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Empowering Educators: Addressing Drug Abuse among Students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges

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Abstract

The issue of drug abuse has emerged as a significant public health concern, not only globally but particularly in South Africa. This study focuses on the context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, which have unique challenges related to drug abuse among students. The study seeks to explore the essential training required for educators who play a crucial role in managing students struggling with drug abuse. The article delves into the specific knowledge and skills necessary to empower educators in addressing the complex issue of student drug abuse.

The purpose of this study was to explore the training requirements for educators in effectively managing drug-abusing students in TVET colleges. The study employed a non-experimental quantitative exploratory descriptive design. The target population consisted of educators from specific TVET colleges in South Africa's Limpopo Province. A census sampling approach was used to survey the entire population of 337 educators. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered web-based questionnaire, and the response rate was 55.1%.

The study found that educators strongly associated specific behaviours with suspected drug abuse among students, allowing for early identification. However, there was considerable variability in educators' responses on how to manage students suspected of drug abuse. A substantial portion of educators had not received training on managing students abusing drugs. The study revealed varying perspectives among educators regarding the importance of educator-student relationships. This study sheds light on the need for comprehensive training for educators in addressing student drug abuse issues in TVET colleges. It emphasises the role of educators in early identification and effective management. The findings provide a foundation for future research and interventions in this critical area, not only in South Africa but also in similar educational settings globally.

Keywords: drug abuse; educator; student; substance abuse; technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges; training needs

Introduction

Around the world and notably in South Africa, drug abuse has emerged as a pressing public health concern (Tshitangano and Tosin 2016, 1). Approximately 5.6% of the world's population between the ages of 15 to 64 engages in illicit drug consumption and has consumed at least one substance (World Drug Report [WDR] 2018, 7). In 2017, an estimated one in 53.4 million individuals indulged in drug use (WDR 2018, 7).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC] (2014, 13–14) reports that 7.1% of South Africans struggle with drug abuse in some form, equating to one in every 14 individuals being regular users. This alarming statistic underscores the gravity of the situation.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, with their unique learning environments and diverse populations, present a distinctive set of circumstances that demand careful consideration. Drug abuse among students not only jeopardises their own academic prospects but also disrupts the learning environment, affecting both other students and educators.

In this compelling context, it becomes nothing short of imperative to embark on an exploration of the essential training required for educators who stand at the frontline in managing students struggling with drug abuse. This article ventures into the realm of uncovering the specific knowledge and skills necessary to empower educators in effectively addressing the complex issue of student drug abuse.

Literature Overview

TVET colleges play a vital role in shaping the future workforce by providing specialised skills and knowledge to a diverse student population. A combination of tertiary and vocational education is provided through training colleges (Kinanti, Ritchi, and Handoyo 2020, 2). UNESECO-UNEVOC (2016) claims that these institutions put a lot of focus on the research of different economic sectors, the acquisition of practical skills, and the study of technology. In accordance with the legislation, colleges are created to help students acquire knowledge, practical skills, and applied vocational and occupational competence, preparing them for employment, vocations, occupations, trades, or higher education (Akinyele and Bolarinwa 2018, 1; Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] 2019, 14). However, this educational sector faces a challenge in the form of drug abuse among students

The Prevalence of Drug Abuse

Addressing drug usage stands as one of today's most pressing social challenges, impacting various professions (Amadi and Akpelu 2018, 21; Naidoo 2017, 3; Sorato et al. 2020, 2). It is imperative to comprehend the extent of drug abuse. Multiple studies have illuminated the disturbing statistics associated with drug misuse among college students worldwide. The prevalence of drug and alcohol addiction among college and university

students remains disturbingly high (Mekonen et al. 2017, 1; Tesfai 2016, 7). Vorster et al. (2019) revealed that 78.4% of second-year students and 82.8% of third-year students at a South African higher education institution admitted to drug use. According to a 2013 study by the Limpopo Department of Social Development (2013, 16), 54.8% of young individuals engaged in drug consumption, including marijuana (49%), inhalants (39%), wine (32%), and beer (30%). Govender, Nel, and Sibuyi (2017, 1) observed a similar trend in a Limpopo Province college they investigated. In their research among university students in the Western Cape, Blows and Isaacs (2022) found that a significant portion of surveyed students initiated drug and alcohol use during their college enrolment, with 62.7% using drugs or alcohol. The most-used substances among students included ecstasy (5.3%), cannabis (46%), and alcohol (80.6%).

At higher education institutions with diverse student populations, peer influence can play a pivotal role, potentially leading to drug use (Naidoo 2017, 2). Student drug use not only affects their academic performance (Manu and Maluleke 2017, 15) but also shapes educators' perceptions of them (Amadi and Akpelu 2018, 21).

The Impact of Drug Abuse on Academic Performance

Students frequently engage in the abuse of substances such as marijuana, Indian hemp, cigarettes, and alcohol, all of which have detrimental effects on both their physical and mental well-being (Amadi and Akpelu 2018, 21). For example, research has shown that these substances can negatively impact students' memory, concentration, and learning abilities (Ta, Greto, and Bolt 2019, 845), ultimately leading to subpar academic performance (Amadi and Akpelu 2018, 21).

Furthermore, alcohol, marijuana, and Indian hemp possess pharmacological properties that affect the central nervous system (Amadi and Akpelu 2018, 21), potentially resulting in antisocial behaviour (Asgedom 2017, 38) and disrupting normal brain development (Gilberto et al. 2019, 487). Student drug abuse can also manifest in excessive emotional behaviour, contributing to confrontations and conflicts among students (Chukwu et al. 2017, 41). Students who abuse drugs may experience a range of side effects, including attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Jordan et al. 2018, 2), difficulty paying attention in class, student absenteeism (Jordan et al. 2018, 2), failing tests, neglecting academic responsibilities, and even dropping out of college due to poor grades (Refahi, Mohtasham, and Raeisoon 2018, 435). As highlighted by Zulu (2018, 2) and Asgedom (2017, 38), students who misuse drugs often struggle emotionally, making it challenging for them to concentrate on their studies. These adverse consequences of drug abuse significantly impact the educator-student relationship (Amadi and Akpelu 2018, 25). Consequently, educators face numerous challenges when attempting to address students' negative behaviours, poor academic performance (Hwang and Meyer 2018, 1), and overall inadequate task performance, which can affect their subsequent career development (Mohammed et al. 2018, 25).

Various factors, such as peer pressure, a student's physical and psychological characteristics, family dynamics, and socioeconomic status, contribute to student drug use, as noted by Maithya, Okinda, and Mung'atu (2015). Drug misuse among students negatively affects their physical, mental, and emotional well-being, ultimately impacting their academic performance (Chukwu et al. 2017, 44). Additionally, abusing drugs often results in impaired focus in students (Uchendu and Ukonu 2016, 62), unethical behaviour, and frequent tardiness for classes (Chukwu et al. 2017, 44). Moreover, such students frequently engage in delinquent behaviour (Mohammed et al. 2018, 25), have difficulty forming close friendships (Walton, Avenant, and Van Schalkwyk, 2016), and frequently engage in arguments with their classmates (Maithya et al. 2015, 638). According to Mekonen et al. (2017), student drug abuse leads to lower math scores and fosters aggressive behaviour (Arora et al. 2016, 101). Many students often feel ill-prepared to cope with the challenges they face (Al-Zboon 2017, 3).

Amadi and Akpelu (2018) contend that the high prevalence of student drug addiction significantly hampers the teaching and learning processes in educational institutions, presenting a serious problem (Howard and Pritchard 2017, 1). Nevertheless, despite the gravity of the issue, only a limited number of research papers have explored viable solutions to this problem (Zulu 2018, 1).

Despite ample evidence of the detrimental impacts of drug use on students, there is still a prevalent misconception among many students that drug use can somehow enhance their academic performance. However, there is no substantiated evidence to support the claim that certain drugs can genuinely improve academic performance (Asgedom 2017, 36; Mekonen et al. 2017, 1; Zulu 2018, 3).

The Role of Educators in Drug Abuse Management

The existing body of literature strongly emphasises the pivotal role of educators in steering teenagers away from drug abuse (Adhani and Anshori 2018, 158; Handrianto et al. 2021, 710). According to Handrianto et al. (2021, 713), educators must possess a combination of subject-matter expertise and pedagogical skills to effectively convey the risks associated with drug abuse to students.

College educators come from diverse educational backgrounds and may not hold formal teaching qualifications (Van der Bijl and Oosthuizen 2019, 208). According to the "National Policy on the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Public and Independent Schools and Further Education and Training Institutions" (South African Government 2002), educators, particularly those addressing issues related to student drug use, should have access to opportunities for professional development. College educators need training to enhance the teaching and learning processes and prepare them to handle student drug addiction issues (Manyau 2015, 85). Student behaviour can pose challenges for educators, and these challenges may be linked to drug use (Mohasoa and Mokoena 2017, 109). Rudman and Meiring (2018, 88) argue that while broader concerns in higher education receive substantial attention, the daily struggles faced by teachers in the classroom,

including difficulties related to student behaviour, are frequently overlooked. Managing student drug abuse constitutes a critical issue in TVET colleges. However, it is noteworthy that there exists a significant gap in the literature regarding the training of educators in effectively managing student drug abuse.

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature in the following ways: The initial inquiry explores and outlines the training requirements for teachers at a TVET college for dealing with drug-abusing students. In the South African province of Limpopo, the researcher found a lack of training programmes for educators that dealt directly with the challenge of handling students with drug misuse issues. The results of this study may be used to help build a programme outline for in-service training that would better prepare teachers to cope with drug-abusing adolescents in the future.

Methodology

The researcher employed a non-experimental, quantitative, explorative, descriptive design to develop an outline for an in-service training programme aimed at assisting educators at a TVET College in Limpopo Province in managing student drug abuse. This design allowed the researcher to examine the relationship among variables related to the topic without manipulating any independent variables. The purpose was to explore the training needs of college educators in terms of the management of student drug abuse.

Sample

The target and accessible population for this study were educators teaching at a specific TVET college located in the Limpopo Province (N=337). Initially, when using a sample size calculator with a 5% margin of error and a confidence level of 95% the recommended sample size was 180 educators. After consultation with the statistician, it was decided to employ a census sampling approach, which involved surveying the entire population (N=337). The decision to utilise a census sample was made for several reasons: The larger sample size reduces the margin of error in the study findings, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the results (Leavy 2017, 77). Census sampling ensured that data were collected from all educators within the college (Nicholas 2017, 25), leaving no room for selection bias or overlooking any potential insights.

Data Collection

A structured, self-administered web-based questionnaire in English was used to collect data. An extensive literature review was done to identify the items that were included in the questionnaire. The relevance, objectivity, suitability, and likelihood of receipt and return were all considered when the questionnaire was created (Leedy and Ormrod, in Brink, Van der Walt, and Van Rensburg 2018, 139). The researcher did an extensive literature review to identify the content to be included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into the following sections: 1) Section A: demographic data of participants; 2) Section B: recognising students who abuse drugs; 3) Section C: educators' management of students who abuse drugs; 4) Section D: educator-student relationships, the

level of importance; 5) Section E: educators' training regarding management of student drug abuse. The questionnaire was pre-tested among 15 educators to spot errors, assess the questions' clarity (Polit and Beck 2017, 393), check for significant biases, and ensure that it yielded the expected results (Brink et al. 2018, 142).

The University of South Africa Research Ethics Committee provided ethical approval (HSHDC/995/2020). The four campus managers and the TVET college research committee all gave their approval for this study to be undertaken. To take part in the study, educators from the TVET colleges' four campuses were recruited. All 377 respondents received an e-mail from the respective campus managers, who acted as gatekeepers and provided information about the study and a letter requesting permission to conduct the research, along with a link to the online web-based questionnaire. The researcher received the completed questionnaire through an anonymous e-mail from the web-based platform, protecting the privacy of the respondents. A total of 186 questionnaires with all required information were returned, yielding a response rate of 55,1%. Data were analysed using SPSS version 23 and reported descriptively for the research question: What are the training needs of educators at TVET colleges in terms of the management of drug abuse in students?

Research Results

Section A: Demographical Details of Respondents

Most of the respondents were female (58%) and just more than half of the respondents were between 36–45 years old (52%). Junior educators (45%) and senior educators (45%) were by far the biggest part of the respondents, while the departmental heads accounted for 8% and the campus managers for 2%. Nearly half of the educators (47%) had a diploma and a third (33%) had an undergraduate degree.

Section B: Recognising Students who Abuse Drugs

This section discusses educators' ability to recognise students who are abusing drugs. A list of possible behaviours that students could display when abusing drugs was provided. According to a 5-point Likert scale, educators had to indicate how likely a student would display a certain behaviour. The data indicated all the behaviours as being "extremely likely" with the highest percentage (91,4%) being disruptive behaviour and the lowest percentage (82,3%) hyperactivity, and participants associated these behaviours with suspected drug abuse (table 1). The standard deviation (SD) for most behaviours was relatively low, indicating that the responses were clustered around the mean and there was less variability in the data. The mean values for the items related to the behaviour of students suspected of abusing drugs varied between 4.90 and 4.79 (table 1).

Table 1: Recognising students who are abusing drugs (Section B)

Items on students who are suspected of abusing drugs will most likely display the following:	Extremely unlikely		Unlikely		Neutral		Likely		Extremely likely		Total		Mean values	SD
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Disruptive behaviour	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.6	13	7.0	168	91.4	185	100.0	4.90	0.354
A lack of concentration in the classroom	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.5	21	11.4	163	88.1	185	100.0	4.88	0.347
Inappropriate behaviour	0	0.0	1	0.6	2	1.1	17	9.5	159	88.8	179	100.0	4.87	0.416
Poor academic performance	0	0.0	1	0.5	2	1.1	25	13.5	157	84.9	185	100.0	4.83	0.445
Delinquent behaviour	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	2.7	21	11.3	160	86.6	186	100.0	4.83	0.440
Poor interpersonal relationship	0	0.0	2	1.1	1	0.5	24	13.0	157	85.3	184	100.0	4.83	0.470
Repeat subjects	0	0.0	2	1.1	1	0.5	17	9.2	165	89.2	185	100.0	4.83	0.440
Signs of being stressed	0	0.0	2	1.1	3	1.6	21	11.5	157	85.8	183	100.0	4.82	0.498
Come late for class	0	0.0	1	0.5	2	1.1	27	14.7	154	83.7	184	100.0	4.82	0.454
Tend to have unnecessary arguments with classmates	0	0.0	1	0.5	3	1.6	23	12.6	155	85.2	182	100.0	4.82	0.460
Sign of depression	0	0.0	1	0.5	4	2.2	24	12.9	157	84.4	186	100.0	4.81	0.479
Participate in organised riots	0	0.0	1	0.5	6	3.3	22	12.0	155	84.2	184	100.0	4.80	0.510
Poor personal care	1	0.5	0	0.0	3	1.6	29	15.6	153	82.4	186	100.0	4.79	0.514
Hyperactivity	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	0.5	30	16.1	153	82.3	186	100.0	4.79	0.524

Source: Ezomo Olawunmi Doyinsola (2022).

Section C: Management of Students who Abuse Drugs

The next section of the questionnaire required educators to indicate how they would manage students whom they suspected of abusing drugs. This section consisted of a list of possible activities, and educators needed to indicate how likely they would perform these activities when they suspected students of abusing drugs (table 2).

The purpose of this analysis was to gain insights into the approaches educators use to address students' drug abuse. Educators' responses varied in their approach to managing students suspected of drug abuse.

Around 70% of the educators responded that they would never give a formal lecture on drug abuse prevention or have a group discussion with the students and would never ask other students to support students who were suspected of abusing drugs. Quite unexpectedly, 69% of educators responded that they would never ignore it if they suspected a student was abusing drugs (table 2).

More than 50% of the participants responded that they would never refer a student to the college health and wellness programme or for substance abuse rehabilitation should they suspect the student of abusing drugs; they would also never engage in an informal discussion with such a student. More than 65% of the educators indicated that they would never seek advice if they were unsure how to address such a problem and that they would also never provide individual counselling or refer students to a senior educator who could take responsibility for assisting the students with their drug abuse.

Responses to the item stating to ignore it if a student is suspected of abusing drugs varied, as 37,3 % indicated that they would never ignore it, and 28,0% indicated that they would always ignore it. The mean values for the items that related to the management of students who were suspected of abusing drugs ranged from 2,94 to 1,64 (table 2). All of the SD values were higher than 1,00 indicating that there is a considerable variability in responses of educators to each question.

Table 2: Management of students who are abusing drugs (Section C)

Items on educators' management of students regarding drug abuse: should I suspect a student to abuse drugs, I will...	Never n %	Rarely n %	Sometimes n %	Often n %	Always n %	Total n %	Mean values	SD
Ignore as it is outside my scope	69 37.3	8 4.3	24 13.0	33 18.0	51 28.0	185 100	2.94	1.682
Refer the student to the college health and wellness programme	105 56.8	18 9.7	33 17.8	16 8.6	13 7.0	185 100	1.99	1.317
Engage in an informal discussion with the student	105 56.5	37 19.9	24 12.9	13 7.0	7 3.8	186 100	1.82	1.134
Refer the student or substance abuse rehabilitation	112 60.2	37 19.9	15 8.1	10 5.4	12 6.5	186 100	1.78	1.199
Seek advice because I feel unsure how to address such a problem	123 66.1	22 11.8	6 6.5	12 6.5	13 7.0	186 100	1.76	1.260
Provide individual counselling	127 68.6	21 11.4	15 8.1	9 4.9	13 7.0	185 100	1.70	1.231
Refer it to the senior educator who takes the responsibility for assisting the student	124 66.7	22 11.8	20 10.8	12 6.5	8 4.8	186 100	1.70	1.156
Give a formal lecture on drug abuse prevention	133 72.3	14 7.6	12 6.5	15 6.5	10 4.0	184 100	1.67	1.225
Have a group discussion with the students	127 69.0	19 10.3	16 8.7	17 9.2	5 2.7	184 100	1.66	1.133
Involve other students to support the involved student	130 70.0	22 3.0	13 9.0	10 5.4	10 5.4	185 100	1.64	1.163

Source: Ezomo Olawunmi Doyinsola (2022)

Section D: Educators-Student Relationships, the Level of Importance

This section delved into educators' perspectives on the significance of educator-student relationships. Table 3 illustrates educators' views on the level of importance of educator-student relationships. Responses to these items varied considerably, as the SD for these items ranged between 1,480 and 1,503.

More than 60% of the educators viewed it as very important that educators were role models to students and that educators should invest their time in listening to students' problems to support positive relationships, while nearly 55% of the educators viewed it as very important that educators should be flexible towards students who were involved in drug abuse. The mean values for these items ranged between 4,06 and 3,89.

Section E: Educators' Training regarding Management of Student Drug Abuse

In the final section of the questionnaire, educators were asked about the training they had received for managing students abusing drugs, the specific content they believed should be incorporated into such training, and their preferred methods of training delivery.

A minority of educators (11,9%) reported having received training on how to manage students who abuse drugs. A relatively small percentage (13,6%) of educators indicated that they had been trained in the process to follow when they suspected a student of drug abuse. A slightly higher percentage (14,6%) of educators reported knowing how to manage situations when they suspected a student was abusing drugs. A notable portion of educators (82,2%) expressed the opinion that it was necessary for an educator to know how to support students if drug abuse was suspected (table 4).

Table 3: Level of importance of educator-student relationships (Section D)

Items indicating educators' views on the level of importance of educator-student relationships:	Not all important		Slightly important		Neutral		Often very important		Extremely important		Total	Mean values	SD	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%				
Educators...														
Are role models to students	29	15.6	4	2.2	11	5.9	24	12.9	118	63.4	186	100	4.06	1.480
Should invest their time in listening to students' problems to support positive relationships	29	15.6	7	3.8	5	2.7	30	16.1	115	61.8	186	100	4.05	1.486
Should be flexible towards students' behaviour who are involved in drug abuse	28	15.1	14	7.6	9	4.9	33	17.8	101	54.6	186	100	3.89	1.503

Source: Ezomo Olawunmi Doyinsola (2022)

Table 4: Educators' training received (Section E)

Items indicating educators' training received regarding drug abuse among students:	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
I received training as an educator on how to manage students who abuse drugs	22	11.9	163	88.1
I have been trained in the process to be followed if it is suspected that a student abuses drugs	25	13.6	159	86.4
I know how to manage the situation when a student is suspected of abusing drugs	27	14.6	158	85.4
I do not think it is necessary for an educator to know how to support students if it is suspected they abuse drugs	33	17.8	152	82.2

Source: Ezomo Olawunmi Doyinsola (2022).

Discussion

The data indicate that all the listed behaviours were perceived as “extremely likely” to be associated with suspected drug abuse by the educators. This suggests that educators strongly associate these behaviours with suspected drug abuse. The uniformity of responses suggests a widespread consensus among educators regarding the behaviour students would display when suspecting drug abuse. The low SD values for most of the listed behaviours emphasise the strength of the association educators make between the listed behaviours that students would display if they abuse drugs. The high likelihood of these behaviours could aid educators in the early identification of students who are suspected of abusing drugs and to be more vigilant and responsive to these behaviours. When students abuse drugs, it can shift their focus away from scholastic excellence and toward drugs, which could lead to absenteeism (Kumar, Dangi, and Pawar 2019, 37). According to Myduc, Greto, and Bolt (2019, 845), one of the duties of the educator is to identify the requirements of the students and deal with health-related issues, including smoking, alcoholism, and other kinds of substance addiction.

The results revealed a range of responses and views among educators on how to manage students who are suspected of drug abuse. Most of the educators tended to take a passive stance, and nearly a quarter of the educators responded that they would never ignore it if they suspected a student abusing drugs. An American organisation, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2016, 1), recommends that educators identify students who may be at risk of abusing drugs and then work with their families to prevent these students from actually starting to abuse drugs. They also recommend that educators need to talk with students. Among other things, educators should be a good source of information and help students to build an exit plan. This approach emphasises a proactive stance in preventing drug abuse among students by identifying students at risk and providing resources on how educators can help them make informed decisions to avoid drug abuse.

In contrast, Al-Zboon (2018) contends that educators are not obligated to offer assistance to students who are suspected of abusing drugs. This viewpoint may stem from a belief that educators should primarily focus on their traditional role in educating students and not become involved in students’ personal lives, especially when it comes to issues like drug abuse. Drug abuse among students is a problem widely discussed (Amadi and Akpelu 2018, 21; Zulu 2018, 8) and policies at TVET colleges are based on the National Education Policy Act: “National Policy: Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Public and Independent Schools, Further Education and Training Institutions,” which was promulgated in 2002 in the Government Gazette. This policy provides guidelines for preventing and managing drug abuse by students in educational settings and also outlines the roles and responsibilities of educators.

According to Makovec (2018, 35), educators need to know how to deal with students’ deviant behaviour, such as alcohol and substance abuse. Knowledge of how to deal with

students will assist educators in creating an effective student-educator relationship. An effective student-lecturer relationship can have a positive influence on the effectiveness of teaching (Sundani and Mamokhere 2021, 139).

It is evident that educators need training on how to manage students who are abusing drugs. Drug abuse among students is a huge challenge at TVET colleges. The National Drug Master Plan (Department of Social Development 2019) states that the Department of Higher Education (DHET) should reduce and manage drug use in tertiary institutions. The “National Policy on the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Public and Independent Schools and Further Education and Training Institutions” (South African Government 2002) suggests that all educators should receive training on managing drug use, misuse, and dependency, and support should be given when necessary. To prepare teachers for dealing with drug-related incidents in educational institutions, appropriate course content needs to be created for pre-service and in-service training.

Limitations and Further Research

A significant limitation of this research is that the sample used in the study was exclusively representative of one college situated in one of the 25 districts within Limpopo Province. Consequently, the research findings cannot be generalised to other provinces or districts.

However, while limited in their regional scope, these findings may serve as a valuable foundation for future research endeavours focusing on the same topic. Researchers examining other provinces or districts may find this research useful as a reference point or a basis for comparison in their own research into the management of student drug abuse among educators.

Conclusion

Based on the participants’ responses, educators knew how to recognise students who were abusing drugs. There were various points of view regarding an educator’s responsibility in managing students who were abusing drugs. This common understanding can be a valuable tool for educators to identify students at risk of drug abuse early and respond more effectively to their needs. It is evident that there are varying approaches and views on how educators should manage students who are suspected of drug abuse. Some educators lean towards a passive stance, while others advocate for a proactive approach. It is clear that educators have had insufficient training in how to manage students who are abusing drugs. Equipping educators with the knowledge and tools to address drug abuse among students is not only essential for their well-being but also for maintaining an effective student-educator relationship, which can significantly impact the quality of education and the overall success of students. There is an obvious need for instructors to receive training on how to handle the issue of drug abuse among their students, and this training should receive more attention.

Competing Interests and Funding

The authors declare that they have no competing interests. A Unisa Postgraduate Bursary was awarded for this study.

Respective Contributions and Availability of Data

ODE initiated the study and was responsible for the design, acquisition of data, analysis, interpretation of data and drafting of the manuscript as part of her MA degree in Nursing Science. CP assisted in the conceptualisation of the study design, data analysis and preparation and finalising of the manuscript. The datasets used and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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