

Peer Group Influence, Alcohol Consumption, and Secondary School Students' Attitudes
towards School

Evarist Mukama

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Declaration

I, Evarist Mukama, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university for the award of Master of Arts in Counselling or any other degree.

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Evarist Mukama

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Date

Approval

This work has been approved for submission in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Counselling of Makerere University.

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Dr. Peter Baguma

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Date

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Paskali Ngambeki and Daria Bisheshemwire who were my inspiration to my priestly vocation and to my sister Concordia Tumureebire who have been the strongest pillar of support throughout my studies.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Peter Baguma of Makerere University who has been of great assistance in coming out with this work. I thank him for the guidance, patience, tolerance, and technical advice rendered to me when things were tough and at any time when approached. Special thanks go to Mr Leon Matagi for his special help that he rendered me. Gratitude also goes to the Institute of Psychology staff whose tireless and courageous efforts made me to accomplish this work.

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Abstract

The present study was intended to find out the relationship between peer group influence, alcohol consumption, and students' attitudes towards school. Specific objectives were to establish the relationship between peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school, secondary, to establish the relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption and to find out the relationship between alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school. The study adopted a correlational research design. Questionnaires to measure peer group influence, alcohol consumption, and students' attitudes towards school were administered to 200 senior four students from four government-aided secondary schools in Mbarara District and they were selected using simple random sampling technique. Spearman's rank order correlation was used to test the three hypotheses. The findings of the study indicated that:

- There was no significant relationship between peer group influence and students' attitudes towards school.
- There was no significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption.
- There was a positive significant relationship between alcohol consumption and students' attitudes towards school.

It was recommended that school administrators should sensitize the students about the effects of peer influence and alcohol consumption. Other main stakeholders in schools like the Ministry of Education should take an active part in designing policies to govern schools so as to control the behaviour of students. Local communities around

schools together with the parents who have children in those schools should be involved and be sensitized to cooperate with the administration in ensuring that students observe school rules. And lastly, through the department of guidance and counseling, the Ministry of Education could design counseling programs focusing on alcohol to be adopted by all schools.

Chapter One

Introduction

Background

When children move out from the family to child care centres, school, and the community at large, they begin to form attachments, and friendships emerge through their play. Even infants and toddlers are observed reacting to other infants by touching them, by crying when others cry and later by offering nurturance or comfort. By about age three, early friendships begin to form and children's peers begin to have a more lasting influence (Barbour, Barbour & Scully 2002). These children begin to think and act like their friends and they begin to see that there are other values, opinions, and rules besides those set by their parents.

In Uganda, when a child begins school he or she moves from the family environment and begins to relate more to his or her peer group. In a peer group, it is the place where the young people feel accepted and where they feel free to speak of things important to them. Such groups have a considerable influence on the behaviour and attitudes of the individual.

A classical experiment by Solomon Asch explains how a group of individuals can influence somebody in making a decision. Suhttleworth (2008) noted that the Asch experiment was designed to test how peer pressure would influence the judgment and individuality of a test subject to conform to the majority. It was found out that people frequently followed the majority judgment, even when the majority was wrong. It was further noted that people often accept to be influenced just for the desire to achieve a sense of security within a group that is of a similar age, culture, religion, or educational status. Any unwillingness to be influenced carries with it the very risk of social rejection and this is what young people fear most (Dewey, 2008).

Young people in their adolescence join different peer groups and identify themselves with these groups by participating in their activities in order not to be rejected. A peer group is a source of great influence during the time of adolescence (Chauhan, 2007). In a contemporary society, peer groups have become an increasingly important context in which adolescents spend time. Modernization has led more and more to age segregation-in schools, work place, and in the community. How much time one spends with friends will play a great part in the development of the adolescent into the mature adult (Barbour, Barbour & Scully 2002).

As children grow older from the age of 12 years onwards, the importance of parents decreases as a reference group and as a model for conformity and they begin to relate more with their age mates. Although parental influence is important for some young people than for others, peer influence is a more dominant factor for many teenagers (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005)..

Peer groups are an important influence throughout one's life, but they are more critical during their developmental years of adolescence. There is often a controversy about the influence of a peer group versus parental influence, particularly during adolescence. The power of the peer group becomes more important when the family relationships are not close or supportive. If the parents are largely unavailable, the children may turn to their peer group for emotional support. Most children in this situation are not discriminatory about the kind of group they join. They will often turn to a group that accepts them, even if the group is involved in illegal or negative activities. For some young people, the need for affiliation or closeness is often greater than the need to "do the right thing" (Barbour, Barbour & Scully 2002).

In all societies since the beginning of time, adolescents have learned to become adults by observing, imitating and interacting with the grown ups around them. The adolescents today are socialized more within the confines of their peers than with adults (Steinberg, 1996). Adolescence is the most important period of human life and the society's success in various

fields of life depends a lot on how this group has been shaped and it is the focus of this study. Adolescence is a period of transition during which change in group belongingness from childhood to adulthood takes place and creates a gap in an individual that contribute to uncertainty of behaviour, and it is characterized by introduction into risk behaviours like violence, unprotected sexual intercourse, and drunk driving (Muuss, 2000). Chauhan (2007) also explained that adolescence is the transitional period of life in which the child experiences a number of changes. He further explained that in this period, great changes occur in all developmental dimensions of the individual, which creates disequilibrium in the personality. During this period of adolescence, young people begin to separate themselves from their parents to join people of their same age.

The adolescent spends much of his time with the members of his peer group. He follows the ideals of the group; he wants fully to be accepted. Nothing can be more devastating to the adolescent than to be rejected by his age mates (Vishala, 2008). Adolescents are mainly influenced by their peers in such a way that their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors are conditioned by what is conceived to be okay by other people. Muzafer Sherif studied how people were influenced by other people's opinions. He carried out this study by performing an experiment and observing individuals involved in what was called the auto kinetic effect experiment. The auto kinetic effect is a phenomenon of human visual perception in which a stationary, small point of light in an otherwise dark environment appears to move (Dewey, 2008).

The stage of adolescence tends to be the most difficult one throughout the life cycle for it is characterized by dramatic physical, psychological and social changes that are often not well understood by adults. During this transition, the adolescents face the dilemma of a desire to become socially acceptable adults. Adolescents are members of a minority group at home, but in the peer group, their status is equal to that of others in the group. At home adults largely

determine the course of events, whereas within the group they enjoy some degree of self-determination. They are not only free from adult control; they are free from what they consider as over protection (Lindgren, 1980).

Peer groups to which the adolescents relate with provide social reference points for these adolescents. Palmer (2008) noted that peer groups are among the most significant social contexts in adolescence. They help to establish norms of behaviour and normally develop a culture that manifests itself in aspects like language, dress, hairstyle, sports, and drinking habits. Adolescents often experience peer influence to be like other peers at a time when they are trying to be more independent (Tutamwebwa, 2006). Peer influence is the pressure, planned or unplanned, exerted by peers to influence personal behaviour (Palmer 2008) and peer pressure is the persuasive influence your friends have over you, which can cause you to associate with certain people, to wear certain clothes, to use certain words and to use certain language (Palmer, 2008).

Peer groups create and maintain a culture separate from home in which adolescents are raised. Many young people spend more time with peers than with parents or other family members (Gara 2006). In Uganda, teachers often write statements on pupils' reports like "he is capable of better work if he or she changes his or her friends" or "poor work due to bad company" (Tizifa, 1993, p. 1).

Peers can exert extraordinary influence over each other into the formation of certain behaviours, among which is alcohol consumption (Yeh, 2006). Peer group influence has been recognized as a powerful socializing agent, from the traditional societies to the present modern societies (Tizifa, 1993). It was further observed that negative peer influences contribute a lot to increased use of substances (Johnson, O'Malley, & Bachman, 2000). Peer group influence is a common source for the involvement in negative activities for adolescents and friends' influence is a major factor in adolescence's alcohol use (Berndt, 1996).

It is within the peer group that the young person learns to relate to different roles and to experiment with interpersonal interaction skills that will eventually transfer to the world of adults (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). The peer group is not a formalized, institutionalized agent of society; it has no legal definitions, no formally ascribed functions or duties, yet it pervades the life of the adolescent to a greater extent as he grows older, and it performs increasingly big functions in teaching him the ways of behaviour (Yeh, 2006).

Alcohol consumption continues to be one of the most risk behaviours engaged in by the adolescents (Arata, Stafford & Tims, 2003) and it is one of the common habits among peer groups that cause psychological and social problems. The world over, alcohol consumption is increasingly becoming a social problem of phenomenal proportions (Hewitt, 1988), and about 54% of all adolescents have drunk an alcoholic beverage at least once in their lifetime (Buddy, 2008).

Nakamyuka (1982) found that, in Uganda, alcohol consumption among students is on the increase and becoming a major point of concern. She discovered that students are mostly influenced to start consuming alcohol by their friends, and this may affect these students' attitudes towards school. This study tried to establish the relationship between peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school among secondary school students in Mbarara District.

Problem

Most secondary schools in Uganda and Mbarara in particular are experiencing a lot of continued unrest; the general behaviour among secondary school students is growing from bad to worse, early pregnancies are reported among secondary school girls, strikes in secondary schools are increasing leaving school property destroyed and some staff members injured, and some students are often times caught drunk. The Ministry of Education has noted that there is substance abuse in schools and moral decadence (Nakazibwe, 2001).

In our Ugandan schools today, (Mukisa, 2002) observed that students who engage in alcohol consumption are usually indisciplined and use abusive language towards teachers and fellow students, they engage in sexual promiscuity which may lead to unwanted pregnancies, and these students are often involved in thefts, strikes, destruction of school property, and hooliganism; and this kind of behavior may affect the students' attitudes towards school, which may lead to some of these students dropping out of school, which will affect their future careers. Parents are worried of their children's lives and school administrators are sometimes scared of what goes on because they are the targets most of the times. Students are key players in this saga, and those who get involved are either influenced by their friends, or are under the influence of alcohol, or still, those students are likely to have low opinion of school and are likely to consider school as a waste of time.

There is an outcry on the behavior of some of the students in some secondary schools and people are wondering what could be behind all this indiscipline among some students. At the end of it all, the general attitudes of students are affected and this will bear a serious impact on their future. Peer group influence is known to have an effect on the lives of young people, positively or negatively depending on which group one joins. When children begin school, they join some peer groups and these groups may have certain influence upon these children among which is

alcohol consumption. A young person who is attracted to a peer group that values antisocial activity inevitably finds that resisting the encouragement of peer group members to engage in negative behaviour is a very difficult task. In Uganda today, alcohol consumption among students in secondary schools is one of the issues of concern and this is largely attributed to peer group influence, and the habit of alcohol consumption among students may negatively affect these students' attitudes towards school (Basangwa, 1994). The relationship between peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school is not well known. If knowledge is not obtained and interventions against alcohol consumption put in place, students may continue to suffer alcohol problems thus threatening the future of the students.

The study sought for further understanding of whether the problem of alcohol consumption is related to peer group influence and whether this affects secondary school students' attitudes towards school here in Uganda. Most of what is known now regarding peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school is largely in other parts of the world. This study wants to find out the relationship between peer group influence, alcohol consumption and students' attitudes particularly among secondary school students in Mbarara District.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between peer group influence, alcohol consumption, and secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Establish the relationship between peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school.
2. Establish the relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption.
3. Find out the relationship between alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

Geographical Scope

Geographically, the study was carried out in Mbarara District, which is in the southwest of Uganda. It was conducted in selected secondary schools in the district, both from rural and urban areas of the district. Mbarara District was selected as an area where this study was conducted simply because there is relatively a high rate of alcohol use among students in this District and so the researcher wanted to find out the relationship of this with their (students) attitudes towards school. Secondly, there are quite a number of government aided senior secondary schools in the District but most of the students drop out of school, (Mbarara District Education Report 2003), so the researcher wanted further to find out what could be related to the dropping out of these students.

The government aided senior secondary schools were selected from both rural and urban areas for the purposes of having views of students from rural secondary schools and urban secondary schools because the environment where the school is located has a lot to offer to students in that school. The surroundings of a place and what takes place there normally have an influence on the people that live around. So what takes place in the surroundings of a school may

have an influence on students because it may contribute to the nurturing of substance use, and impairment of educational focus (Johnson, O'Malley & Bachman, 2000), if the students copy the habits and behaviours of the inhabitants.

Content Scope

This study covered peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school

In this study, peer group influence was defined as the force of people who share similar social characteristics, such as age, class, occupation, education and interact on a level of equality, have on others and significantly influence the behavior of those individuals (Guzman, 2005).

Alcohol consumption was defined as the drinking of beverages containing ethyl alcohol (Tikkanen, 2008). Alcoholism can be subdivided into several types of alcohol consumers, each portraying characteristic unique to their group and sometimes sharing some same traits as other groups of drinkers. Quinten (2009) outlined various types of alcohol consuming which include the following;

Hazardous drinking whereby those involved consume alcohol in excess and they cause harm to themselves, to others and their relationships with others is endangered. The second type is Physical dependence category and this is whereby the bodies of physically dependant drinkers need alcohol to keep off the onset of withdrawal symptoms. There is also Psychologically dependent drinkers who use alcohol to induce a desirable mindset. They may consume alcohol as a way to escape stress, relieve social anxieties, to relax or to simply combat boredom. Lastly, there is social drinking and this is whereby social drinkers tend to practice more responsible drinking and will often consume smaller amounts of alcohol at a much slower pace than other

drinkers. Many students who are involved in alcohol consumption are social drinkers because they are in most cases taken up by the social pressure of their friends.

Students' attitudes towards school were defined as the feelings that students express towards school and education as a whole (Morrell 1998), whether they value education positively or negatively.

Significance

The findings of this study provided knowledge on peer group influence and alcohol consumption and how these affect secondary school students' attitudes towards school and if students read this information, it can help them change their behavior.

Education policy makers, in the Ministry of Education and Sports, school administrators and members of boards of governors could use the findings of this study to make guidelines and policies to help students to be more responsible and successful in school by setting rules and guidelines prohibiting the use of alcohol in school premises.

Churches could use the findings of the study to design programs that will help peers to become responsible adults. Such programs could be getting involved in various religious associations and groups, and taking an active role in church activities like singing. This will have an influence on peer interactions, such that instead of spending time consuming alcohol, this time will be spent promoting church programs like religious movements.

Non-governmental organizations could use the findings of this study to sensitize young people to avoid alcohol consumption through programs like behavior change program and youth alive program.

Guidance counselors in schools could also use the findings of this study as they carry out counseling among students who may be under the influence of peers and alcohol. It is hoped that this study is going to contribute to the stock and scope of literature existing on peer group influence, alcohol consumption, and secondary school students' attitudes towards school. This is going to help policy makers in schools and outside schools to have a point of reference.

The findings of this study might help future researchers to direct more research in related fields like to find out the effects of peer groups and alcohol consumption on secondary school student's performance in school. And finally, this dissertation will act as a reference material for future researchers.

Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1 below.

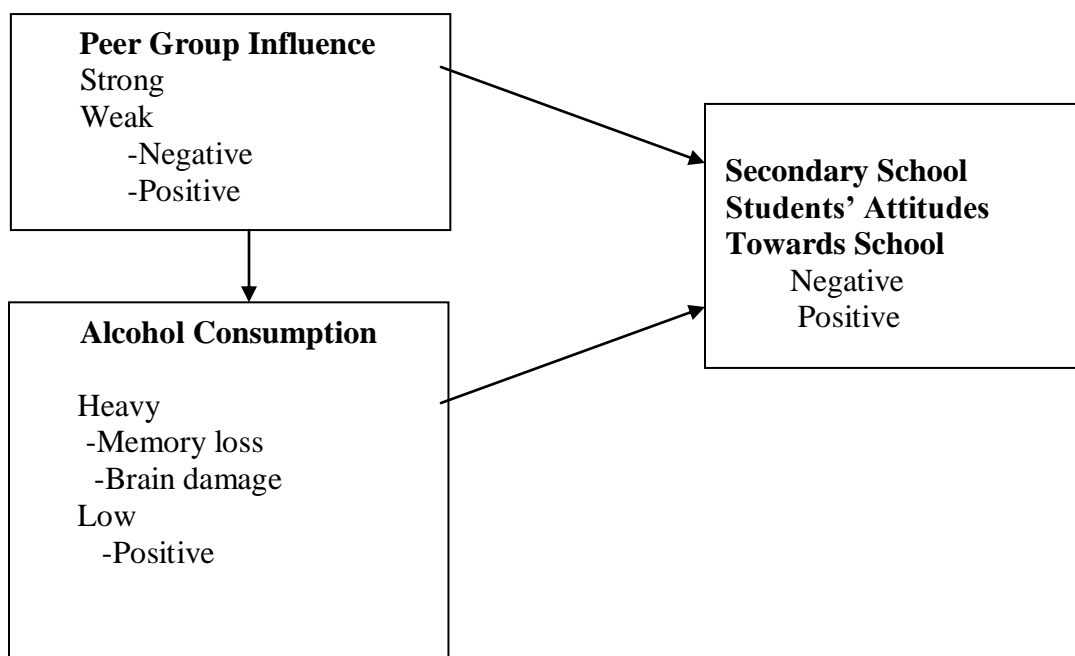


Figure 1: The relationships between peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

The conceptual framework in figure 1 above shows peer group influence and alcohol consumption, as independent variables, while secondary school students' attitudes towards school is a dependent variable. It was anticipated that peer group influence affected secondary school students' attitudes towards school positively or negatively; depending on the type of group one joined. On the other hand, peer group influence leads to alcohol consumption, and this could affect secondary school students' attitudes towards school (See figure 1 on page 14).

Strong peer group influence can either be positive or negative and if it is positive, it can affect secondary school students in a positive way while if it is negative, it can also affect secondary school students in a negative way. Positive peer group influence will induce students to like school, participate in school activities, and improve on academic performance. If the

influence is negative, students will dislike school, there will be poor academic performance and dropping out of school will be the immediate option.

Peer group influence can lead to alcohol consumption and heavy consumption of alcohol will result into having negative attitudes towards school can affect secondary school students' attitudes towards school and low consumption of alcohol will bear having positive attitudes towards school.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter expounds on the themes contained in the conceptual framework by looking at the studies related to these themes and below is a review of these related studies.

Peer Group Influence and Secondary School Students' Attitudes Towards School

Peer group influence plays an important role in the academic achievement of adolescents. It is well recognized that the extent to which an adolescent succeeds in meeting the school's expectations has an important and direct bearing upon his status in the peer group (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). The peer group of an adolescent constitutes a world of its own with its customs, traditions, manners, and even its own language. Peers can exert extraordinary influence over each other particularly in regard to academic aspirations and attitudes towards school (Gara & Davis, 2006).

Peer group influence upon secondary school students' attitudes towards school can be supportive of the formal organizational norms concerning the importance of academic achievement. The more cohesive the peer group is, the greater the influence on its members (Dougherty & Hammack, 1990).

Lindgren (1980) observed that, individuals need to relate to their peers for they are dependent on their attitudes, feelings, and expectations to help them construct their own views of the world. Farmer (2010) also affirms that peers are not inherently positive or negative, they can be both good and bad. He further said that, peer friendships, group interactions, and influences are a part of positive development. Young people learn to evaluate themselves through the eyes

of their peers, they get feedback on their personal characteristics, they gain social skills and confidence and they learn how to defer personal gratification to group goals. Young people also learn how to make themselves more attractive and interesting to others, they learn to control their aggressive reactions in the interest of fitting with others. And that peers can also offer an opportunity to develop various social skills, such as leadership, teamwork and empathy.

But Burton, Ray, & Mehta (2003) noted that these peers pose an influence that is a common source for negative activities for students like experimentation with drugs, drinking, vandalism and stealing. It was noted that some students often perceive the school as another symbol of adult authority, full of restrictions and rules, and quite often they decide to drop out (Namugembe, 1999). It is worth mentioning that individual students who hold negative views towards school and opt to drop out of school bring emotional frustration and shatter the expectations people had in them for their future success.

Lindgren (1980) further observed that an individual's attitudes towards school initially tend to be positive; learning becomes an exciting adventure as new skills are discovered and vistas open, but later something happens. Perhaps learning tasks are increasingly repetitive, teachers become less supportive and permissive, or perhaps children themselves develop goals and motives that are in conflict with those of the school. It is at this stage that peer group influence begins to set goals that compete with those of the school. The school becomes less interesting and attractive, and negative peer group influence sets in.

However, in a report that was compiled which was code-named, Raising the Educational Achievement of Secondary School Students (REASSS, 1995), it was observed that high dropout rates of students, poor attendance, and frequent conflicts between students and teachers and among students themselves often signal alienation among students as peers and need to build their commitment to schooling. Those who dropout of school often attribute this to teachers who

do not care about them. Teachers are potentially builders of students' attitudes towards school. This is in agreement with what Hinds, et al. (1999) noted, that teachers wield great potential to shape students' attitudes towards school. This means that peer groups may not only be the ones who influence students' attitudes to school, but also teachers and parents have that potential.

In the report about raising the educational achievement of secondary school (REASSS, 1995) it was observed that parents try to influence their children's academic development and motivate these children to become successful learners, but Lindgren (1980) noted that these children find peer groups more attractive because they feel as inferior members at home with their parents. But when they are in peer groups at school, they feel that their status is equal to that of others in the group and they enjoy a degree of self-determination going by the standards of the peer group and this may influence their attitudes towards school. While on one hand, Black (2002) concurred with Lindgren and pointed out that though peer groups can negatively affect young peoples' attitudes towards school, he maintains that peer group influence can be positive. He observed that, peer groups can offer emotional benefits, such as affection, love, understanding, and support from friends and if these friends are intelligent, they might help the individual students academically.

Although schools were perceived as places in which one prepared for future vocations, some students never saw them as places in which one could develop talents, pursue interests and improve social skills. Instead, there was an increasing tendency to express dislike for the academic aspects of school by the young people under the influence of their peers (Dunn, J., & Cutting, A. L. 2002). In this regard, Coleman (1991) contended that students judged sports, popularity, good looks, music, and having a good time to be more significant than academic achievement while at school. However, Gara & Davis (2006) upheld that schools are the breeding grounds for future academic prosperity and advancement.

Though some of the above literature shows that peer group influence has influence on some secondary school students' attitudes towards school, it does not point out the relationship between the two. This study tried to find out if there was any relationship between peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

Peer Group Influence and Alcohol Consumption

The subject of alcohol consumption remains a socially defined moral issue (Hyde, 2001) and this consumption of alcohol is steadily gaining prominence especially among the youth of school going ages (National Coalition Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse report 'NACODA', 2007). In his study about the role of peer influence across risk behaviours, Kimberly (2002) observed that if friends do not engage in activities like alcohol consumption, teens might be less likely to engage in it. Chalder, Elgari, and Bennett (2005) agreed that peer group influence is a key determinant in causing alcohol consumption and this influence could be enhanced by the drinking behaviours of the individuals in peer groups themselves. However, it is good to note that the type of peer group one joins will determine the kind of influence one will get. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) found that as young people grow, they begin to surrender to the influences of their peers as they shed off their parental orientation and replace it with dependence on their peers. Friends may encourage their peers to engage in undesirable acts like fighting, alcohol drinking, and sexual promiscuity.

Groups bestow rewards and give approval to individuals who conform; commendation is given rather than censure. If groups use this type of influence to bring the members into conformity, Bany (1994) pointed out that individuals are unaware of the influence and the changes that are being effected in their behaviour. Such influence develops unquestioning loyalty

to the group and its standards, beliefs, habits and expectations. What the group sanctions, individuals will approve, what it condemns, individuals will discard. However, Kimberly (2002) observed that peer groups might influence an individual to shape his or her normative beliefs and interpretation of information regarding risk activities.

Kandel, Kessler, & Margulies (1978) pointed out that children, who are friends consistently, have similar attitudes and engage in similar habits that include alcohol consumption. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986), and Barcett et al. (1988) argued that friends' influence is a major factor in adolescents' alcohol use, which brings delinquent behaviours. As a whole, they noted that, peer group influence is the common source for the involvement in negative activities.

Foxcroft and Lowe (1991) reported that social interaction with peers is a key determinant that results into alcohol consumption among the adolescents. This rhymes with what was reported in the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Journal (NIAAA) that peer groups contribute a lot in shaping students' attitudes towards drinking (NIAAA, 1997). Similarly, a survey carried out in Uganda by the National Coalition Against Alcohol & Substance Abuse found out that adolescents begin drinking alcohol when they are still young (NACODA, 2007) and this has got some far reaching consequences like getting addicted to alcohol, and chances are that such children may consequently influence their friends to indulge in alcohol consumption while at school. Due to this fact, school administrators are trying their level best to promote counseling programs and to have counselors available at school who could help students who have various problems including problems regarding alcohol (NACODA, 2007). The current study intended to establish whether there is a relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption and whether these affected secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

Alcohol Consumption and Secondary School Students' s Attitudes Towards School

Today, alcohol is widely available and aggressively promoted throughout society. Its use continues to be regarded by many people including the young, as a normal part of growing up. Alcohol consumption is a major concern for parents, policymakers, teachers and public health officials and alcohol consumption can initially generate a pleasant sensation of euphoria and a fall in anxiety levels (Royce, Singleton, & Wolfson, 2009). These sensations can eventually lead to the perpetuation of alcohol consumption to the extent that one becomes alcohol dependant and this brings some consequences upon an individual. Hewitt (1988) found that when the level of alcohol consumption continues to increase, a number of physical and psychological consequences like loss of memory, dementia, and insomnia also rise. Duarte and Molina (2004) also stipulated that the consequences of alcohol consumption include damage to the liver and brain, thus reducing concentration and reaction levels. The cognitive process can be damaged and psychological disorders can be provoked. This may lead to an individual's disorientation as far as school is concerned.

Drinking alcohol socially is a regular part of life for many people. However, some individuals go beyond drinking socially and end up in abusing alcohol by drinking irresponsibly and they turn out to be alcoholics. Alcohol consumption can have devastating effects on the academic performance of students for it reduces the level of concentration (Royce, Singleton, & Wolfson, 2009). It was observed by Ngabirano (2003), that alcohol consumption results into consequences that include anxiety disorders, depression, insomnia, violent behaviour, memory lapses, mental incapacity, and dementia. A student who experiences the mentioned consequences

due to alcohol consumption, his level of concentration on academic matters will become poor and school will seem to be a burden to him and will eventually opt to drop out of school.

Tibamanya (1973) found that alcohol consumption may involve interference with young members of the society, weakening social control, and all this causes widespread delinquency and deviance. Alcohol consumption develops negative consequences including impairment of school performance at school, legal problems, accidents, and interpersonal difficulties. Alcohol use has strongly been linked to risky sexual behaviour, delinquent behaviour, and low school achievement (Royce, Singleton, & Wolfson, 2009). Similarly, Standridge et al. (2004) noted that alcohol consumption adversely affect some organ systems like the liver and kidneys and worst of all, the brain. Furthermore, Barret (2006) observed that alcohol consumption results into distortion of memory, brain damage, stealing, and receiving low grades in class.

Furthermore, Klauke (1988) observed that the use of alcohol by students poses a serious threat to society, to the students themselves, and to the educational process. All this will eventually affect the individual who is in school and will have negative implications towards school. A student who is to succeed in school needs concentration, focus, discipline, and hard work with no worries and interruptions as mentioned above.

Conclusion:

The above literature about peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school point to the fact that young people are in a position of being induced to bend towards a certain direction regarding their academic aspirations depending on the circumstantial influences like peer groups and alcohol consumption.

This study tested the following hypotheses:

- 1. Peer group influence is significantly related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school.**
- 2. Peer group influence is significantly related to alcohol consumption.**
- 3. Alcohol consumption is significantly related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school.**

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discussed the main methodological aspects that this study followed. The aspects included research design, population, sampling techniques, research instruments, procedure, data management, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study was mainly a quantitative study and it adopted a correlational research design. A correlation research design is a study that describes the degree to which the variables are related. Correlation method tries to determine whether and to what degree a relationship exists between two or more variables (Amin, 2005). This study adopted this method because it was interested in establishing whether there was a relationship between peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school; peer group influence and alcohol consumption; alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

Population

The sample population of this study were 200 senior four secondary school students aged 14-20 and the total number of students in senior four in the 4 selected schools was 440 students and all of them were able to write and understand english language. The term population refers to a group of people that a researcher has in mind from whom information can be obtained (Enon, 1998). But broadly speaking, Amin (2005) defines population as the complete collection or universe of all the elements that are of interest in a particular investigation. He further says that it is a totality of objects or individuals having one or more characteristics in common that are

of interest to the researcher. In this study, senior four secondary school students who were in government-aided secondary schools in Mbarara District were the targeted population. Four (4) schools were selected from the eighteen (18) government-aided senior secondary schools in Mbarara District using simple random sampling technique.

Study Sample size and Sampling Technique

The study was carried out in 4 out of the 18 government-aided secondary schools in Mbarara District. These 4 schools were selected using simple random sampling technique, whereby the names of the 18 secondary schools were written on pieces of paper, names of rural schools were placed in one container and names of urban schools were placed in another container and two schools were selected from each container to get the four schools. The reason why names of rural schools and urban schools were separately selected was because the environment where the school is located might influence secondary school students' attitudes towards school. And so selecting two schools from rural areas and two schools from the urban areas would enable the researcher to get information of secondary students in schools located in rural areas and urban setting regarding their attitudes towards school, depending on the peer influence and alcohol consumption.

The total number of students in senior four in the 4 selected schools was 440 students and the researcher used the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to determine the sample size, which was to be 200 participants. These participants were selected using systematic sampling technique to get the respondents. Systematic sampling is one in which every k-th element of the sampling frame is selected. In this case, the researcher used a class list of senior four students in each school to get respondents, and every 2nd name on the class list was selected until 50 students

were got from each school. The sample size for the study was 200 students and 50 students were selected from each school in senior four and all these added up to 200 respondents.

Senior four students were particularly the ones selected because they are the ones at the end point of O'level education where peer influence is high being in the adolescent stage (Kimberly, 2002). Secondly, senior four students are the ones who tend to consume alcohol as a way of relaxing their minds after study following the practice of some of their parents after work (Ngabirano, 2003). It is also a decisive class, where individuals make major decisions whether to continue with education or to drop out.

Research Instruments

Alcohol Consumption.

To measure alcohol consumption, Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (RAPI) was used. RAPI is a 10-item (modified) self-administered instrument for assessing adolescent alcohol consumption. It was designed by White & Labouvie (White & Labouvie, 1989) and it has a reliability of .92 and this high score of the instrument meant that the instrument was suitable for use.

Attitudes Towards School.

To measure the Secondary School Students' Attitudes towards School, the Feelings about School (FAS1) Instrument was used. FAS1 is a tool for measuring feelings about school and this instrument was formulated by Bills (Bills, 1975). The instrument is reliable with internal consistency of .89.

Peer Group Influence.

To measure the peer group influence, the Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) was used and this instrument was prepared by Clasen and Brown (Clasen, & Brown, 1985). This was a 22-paired items describing how peers influence one another.

Establishing reliability and validity in Ugandan situation:

Reliability

A pilot test was carried out to ensure that instruments were suitable to be used within the Ugandan context and in order to establish their reliability. Twenty senior four students from one of the secondary schools in Kampala city, which is outside the study area, were selected using simple random sampling and questionnaires were administered to them. The reliability was tested using Cronbach's reliability coefficient and Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (RAPI) Instrument was found to have a reliability of .92, Feelings About School (FAS1) Instrument had a reliability of .71, and Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) had a reliability of .72. Given that all the instruments were above .70, they were considered sufficiently reliable for the purpose of this study.

To ensure that the instruments were valid, one university research lecturer from the Institute of Psychology in Makerere University and one MA graduate candidate in [counseling](#) who was working as an assistant lecturer in Makerere University in the Institute of Psychology were also asked to look at the questionnaires and judge whether they were suitable for use basing on the population of the study. The two were asked to comment on whether the questions were understandable to the population under study and whether they addressed the objectives. The following were the content validity index (CVI) of each particular instrument;

(1) Content Validity Index (CVI) of Alcohol Consumption

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of rated items}} = \frac{8}{10} = .80$$

Total number of rated items 10

(2) Content Validity Index (CVI) of Attitudes Towards School

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of rated items}} = \frac{15}{20} = .75$$

Total number of rated items 20

(3) Content Validity Index of Peer Group Influence

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of rated items}} = \frac{18}{22} = .818$$

Total number of rated items 22

(Source: Tojib, D. R and Sugianto, L. (2006) "Content Validity of Instruments in IS Research,"
Journal of Information Technology Theory and Application (JITTA))

The comments from the two judges produced a content validity index (CVI) of the three instruments as above .70. After getting the validity above .70, the three instruments were considered suitable for the study.

Procedure

After acquiring a letter of introduction from Makerere University Institute of Psychology, it was presented to head teachers in the selected schools. Arrangements regarding the dates when to come and administer the questionnaires to the respondents were made with the head teachers. On the appointed days, the study was introduced to the respondents in each school, sampling frame done.

The researcher used systematic sampling technique to get the respondents whereby every second name on the class list in the 4 selected schools was selected until 50 names of students were got. Questionnaires were administered to these selected respondents, The researcher read the instructions of each questionnaire with the respondents to ensure that each respondent clearly understood what was required and these respondents were requested to fill the questionnaires individually without discussing them.

The respondents willingly accepted and they were assured of confidentiality and were asked not to write their names or any identifying information on the questionnaires for purposes of anonymity. The questions were clearly explained so as to make participants feel comfortable and know exactly what they are responding to. The respondents completed the questionnaires within one hour and filling the questionnaire was voluntary. After filling in the questionnaires, the researcher collected them for analyses. All the respondents were literate in English and so there was no need to translate the questionnaires. At the submission of each questionnaire, the researcher checked each questionnaire to ensure that all items have been duly filled in as required. Those who had not completed answering all items on their questionnaires were requested to do so. After capturing the data, the questionnaires were kept under lock.

Data Processing

Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (RAPI).

RAPI was used to measure the intensity of alcohol consumption not alcoholism for the past one year. It is a measure of adolescent drinking problems, and any additional information about intensity of use, and motivations for use. Responses on each item were coded from 1-4, whereby 1 represented **none**, 2 represented **1-2 times**, 3 represented **3-5 times** and 4 represented **more than 5 times** in the last past year. For scoring, all the numbers for each response were added together to form a total score for each respondent. All the items form a scale ranging from 9-92. High scores implied that ones' alcohol consumption was high. Students with 47-92 had high scores while those with 9-46 scores were scores as low in alcohol consumption.

Feelings about School (FAS1).

FAS1 was used to measure the Secondary School Students' Attitudes Towards School. A person's responses were compared with the following true or false statements. Positive statements included numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, while negative statements included numbers: 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. If the respondent answered, "true" to positive items, his/her response was coded +1; but if his/her response was "false" on positive items, his/her response was coded 0. If the respondent answered, "true" to negative items he/she was coded 0 and if he/she answered "false" to a negative item he/she's score was coded +1. After coding of the items, the sum total was computed to get a final score. Thus, the higher the score, the more positive were the attitudes towards school he/she expressed. The scores potentially ranged from 0-40. Low scores ranged from 0-19, and high scores ranged from 20-40.

Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI).

The Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) was used to measure the peer group influence. The statements were in pairs and in each pair; individuals were to decide whether they were encouraged by their peers to do or not to do something. Each item was scored from -3 to +3 with the “no influence” option scored as zero. Thus: 3 = a lot, meaning a lot of influence from peers; 2 = somewhat, meaning a bit of influence; 1 = little, meaning little influence from peers, and 0 = no influence. In addition, -1 = little, meaning that friends do not encourage you to do something; -2 somewhat, -3 = a lot. Coding was as follows: -3 = 0, -2 = 1, -1 = 2, 0 = 3, +1 = 4, +2 = 5, +3 = 6. The potential range was from 0 - 132. Negative influence ranged from 0 – 44. Low influence ranged from 45 - 89, and positive influence ranged from 90-132. High scores implied positive peer group influence from the positive direction or negative peer group influence from the negative direction.

Data Analysis

When the questionnaires were collected, the process of editing followed. This is a process of examining the collected data to delete errors and omissions and to correct these when possible. Coding the data was done, and this is the process of assigning numerals or other symbols to answers so that responses can be put into a limited number of categories.

Data was then entered in the computer clearing process and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists Software (SPSS). Clearing the data involved descriptive analysis that included use of frequency tables for the variables under study. To test the three hypotheses, Spearman’s rank order correlation coefficient was used because the three variables contained ordinal data.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis of the study. The three hypotheses presented in chapter two are tested in this chapter and the results shown.

Demographic Information

This section gives the bio-data information from 200 senior four students in four-government aided senior secondary schools in Mbarara District who participated in the study. It helps to know the type of sample used in the study. It shows their age, sex, religion, school, location of the school, and the nature of the school from which they study. The four secondary schools were selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Table1

Age of the Respondents

Item	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Age	14-15 years	31	15.5
	16-18 years	126	63.0
	19-20 years	43	21.5
Total		200	100.0

Results in Table 1 show the different ages of the respondents. The majority of the respondents were between 16-18 years, forming 63.0% of the total respondents.

Table 2

Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	101	50.5
Female	99	49.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 2 shows the sex of the respondents and it shows that female students formed 49.5% of the total, almost equal to male students with 50.5%. The difference between the percentages of the two sexes is only 1%, implying that the final results reflected equal representation of the views of both boys and girls.

Table 3.

Religion of the Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Catholic	97	48.5
Protestant	85	42.5
Moslem	9	4.5
Other	9	4.5
Total	200	100.0

Results in Table 3 shows the religion of the respondents, whereby 48.5% were Catholics, 42.5% were Protestants, 4.5% were Moslems and another 4.5% belonged to other religious affiliations.

Table 4

Nature of the School of the Respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Boys' School	50	25.0
Girls' School	50	25.0
Mixed Schools	100	50.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 4 shows the nature of the schools where the respondents were studying from, and it shows that 50 students (25.0%) were in boys' school, 50 students (25.0%) in a girls' school, and 100 students (50.0%) in mixed schools

Hypothesis 1***Peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school:***

This section presents data on peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school student's attitudes towards school. The tested hypothesis stated that; "Peer group influence is significantly related to secondary school student's attitudes towards school".

To test this hypothesis, Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was used to find out whether there is a significant relationship between peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school. Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was used because it is suitable in measuring a relationship between two variables with ordinal data.

Table 5

***Relationship between Peer Group Influence and Secondary School Students’
Attitudes Towards School***

Variable		Attitudes Towards School
Peer Group Influence	Correlation	-.100
	Coefficient	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.178
	N	200

Table 5 indicates that peer group influence is not significantly related to students’ attitudes towards school ($p = .178$; $\rho = -.100$). Hypothesis one which stated, “Peer group influence is significantly related to secondary school students’ attitudes towards school” was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

Peer group influence and alcohol consumption

The second hypothesis stated that: “Peer group influence is significantly related to alcohol consumption”. In order to test this hypothesis, Spearman’s rank order correlation coefficient was used because it measures the relationship between two variables with ordinal data.

Table 6

Relationship between Peer Group Influence and Alcohol Consumption

Variable		Alcohol Consumption
Peer Group Influence	Correlation	.071
	Coefficient	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.350
	N	200

Table 6 shows that there is no significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption ($p = .350$; $\rho = .071$). Hence the researcher rejected the research hypothesis, which stated that: “Peer group influence is significantly related to alcohol consumption.

Hypothesis 3

Alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school

Hypothesis 3 stated that: “Alcohol consumption is significantly related to secondary school students’ attitudes towards school”. To test this hypothesis, Spearman’s rank order correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship between those two variables because it measures the relationship between two variables with ordinal data.

Table 7

Relationship between Alcohol Consumption and Secondary School Students’ Attitudes Towards School

Variable		Attitudes Towards School
Alcohol Consumption	Correlation Coefficient	-.339
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	200

The results in Table 7 shows that there is a negative significant relationship between alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school ($p = .001$; $\rho = -.339$).

As alcohol consumption increases secondary school student's attitudes towards school decreases.

Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was retained that, "Alcohol consumption is significantly related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school".

Chapter Five

Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations .

Introduction

This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school. The discussions of this chapter are based on the results and on the interpretation of these results as they relate to the three hypotheses in terms of the variables under study. At the end, limitations and conclusions of the study, and recommendations for future research are made.

Discussion of Hypothesis 1:

Peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school

Hypothesis one stated that: "Peer group influence is significantly related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school". But the findings of this study showed that peer group influence was not significantly related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school. Though Gara and Davis (2006) contended that peers exert extraordinary influence over each other in regard to attitudes towards school, this study has found out that peer group influence is not related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

The alternative hypothesis, which stated that peer group influence is significantly related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school, was rejected. Other factors other than peer groups may be responsible for the relationship. It was pointed out by Hinds, et al. (1999) that the most important influences on students attitudes' towards school come from the most significant adults in these young peoples' lives, and these are parents and teachers. This implies

that parents' and teachers' influence upon students may be related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

The findings of this study reflect what Lindgren (1980) observed, he noted that; when teachers become less supportive and more indifferent, peer group influence begin to take an upper hand in changing students' attitudes to school. This would not be the case if teachers were deeply involved in students' affairs. This implies that teachers may have a high potential of influencing secondary school students' attitudes towards school. This is in agreement with what was presented in Raising the Educational Achievement of Secondary School Students Report (REASSS, 1995), which stated that students who drop out of school often perceive school as a place where teachers do not care about the students, thereby the students' attitudes towards school rotate around teacher's commitment to their duties. The quality of support, interest and recognition provided by teachers play a big role in establishing a relationship with students' attitudes to school. Henceforth, a relationship between teachers and students' attitudes towards school is realized and so we say that teachers' influence is related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

It was further noted in the REASSS Report (1995) that parents try to influence their children's academic development. This corresponds with what Hinds et al. (1999) found, that parental support and involvement in students' affairs encourage students' progress in school. Hinds et al. (1999) further affirmed that parental involvement in students' academic lives is a powerful influence on students' achievement across all academic areas.

Though Dunn, & Cutting, (2002) observed that there was a tendency to express dislike for the academic aspects of school by the young people under the influence of their peers, the findings of the present study found no relationship. This could be explained by what Hinds et al. (1999) found, that other factors like parents and teachers play a great role in shaping students'

attitudes towards school. This happens when parents monitor the students' school attendance, concentration on doing school homework and how these students spend their leisure time. Hinds et al. (1999) further observed that students, who have strong support and encouragement from their parents regarding school, have stronger beliefs that schooling is valuable to them in their future lives. Similarly, in his work in Uganda, Heyneman (1983) observed that a "push" on the part of parents for their children to perform well in school is unquestionably powerful in encouraging the student to do well at school. Hence, the role of parents in determining students' orientation to school and their academic achievement is very critical. This is in conformity with what Kamuhanda (1999) noted among adolescents in Mbarara Municipality, when she observed that parental involvement in adolescents' activities is very significant in shaping the adolescent's behaviour. As such, the lack of relationship between peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school may be attributed to teacher and parental involvement in the students' academic affairs.

Discussion of Hypothesis 2:

Peer group influence and alcohol consumption

Hypothesis two stated that: "Peer group influence is significantly related to alcohol consumption". The results showed that peer group influence is not significantly related to alcohol consumption. The findings are contrary to what was hypothesized. Chalder, Elgari, and Bennett (2005) pointed out that peer group influence is a key determinant in causing alcohol consumption that may result into getting into fights, engaging in sexual promiscuity, and missing school. The findings of this study do not contradict this view of causation, but they only reveal that there is no significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption.

Lack of significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption could be attributed to some other factors like the existence of rules and regulations in schools, established to control students' behavior and discipline as it is observed in the Raising the Educational Achievement of Secondary School Students Report (REASSS, 1995). These rules and regulations are established to deter students from engaging in undesirable acts. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) noted that friends encourage their peers to engage in undesirable acts, one of which is alcohol consumption, but school rules normally prohibit students from falling into such misbehaviour, though some students still fall victims. Kandel, Kessler, & Margulies, (1978) also pointed out that children who are friends to one another influence each other to engage in habits like alcohol consumption and so rules and regulations therefore are put in place to protect the students from being influenced.

Inter-item analysis revealed that of the 200 respondents who responded to a question inquiring about the existence of strict rules in schools, 67% responded that there are strict rules in their various schools, while only 33% disagreed. This implies that rules in schools may prohibit students from being influenced by their peers to indulge in certain habits like alcohol consumption.

These rules are meant to contain certain vices accruing from particular individuals who endeavour to influence their friends (REASSS, 1995). The National Coalition Against Alcohol & Drug Abuse Report (NACODA, 2007) revealed that some students begin drinking alcohol when they are in their adolescent stage and they begin influencing their friends to indulge in the same behaviour. Due to the established rules in schools that prohibit students from engaging in bad habits, students' influence over each other to indulge in behaviours like alcohol consumption is checked and this may help to explain lack of significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption. However, it has to be noted that strict rules may not

necessarily stop students from taking alcohol, but may instead induce them to indulge in the habit because some students always want to do the opposite of what the authority recommends.

Barret (2006) noted that school administrators normally establish clear, consistently enforced alcohol-use policies that specify alcohol use offences, and punitive procedures. He further says that security measures are implemented to eliminate alcohol from school premises. All this could explain lack of significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption because students are fully aware of the policies regarding alcohol consumption and the punitive measures and so they try to be alert and not to engage in the habit. Royce, Singleton & Wolfson (2009) observed that, alcohol-use policies as mentioned above indicate that prohibiting students from drinking alcohol in schools is usually not effective, and that providing counseling and guidelines on proper ways of handling alcohol and drinking situations are better.

In some of the schools where this research was conducted, there are some visiting counselors who normally visited the schools and carried out counseling programs like behavior change programs, which include alcohol consumption. This could explain why some students are not easily influenced by their peers to indulge in some habits like alcohol consumption, and this also explains the lack of significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption.

Discussion of Hypothesis 3:

Alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school

Hypothesis three stated that: "Alcohol consumption is significantly related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school". The results showed that alcohol consumption was negatively significantly related to secondary school students' attitudes towards school. This meant that as alcohol consumption increase, secondary school students' attitudes towards school decrease, meaning that when students' involvement in alcohol consumption is high, their views towards school and all its activities become negative. These results concur with what Ngabirano (2003) found, that alcohol consumption results into manifestations that include depression, violent behaviour, memory lapses, and dementia, and that these can affect secondary school students' attitudes towards school. Klauke (1988) affirmed that alcohol consumption causes permanent damage to the learning centers of the brain, reduces concentration, and affects academic performance.

Yu, Evans, and Perfetti (2003) observed that alcohol consumption among students result into physical and sexual assault, property damage and other negative consequences. Duarte and Molina (2004) further noted that alcohol consumption affects the brain and damage cognitive processes, leading to an individual's disorientation as far as school is concerned.

The negative significant relationship between alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school may have been due to the peer group influence as noted by Chalder, Elgari, and Bennett (2005) when they observed that peer group influence is a key determinant in causing alcohol consumption which eventually affect students' attitudes towards school. The results of this study reveal the existence of a negative significant relationship between alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school. They are

a confirmation of the advice of parents and teachers to students to realize that actually alcohol consumption affects students' attitudes towards school, and they are advised to be in position to keep guard against engaging into the habit.

Students who engage in increased alcohol consumption manifest negative attitudes towards school like poor academic performance, poor academic achievement, low school motivation, and truancy (Bryant, Schulenberg, O'Malley, Bachman, & Lloyd, 2003). While on the other hand, Bryant et al. (2003) again noted that those students with high levels of achievement motivation and positive attitudes towards school show that they like and are interested in school. This implies that if students are to like and feel interested in school, they are to have high levels of motivation, which is to come from significant others like parents. As Heyneman (1983) observed, the role of parents in determining students' orientation to school and their academic achievement is very critical. This may eventually decrease students' involvement in alcohol consumption and improve to shape their attitudes towards school.

Conclusions

The study was geared to establish whether there is a relationship between peer group influence, alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school. The conclusions of the findings were as follows:

There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and secondary school students' attitudes towards school. This implies that factors other than peer groups may be responsible to explain secondary school students' attitudes towards school and according to the findings of the study; parents and teachers were found to be the major factors playing a big role in the lives of students. A big percentage of the respondents revealed that they like their teachers

and this implies that students trust and believe in their teachers and hence accept their influence as far as moulding their perspectives towards school is concerned.

Secondary, it was revealed that there is no significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption. Many respondents affirmed that there are many strict rules in their schools, including one of prohibiting alcohol consumption while at school. Therefore most students may try to follow school rules and avoid being influenced by their peers to indulge in habits like alcohol consumption, which is prohibited by the school, and as such there may be no significant relationship between peer group influence and alcohol consumption.

There is a negative significant relationship between alcohol consumption and students' attitudes towards school. Though a negative significant relationship was found to exist between alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school, it has to be noted also that parents' influence could also explain further the relationship of secondary school students' attitudes towards school. Parents also influence students' attitudes on various issues, and this means that students may not only be influenced by their peers only, but also parents influence students as well.

Recommendations

School administrators should be vigilant and explain to students the influence that can come from other areas like the mass media and be in position to guard against such influence. Parents, Teachers, and other caregivers should always be near the concerned students in order to influence them positively so as to try to have a good focus on the decision of future careers since parents and teachers happen to be among those that influence students' attitudes.

It is recommended also that parents, who are partners and stakeholders in the education of their children, be involved more in the affairs of the schools. Parents should be on school management boards to influence policies that will guide and shape their children and the school administration could organize regular parents' meetings to talk about issues affecting the school since they have a lot to contribute in shaping secondary school students' attitudes towards school.

Since there is a negative significant relationship between alcohol consumption and secondary school students' attitudes towards school, secondary school students in Mbarara District need to be sensitized about the effects of alcohol consumption like impaired short term memory, reduced attention span, lower levels of performance at work, and how these can affect students' attitudes towards school, this can be through seminars and behaviour change programs. Youth Alive Group could conduct behaviour change programs during the course of the term, as a way of sensitizing the students on a range of issues including alcohol consumption.

Furthermore, school administrators should work together with local communities around schools to ensure that alcohol is not served to students. School administrators should themselves sensitize students on the dangers of alcohol consumption and they should supervise students to ensure that they comply with the regulations that prohibit bad habits like alcohol consumption.

Through the department of guidance and counseling, the Ministry of Education and sports could ensure that each school employs a permanent counselor who will handle issues like alcohol consumption and other related challenges among the students. Peer counseling in schools is also recommended since the youth will be helping fellow youth as they face similar challenges.

Limitations of the study

Data collection was carried out four days to the commencement of UNEB examinations. Since my respondents were from senior four, the majority of them were already busy with exam preparations, so some of them filled the questionnaires hurriedly implying that some never paid much attention to what the questions asked but simply filled the gaps. However, the researcher tried to minimize this by explaining very well to the respondents what the questionnaires required before the commencement of the exercise

Due to the tight schedule of senior four students during daytime, some headmasters arranged that I meet these students at night during preps since there was no other possible time. However, I got some interruptions in one school and power went off due to load shedding which occurred in the middle of the exercise, and a standby generator took sometime to be started. During this interval of darkness, students exchanged views regarding certain items on the questionnaires, which could have influenced the way they responded to certain items by being influenced by decisions of their friends on selecting certain items, other than of their own choice. As the researcher carried out editing of the questionnaires before coding, he tried to eliminate certain items that had double shedding.

Suggestions for Further Research

Since the study found out that peer group influence is not related to alcohol consumption, it means that other factors are responsible and so it is suggested that further research in future could be done to establish these factors.

It is suggested that an investigation be carried out to establish the relationship between parents', teachers', and secondary school students' attitudes towards school in order to find out how parents and teachers may help students to mould their attitudes towards school. A study should be conducted to find out how age and sex of students could affect their attitudes towards school, and this will help school administrators in helping individual students. Research should also be carried out to examine the influence of religion and alcohol consumption upon secondary school students' attitudes towards school in order to establish whether the religion of someone influences him or her to alcohol consumption and how this affects attitudes towards school.

Finally, an investigation could be carried out to establish the relationship between socio-economic factors and secondary school students' attitudes towards school in order to find out how the socio-economic background of someone influences his or her academic attitude. This could help further to explain the attitudes that secondary school students have towards education.

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Appendix A

Biodata information

Provide the relevant information in the spaces provided

1. Age 14-15 ☐ 16-18 ☐ 19-20 ☐
 2. Sex (tick one) Male ☐ Female ☐
 3. Religion: Catholic ☐ Protestant ☐ Moslem ☐ others ☐
 4. Name of school
 5. Location of the school (tick one) Rural ☐ Urban ☐
- Nature of the school (tick one)**
6. Boys' school ☐ Girls' school ☐ Mixed school v ☐

Appendix B

Alcohol Consumption Questionnaire

Indicate how many times you got involved in any of the things mentioned below in the last past year.

Circle the appropriate number.

1 = none, 2 = 1-2 times, 3 = 3-5 times, 4 = more than 5 times.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Went to school drunk.. |
| 2. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Felt that you needed alcohol in order to feel good. |
| 3. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Missed other things because you spent too much money on alcohol. |
| 4. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Tried to control your drinking. |
| 5. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Had withdrawal symptoms i.e. felt sick because you cut down on drinking |
| 6. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Felt that you had a problem with alcohol. |
| 7. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Wanted to stop drinking but could not. |
| 8. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Kept drinking when you promised yourself not to. |
| 9. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Felt physically or psychologically dependent on alcohol |
| 10. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Told by a friend, neighbour or relative to stop or cut down drinking |

Appendix C

Attitudes Towards School Questionnaire

If you think an item is true circle the letter **T** at the beginning of each item and if you think it is false tick the letter **F**. If you change your mind, erase your first mark completely.

1. **T** **F** I am learning things in school, which help me now.
2. **T** **F** Mostly, I like our school clubs and activities.
3. **T** **F** I like the way our teachers treat us.
4. **T** **F** When we have assembly programs, they are usually interesting.
5. **T** **F** My classes are boring.
6. **T** **F** In general, I like my teachers.
7. **T** **F** Most of the teachers are fair in their criticism of my work.
8. **T** **F** I like most of the subject I have taken at this school.
9. **T** **F** Our headmaster is usually glad to receive suggestions from the students.
10. **T** **F** I like the way this school is run.
11. **T** **F** Some of the teachers are lazy.
12. **T** **F** I hate one of my teachers.
13. **T** **F** I would not be going to school if I didn't have to.
14. **T** **F** Schoolwork is boring and uninteresting for me.
15. **T** **F** Some teachers assign unreasonable amounts of homework.
16. **T** **F** Some of the teachers act as if they want the students to be afraid of them.
17. **T** **F** Some of my subjects are extremely boring.

18. **T F** Our teachers don't pay enough attention to what we are interested in.
19. **T F** There are no student activities at this school, which I find interesting.
20. **T F** We have too many rules at this school.

Appendix D

Peer Group Influence Questionnaire

Here are some PAIRS OF STATEMENTS describing **PEER INFLUENCE**, which is when your friends encourage you to do something and not to do something else. For each pair, read both statements and decide whether friends mostly encourage you to do the one on the **RIGHT** or one on the **LEFT**. Then, circle one of the boxes on the side towards the statement you choose, depending on **HOW MUCH** your friends encourage you to do that (“A little”, “Somewhat”, “Little” “A lot”). If you think there’s no influence from friends to do either statement, mark the middle “No Influence” box. Remember; circle only **“ONE”** pair of statement.

	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	LITTLE	NO INFLUENCE	LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	A LOT	
How strong is the influence from your Friends								
1. Study hard or do your homework.	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not study or do homework.
2. Smoke marijuana	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not smoke marijuana
3. Try to do what your parents want you to do.	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Go against your parents' wishes
4. Have a steady boy friend or girlfriend	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not just go out with one guy or girlfriend
5. Drink beer or liquor	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not drink beer or liquor

	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	LITTLE	NO INFLUENCE	LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	A LOT	
How strong is the influence from your Friends								
6. Not go to school dances or mixers	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Go to school dances or mixers
7. Get home by the time your parents say you should be	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Stay out past the curfew time
8. Wear the same types of clothes your friends wear	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Wear styles of clothes different than your friends
9. "Make out" (kissing or petting)	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not "make out" (kissing or petting)
10. Smoke cigarettes	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not smoke cigarettes
11. Finish high school	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Drop out of school
12. Be in religious activities church, young life, etc)	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not get involved with religious activities.
13. Get drunk or get "a buzz"	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not get drunk
14. Not shoplift or steal anything	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Steal something (shoplift, raid a locker, etc)
15. Go out with boys/girls (opposite sex)	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not go out with boys/girls (opposite sex).

	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	LITTLE	NO INFLUENCE	LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	A LOT	
How strong is the influence from your Friends								
16. Go to the games at school (football basket, etc)	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not go to school games
17. Not cut classes or skip school	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Cut classes or skip school
18. Try to get good grades	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Not try for good grades
19. Not let your parent know where you go, what you do.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Tell your parents where you go and what you do.
20. Listen to the music and groups, your friends think are good.	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	Listen to the music and groups that no one else likes
21. Give teachers a hard time.	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Be nice to teachers.
22. Do things to impress members of the opposite sex	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Try Not to impress members of the opposite sex.

Appendix E

TABLE FOR DETERMINING SAMPLE SIZE FROM A GIVEN POPULATION

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	10000	384

Note: “N” is population size

“S” is sample size.

Krejcie, Robert V., Morgan, Daryle W., “Determining Sample Size for Research Activities”,
Educational and Psychological Measurement, 1970.

Appendix F

Validity of instruments

(1) Content Validity Index (CVI) of Alcohol Consumption (modified)

Raters	Rated as relevant	Rated as not relevant	Total
Rater 1	4	2	6
Rater 2	4	0	4
Total	8	2	10

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of rated items}} = \frac{8}{10} = .80$$

Total number of rated items 10

(2) Content Validity Index (CVI) of Attitudes Towards School (modified)

Raters	Rated as relevant	Rated as not relevant	Total
Rater 1	9	2	11
Rater 2	6	3	9
Total	15	5	20

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of rated items}} = \frac{15}{20} = .75$$

Total number of rated items 20

(3) Content Validity Index of Peer Group Influence (modified)

Raters	Rated as relevant	Rated as not relevant	Total
Rater 1	10	3	13
Rater 2	8	1	9
Total	18	4	22

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of rated items}} = \frac{18}{22} = .818$$

Total number of rated items 22