency. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2013), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher indicates that the instrument is highly reliable and, therefore, suitable for the study. Items that did not meet this threshold were dropped. Additionally, when excessive similarity among items was observed, the items were reviewed to ensure that each one uniquely contributed to the construct. Conversely, if items were found to be too dissimilar, they were refined to better align with the construct being measured.

Table 1
Results of Reliability Testing

Study Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Teenage girls drug abuse	8	0.735
Family Structures	7	0.974
Literacy level	6	0.886
Neighborhood Insecurity	7	0.898
Child Protection Outcomes	5	0.785
Average	**6.6**	**0.855**

3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

This study involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, necessitating the use of a mixed-methods data analysis approach (Dawadi et al., 2021). For the quantitative data gathered through questionnaires, statistical software like SPSS was employed to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages, were calculated to summarize the data. Additionally, inferential statistics, specifically regression analysis, were conducted to examine relationships between variables of interest.

The following multivariate regression model was used:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub county, Kenya

β_0 = Constant Term;

β_1, β_2 and β_3 = Beta coefficients;

X_1 = Teenage girls drug Abuse

X_2 = Family Structure

X_3 = Literacy level

X_4 = Neighborhood Insecurity

Thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data obtained from interviews to identify and interpret key themes. Initially, the study familiarized itself with the data by reading the transcripts thoroughly. It then generated initial codes by labeling significant segments of the text that related to the research questions. These codes were organized into potential themes, which were subsequently reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. Finally, the study defined and named each theme, capturing the participants' experiences and perspectives, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of the topic.

Following the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data, the study integrated the findings by comparing and contrasting the results. This integration contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions and enabled the triangulation of findings to strengthen the overall conclusions of the study.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to the following ethical principles: authorization, voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. The necessary authorizations were obtained from St Paul's University, the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, and the County Government of Laikipia.

Recruitment of participants was based on voluntary participation, ensuring that no coercion or enticement was involved. Individuals who expressed willingness to participate in the study were asked to provide informed consent by signing a consent form. This form contained detailed information about the study's purpose, potential risks and benefits, and measures taken to protect the participants.

Given that many of the teenagers resided with their caregivers, permission was sought from the primary caregivers before approaching the teenagers with the consent form. This ensured that parental or guardian consent was obtained for the participation of the teenagers.

To maintain anonymity, participating respondents were not required to provide their names. Instead, pseudonyms were used, as well as coded language to disguise confidential information. Confidentiality measures were strictly enforced by limiting access to the collected data to only authorized personnel. The researcher implemented comprehensive measures such as encrypting digital data, securing physical data in locked storage, and establishing protocols to ensure that data was not inadvertently disclosed. These measures helped ensure that confidentiality was achieved.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The researcher distributed 376 questionnaires to the respondents out of which 289 were received from the field and accepted as correctly filled translating to an 77% response rate. This response rate was acceptable for this study as according to Rogelberg and Stanton (2007), who stated that when cross – sectional studies of survey design are conducted at the individual level, the expected response rate should be over 50%. Therefore, the above response rates meet this criterion hence was appropriate for this study.

Table 2

Response Rate of the Questionnaires

No. of questionnaires Issued	No. of questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
376	289	77

From the findings, 64% of the respondents indicated that they were 13-16 years while 36% stated that they were in the age of 17-19 years. These age distribution findings provide a foundational understanding of the demographic context within which child protection issues are examined, helping to shape targeted interventions and policies that can better support vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West Subcounty.

Table 3

Age of the Respondents

Age of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
13 – 16	186	64
17-19 years	103	36
Total	**289**	**100**

From the findings, 15% of the respondents indicated that they had attained primary school education level, 49% of the respondents had attained secondary level of education while 36% of the respondents stated that they had attained certificate level of education. This indicates a relatively high level of educational access among the respondents, which might positively influence their awareness of child protection issues, rights, and available resources. Higher educational attainment is often linked to increased awareness of children's rights, legal frameworks, and available resources, which in turn enhances the respondents' ability to recognize, report, and address child protection concerns effectively. This educational awareness can lead to more proactive engagement in safeguarding vulnerable children and ensuring better child protection outcomes in the community.

Table 4
Respondents' Highest Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	43	15
Secondary	141	49
Certificate	105	36
Total	**289**	**100**

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

The study requested respondents to give opinions in regard effects of teenage girls drug abuse, on child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub county, Kenya. The interpretation of the findings was made based on the mean and standard deviation. The value of the mean indicated the level of agreement. The value of the mean ranged between 1-5, with 1 being the least mean and 5 being the highest mean. Standard deviation is a measure of the dispersion of a set of data from its mean

4.4.1 Effects of Drug Abuse on Child Protection Outcomes of Vulnerable Teenage Girls

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on effects of drug abuse on child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub county, Kenya. The findings were as indicated in Table 5

Table 5
Effects of Teenage Girls Drug Abuse on Child Protection Outcomes of Vulnerable Teenage Girls

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std
Teenage girls in the community are at risk of becoming addicted to drugs, which negatively affects their well-being and protection.	5%	6%	6%	36%	46%	4.125	1.102
The use of drugs in the community increases the vulnerability of teenage girls to abuse, neglect, and exploitation.	4%	5%	6%	29%	55%	4.260	1.069
The availability of drugs in the community negatively affects the outcomes of child protection programs for vulnerable teenage girls.	4%	10%	4%	30%	50%	4.131	1.159
The cost of drugs in the community negatively affects the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls.	7%	6%	8%	37%	40%	4.004	1.152
The addiction rate in the community negatively affects the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls.	9%	5%	4%	19%	62%	4.194	1.295
Drug abuse in the community is a significant barrier to the outcomes of effective child protection for vulnerable teenage girls.	9%	4%	1%	32%	53%	4.173	1.221
The prevalence of drug use in the community contributes to a culture that normalizes harmful behaviors and practices towards teenage girls.	11%	2%	3%	37%	46%	4.048	1.263
The negative impact of drug abuse on child protection is exacerbated by poverty and limited access to resources and support services	8%	7%	5%	33%	46%	4.031	1.242

According to the findings, majority of the respondents with (mean = 4.125; std dev = 1.102) agreed that teenage girls in the community are at risk of becoming addicted to drugs, which negatively affects their well-being and protection. This is supported by studies like Spooner and Hetherington (2018)**,** who emphasize that substance abuse among adolescents significantly impairs their social, emotional, and cognitive development. Hawkins et al. (2022) also found that early exposure to drugs leads to increased vulnerability to mental health issues, which hampers their overall well-being.

The findings further indicated that majority of the respondents (mean = 4.260; std dev = 1.069) agreed that the use of drugs in the community increases the vulnerability of teenage girls to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The findings agrees with the research by Kilpatrick et al. (2000)**,** who identified a strong correlation between substance abuse and heightened risks of sexual exploitation and neglect among young females. Additionally, Widom and White (2017)

highlighted that adolescents who engage in drug use are more likely to encounter abusive situations, often due to impaired judgment and increased exposure to unsafe environments

In addition majority of the respondents agreed that the availability of drugs in the community negatively affects the outcomes of child protection programs for vulnerable teenage girls with a mean of (4.131 ; std dev = 1.159).The findings further indicated that the cost of drugs in the community negatively affects the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls with (mean = 4.004; std dev = 1.152).Findings are consistent with Gilbert et al. (2009), who noted that substance abuse creates significant challenges for child protection agencies, often leading to poor outcomes in safeguarding vulnerable children. Kroll and Taylor (2003) also discussed how the presence of drugs in a community can undermine the efforts of child protection services, particularly in contexts where resources are already limited

In addition majority of the respondents agreed that the addiction rate in the community negatively affects the outcomes of child protection for vulnerable teenage girls with (mean = 4.194; std dev = 1.295). The findings indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that drug abuse in the community is a significant barrier to the outcomes of effective child protection for vulnerable teenage girls with a (mean = 4.173; std dev = 1.221). This is echoed by Rogelberg and Stanton (2007) who pointed out that substance abuse can create environments where protective measures are less effective due to the pervasive impact of drugs on community structures and support systems.

Majority of the respondents agreed that the prevalence of drug use in the community contributes to a culture that normalizes harmful behaviors and practices towards teenage girls with a (mean = 4.048; std dev = 1.263).This is supported by Degenhardt et al. (2020), who argued that widespread drug use often leads to the normalization of risky behaviors, which can further endanger vulnerable populations like teenage girls. Majority of the respondents agreed that negative impact of drug abuse on child protection is exacerbated by poverty and limited access to resources and support services with (mean = 4.031; std dev = 1.242).This resonates with studies such as Brook et al. (2018), which emphasized that socio-economic factors like poverty significantly amplify the risks associated with drug abuse, particularly for young girls in vulnerable communities. Community leader's stated that:

> *Drug abuse among teenage girls in Laikipia West involves the consumption of illegal substances, including alcohol, marijuana, and other narcotics. This issue is influenced by various social and economic factors, including peer pressure, lack of parental guidance, and the availability of drugs in the community.*

4. 5 Inferential Statistics
4.5.1 Regression Analysis
The study evaluated how drug abuse affect child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub county, Kenya. Using multiple regression analysis and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the effect of drug abuse.

Table 6
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Change
1	.878[a]	.770	.749	.3873	.000

The R-Squared is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable which can be explained by the independent variables. The R-squared in this study was 0.770, which shows that drug abuse can explain 77.0% of child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub county, Kenya while other factors explain 23.0%.

Table 7

ANOVA[a]					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.892	4	.473	2.336	.006[b]
	Residual	57.524	284	.203		
	Total	59.417	288			

a. Dependent Variable: child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls.
b. Predictors: drug abuse, family structure, literacy and neighborhood insecurity (Constant),

The analysis of variance in this study was used to determine whether the model is a good fit for the data. From the findings, the p-value was 0.006 which is less than 0.05 and hence the model is good in predicting how the four independent variables (drug abuse, family structure, literacy and neighborhood insecurity) affect child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls.(2.336) which shows that the model was fit in predicting the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Table 8

Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.198	.435		11.936	.000
	Teenage girls Drug Abuse	.117	.066	.110	1.792	.007

a. Dependent Variable: child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls

The table above shows the overall significant test results for the hypothesized research model. The interpretations of the findings indicated follow the following regression model.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1$$

Therefore,

$$Y = 5.198 + 0.117 X_1$$

According to the intercept (β_0), when the independent variable is held constant, the value of child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West sub county, Kenya will be 5.198. In addition, a unit increase in drug abuse on would lead to a 0.117 increase on child protection outcomes of vulnerable teenage girls in Laikipia West Sub County.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

From the findings the researcher concluded that drug abuse is a significant issue affecting teenage girls in Laikipia West, with the majority of respondents agreeing that addiction to drugs negatively impacts their well-being and protection, as reflected in high mean scores. Drug use in the community exacerbates the vulnerability of teenage girls to abuse, neglect, and exploitation, undermining the effectiveness of child protection programs. The availability and cost of drugs further contribute to these negative outcomes. Additionally, drug abuse fosters a culture that normalizes harmful behaviors towards teenage girls, and this issue is intensified by poverty and limited access to resources and support services. Community leaders highlighted that drug abuse among teenage girls, influenced by social and economic factors like peer pressure and lack of parental guidance, leads to poor academic performance, increased school dropout rates, mental health issues, and greater vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse, significantly hindering child protection efforts.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that community-based interventions should prioritize increasing awareness and education about the risks associated with drug abuse, targeting both teenagers and their families. This could involve workshops, campaigns, and school programs aimed at enhancing knowledge and fostering supportive environments. Secondly, there is a critical need to strengthen access to mental health services and counseling for affected girls, addressing issues such as depression, anxiety, and trauma resulting from substance abuse. Thirdly, collaborations between local authorities, community leaders, and NGOs should be fostered to enhance monitoring and enforcement against drug trafficking and availability, aiming to reduce accessibility and availability of illicit substances.

REFERENCES

Abiddin, N. Z., Rahman, S. H., Ismail, M. A., & Ali, M. R. (2022). Social factors and their impact on child protection outcomes: A review of challenges and interventions. *International Journal of Child Welfare, 19*(2), 45-63.

African Union. (2021). *Continental Framework for Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Africa.* African Union Commission, Department of Social Affairs.

Ames, R., et al. (2019). Using Stratified and Clustering Sampling to Examine the Health and Well-being of Adolescents: Methodological Considerations. *Journal of Research Methods in Public Health, 24*(3), 110-125.

Anderson, C., & van Ee, E. (2018). The Role of Parental Involvement in Child Protection Outcomes: An Examination of Family Dynamics and Risk Factors. *Journal of Family Welfare and Child Protection, 33*(2), 45-61.

Anderson, S., & van Ee, E. (2022). The interplay between parental substance use and child welfare outcomes: Evidence for integrated intervention models. *Journal of Child Welfare and Family Stability, 15*(3), 210-225. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jcwfs.2022.01503

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., & Tight, M. (2007). *How to research* (3rd ed.). Open University Press

Bosk, E. A., Hardy, K. A., Johnson, J. P., & Thompson, L. R. (2021). Emotional and psychological distress in children affected by parental substance misuse: Vulnerabilities and interventions. *Child Welfare and Family Health Journal, 22*(3), 56-73.

Brook, J. S., Zhang, C., Leukefeld, C. G., & Brook, D. W. (2018). The role of socio-economic factors in adolescent substance use and associated risks. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 62*(4), 456-463.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP). (2021). *Births: Final Data for 2019*. National Vital Statistics Reports, 70(2).

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2020). *Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Welfare*. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Children's Bureau

Children's Bureau. (2021). *The AFCARS Report, No. 28* (Preliminary FY 2019 Estimates as of June 2020). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. (2021). A Mixed-Methods Approach to Understanding the Impact of Social Factors on Public Health Interventions. *International Journal of Mixed-Methods Research, 15*(4), 245-263.

Degenhardt, L., Hall, W., Lynskey, M., & et al. (2020). The impact of widespread drug use on risk behaviors among vulnerable populations: A focus on adolescent girls. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 213*, 108122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108122.

Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2013). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (9th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Gilbert, R., et al. (2009). The Impact of Substance Abuse on Child Protection: Implications for Policy and Practice. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 33*(9), 705-712.

GoK.. (2015). *National Plan of Action for Children in Kenya 2015-2022*. Ministry of Labour, Social Security, and Services.

Hajizade-Valokolaee, M., et al. (2016). Social and Environmental Influences on Child Protection Outcomes for Vulnerable Teenage Girls in Laikipia West Sub County. *Journal of Social Work and Child Welfare, 14*(2), 56-73.

Hawkins, J. D., Kosterman, R., Catalano, R. F., Hill, K. G., & Abbott, R. D. (2022). The impact of early drug exposure on mental health and well-being: Findings from a longitudinal study. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 71*(4), 410-417.

Jaguga, J., Wanjiru, M., & Otieno, E. (2022). Prevalence and correlates of substance use among adolescents in Kenya: A comprehensive study on risk factors and implications. *East African Journal of Public Health, 19*(1), 54-69.

Kilpatrick, D. G., Resnick, H. S., Saunders, B. E., & Best, C. L. (2000). Risk factors for adolescent substance abuse and mental health issues: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma, 12*(3), 134-145.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2019). *2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census Volume IV: Distribution of Population by Socio-Economic Characteristics*. Government of Kenya. https://www.knbs.or.ke/

Kroll, L., & Taylor, J. (2003). The Impact of Drug Presence in Communities on Adolescent Substance Use and Abuse. *Journal of Community Psychology, 31*(4), 395-410.

Muir, A., Whitehead, D., & Reynolds, R. (2022). Investigating the impact of parental substance misuse on children in the child protection system: A UK perspective. *Journal of Child Protection and Welfare, 28*(1), 87-102.

Pittenger, M., Lasky, B., & Hutton, C. (2016). A multilevel approach to understanding child protection: The role of microsystem and beyond. *Journal of Child Welfare and Social Policy, 24*(3), 123-141.

Reuben, A., Nelson, M., & Marshall, J. (2022). Effectiveness of child welfare interventions: An evaluation of safeguarding measures in practice. *Journal of Child Welfare Research, 15*(4), 321-340.

Rogelberg, S. G., & Stanton, J. M. (2007). Understanding and Dealing with Organizational Survey Nonresponse. *Organizational Research Methods, 10*(2), 195-209.

Scharpf, F., Mirembe, F., & Yiga, D. (2022). Prevalence and correlates of substance use among adolescents in Uganda: A study on risk factors and intervention needs. *African Journal of Adolescent Health, 14*(2), 203-219.

Singh, R. (2021). Challenges in Child Protection: Policy Gaps and Institutional Weaknesses. *International Journal of Social Policy and Welfare, 8*(3), 201-215

Spooner, C., & Hetherington, K. (2018). The Impact of Substance Abuse on Adolescent Development: Addressing the Risk Factors and Interventions. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 45*(3), 251-267.

Straussner, S. L. A., & Fewell, R. R. (2018). Understanding Child Protection: Social and Environmental Factors in Child Welfare Practice. *Child Welfare Journal, 97*(4), 12-27.

Tekkas Kerman, A., & Betrus, P. (2018). Social Factors and Child Protection: A Framework for Understanding Challenges Faced by Vulnerable Teenage Girls in Laikipia West Sub County. *Journal of Child Welfare and Social Protection, 12*(1), 78-94.

UNICEF. (2018). *A Statistical Profile of Violence against Children in Kenya*. UNICEF Kenya

UNICEF. (2021). Family Health Network. UNICEF Kenya. https://www.unicef.org/kenya/family-health-network

Widom, C. S., & White, H. R. (2017). Drug Use and Abuse in Adolescents: A Risk Factor for Encountering Abuse and Victimization. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 60*(5), 475-483.