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The perceptions of high school learners on drug use at a high school in the West Rand District, Gauteng

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ABSTRACT

Substance use remains one of the major challenges facing the South African community and it has severe effects not only on the individual, but also on those closest to the individual and society as a whole. The purpose of the study was to discover the perceptions of learners on drug use in a high school in the West Rand district, Gauteng. Two theories namely the systems theory and the ecological perspective guided this study. The research approach was qualitative in nature. A sample of eight learners between the ages of 16-19 years was purposively sampled representing both genders equally. A focus group guide with propositions guided the process of data collection. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. The main findings of the study indicate that there is a link between substance use and the stages of development of learners. High school learners have advanced experiences of substance use, contrary to the norm of high school learners engaging in entry drugs, high school learners have progressed into illicit drugs such as Crystal meth, cat, Ndada, rock and Flakka. In addition, high school learners are challenged with numerous contributing factors to substance use. The research study concludes that even though learners have lost trust in current prevention strategies, more educational substance use awareness and prevention programmes are highly recommended to reduce the challenge of substance use in schools. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, critical gaps in the current research were identified and future research is recommended to improve the existing strategies and establish age appropriate prevention programmes to assist learners challenged with substance use.

Keywords: Substance use, substance dependency, drug, learner, adolescence