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The prevalence of alcohol and other drug use amongst school learners in Alexandra Township.

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The prevalence of alcohol and other drug use amongst school learners in Alexandra Township.

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Dissertation submitted to the School of Human and Community Development, University of Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts (Community-Based Counseling Psychology)

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Masters of Arts (Community-Based Counseling psychology) at the University of Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

_____ Day of _____ 2004.

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of alcohol and other drug use amongst school learners in Alexandra Township. The participants in this study were 118 school learners in Alexandra Township. Of these 44 (40%) were in grade 9, 37 (32.2%) in grade 10 and 32 (27.8%) in grade 11; 55 (46.6%) were males and 63 (53.4%) were females; 50.4% were aged between 14—16, while 49.5% were aged between 17-20 years. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire, mostly requiring 'yes' or 'no' answers to determine use of various substances, the age of first use and the frequency use of these substances. This questionnaire has been used in other local studies and translated from English into Sesotho to maximize the validity of responses. The findings of this study indicate that in the past month the prevalence of 54.5% of males and 38.4% of females smoked cigarettes; 49.1% of males and 39.1% of females drank alcohol; and 36% of males and 12.6% of females smoked dagga. The everyday use of cigarettes was 41.7% for females and 47.2% for males; 7.2% of males and 3.6% females for alcohol; and 29.9% of males and 6.3 % for dagga. The results showed that there were no significant age and gender differences regarding the use of these drugs, except for dagga (X^2=.005), with more males than females reported the use. It seems that the everyday use of alcohol, tobacco and dagga is very common than the use of other illicit drugs. Mental health workers should take note of the above findings while planning preventative strategies for the reduction of everyday dagga use, daily cigarette smoking and drinking of alcohol. The results are also important for those involved in treatment programmes to assist these school learners before they progress into more other serious drugs such as ecstasy, LSD, Crack cocaine and heroin.

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