KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND READNIESS OF SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION PROGRAMME AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN AFIKPO NORTH AND SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EBONYI STATE.

**Abstract**

**Aims:** The study was embarked upon to determine knowledge, attitude and readiness of substance use prevention programs among secondary school teachers in Afikpo North and Edda south Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State. It was aimed at enlightening the teachers on the need for substance use prevention among youths. **Methodology**: The researcher adopted a descriptive survey research design which focused on secondary school teachers. The researcher used a structured questionnaire with a sample size of 100 which was administered and returned by the respondents on the spot. Data was analyzed using mean and percentages and was presented in tables. **Results:** Based on the findings, teachers have good knowledge of what substance use prevention is all about. They have positive attitude towards implementing the program and they are ready to implement programs in preventing substance use among youths. **Conclusion:** The researchers recommended that frequent assessment of teacher’s knowledge, attitude and readiness regarding substance use prevention is eminent. The sources of teacher’s information and provision of frequent educational programs regarding substance use prevention among students should be assessed and there should be a collaborative effort of the ministry of health and that of information in providing prevention programs targeted on adolescents and students for prevention of drug use.

**Keywords:** Substance use, Knowledge, Attitude, Readiness, Drug, Prevention.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria, particularly the Colleges of education, are set up to train the nation’s youth to become useful, responsible, patriotic and reliable future leaders with high moral and professional standards, Abdu-Raheem, (2020). Regrettably, large numbers of students admitted to these institutions turned out to become wayward, irresponsible, unpatriotic and unreliable citizens through their involvement in drug abuse and cultism. Jekayinfa and Kolawole (2010) stated that the singular purpose of education in Nigeria is to produce a useful citizen. In most recent time, hardly a week passes by when schools are in session without incidents of murder, injury and raping of fellow students in Nigerian educational institutions especially the tertiary institutions due to the menace of drug abuse and cultism Odudele, R. (2014). According to Adegbite, (2007), Drug abuse is not confined to young people in certain geographical areas or from particular social-economic backgrounds alone. It affects the nation as a whole-both urban and rural areas. The concept of “drug” has been defined as any chemical substance which affect living organism Ajayi *et al*, (2010). A drug may be used to fight infections and illness or minimize pain, fatigue, anxiety or at times to achieve certain level of euphoria. World health organization defined “drugs” as any substances that when taken into a living body produce reactions or modify its psychological and physiological functioning. It is also referred to as a medicine or other substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body. Nigeria as a country is committed to providing education for all her citizens, especially the youth (National Policy on Education, 2013) and Rotimi, A. (2005)., many students in tertiary institutions of learning engage in unruly behaviors such as drug abuse, cultism, raping, killing and maiming of colleagues and staff, armed robbery, stealing, internet fraud, kidnapping and political thuggery. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2017) stated that drug abuse is an anti-social behavior that is in an alarming dimension in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Anjorin and Popoola (2018) asserted that tertiary institutions used to be in charge of social atmosphere and academic excellence until the situation turned around in the last two decades when drug abuse reared its dreadful head on campuses.

Close observation of the use of substance reveals that it cut across all races, gender, age and cultures, but it seems that worst hit is the youth (Abduraheem 2015). The use of substances today in our country is becoming a big challenge especially alcohol and drugs. This is a serious public health problem increasing in Nigeria and other country of the world; equally it is causing a sustained illness that may cause physical, mental and social problems in people. According to World Health Organization (WHO) substance use refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substance including alcohol and other illicit drugs which can lead to dependence syndrome (WHO, 2014). People abuse substances such as drug, alcohol and tobacco for varied and complicated reasons. Premised on the above, the challenge of substance use today is taking a geometric gallop and hence preventive approaches both by the government and other bodies should increase. Different forms of harmful and addictive substances are in circulation today and their uses are mostly found among the students. Whether government preventive efforts are not enough, or that the implementation of the program is not carried out is yet another question. The teachers are greatly involved because they tend to stay-more active hours with the students in the school than the number of hours they spend at home with parents. Again, since school is one of the agents of change, there is a better opportunity of these prevention program to be thought to the student. The government in an effort to reduce or eliminate the problem of substance use, instituted some agencies such as NDLEA National Drug Law Enforcement Agency). Even the National Orientation Agency (NOA) are organs that disseminate information against the use of drugs and selected substances that could endanger the life of the upcoming youth.

According to the United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNIDDC) report (2015), some 200 million people about 5% of the third world population aged between 15- 64 have used drugs at least once in the last 12-15months. Equally according to the world drug report (2015), the use of illicit substance in all nations has increased in recent years. The increasing use of substance of abuse among our youths is obvious. Secondary school students are particularly at risk given that they are in their formative years of education, carrier development, social skill and identity formation despite national agency for food and drug administration and control (NAFDAC) and other organization-based intervention, drug abuse is on the rise with over 40% of student abusing various types of drugs. Given the availability, consequences and increasing use of drugs in Nigeria, it is essential to formulate prevention programs in schools. It is against this background that the researchers decided to take up this study. This study seeks to establish teacher’s knowledge, attitude and readiness in implementing substance use prevention program in secondary schools in the two local government areas.

**2. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**2.1 Area of Study**

The research was conducted in Ebonyi State, focusing on Afikpo North and South Local Government areas of the state: There are about thirty-eight (38) public secondary schools in both Afikpo north and South LGA. Twenty-two (22) schools in Afikpo North and sixteen (16) secondary schools in the South. The dwellers of these area are predominantly farmers.

**2.2 Research design, the population of the study, sample, and sampling techniques**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design and the reason for this choice was because the study is aimed at collecting data from teachers considered representative of the population in assessing the knowledge, attitude and readiness of substance use prevention programs among secondary school teachers in Afikpo North and Edda south Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State. The population of the study comprises of teachers of all the secondary schools in Afikpo North and South Local Government Areas which is made up of 1650 teachers according to Ebonyi state ministry of education and Ebonyi state universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) report 2024. A sample size 100 teacher, randomly selected through a proportionate stratified sampling technique. The researchers placed the target population into two strata, according to some predetermined criteria (north and south). Then simple random samplings were used to select 2 schools from each Local Government and all the teachers found in schools during the researcher’s visits were used to reflect its size in the population. The researcher used questionnaire to assess the teacher's response. In this study the questionnaire is made up of two sections A & B; A contains a demographic data or information of the respondent which include age sex, educational level, and Religion while Section B seeks to elicit information on the respondent's knowledge, attitude and readiness of substance use prevention among their students. The researchers used a modified four-point likert- scale type of a structural questionnaire to elicit information for the study. The question consist of 28 items as follows: 4 questionnaire items (table 1) 1 - 4 dwelt on the teacher’s knowledge on what substance use prevention program is all about. 14 Questionnaire items (table 2) 1-14 was designed to find out the attitude of teachers towards substance use prevention among their students. While 10 questionnaire items (table3) 1-10 sought to elicit information on the teacher's readiness in preventing substance use among students.

**2.3 Validity of the instrument**

The research instrument was subjected to face validation by giving it to an expert from Measurement and Evaluation department, Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu and one medical doctor from psychiatric hospital, Abakaliki. They were asked to validate the instrument concerning the appropriateness of language used in terms of clarity of statement and adequacy of items of the instrument. The experts also checked whether the instrument is capable of answering the questions. Based on the experts, corrections, comments, observations, suggestions, and amendments were made to the instruments before a final copy was produced for the study.

**2.3 Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected from the respondents were keyed into a Microsoft Excel sheet, and analyses of mean and standard deviation were carried out. A four-point scale of Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (ASD), and Strongly Agree (SA). The scaling statement and the nominal values are SD= 1; D= 2; A= 3; SA= 4. Therefore, Mean = 4+3+2+1 divided by 4 = 2.50. Therefore, 2.50 was the cut-off point for deciding on each item. Any item whose weighted mean was 2.50 and above was considered as agreement in line with Egbe et al (2025) and Nnamonu et al (2024) while any item that was less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreement.

**2.4 Reliability of the Instrument**

A test-retest trial testing was done using 15 participants from another Local Government with similar characteristics of the teachers used for the study. Data obtained was analyzed, Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used and correlation coefficient was 0.94. To this extent the instrument reliability was found to be good. The questionnaire was distributed to the teachers on different days, and the researchers stayed back to collect the completed questionnaires on the spot. The data were analyzed using tables, mean and percentages. Mean was used to answer the research questions. Questionnaire items with the mean of 2,5 was agreed upon while mean below 2.5 was disagreed in the decision rule

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**3. RESULTS**

The presentation and analysis of data obtained from the administration of the instrument (questionnaire) of the study. The data were organized into three tables in relevance to the three research questions.

**3.1 Secondary school teachers’ knowledge on substance use prevention program.**

Table one item number 1 shows that, 94% of respondent agrees that school is an important setting for adolescent’s substance use prevention while 6% of the respondent disagree. the mean scale of those that agreed is 3.52 while those that disagreed is 0,12. In item 2, 72% of the respondent agreed that that teachers plays important role in substance use attitude and behavior of the student while 28% of the respondent disagreed. The mean scale of those that agreed is 2.8 while 0.18 are for those that disagreed. In the item no 3, 84% of the respondent agreed to the item while 16% of the respondent disagreed. The mean scale of the agreement side is 3.03 while those that disagreed is 0.16. In item no 4, 90% of the respondent agreed that that Guidance and counselling plays an important role in adaptive skill building among adolescents while 10% disagreed the mean scale of those that agreed is 3.36 while 0-10 disagreed.

**3.2 Teachers attitude towards the substance use prevention programs.**

In item 1-3, 70%, 66% and 79% of the respondent agreed that with or without teacher’s irresponsible adolescents use drug, that teachers do little in drug use prevention and that substance use can only be prevented by the parents. The mean scale of those that agreed to these is all above 2.5 and its positive meaning that teachers show negative attitude towards drug use prevention among adolescent while in item 4-6, 72%, 91% and 77% of the respondent agreed that school can build drug resistance skill, teachers can discourage drugs use and protect student from drug use. The mean averages of the above items are above 2.5 which mean that the teachers have positive attitude towards substance use. Prevention programs in items 7, 73% disagrees that drug use among youthis highly experimental and that thing will stop when they are mature whilethose that agree is only 27% the mean scale is 2,0 which means that the decision rule on the disagreement side.

In item 8-14, 94%, 74%. 72%, 73%, 74%, 69% and 72% of respondent respectively agrees to the items that teachers know the substance use prevention strategies that can be used in prevention of drug use among adolescents. And mean scale of the above items is above 2.5 which means that they have positive attitude towards the prevention strategy in substance use prevention and is also willing to implement it.

**3.3 Teachers’ levels of readiness in implementing substance use prevention programs among their students.**

Table 3, item 1,2,3,4, revealed that teachers are ready in implementing substance abuse preventive programs in school by agreeing to that they are willing to help, adolescent prevent substance use, to receive training on substance use prevention and also assist in enforcing -the school policies on substance use prevention among the student which average mean scale of were above 2.5. But item 5-10 revealed some factors that can affect teacher's readiness in implementing the substance use prevention programs. These were determined by the teachers agreeing that lack of finance, lack of organizational support, lack of facilities and power failure are those factors that hinders substance use prevention programs in school.

This is because their mean scale is above 2.5 while they disagreed to the fact that there is a trained counselor in the school because the average mean is below 2.5 which means lack of trained counselor also affect substance use prevention in schools.

**Table 1: Are the secondary school teachers knowledgeable enough on what** **substance** use **prevention program is all about?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Knowledge of the Teachers** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** | **W/S** | **X** | **X AGREE** | **X DISAGREE** | **DECISION** |
| 1 | School is an important setting for adolescent substance use prevention | 50  50% | 44  44% | 6  6% | -  - | 344 | 3.44 | 3.22 | 0.12 | Agreed |
| 2 | Teachers can play major role in substance use attitude and behavior of students | 50  50% | 22  22% | 10  10% | 18  17% | 298 | 2.98 | 2.8 | 0.18 | Agreed |
| 3 | Specific intervention for preventing substance use and developing adaptive skill among students can be carried out | 50  50% | 44  44% | 6  6% | -  - | 344 | 3.44 | 3.22 | 0.12 | Agreed |
| 4 | Guidance and counselors play important role in adaptive skill building among adolescents | 60  60% | 30  30% | 6  6% | 4  4% | 346 | 3.46 | 3.36 | 0.10 | Agreed |

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**Table 2; Do the teachers show positive attitude towards the substance use prevention programs**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Attitude of Teachers**  **On substance use prevention** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** | **W/S** | **X** | **X AGREE** | **X DISAGREE** | **DECISION** |
| 1 | With or without school intervention irresponsible adolescents still use substances | 40  40% | 30  44% | 21  6% | 9  - | 301 | 3.01 | 2.5 | 0.51 | Agreed |
| 2 | Substance use prevention by teachers does little towards reducing use among student | 20  20% | 46  46% | 13  13% | 15  15% | 259 | 2.59 | 2.1 | 0.49 | Agreed |
| 3 | Substance use prevention is solely the responsibility of parent’s skill among adolescents | 35  35% | 34  34% | 14  14% | 17  17% | 287 | 2.87 | 2.42 | 0.45 | Agreed |
| 4 | School educational intervention can build drug resistance skill among adolescents | 37  60% | 35  30% | 16  6% | 12  4% | 302 | 3.06 | 2.53 | 0.49 | Agreed |
| 5 | I use every opportunity to discourage drugs use among my student | 48  48% | 43  43% | 3  3% | 6  6% | 333 | 3.33 | 3.21 | 0.12 | Agreed |
| 6 | It is possible for a student to be protected from day use by teachers | 36  36% | 38  38% | 13  13% | 10  10% | 306 | 3.06 | 2.7 | 0.36 | Agreed |
| 7 | Drug use among teenagers is highly experimental, they | 12  12% | 15  15% | 34  34% | 39  39% | 200 | 2.0 | 0.93 | 1.07 | Disagree |
| 8 | I will be glad to partake in a special activity to prevent substance use among secondary school student | 47  47% | 38  38% | 10  10% | 5  5% | 327 | 3.27 | 3.02 | 0.25 | Agreed |
| 9 | I encourage other teachers to partake in student social skill development | 38  38% | 36  36% | 16  16% | 10  10% | 302 | 3.02 | 2.6 | 0.42 | Agreed |
| 10 | With adequate teachers training, students substance use behavior can be modified | 37  37% | 35  35% | 20  20% | 8  8% | 301 | 3.01 | 2.53 | 48 | Agreed |
| 11 | Specific support to student with academic problems reduces substance use attitude and behavior among student | 37  37% | 36  36% | 23  23% | 4  4% | 306 | 3.06 | 2.56 | 0.5 | Agreed |
| 12 | Overall improvement and well-being of student in school will help reduce substance use | 37  37% | 36  36% | 23  23% | 4  4% | 306 | 3.06 | 2.56 | 0.53 | Agreed |
| 13 | Engagement of adolescent in extra -curricular activities will help in prevention of substance use | 34  34% | 35  35% | 22  22% | 9  9% | 294 | 2.94 | 2.41 | 0.53 | Agreed |
| 14 | School policy on substance use will go a long way to forestall use of drugs | 34  34% | 38  38% | 14  14% | 13  13% | 291 | 2.91 | 2.5 | 0.41 | Agreed |

**Table 3: what are the teachers’ levels of readiness in implementing substance use prevention programs among their students**.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **s/n** | **Teachers readiness for substance use prevention** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** | **W/S** | **X** | **X AGREE** | **X DISAGREE** | **DECISION** |
| 1.  . | I have the needed skill to help adolescent prevent substance us | 30  30% | 40  40% | 21  21% | 9  9% | 291 | 2.91 | 2.4 | 0.51 | Agree |
| 2. | I am willing to receive training to help adolescents prevent substance use | 32  32% | 41  41% | 19  19% | 8  8% | 297 | 2.97 | 2.5 | 0.46 | Agree |
| 3. | We have school policy on student’s substance use | 36  33% | 43  43% | 10  10% | 11  11% | 304 | 3.04 | 2,73 | 0.31 | Agree |
| 4. | I am willing to assist with enforcement of school policies on substance us prevention among student | 34  34% | 38  38% | 18  18% | 10  10% | 296 | 2.96 | 2-5 | 0.46 | Agree |
| 5. | The school does not have finances from special social skill building in adolescents | 38  38% | 39  39% | 12  12% | 11  11% | 304 | 3,04 | 269 | 0.35 | Agree |
| 6. | Lack of organizational support will be a strong banner | 40  40% | 28  28% | 20  20% | 12  12% | 296 | 2.96 | 2,44 | 0.52 | Agree |
| 7. | Facilities (space) in school is not sufficient for group activities | 39  39% | 28  28% | 14  14% | 19  19% | 289 | 2.89 | 2.42 | 0.47 | Agree |
| 8. | There is strong power outage problem in my school | 33  33% | 24  24% | 15  15% | 28  28% | 262 | 2.62 | 2.04 | 0.58 | Agree |
| 9. | The school lack sufficient teacher staff to support special program | 31  31% | 37  37% | 10  10% | 22  22% | 285 | 2.85 | 2.43 | 0.42 | Agree |
| 10. | Within the past one year there is trained counselor working in my school | 48  48% | 29  29% | 19  19% | 4  4% | 321 | 3.21 | 2.79 | 0.42 | Agree |

**4.1 DISCUSSION**

In table 1 the researchers found that 94% of the teachers are aware that school is an important setting for substance use prevention and 72% accept that they play a major role in substance use attitude and behavior of students.This in line with Smith and Foxcroft, (2022) which revealed that teachers generally showed a moderate level of knowledge about substance use prevention, attitudes towards substance use prevention were mostly positive, with teachers expressing strong support for prevention program and a positive correlation between knowledge and attitude. This in contrary with Adeleke, Ogunlese and Akindele (2015) which revealed that knowledge of teachers on substance use prevention was poor at 88% of the respondent while attitude and practice were fair. And that, for effective intervention on substance use preventive strategy in adolescents, teachers and other workers in secondary school should be equipped with adequate knowledge concerning substance use preventive practice.In item 4, 90% of teachers accepted that guidance and counselors play important role in adaptive skill building among adolescents This result agrees with Adeleke. Ogunlese and Akindele (2015) who observed that although teacher had a good concept of the substance use prevention program but choose guidance and counseling as an approach to the management of substance users.

According to the findings generated from the data collected in the table 2, it is indicate-that with or without school intervention an irresponsible adolescent use substance and that teachers do little towards reducing substance use among students. This was proved by 70% and 66% of teachers agreeing to the items respectively. This is in line with Kourgiantakis, & Lee. (2024) Study which revealed that high school teachers generally recognize the importance of drug abuse prevention but perceive challenges in effectively implementing prevention strategies. that attitude towards prevention programs vary based on school environment, personal experiences, and perceptions of student needs. And they concluded that Teachers play a critical role in shaping school-based drug abuse prevention effort and Understanding teachers' perceptions and attitudes is essential for designing effective prevention programs tailored to school contexts. This is in controversy with what Johnston (2012) saw, that it is the role of the classroom teacher to prevent substance use among student in item 3 79% of teachers agrees that substance use is solely the responsibility of parents and not teachers.

In item 4-6 it was also generated that 72%, 91% and 77% of teachers agreed that school intervention and teachers can discourage drug use among students. This is in line with whatAdelekan, & Lawal (2021) said in his study stated that teachers are the central role in education for substance use prevention and also an important component of any substance use prevention program. In item 7 it is clearly stated that drug use among teenagers is highly experimental and that they will stop when they mature. This was disapproved by 73% of teachers disagreeing to the items. This was proved by 70% 73% 79% and 72% of the respondent agreeing to the items (1-4) that teachers have the needed skill, willing to receive training, have school policy and are also willing to assist the enforcement agency in other to help adolescent prevent substance use.This in agreement with Dobavien, Bouyami and Pethova (2015) in their findings stated that training program that follows the guiding principle of school-based principle and policy for prevention of the substance use is an essential component of the school curriculum.From item 5-9, over 60% of the respondent agreed that lack of finance, organizational support, lack of facilities and teachers are those factors that can influence the teachers readiness on the implementation of substance use prevention program in schools. This is in line with Paula, Angela and Samchez (2016) who stated that it is possible highlight lack of financial investment, lack of money and teaching materials as factors that can hinder the implementation of substance use prevention programs in schools.

**4.2 CONCLUSION**

The findings indicate that while many teachers possess a fundamental understanding of substance use and its implications, gaps remain in their comprehensive knowledge of prevention strategies. The attitudes of teachers toward substance use prevention are generally positive; however, there is a need for increased training and resources to enhance their effectiveness in implementing prevention programs. Empathic attitude of teachers facilitates establishment of bonds between student’s family and the school.

Moreover, the teachers showed a notable willingness to engage in prevention efforts, yet systemic barriers—such as lack of support from school administration and insufficient training—hinder their readiness to take active roles in these initiatives. This highlights the necessity for policy-makers and education authorities to provide targeted professional development and resources to empower teachers.

**4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of substance use prevention programs among secondary school teachers in Afikpo North and South Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State:

1. Comprehensive Training Programs: Develop and implement regular training workshops for teachers focused on substance use prevention, covering the latest research, prevention strategies, and intervention techniques. This training should include interactive components, such as role-playing and scenario analysis, to foster practical skills. (Ezugwu et al, 2025)
2. Resources and Materials: Provide teachers with access to up-to-date educational resources, including manuals, pamphlets, and digital materials that outline effective prevention strategies and the signs of substance abuse. These resources should be easily accessible and user-friendly.
3. Collaborative Initiatives: Encourage collaboration between schools, local health authorities, and community organizations to create a comprehensive support system for substance use prevention. This can include shared resources, guest speakers, and community events that raise awareness.
4. Supportive School Environment: Advocate for school administrations to foster a supportive environment where teachers feel empowered to discuss substance use issues openly. This includes creating policies that encourage open communication and support for teachers who tackle these subjects in the classroom.
5. Parent and Community Engagement: Involve parents and community members in substance use prevention efforts by organizing community workshops and informational sessions. Educating families about the dangers of substance abuse and the role of the school can create a collective approach to prevention.
6. Regular Assessment and Feedback: Establish a system for evaluating the effectiveness of implemented prevention programs, allowing for regular feedback from teachers, students, and parents. This will help identify areas for improvement and adapt strategies as necessary.
7. Integration into Curriculum: Incorporate substance use prevention topics into the school curriculum across different subjects, ensuring that students receive consistent messaging about the dangers of substance use and healthy lifestyle choices.
8. Policy Advocacy: Engage in advocacy efforts to influence local and state education policies that prioritize substance use prevention programs in schools, ensuring that they receive adequate funding and support.

**Educational Implications.**

These implications can guide educational policy, curriculum development, and teacher training initiatives:

1. Curriculum Development: Schools should integrate substance use prevention topics into the existing curriculum across various subjects, such as health education, social studies, and physical education. This holistic approach will ensure that students receive consistent and comprehensive education on the risks associated with substance use.
2. Enhanced Teacher Training: There is a pressing need for enhanced professional development opportunities that equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively deliver substance use prevention education. Training programs should focus not only on the content but also on instructional strategies that engage students.
3. Interdisciplinary Approaches: Encouraging an interdisciplinary approach to substance use education can promote broader understanding among students. For example, integrating lessons from psychology, sociology, and biology can help students comprehend the multifaceted nature of substance abuse and its impact on individuals and society.
4. Creating Supportive Learning Environments: Educational institutions must prioritize creating a supportive environment that fosters open discussions about substance use. This includes training teachers to handle sensitive topics compassionately and thoughtfully and to identify students who may be struggling with substance-related issues.
5. Community Partnerships: Schools should seek to build partnerships with local health organizations, law enforcement, and community leaders to facilitate comprehensive substance use prevention programs. Collaborative initiatives can enhance resource availability and provide students with access to external support services.
6. Student Empowerment: Schools should implement programs that empower students to advocate for healthy choices among their peers. Peer-led initiatives can be effective in promoting positive behavior and developing leadership skills among students.
7. Parental Involvement: Educators should recognize the critical role of parents in substance use prevention. Schools can encourage parental involvement through workshops, informational sessions, and resources that help parents engage in conversations with their children about substance use.
8. Continuous Assessment and Improvement: Educational institutions should adopt a framework for ongoing assessment of substance use prevention programs. Regular evaluations will enable educators to identify effective strategies and necessary adjustments to meet the evolving needs of students.
9. Policy Formulation: The findings underscore the necessity for clear policies regarding substance use and its prevention within educational institutions. Comprehensive policies should be developed and enforced to establish guidelines for prevention initiatives, disciplinary actions, and support systems for affected students.

**Disclaimer (artificial intelligence)**

Author(s) hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript

**Consent**

Not applicable.

**Ethical approval**

Not applicable.

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