

CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Drug abuse among adolescents continues to be a major problem worldwide, and in particular, most teenagers begin to experiment with substances at an early age. The most widely abused substances are alcohol, tobacco and cannabis because they are in excess. Most high schools encounter problems with male who smoke cigarettes and dagga on the school premises. Some of these males come to school under the influence of liquor.

Abuse of substances among adolescents is associated with a broad range of high-risk behavior. This type of behavior can have profound health, economic and social consequences, for example, some adolescents participate in deviant peer groups, unprotected sexual intercourse, interpersonal violence, destruction of property and perform poorly in their studies.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2008), substance abuse is worsened by complex socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty and crime in general. These social ills are devastating many families and communities. Drug pushers are forcing young people into taking substances so that once they are hooked; they can manipulate their friends into taking substances. Too many youth seem to think of experimentation with substances as an acceptable part of transition into adulthood. Few take seriously the negative consequences of dependence on substances.

Substance abuse among adolescents costs a country a lot of money every year. Various organizations control the flow of substances and discourage the youth from getting involved with substances. Despite their effort to control substance use among adolescents, recent national survey data indicate that the use of substances is still on the rise.

The urgency of the problems associated with adolescents' substance abuse and misuse of substances impels lawmakers, educators, parents and communities to take actions. Thus, there is a need to develop more effective evidence based prevention methods.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Adolescence

Adolescence is a Latin word *Adolescere* which means to grow. Adolescence refers to a stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence covers the period of life between 10 and 20 years of age. In this study, adolescence refers to a transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood, in which males between the ages 12 and 15 years experience physiological, psychological and social changes.

Adolescent

Adolescent refers to a boy or girl between the ages 10 and 20.

Substance

A substance is a chemical used in the treatment, cure, prevention or diagnosis of disease or to enhance physical and mental well-being. Furthermore, a drug also refers to chemical substances that affect the central nervous system, such as tobacco, alcohol, dagga, cocaine, and heroin. These drugs are used for perceived beneficial effects on perception, consciousness, personality and behavior.

Substance abuse

Substance abuse refers to chronic or habitual use of any chemical substance to alter states of body or mind, other than medically warranted purposes leading to effects that are detrimental to the individual's physical or mental health or the welfare of others.

Substance dependence

Substance dependence refers to the uncontrollable craving and use of substances despite the potential or actual harm to the person and society that may result from it . It includes both legal and illegal substances. Those dependent on substances are often unable to quit on their own and need treatment to help them to stop using the substances.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The study is conducted for the following reasons: The extent of substance abuse among adolescents is on the rise. Parents and educators are trying their best to discourage adolescents from using substances, yet their efforts seem to be ineffective. Parents and adolescents need to be made aware of the extent of substance use and its effects. Parents and educators seem not to be able to assist and even cope with adolescents once they are dependent on substances. Some of the adolescents who abuse drugs do not perform well in their studies. Others drop-out of school. Adolescents abusing substances tend to be aggressive and uncontrollable. The study will help parents and adolescents to understand how it came about that adolescents abuse substances as well as their knowledge thereof.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study could be used to educate adolescents and their parents on substance abuse in DMS Bhopal. Furthermore, the findings of this study will help educators, health care professionals, and other professionals involved with adolescents to understand the prevalence of adolescent substance use and abuse, associated morbidities and most importantly, to develop effective evidence-based strategies and policies that could be used to control the substance abuse problem.

AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of this research are to: Investigate how it came about that adolescents abuse substances. Investigate the complexities of substance abuse among a small group of adolescents in DMS Bhopal. Explore what adolescents know about substances and its effects. Identify the family structure and the social environment in which the adolescents live. Identify strategies to prevent substance abuse among adolescents.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In light of the above, the main research question for the study is:

- Why do adolescents use substances?

The following are the sub-questions for the study:

- Which substances are used by adolescents?
- What do they know about substances?
- Which socio-cultural factors contribute to substance abuse?
- Which strategies can be developed to prevent substance abuse among adolescents?

DEMARCATON OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in DMS Bhopal only. Only male adolescents attending school were participants in this study, therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to females and to adolescents in other parts of city. However, the results may be used to develop policies and intervention strategies for adolescent substance abuse.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the study, including the background to the research problem, rationale for the research, significance of the study, aims of the investigation, statement of the problem, research strategy and research methods, ethical considerations, demarcation of the study, definition of concepts, and outline of the study. Adolescents are in the most vulnerable stage of development. Substance abuse among adolescents creates a concern among parents, educators and other professionals, thus, effective evidence-based intervention strategies to address substance abuse among adolescents need to be implemented. The next chapter discusses the literature review.