

## Prevalence and associated risk factors of substance abuse by street kids in kitwe city centre

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### Abstract

Drug abuse has become a global phenomenon affecting almost every country though the extent and characteristics vary depending on the country in question. The most commonly used and abused substances are inhalants, cigarettes, alcohol and others. This abuse is believed to be associated with increasing amounts consumed, frequency of use and groups involved. Thus, a rapid assessment of children living on the streets of Kitwe, particularly the town centre was conducted in September 2019 by the informant with approval from the Ministry of Youths, Sports and Child Development under the auspices of a non-governmental organization called Friends of The Street Children (FOSC). The study sought to determine the prevalence and associated risk factors of substance abuse among the kids in Kitwe town centre.

**Methodology:** This was a cross sectional study which involved a total number of 73 participants. Information was obtained through the use of questionnaires from the street kids who were less than 18 years, that were found in the town centre of Kitwe. The data collected was entered and analysed using SPSS version 23.

**Results:** The findings of this study showed the prevalence of substance abuse being 93%, of which majority of those interviewed were between the ages of 10 to 15 years. The males dominated this age range and the commonly abused substance was Genkem alone (47%) and other substances. Genkem had a high usage rate as compared to other substances because of its availability and accessibility. It was noted the usage of Genkem was mainly for the purpose of warmth alone (26%), warmth, fun and peer pressure (39.7%). With regards to their social welfare it was established amongst themselves that the usage of these substances attributed to negative effects such as bad temper, depression (38.4%), family relationship breakdown (53.4%), violence, accidents and reduction in productivity (38.8%).

**Conclusion:** In this study, the findings revealed a high prevalence of substance abuse among the street kids in Kitwe. It is worth noting that there was a high addiction of substances which has had an adverse effect on the growth of the economy of Zambia.

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