

Abstract

The current study aimed to explore whether or not levels of substance use disorder-related knowledge is associated with attitudes towards people with Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) through a convenience sample of young adult psychology students registered at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). This research particularly sought to explore the potential moderating effects of exposure to people with SUDs in this relationship. **METHOD:** The convenience sample employed in this study comprised 253 participants, all of whom completed an online survey which included a brief demographic questionnaire, a questionnaire measuring SUD-related knowledge, a questionnaire measuring SUD-related exposure, and a questionnaire measuring SUD-related attitudes. **RESULTS:** The results of the study indicated that, on average, the current sample evidenced positive SUD-related attitudes across more domains than not. Additionally, SUD-related knowledge amongst participants in this study appeared to be somewhat limited. The results suggest that exposure to SUDs amongst the participants is varied and that significant links exist between SUD-related attitudes and exposure. Furthermore, the results call to question the extent to which SUD-related knowledge alone impacts on attitudes towards SUDs. **CONCLUSIONS:** The primary implication of these findings relates to the SUD-specific training of health professionals. This research suggests the inadequacy of such knowledge-focused training and motivates for the incorporation of exposure to real individuals living with SUDs in such training programmes.

Keywords: SUD, Substance Use Disorders, Addiction, Attitudes, Knowledge, Exposure, Training