Forging Shields to Protect Against Childhood Substance Use

55th SACENDU Symposium

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SANCA & UNISA Community Engaged Research Project
Collaborating to Make a Difference

Aim
To develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing childhood substance use, abuse, and addiction both proactively and reactively

Methodology
- Mixed methods - youth voice approach
- Sample - 484 children between 10 – 18 years who received prevention and/or treatment services from SANCA nationally
  - 56% male, 43% female & 1% non-binary
- Data collection – self-administered questionnaire
- Data analysis – SPSS (Kendall's tau_b Correlation & Sig.2 - tailed Significance Test)
- Ethical clearance was obtained from Unisa College of Law and Gatekeeper permission from SANCA
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption

- Daily: 4%
- Many times: 11%
- Over weekends/ occasionally: 15%
- I tried it once: 24%
- Never: 45%

- Consuming alcohol till intoxicated - 10%
- Consuming alcohol alone – 10%
Impact of Family, Friends, and Social Contexts on Alcohol Consumption

- Strongest Correlation for frequency of drinking with family members and at family functions while no correlation was established with excessive drinking.
- Drinking with friends has a weaker correlation indicating less influence on frequent drinking but a stronger association with excessive drinking.
- Parties show a moderate correlation with frequent alcohol use but are less influential than family contexts.
- Shebeens/Taverns play a significant role in encouraging excessive drinking.
- A moderate association was also noted between excessive drinking and drinking alone and at school but less so than socialising with friends or drinking alcohol in shebeens/taverns.

**COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS:**

**Family vs. Friends:** Family interactions significantly influence frequent drinking, while friends have a more pronounced impact on excessive drinking episodes.

**Social Settings:** Different settings (family gatherings, parties, shebeens/taverns) have distinct impacts on alcohol consumption patterns, indicating a complex interplay of environmental contexts and individual behaviours.
Frequency of Drug Use

- **56%** Never
- **11%** I tried it once
- **11%** Over weekends/ occasionally
- **12%** Many times
- **10%** Daily
Drug Use Patterns

- Cannabis: 38%
- Codeine (Lean and pills): 32%
- Cigarettes (tobacco & vaping): 32%
- White pipe (mandrax & cannabis): 7%
- Methamphetamine (Crystal meth): 4%
- Cocaine: 3%
- Sniff solvent (Glue): 3%
- Ecstasy: 2%
- Methcathinone (CAT): 2%
- Herion: 2%
- Nyaope: 2%
- LSD: 2%

➢ Hubbly Bubbly (hookah/shisha pipe) - 41%
Correlations Between Drug Use Contexts and Alcohol Consumption

Strong correlation between drug use to get high and excessive drinking, emphasising the role of parties in reducing inhibitions

Significant, though slightly weaker, correlation suggests less pronounced substance use occur while socialising with friends compared to parties, reflecting diverse social dynamics

Moderate correlation in settings like shebeens/taverns indicates public social settings also encourage drug use and heavy drinking, but to a lesser extent

Notable moderate correlations with excessive drinking highlight the influence of family dynamics and in school settings

Solitary substance use highlights a complex relationship with both private and social substance use, with significant correlations indicating potential as an indicator of addictive behaviours
Early substance use dramatically increases the risk of developing substance use disorders and mental health issues.

Alters brain development, affecting impulse control and vulnerability to addiction.

Normalises substance use, increasing the likelihood of dependence and a broad range of substance issues.

Childhood initiation often leads to polysubstance use patterns associated with using multiple substances which compounds health risks and complicates treatment.

Exposure to substance use in familial, peer, and community settings can mirror polysubstance use behaviours.

Lack of supportive structures contributes to the initiation and escalation of substance use.
UNITING FOR A SAFER FUTURE

Together, We CAN Shield Children from Substance Exposure, Use, Abuse and Addiction!

Visit the SANCA National website or contact Marelize Schoeman (schoemi@unisa.ac.za) for more information about this project.