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# Nurses' Awareness in Identification of Substance Abuse Among Adolescents in Nyarugenge District, Kigali-Rwanda

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**Abstract:**

Substance abuse is a self-destructive behaviour engaged in by individual including adolescents. Nurses play vital role in the care of individuals, families, and communities with problems related to the substance abuse. It is crucial that the nurses have adequate awareness identifying and preventing substance abuse. This study assessed nurses' awareness on identification of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District. The study adopted a descriptive and quantitative research design. The population comprises 118 nurses from Nyarugenge district primary health centers. Total enumeration was used for the study. A self-structured questionnaire which was validated was used to collect data. The study achieved a response rate of 98.3%. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. In regard to nurses' awareness of substance abuse 26.7% nurses had low awareness, 57.7% had moderate awareness and 15.5% had high awareness. The study showed that 26.7% of nurses had low ability, 58.6% of nurses had moderate and 14.6% had high ability in identification of substance abuse. The study showed that socio-demographic characteristics of nurses had a positive correlation with ability in identification of substance abuse, correlation (r = .760, p = .000). The study concluded that most of the nurses are moderately aware of substance abuse among adolescents while most of them too had moderate ability in identification of substance abuse in Nyarugenge District. It was recommended among others

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that there is a need to provide trainings for nurses about substance abuse and easy identification of substance abuse.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Identification, Nurses' Awareness, Substance Abuse,

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### *Introduction*

Substance abuse is a self-destructive behaviour engaged in by individuals. These are those behaviours that are bound to harm the individual physically and mentally. It is usually unintentional or it may be that the individual knows exactly what he/she is doing, but the urge is too strong for the individual to control. Other self-destructive behaviours are suicide, eating disorders, compulsive activities, impulsive habits, risky sexual behaviours, and self-injuries/harm, medical non-compliance, over speeding and compulsive gambling (Lindgren, et al, 2021). Self-destructive behaviours are classified as covert or overt. Covert self-destructive behaviours are those that occur in individuals whose intention is not in self-harm but such behaviours are likely to end in harming the individual. Examples are compulsive gambling, and overeating. Overt self-destructive behaviours are those behaviours that occur in the individual with the intention of self –harm. An example of such behaviours is suicide. adolescents are more at risk not just because they may turn to substance abuse, street living and petty crimes as a way of dealing with the difficulties they face but also because they are ambitious and are in danger of being exploited.

Adolescents are at high risk of engaging in self-destructive behaviours due to the stage of life where they are at, pulling away from their parents, rebelling, taking risks, trying to figure out who they are, who they are going to be and also trying to fit in with friends as they get closer to their peers (Pavarin & Consonni, 2017). Adolescents often feel inadequate compared to those they observe in the media, or even amongst their own friends causing them to struggle with low self-esteem. Adolescents are at the age of experimentation when they try to get their hands on substances and other new things just to see how they feel. According to Sullivan's stage of development, adolescence has three important stages including early adolescence, Pre-adolescence, and late adolescence (Hasan, et al., 2018). During each period, an adolescent develops psychologically, socially, intellectually and this has implications on their health as they are vulnerable to exposure to substance uses and abuse (Curtis, 2015). Adolescence period is heavily marked by the onset of and progression through puberty, greater autonomy and less self-regulation, and changes in parental and peer relationships (Walsh, et al, 2020).

All this health changes can affect adolescence decision making, and behaviours like engaging themselves in substance uses in order to satisfy themselves. According to Akanbi, et al, (2016); in order to prevent adolescence engagement into substance use the nurse must help them, to become aware of negative impacts that are brought to individuals because of substance abuse. Substance use in adolescents has been played as an important predictor of possible continued use of illegal substances in adulthood, together with other risk factors: specific lifestyles outside the home, early start of sexual activity, a greater amount of spending money, frequenting urban environments or areas with a high prevalence and availability of illegal substances, the use of substances at home, family composition, and the development of various forms of sociability (Pavarin & Consonni, 2017). Jadidi (2015) states that varied etiological reasons may contribute to the initiation and continuation of substance use, including genetic and social factors, family relationships and poor parenting practices. Research shows that the risk factors related to substance abuse are compounded by substance type, availability, poverty, political instability, urbanization, dysfunctional family,

violence, peer influence and limited income generating opportunities among others (Martinez, et al, 2019).

Substance use leads to poor performance academically thus destroying the basis for adolescents for further education and their future. While substance use generally begins during the adolescent years, there are known biological, psychological, social and environmental factors that contribute to the risk that begin accumulating as early as in pre adolescence period (Bierman, 2021). A study was conducted by Atieno, (2019) on understanding alcohol addiction, the use of Substance frequently was found to be a significant health problem, and a high number of economically active adults die or present serious complications. The abusive consumption of substances, may lead to demand for direct medical care (intoxication, overdose, or withdrawal), and above all, a high demand for indirect medical or psychiatric complications (Martinez, et al., 2019). The increasing consumption of substances in various age ranges, and among adolescents in particular, currently presents serious health problems to individuals, families, and societies. Although the search for substances that can alter mood, feelings and emotions is as old as the history of humanity itself, in modern society substance abuse occurs in larger proportions than at any other time in history (Edalati & Conrod, 2019).

Substance abuse has become one of the major public health concerns worldwide (Greene, 2020). Therefore, this creates opportunities to intervene very early in an adolescent's life and thereby preventing substance abuse and, along with them, a range of other related behavioural problems, long before they would normally manifest themselves. According to Al-Ghamdi and Nahed, (2019), there is an increasing awareness of the need for identification of substance abuse related problems. Nurses are often the first health care providers that individuals with substance abuse see in any health care settings. They help the clients regain their ability to function as fully as possible in a therapeutic environment. Nurses must be aware in identifying substance abuse and providing treatment and rehabilitation services for individuals with substance abuse related problems at all stages, from the community outreach through initial assessment, treatment and follow-up care.

The nurse is especially equipped to strengthen the bonds among citizens and parents, health agencies and schools, law enforcement and hospitals to assist the community in the design and implementation of its own prevention program (Greene, 2020). The nurse is able to facilitate the community's own vested interests in a manner congruent with its needs. As reported by Al-Ghamdi and Nahed, (2019), the nature and scope of nursing practice have traditionally included responses to health-conducive behaviour. The nurse can provide the knowledge of addiction and abuse and assist the community in its health enhancement by using addiction and nursing theory, interpersonal process, research competencies, and teaching skills. Awareness of nurses is an essential resource in the care of individuals, families, and communities with problems related to the use of psychoactive substances, and in order to carry out their activities, they must be apt in their clinical, cognitive, and relational skills. Seeking education on substances is a role that should be played by nurses in the context of their clinical practice, as well as in their teaching and research.

In Rwanda just like other countries of the world, the problem of substance abuse remains a major concern given the increased prevalence and complexity of the problem.

Notwithstanding tremendous efforts by government and Non-Government organizations (NGOs) to eradicate the problem, findings from recent studies on the subject indicate an increasing trend of substance abuse behaviours especially among the adolescents, since the most substance abusers afflicted part of the Rwandan population lies between 14 and 35 years of age. However, there is evidence that substance abuse rates decline with age where, as adolescents' lawbreakers mature the likelihood that they will still commit offenses declines. The most pronounced forms and manifestations of substance abuse include; vagrancy, petty theft, prostitution, habitual begging, and homelessness.

The use of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and other substances constitutes one of the outstanding causes of public health problems among adolescents in Rwanda. Most young people begin their use of substances with alcohol and cigarettes and later progress to more dangerous substances such as cannabis and cocaine. More than half (52.5%) of the adolescents interviewed confirmed to have used one or more of the substances at least once in their lifetime, 50.6% had consumed alcohol at least once in their lifetime, 10.6% had smocked tobacco, 4.4% had used cannabis, 0.5% had used other inhalants and solvents while 1% had used a mixture of several substances locally prepared, leading them into various conducts of substance. The youth not attending school or dropping out of school were more likely to use drugs than those who were students. Another alarming fact is that clients with substance induced mental illnesses who consult Ndera Neuropsychiatric Hospital range around (8%) annually.

It means giving attention to the full picture of substances, the environments in which they are used and in which people live, and the individuals who use those substances will provide a clue to nurses' awareness in identification of substance abuse. Through nurses' awareness in identification, they can minimize or eradicate substance abuse among adolescents. Researches have shown that it takes an adolescent only 3 to 15 months to move from stage of substance experiments to substance dependency or addiction whereas for adults it takes 8 to 10 years to move from experiment to dependency (Knight, et al, 2020). Nurses must have accurate information and knowledge on identification of substances abuse.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess nurses' awareness in identification of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District, Kigali-Rwanda. The specific objectives were to:

1. assess nurses' level of awareness of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District;
2. determine nurses' ability in identification of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District; and
3. determine association between socio-demographic characteristics of nurses and their ability in identification of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District;

***Research Questions***

1. What is the nurses' level of awareness of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District?
2. What is the nurses' ability in the identification of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District?

***Research Hypothesis***

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of nurses and their level of ability in identification of substance abuse.

***Methodology***

The research design that was employed was quantitative while the method was descriptive. This type of research design and method were adopted to allow systematic description of the facts, qualities and characteristics of the population of study as factually as possible to obtain reliable information about the variables under study. The total population of these five health centers was one hundred and eighteen (118) nurses. Total enumeration was used and there was no need for any sampling size determination. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in this study, hence only nurses among other healthcare workers were selected.

The data for this study were collected through the use of an adapted instrument. The study used a self-structured questionnaire which was divided into three sections, A, B and C to covers the variables of interests. The researchers used Google forms to administer the questionnaires among nurses in health centers of Nyarugenge District, Kigali-Rwanda. Google form is survey administration software that is included in the Google Docs Editors suite along with Google Docs, Google sheets, and Google Slides.

The instrument validation adopted face and content validity which was validated by experts of Tests and Measurement, and Nursing Science. The instrument was subjected to a pilot study among 12 nurses working in community Health center in Remera Health Center; Data collected were analysed using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Reliability coefficient scores of 0.857 for nurses' awareness of substance abuse and 0.856 for nurses' awareness in identification of substance abuse were deemed acceptable for the questionnaire.

The researchers used the primary method by sending forms to the participants through their email addresses. The researcher had 3 assistants that visited 5 selected Health centers to help researcher getting the emails of the Head-nurses and questionnaires well distributed to the emails of their staffs. Responses were only accessible to the researchers. The copies of questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher with the help of Google forms where data were stored to Google Drive. Collected data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. The data collected from this research were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the nurses' level of awareness of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District?

**Table 1: Nurses awareness of substance abuse** **N=116**

| Items | Yes | | No | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| Recently read books, or attend training | 22 | 19.0 | 94 | 81.0 |
| Alcohol is dangerous to the body | 112 | 96.6 | 4 | 3.4 |
| Drugs based on doctor's prescription | 101 | 87.1 | 15 | 12.9 |
| HIV-spread, homicide victimization, criminal activities | 108 | 93.1 | 8 | 6.9 |
| Cigarette smoking is usually abused by adolescents | 114 | 98.3 | 2 | 1.7 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Water is usually abused by adolescents | 6 | 5.2 | 110 | 94.8 |
| Alcohol is usually abused by adolescents | 116 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Milk is usually abused by adolescents | 0 | 0 | 116 | 100 |
| Marijuana is usually abused by adolescents | 116 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Opioid is usually abused by adolescents | 105 | 90.5 | 11 | 9.5 |

Table 1 shows that only 22(19.0%) nurses have recently read books, or attended training regarding substance abuse. Marijuana and alcohol have been reported by 116(100%) nurses as substances usually abused by adolescents in Nyarugenge District

**Table 2: Summary of nurses' level of awareness on substance abuse**

| **Awareness of substance abuse** | **Frequency(N)** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Low (1-5) | 31 | 26.7 |
| Moderate (6-7) | 67 | 57.7 |
| High(8-10) | 18 | 15.5 |
| **Total** | **116** | **100** |

Table 2 reveals that majority of nurses (57.7%) had moderate level while 31 (26.7%) nurses had low level and 18 (15.5%) nurses had high level of awareness of substance abuse.

**Research Question 2:** What is the nurses' ability in the identification of substance abuse among adolescents in Nyarugenge District?

**Table 3: Nurses ability in identification of substance abuse N=116**

| **Items Identification of** | **High Freq. (%)** | **Moderate Freq. (%)** | **Low Freq. (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alcohol abuse and dependency | 1(0.9) | 80(69.0) | 35(30.1) |
| Alcohol withdrawal State | 8(6.9) | 78(67.2) | 30(25.9) |
| Drug overdose | 6(5.2) | 84(72.4) | 26(22.4) |
| Mental illness from substance abuse | 5(4.3) | 78(67.2) | 33(28.4) |
| Specialists alcohol and drug services | 72(62.1) | 10(8.6) | 34(29.3) |
| Signs of relapse | 9 (7.8) | 76 (65.5 | 31(26.7) |

Table 3 shows that majority of nurses had moderate level of the ability in identification of substance abuse. The Table also shows that 72(62.1%) had high ability, while 10(8.6%) nurses had moderate and 34(29.3%)nurses had low ability in identification of specialists' alcohol and drug services.

**Table 4: Summary of nurses' ability in identification of substance abuse in adolescents**

| **Ability in identification of substance abuse** | **Frequency (N)** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Low (1-2) | 31 | 26.7 |
| Moderate (3-4) | 68 | 58.6 |
| High(5-6) | 17 | 14.6 |
| **Total** | 116 | 100 |

Table 4 reveals that majority of nurses 58.6% had moderate while 26.7% had low and 14.6% had high level of ability in identification of substance abuse.

**Test of Hypothesis**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics (age, Marital status, experience, education) of nurses and their ability in identification of substance abuse.

**Table 5: Pearson's correlation showing the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics (age, Marital status, experience, education) of nurses and their ability in identification of substance abuse**

| Variables | | Age of respondent | Marital status of respondent | Years of experience of respondents | Educational level of respondent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identification of alcohol withdrawal state | Pearson Correlation | .746** | .474** | .677** | .280** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .002 |
| | N | 116 | 116 | 116 | 116 |
| Identification of drug overdose | Pearson Correlation | .760** | .474** | .673** | .316** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .001 |
| | N | 116 | 116 | 116 | 116 |
| Identification of Mental illness from substance abuse | Pearson Correlation | .717** | .497** | .694** | .331** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 116 | 116 | 116 | 116 |
| Identification of specialists alcohol and drug services | Pearson Correlation | .702** | .481** | .661** | .278** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .002 |
| | N | 116 | 116 | 116 | 116 |
| Identification of signs of relapse | Pearson Correlation | .689** | .473** | .634** | .268** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .004 |
| | N | 116 | 116 | 116 | 116 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Discussion of Findings**

The result of this study shows that only 22(19.0%) nurses have recently read books, or attended training regarding substance abuse. This is in line with Mirlashari, et al, (2020) where nurses noted that there was no training programme regarding substance abuse and addiction in their curriculum, this is also consistent with the study by Pilge and Arabaci, (2018) where 80.2% of the respondents had never been educated on substance abuse. Marijuana and alcohol have been reported by 116(100%) nurses as substances usually

abused by adolescents in Nyarugenge District, this is in agreement with a report by Ojewale, (2019) more than 56.4million people in only 13 African countries, and across which nearly 42.8 million are estimated to use cannabis (Marijuana) at least annually. This is in line with a study conducted by Levy, (2020) where Alcohol and marijuana had 90% of being abused by adolescents followed by cigarette smoking from 114(98.3%) nurses but this result on cigarette smoking were inconsistent with results by Levy, (2020) results, where her study showed a decline in cigarette smoking on 5.7% in 2019.

Opioid reported by 105(90.5%) nurses this is in line with a study by Lloyd, et al, (2021) where the number of opioid overdoses has increased in recent years in several countries, in part due to the increased use of opioids in the management of chronic pain and increasing use of highly potent opioids appearing on the illicit drug market. In general, these findings were consistent with Mumba and Kraemer (2019), nurses' level of awareness regarding substance use and substance users, which revealed that 46% of participants' current level of awareness about alcohol and drug misuse, was satisfactory. Summary shows that majority of nurses (57.7%) had moderate level while 26.7% of nurses had low level and 15.5% had high level of awareness of substance abuse which is in line with the findings conducted by Maigari, (2014) in Nigeria to assess the nurses' knowledge and attitude towards substance abuse patient. They found out that, the total knowledge scores presented that 42.6% had good knowledge, 19.6% of nurses had very good knowledge, while 14.2% had poor knowledge.

The findings of the study also shows that majority of respondents 80(69.0%) have moderate level of awareness in identification of alcohol abuse and dependency and 35(30.1%) nurses have low level of awareness. 78(67.2%) nurses have moderate awareness in identification of alcohol withdrawal state while 8(6.9%) have high level of awareness. In regards to identification of specialists' alcohol and drug services 72(62.1%) nurses had high level of awareness while 34(29.3%) had low level of awareness. In summary, majority of nurses 58.6% had moderate while 26.7% had low and 14.6% had high level of ability in identification of substance abuse. This is in agreement with Nalini, et al (2018) as they revealed that young nurses 47% had moderate awareness on substance abuse identification. This is inconsistent with Souza et al., (2018) findings, where first and final year students participated to evaluate their level of awareness on identification of substance abuse, final year students showed high scores of awareness.

The findings of the study revealed that age of respondents had a high positive correlation with nurses' level of awareness in identification of substance abuse. On the relationship of age and identification of drug overdose, the table above shows that these variables are highly positive correlated ($r = .760$, $p = .000$). In regards to the marital status, the table shows that, there is a moderate positive correlation between marital status of respondents their level of awareness in identification of substance abuse, Marital status had a positive correlation with identification of mental illness from substance abuse ($r = .497$, $p = .000$). Years of experience of nurses also had high positive correlation with their level of awareness in identification of substance abuse; identification of mental illness and years of experience are correlated ($r = .690$, $p = .000$). The results also showed that there was low positive correlation between educational level of nurses and their level of awareness in identification of substance abuse. Therefore, there was significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics (age,

marital status, experience, education) of nurses and their level of awareness in identification of substance abuse. This is in line with Tarafdar and Gupta, (2018) who reported a positive significant relationship between nurses awareness of substance abuse and some socio-demographic characteristics such as age, education, and experience, according to their findings age (f = 0.675 p = 0.569); Qualification or educational level (f =0.314 p =0.731) and Experience (f =0.540 p =0.656).

***Conclusion***

The study concludes that most of the nurses are moderately aware of substance abuse among adolescents while most of them too had moderate ability in identification of substance abuse in Nyarugenge District. Substance abuse has remained a threat to humanity with varying health implications to individuals, families, communities and the nation at large. This menace has constituted a challenge to nursing profession. This has become imperative to nurses to be aware about substance abuse, identification, so as to be fully equipped to render quality nursing care to adolescents who abuse substance.

***Recommendations***

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study

1. There is a need to provide trainings for nurses about substance abuse and easy identification of substance abuse.
2. There is a need to enlighten parents, teachers and guardians on their role in identification of substance abuse among adolescents.
3. There is a need for training nurses how to use media and government authorities wherever is possible to increase public awareness on the impact of substance abuse on individual and the society. Nurses should be aware on targeting parents, teachers, and schools

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