

ABSTRACT

Introduction

The Matthew Goniwe Comprehensive High School (MGCHS) in Cradock, which was the research site for this study, has a high number of learners identified as using substances by the school drug testing protocol. This school has a substance use support programme, but occupational therapy was a new addition. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the outcome of a specially designed group occupational therapy programme to the school substance support programme.

The aim of the study was to design and implement an appropriate group occupational therapy intervention programme and then evaluate the effect on behaviour, academic performance and time use for learners identified with substance use.

Methodology

A quantitative randomized control trial using an experimental design was undertaken. Total population sampling recruited Grade 8 and 9 learners identified as using substances into the study. The learners were randomly divided into an experimental and control group. Only participants in the experimental group attended the group occupational therapy programme, but both groups attended the school substance use support programme. Demographic data as well as academic performance and behaviour were collected using the Child Behaviour Checklist (6-18 years) Teacher Report Form (CBCL-TRF) at the start of the study. The CBCL-TRF was repeated at the end of the study and again six months later. The activities health assessment, as a programme outcome, was used to collect time use data at the end of the study. Descriptive and non-parametric statistics were used to determine the differences between the two groups.

Results

Forty-five participants took part in the study, 23 in the experimental group and 22 in the control group. There was no statistical difference between the two groups on the demographic variables. There was no change between the groups' scores before and after the CBCL-TRF, but there was a significant improvement on scores for the

experimental group six months later. The academic pre- and post-experiment scores for the control group remained the same, while those of the experimental group improved significantly between the two data collection periods. There was no significant difference in activities health between the two groups at the end of the study.

Conclusion

The specifically designed occupational therapy programme did not influence the behaviour of the experimental group participants initially, but a significant change was noted six months later. The programme influenced the academic performance of the experimental group participants but did not influence their activities health.

KEYWORDS: Substance use; Occupation; Behaviour; Learners; Programme; Activities Health; Time use; Intervention; Therapy; School.