

Review Article

This paper was presented at the 20th International Conference on Sustainable Development, Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa on December 3-4, 2024

Evaluating the success of South African Law Enforcement in combating drug and substance abuse: Are we winning the fight? The case study of Youth-Network Engaged Scholarship Project

Mokopane Charles Marakalala ¹, Mahlodi Mothapo ²

College of Law, School of Criminal Justice, Department of Police Practice, University of South Africa, Youth-Network Engaged Scholarship Project, Preller Street Muckleneuk Ridge, Pretoria, South Africa.

¹ Corresponding author: Marakmc@unisa.ac.za

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OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, Ontario International Development Agency, Canada.

ISSN 1923-6654 (print) ISSN 1923-6662 (online) www.oidaijsd.com

Also available at <https://www.ssm.com/index.cfm/en/oida-intl-journal-sustainable-dev/>

Abstract: Research shows that engagement vision of higher education as an asset for Social Justice in South Africa and in Africa by combating drugs and substance abuse. In 2024, The **Youth-Network Engaged Scholarship Project** conducted site visit with the communities in South African . The project's goal is to raise community awareness about the efficacy of law enforcement's efforts to combat drug and substance misuse. Specifically, it aims to determine if our law enforcement is winning the battle against drug and substance abuse in the South African community. Furthermore, it looks at the effects of substance abuse and drug usage on a young participant's life both during and after matriculation. The goal of The Young-Network ES Project for the 2024 academic year is to collaborate with various stakeholders in the Western Cape (Cape Town Community) and Limpopo (Mokopane and Polokwane) to combat drug and substance addiction as well as life after matric among young participants and repercussions of drug usage among young people.. Young people who persistently abuse substances often experience an array of problems, including academic difficulties, health-related problems (including mental health), poor peer relationships, and involves law enforcement to address "Is Law Enforcement winning the fight against Drugs and Substance Abuse in South African Community".

Keywords: Effectiveness, Law Enforcement, Awareness, Engaged Scholarship, Community, Drugs and Abstance Abuse.

Introduction and Background

The Youth-Network ES Project works with Polokwane-Limpopo Anti-Drugs Gangsterism and Crime (LADGAC) and Mokopane-Waterberg Education Project for Commerce and Science (WEPCOS) to further project operations in Western cape. According to reports, drug and substance misuse is a serious issue that contributes to social and economic issues in many developing nations, including South Africa (Monteiro, 2001:98; WHO, 2014:1). "The emotional and psychological impacts on families, the high levels of crime, and other social ills have left many communities under siege by the scale of alcohol and drugs," according to South Africa's Minister of Social Development. Couch, Felstehausen and Hallman (2017:43) mentioned that the abuses places a burden on the social, economic and health wellbeing of drinkers as well as their social support networks. According to this assertion, drinking too much has detrimental effects on one's health and relationships with others, as well as with society as a whole. As such, it is necessary to lessen or eradicate these detrimental impacts of drug and substance usage. In collaboration with community members, the Youth-Network Engaged Scholarship Project with other service providers, including social workers, police officers, and/or the police service, have an obligation to take action to lessen drug and substance abuse and the issues that accompany it. The "ability of all people in South Africa to deal with problems related to drug and substance abuse within communities" is one of the objectives of the service providers. (NDMP, 2023:np; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2016:31).

This suggests that service providers and the community at large must be involved in the intervention process. The Youth-Network ES Project offer services in communities with the goal of bringing various talents, expertise, and experience to address the problem of drug and substance abuse. Maguire (1983:1) defines a "community support network as those that provide support or services within a particular community for helping residents to meet social-emotional needs, as well as general welfare." Service providers and formal support networks will be used interchangeably in this article.

The Youth-Network Engaged Scholarship Project offers services to support communities in addressing their own emotional, social, and well-being. Drug and substance abuse treatment facilities or community-serving organizations like Polokwane's Limpopo Anti-Drugs Gangsterism and Crime (LADGAC) and Mokopane's Waterberg Education Project for Commerce and Science (WEPCOS) could be involved. The issue of drug and substance abuse is addressed by the community or official support networks using various tactics or strategies that are in line with various policies and programs. By showing the path to accurate service targeting, they aim to lessen the harm that drug and substance abuse cause.

Problem Statement

To combat drug and substance abuse, Youth-Network ES Projects have implemented activities. The crucial query is whether the results are favorable and, if not, what issue or issues might be at play (Eliseev & Maughan, 2016:22). Despite some noteworthy successes, South Africa's law enforcement agencies have had little success in preventing substance use and abuse (Drug Advisory Board, 2019:np; Flisher and Ziervogel, 2020:27). Their efficacy is hampered by the complexity of the problem, resource limitations, and corruption. The South African Police Service (SAPS), the country's police force and community policing are principally in charge of law enforcement in South Africa. The SAPS is in charge of conducting nationwide security and criminal investigations. Many people who are addicted to drugs turn to illegal activity to pay for their addiction. According to Flisher and Ziervogel (2020:43) argued that in areas where drug abuse is common, this may result in a rise in larceny, burglaries, and even violent crimes. In South Africa, drug addiction and abuse are serious problems that impact people individually, in families, and in communities all around the nation (Drug Policy Alliance, 2017:np). Drug abuse, including that of opioids, methamphetamines, and marijuana, has escalated in recent years, contributing to a surge in poverty, crime, and health problems. The severity of drug usage and addiction in South Africa must be acknowledged by society, and steps must be taken to address this issue. Communities, governments, and organizations may lessen the detrimental impacts of drug usage and addiction by cooperating.

The statement by Drugaware Dagga or Cannabis (2016:np) mentioned that South Africa experienced a significant political upheaval just over 20 years ago. A new constitution that was hailed as one of the most progressive and inclusive in the world was drafted after the harsh laws of the apartheid regime were repealed. However, drug policy is one area where South Africa still lags behind (Drug Policy Alliance, 2017:np). Drug use is illegal in South Africa and frequently wrongly attributed to a variety of social problems. This oversimplified conventional wisdom fails to take into account the many and intricate factors that contribute to poverty, crime, and drug use. For example, South African officials misrepresented drug dependence as one of the "root causes of crime" at the 58th Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Eliseev & Maughan, 2016:32). High levels of stigmatization and exclusion have resulted from this misperception of drug use. Apartheid-style policing is still common and justified when it comes to the "drug problem."

In South Africa, communities that have endured decades of oppression fight the war on drugs on a daily basis. These areas are now practically police states due to the increased criminalization of these communities. The consequences of this have been disregarded, including the strain on the legal system, mass incarceration, and social exclusion (Hochfeld, 2017:13). Rather, authorities only concentrate on the politically advantageous goal of eradication (Frank & Fisher, 2020:23). Despite this emphasis on medications, there are few evidence-based treatment options and significant entry barriers. According to Muller and Lombard (2019:43) argued that the rise in injecting drug use is concerning as well, particularly in light of the conspicuous dearth of state-funded opioid replacement therapies and harm reduction services in a nation already grappling with an HIV epidemic.

Nations all over the world are moving away from antiquated approaches to drug control. There is growing recognition that treating drug users like criminals is an ineffective strategy (Odejide, 2016:56). Instead, nations and regions are being encouraged to think about drug policies based on human rights and health by the upcoming UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS). However, there has been virtually no discussion of the UNGASS process in South Africa, either at the governmental or civil society levels (Lynch & Kaplan, 2020:32).

Youth-Network ES Project identifies the following related problems

Increase in Crime: An increase in crime is one of the primary consequences of drug abuse in South Africa. Many people who struggle with drug addiction turn to illegal activity to support their addiction (Mail & Guardian online, 2019:np). In areas where drug abuse is common, this may result in a rise in theft, burglaries, and even violent crimes.

Contribution to poverty: In South Africa, drug addiction also plays a role in poverty because many drug addicts find it difficult to provide for their families (Martinic, 2016:08). This may result in monetary difficulties and a greater strain on the social safety net.

Impact on youth health: Furthermore, drug and substance abuse have a serious negative influence on people's health. The argument by Meleod (2010:56; Medina-Mora, 2005:67) indicated that heart disease, liver damage, depression, and other mental and physical health issues can result from drug addiction. Additionally, it can raise the risk of HIV and other infectious diseases because drug users may share needles and engage in other risky behaviours.

How drug and substance abuse affect a young participant's life both during and after matriculation. In order to carry out project activities, the Youth-Network ES Project partners with Polokwane-Limpopo Anti-Drugs Gangsterism and Crime (LADGAC) and Mokopane-Waterberg Education Project for Commerce and Science (WEPCOS).

Lynch and Kaplan (2020:20) assert that income and educational attainment are significant indicators of socioeconomic status. Because it is directly related to the material circumstances that may affect wellbeing and income in particular is a useful metric. Parry and Bennets (2018:7) provide that resident of underprivileged communities, where alcohol is easily accessible, are more likely to abuse alcohol. According to Morojele, Parry, and Brooks (2019:2), drug abuse problems are severe and challenging to treat in underprivileged and marginalized areas because of systemic factors like poverty and unemployment (Mkhize, 2016:14). It is alarming to see the negative socioeconomic effects that drinkers, families, and society at large experience (WHO, 2014:60). Under the Youth-Network ES Project, social workers, police officers, and educators are among the service providers addressing socioeconomic issues, including drug and substance abuse. Rataemane (2014:13) lists a number of interventions, such as teaching teenagers about alcohol, developing positive relationships with them both inside and outside of schools, promoting responsible use, and providing treatment and rehabilitation. However, execution seems challenging, and the outcomes remain unsatisfactory.

The Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependency Act (20 of 1992), as amended, the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act (70 of 2018), and the NDMP (2013-2017) are some of the laws in the South African government introduced to address the issue of drug and substance abuse and lessen its harm, demand, and supply. Alcohol harm reduction, which attempts to reduce problems caused by drug and substance addiction, such as violence, traffic accidents, lost productivity, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases from risky sex, is mentioned by Rataemane and Rataemane (2016:373). The Youth-Network ES Project is responsible for implementing these policies, programs, and strategies to prevent drug and substance abuse. The challenge is that despite the efforts of the government, non-governmental organizations, and industry, the problem persists. The damage caused by drug and substance abuse is widespread and affects the drinker, people around them, and society as a whole, including those who provide services meant to lessen or eradicate the problem.

This article seeks to:

- Report on strategies that are employed by Youth-Network ES Project to address the problem of drug and substance abuse and reduce the harm it causes.
- Propose intervention strategies that could be used to address the problem of drug and substance abuse.

Research Methodology

A qualitative method was used to gather key informants' opinions. Using open-ended questions, unstructured in-person interviews and focus groups were held together data on the effect drug and substance consumption has in the communities. The method used was purposive sampling. In the selected research communities in Mokopane and Polokwane. In order to analyse the qualitative responses to open-ended interview and focus group questions, content analysis was used. Several viewpoints were used to analyse the data in order to identify textual components that improved our comprehension of the participants' experiences and endeavours as well as the intervention strategies employed to address drug and substance abuse problems.

An analysis of the development and application of intervention measures was conducted by looking at legislative and national planning documents. This comparison and study lead to the recommendation of intervention solutions. Based on the information analysis, recommendations were created to reduce drug and substance abuse, damage, and misuse. Multi-level synergistic intervention, customized interventions, multi-sectoral responsibilities and collaborations, risk and risk environment assessment, and other themes are highlighted in the description of the recommended intervention techniques (Stimson, 2016:9).

Discussion and Results

The identified themes focused on the current intervention strategies used by the Youth-Network ES Project, and suggestions for intervention were provided. The key informants claim that drug and substance abuse have a detrimental effect on individuals, families, the community, and the workplace. It reduces quality of life and exposes social support networks to poverty, starvation, injury, early death, abuse, and neglect, to mention a few consequences.

South African Law Enforcement not the fight against Drugs and Substance Abuse and related crimes

South Africa's law enforcement agencies have not been very successful in preventing substance use and misuse, despite a few notable successes. Corruption, resource constraints, and the complexity of the issue all hinder their effectiveness. Upholding and enforcing the law, preventing, investigating, and combating crime, preserving public order, and safeguarding South African citizens and their property are among the main responsibilities of the police force that are governed by this law. It is well known that South Africa has a high crime rate. This concept is the result of many factors. Cape Town is ranked 14th out of the world's most dangerous cities. Furthermore, the Western Cape is believed to have the highest rate of gang violence in South Africa; according to the South African Police Service (SAPS), 25 out of the 151 police stations in the Western Cape are linked to gangs. As a developing country, South Africa is obviously unable to effectively address the social ills that afflict our communities, such as gangsterism, chronically high unemployment rates, and the rise of illegal partnerships fueled by boredom and money greed (especially among young people who lack motivational support in the form of offered activities) (Nqakula, 2016:34).

In order to ensure a coordinated approach to treating drug and substance abuse issues, the plan mandates that government agencies establish micro drug master plans, provincial drug forums, and local drug action committees. Regular audits of treatment facilities and prevention initiatives, as well as intervention-focused demonstration projects, are among the gaps that must be filled in order to further solidify the body of research supporting South African substance abuse policy and practice (Meel, 2016:19). Demand, particularly from younger patients, has increased faster than the number of drug abuse treatment programs available. Services remain geographically dispersed, split between the social welfare and health sectors, and insufficient to meet demand because the plan to expand primary care services while reducing tertiary care services has not been implemented. Treatments for substance abuse and mental health issues are not combined; they are handled independently. Poor aftercare service provision has also been noted. According to Meel (2016:25) stated that apart from a few non-governmental organizations' initiatives to educate young people about the harmful effects of drugs and the infrequent use of drug replacement therapy for heroin addicts, harm reduction has gotten little attention. In many treatment programs, the paradigms of evidence-based therapy are not being followed. A project to develop standards and guidelines for inpatient treatment facilities was recently completed, and the implementation is one of the positive developments.

South African Police Annual Report- 2021-2023

Law enforcement has been identified as a key strategy in collaboration with the Youth-Network ES Project, aimed at enhancing public safety and security services within South African communities, as outlined in the South African Police Annual Report for 2021–2023. In the provinces of Limpopo, Gauteng, and Western Cape, authorities reported a significant number of drug and alcohol-related offenses, particularly during weekends; however, they were unable to provide specific data. The issue of drug and substance abuse impacts both adults and children, as well as individuals of all genders. Domestic violence is prevalent and frequently linked to alcohol consumption. Assaults often occur in venues where alcohol is served, and in some cases, victims succumb to their injuries. According to Meel (2016:28), alcohol consumption is associated with 76% of all fatalities in South Africa resulting from interpersonal violence. The relationship between drug and substance abuse and domestic violence shows considerable variation, with estimates ranging from 25% to 80% of cases, as reported by the Women's Rural Advocacy Programme (2017). Additionally, the high rate of trauma on South African roads is also connected to alcohol consumption. A police officer remarked: *"To illustrate the issue of youth frequenting shebeens and engaging in alcohol abuse: A 20-year-old was fatally stabbed at a shebeen this past weekend during a fight. The assailant, aged 21, is currently in custody. This tragic incident represents a lost opportunity for a young life. Our community is facing numerous challenges."*

Issues such as substance abuse, including drug and alcohol misuse, continue to play a role in criminal activities (Nqakula, 2016). Additionally, interpersonal violence poses a considerable threat to both individuals and communities, hindering crime prevention efforts (WHO, 2005:np). A police officer reported incidents of rape involving women who were either at or departing from bars. *"Women also visit establishments that serve alcohol. There have been instances of rape involving both older and younger women, as they consume alcohol and attempt to walk home alone. In certain situations, men purchase drinks for women with the ulterior motive of engaging in sexual activity while they are intoxicated."* According to the WHO (2018:np), men are statistically more likely to perpetrate sexual violence, while young women who frequent bars face a heightened risk of being targeted for sexual aggression in nightlife environments. The consequences of sexual assault can be devastating, leading to long-lasting physical and mental health issues. This may include the transmission of HIV and AIDS, which can result in death and the loss of a loved one or a critical source of financial support.

Addressing the significant presence of shebeens within communities represents a major challenge. A police officer has indicated that these establishments create perilous situations that jeopardize community safety while also placing considerable demands on police resources due to the unpredictable nature of the disturbances they cause. *"The issue lies in the numerous shebeens operating in the community, selling homemade alcoholic beverages. Despite frequent police raids, these establishments persist in their operations, with the situation exacerbated during weekends."* Shebeens are identified as the primary venues for alcohol consumption, where dangerous concoctions are produced and sold, contributing to various social and health-related problems. The consumption of alcohol in these settings often leads to violent incidents, including sexual assaults, stabbings, physical assaults, and homicides. Furthermore, the officer highlighted that a significant proportion of alcohol-related incidents predominantly occur in residences and shebeens during the weekends. This observation aligns with research conducted by Pridemore (2016:1034) in Russia, which established a correlation between alcohol consumption and violence, particularly due to the prevalence of binge drinking on weekends.

Current intervention strategies that address the problem of drug and substance abuse

Youth-Network ES Project is about creating an empowering network for mostly unemployed youth in marginalised communities to become leaders and trainers. The goal is to enable them to use their current football and netball teams to educate other members of their community's life skills and computer literacy, among other soft skills. This is to provide young people in underprivileged neighborhoods more options for living and to keep them from having to turn to crime as a source of income. Specialized community development staff members from Youth-Network ES Project assist in the development processes in different communities.

At the 21 Youth-Network locations around the country, a multidisciplinary staff and other stakeholders oversee and carry out the interventions. The volunteers and Unisa employees make up the team. The activities of the Youth Network ES Project are divided into several phases. The first stage is to establish trustworthy connections with poor groups, most of which live in informal settlements. This is founded on integrity and developed over time. Adopting or starting netball and soccer teams in these areas is the second stage. This offers a means of cultivating a relationship with the young people. Through unofficial programs, the third phase offers a platform for ongoing life skill training. Communities that excel are taken to a fourth phase that provides computer skill training and to facilitate access to the Internet. This skill transfer programmes are placed at the disposal of the community members and learners to enhance their knowledge that may assist them with their school homework, research, and studies. The last stage teaches entrepreneurship skills and aims to help eligible individuals enroll in different higher education schools or launch their own small businesses. This procedure discourages young people from turning to a life of crime and puts them in a position to make educated decisions about their professions. The fact that adults leave the network while new members are always joining makes this a cyclical process.

The Youth Networks ES Project offers a variety of interventions that support contextualized skills development training sessions, such as reading and literature reviews for educational reasons, in order to reduce drug use and substance addiction. This is accomplished via teaching schools and communities on relapse prevention, resilience, and the addiction and recovery process.

Proposed intervention strategies to address the drug and substance abuse problem

Communities must be made aware of drug and substance abuse, associated socioeconomic issues, and the necessity of group action. Reviewing intervention efforts and the implementation of policies in an integrated way, however, requires additional attention. To succeed in the fight against drug and substance abuse, attention must be paid to both the internal and exterior settings. An alcohol reduction plan that is suitable and pertinent to the communities is

required. According to Stimson (2016), programs' failure can be attributed to their lack of contextualization. Areas, regardless of their differences, are given a single kind of plan. Stimson (2016:9) intervention themes risk assessment and risk environment, targeted interventions, multi-level synergistic interventions, and multi-sectoral accountability and partnership—are the basis for the suggested strategies.

Assessment of risk and risk environment

Stimson (2016:9) claims that evidence-based interventions and evidence-informed policy are likely to be more effective in addressing alcohol problems. He contends that both the costs and the most successful therapies should be determined. Finding therapies that are likely to be suitable, practical, and meaningful is also crucial. Developing the ability to evaluate the risk environment is necessary, particularly at the local level.

Alcohol harm reduction strategies should be informed by a proper assessment of the risk and risk environment that is performed by all role players such as social workers, police, health workers, educationists, traditional leaders and policymakers. The risk assessment calls for a change in prevention of drug and substance abuse itself to prevention of risk factors. Medina-Mora (2005:26) states that risk factors should be identified at all levels such as individual, family, school, among peers and in the community. Environmental evidence would offer pertinent data that directs the creation of a plan that centres on actions with the highest likelihood of success (Stimson, 2016:9). It is crucial to properly evaluate the environment, taking into account the community's socioeconomic standing, culture, human capital, and financial and infrastructure resources. It would decide what type of intervention is suitable to lessen damage. To lessen the harm that alcohol does, people, families, communities, organizations, and the government must acknowledge the issue and be prepared to take action to solve it.

At the national level, intervention techniques were created and implemented everywhere. Although it appears that some areas have received intervention, no evaluation was conducted to identify the best kind of intervention for the community, especially for those who exhibit the socioeconomic circumstances found in the two study areas that were chosen (low level of education, poverty, and unemployment). Contextual elements including poverty, disorganized neighborhoods, a lack of social and health services, and the accessibility of drugs are significant predictors of the degree of use and issues, according to Medina-Mora (2005:26).

Contributing causes to the problem include unemployment, low educational attainment, poverty, and reliance on pensions. The complexity of drug and substance abuse issues hinders efforts to treat them. A thorough evaluation of risk and the risk environment should take into account possible successful actions, but it is also important to ascertain the cost, according to Stimson (2016:9). Funds should be set aside for alcohol-related initiatives. The police and social workers highlighted a shortage of funding that affects the provision of services. Stimson goes on to say that "off-the-shelf solutions" for alcohol-related problems are not always suitable, relevant, practical, or successful. Parry (1998:130) emphasizes that interventions should be tailored to the specific groups they are intended to serve. In certain places, generic programs might not be sufficient to address the alcohol problem.

Rather than creating a policy that should apply to everyone, regardless of their resources or shortcomings, an assessment is intended to give a comprehensive ecosystems' view of the community, including their strengths and socioeconomic position, among other things, which could be used to develop intervention strategies. According to Mokdad, Brewer, and Warner (2017:304), evidence-based preventative tactics including restricting alcohol outlets and enforcing age restrictions can help alter societal norms around appropriate drinking behavior, which will lessen excessive alcohol intake and the associated risks. Research should be conducted to gather pertinent and useful data that will support intervention and planning. Despite the fact that the population is varied and uneven in terms of resources and education, among other things, the National Drug Master Plan (2016–2011) was created for all of South Africa's provinces and no particular measures were suggested for any of them. The Mini-Drug Master Plan for these regions has not yet been prepared as suggested.

The ability to evaluate the risk environment, particularly at the local level, is necessary for a good evaluation. There are not enough specialists in the chosen fields of study. A thorough evaluation that would aid in strategy development and policymakers' decision-making would not be feasible. One social worker would not be able to conduct a thorough evaluation without the necessary capacity to evaluate the risk environment. In addition to increasing the number of social workers, additional social service jobs like community development officers and social auxiliary workers should be considered for employment in order to support social workers.

Drug and substance abuse are not areas of expertise for the departments and organizations that participate in local drug committees. It might be wise to pursue courses focused on drug and substance abuse in order to acquire specialized knowledge and practice for successful interventions, even if social workers study specialized fields of

practice throughout their graduate school. Other entities, including schools, also require capacity in order to evaluate risk. Teachers stated that they occasionally encounter psychological issues that they are ill-equipped to handle due to a lack of training. Social workers in schools would be able to evaluate the risk environment and take the necessary measures.

Members of the community has the ability to prevent drug-related issues as well as to identify and address them early on. Basic-educated individuals would need to comprehend the purpose of this intervention. The community's poor educational attainment is the problem. Finding community people who are eager to contribute and who need help developing capacity, however, requires careful consideration. Being the owner of intervention programs might help with treatment and lessen the harm that alcohol causes. Rataemane (2014:7) supports this viewpoint by asserting that "treatment works with the support of family and community"; as a result, strengthening community mobilization around alcohol and associated concerns may be a potent tactic.

Local drug action committees ought to be included in all stages of evaluation and make sure that those who are capable of evaluating risk and the risk environment are included in their operational regions. Addressing the issues requires knowledge of drug and substance misuse and intervention techniques. Administration officers who serve as employee assistance officers make up the majority of the local drug action committee members, who are designated by their departments. They lack skilled personnel in the psychological domains. For example, the police and the Youth-Network ES Project have hired social workers to help police personnel with their psychological needs, although they are located outside of the Limpopo region (Mokopane and Polokwane). Members of the local drug action committee, who represent various departments and organizations, should get risk assessment training while the situation is still in place.

The goal of doing a thorough evaluation is to make it easier to identify, evaluate, and treat alcohol-related issues. The ultimate goal is to develop context-appropriate intervention options rather than attempting to implement a single, generic approach that ignores the various environmental situations across the nation. According to Parry (2020:219), a combination of strategies is required to identify the best policies, taking into consideration elements like public acceptance, political viability in various cultural contexts, impact likelihood, and response capacity.

Areas that should be targeted for interventions

Targeted treatments should target behaviors like excessive drinking, drug and substance abuse, and hazardous sex, as well as environments like drinking establishments and particular groups like the elderly and vulnerable youth (Stimson, 2016:9). The main informants reported targeted interventions in families, schools, and drinking establishments. Although drinking establishments were the focus of the intervention, it appears that it was only implemented once during the anti-drug week. The police can only randomly visit drinking establishments if they are aware that they exist. They said that because they are illegal, it is unknown how many drinking establishments there are in the township and villages.

Since many shebeens in the villages are unregistered, they disregard the laws governing the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. In South Africa, there are a lot of illegal alcohol establishments, which lessens the impact of any policies meant to curb underage drinking. Because age restriction regulations are not enforced in pubs, supermarkets, and alcohol stores, young people are at risk. Owners of the drinking establishments should be the target of initiatives to improve the situation by including them in educational initiatives that emphasize responsible drinking. Additionally, they can be encouraged to engage in other revenue-generating endeavors instead of turning to illicit means of making money. Attention must be paid to the enforcement of the laws that oversee licensing.

There are specific groups that require attention because they are vulnerable, for example, school going children, young people, women and the elderly. Martinic (2016:11) states that those individuals at particular risk of harm can be specifically addressed. The key informants registered concern regarding all these groups.

School-going children should be targeted to prevent them from using alcohol. Prevention is still better than cure. This could include any activity designed to avoid substance abuse and reduce its health and social consequences (Medina-Mora, 2005:25). Due to their vulnerability, schoolchildren need preventative programs like life skills to shield them from the negative effects of drug and substance misuse. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2016:57) define life skills as the many abilities and talents a person needs to be able to meaningfully improve their life. Their key life skills, including problem-solving, decision-making, critical and creative thinking, and self-concept, are to be developed (Couch, Felstehausen & Hallman, 2017:16-32). It was noted that the WEPCoS programme was introduced in one upgrading school in area, which is a good effort. It would be beneficial to evaluate implementation and impact. This should then be extended to other schools to facilitate these skills.

Thus, schools have to think about hiring social workers who specialize in addressing the psychological problems that schoolchildren face. In addition to working with families that require support to establish an atmosphere that supports learning and development, the social workers would act as a liaison between the children's homes and schools. The social worker and other experts who may be called to the school to impart information and skills, such as early behavioral issue assessment, would also empower the teachers.

As a preventative step, it is important to educate young children about alcohol and its effects on the body. When parents abuse alcohol, they ignore their children, making them vulnerable. They are subjected to detrimental psychosocial outcomes such as home accidents, misbehavior, and physical or sexual abuse. The young people are at risk and need help coping with peer pressure so they can avoid drinking. According to Parry (1998:13), life skills programs ought to be created to address young people's views toward binge drinking and should also consider how normative norms and self-identity affect men's intentions to partake in binge drinking. Including role models who have overcome substance abuse might encourage young people to take part in programs. Despite being an intervention method to address the issue that young people experience, the LADGAC program was launched with little results. According to the social worker, an assessment of the issue involving young people would be beneficial because they have other needs to attend to, such as unemployment. A more comprehensive strategy could produce better outcomes.

It is proposed that the teenagers themselves, particularly those in drug addiction recovery, should manage the programs in order to encourage young participation. They might conduct lectures and workshops in addition to concentrating on other pertinent topics like work and educational prospects. Behavior modification may be aided by the use of role models, such as artists who perform their genre. It is also advised that a young representative join the LADDAC.

For people and their families to adapt, grow, and develop, parents and families must be the focus. Services like screening and early identification of families in need of support and help with preventative programs are needed. To help parents deal with parenting challenges, upkeep of the house, establishing norms and limits, and building support systems, effective parenting techniques might be taught. Parents who drink alcohol are poor role models because children who grow up in homes where alcohol consumption is common are more prone to emulate or tolerate this behavior. Building healthy families with strong morals should be the main goal in order to provide a nurturing atmosphere for kids. Cultural practices that curbed drug and substance abuse in the past could be reintroduced, with the tribal authority leading the process. A door-to-door campaign was used by committee members, where families to disseminate information on alcohol use and abuse. As admirable as it is, it was only done once during the week against drugs. Even though information was given, most community members are not educated enough to understand the problem of binge drinking and take appropriate action. It takes more than one session to get consumers to quit consuming alcohol. Drug and substance abuse are exacerbated by high rates of unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy. As important informants, social workers believed that taking part in community development initiatives may help to alleviate the issue. Structures like the Department of Labor must make strong efforts to support the development of skills in various trades.

The absence of recreational amenities in both communities was another drawback, according to the social workers. Shebeens were founded as a form of protest against apartheid regulations, but they are also utilized for entertainment and to meet new people (Parry, 2005:426). According to Freeman (undated), apartheid and poverty had an impact on alcohol use since the government failed to provide other recreational opportunities, hence people drank. The current administration still has difficulties in providing recreational amenities to deter alcohol consumption.

Participation in the community guarantees that people take charge of their life and become independent. The goal of the White Paper on Developmental Social Welfare (2017:14) was to support the growth of human potential and independence in a supportive and encouraging socioeconomic setting. This notion of self-reliance is expressed with caution, considering Hochfeld's (2017:84) view that the discourse of self-reliance is problematic in terms of its expectation of economic self-sufficiency of families in the context of high levels of unemployment and extreme poverty. In this case, self-reliance is emphasized for behavior modification in relation to drug and substance abuse. People in society must take responsibility for altering their behavior and not using poverty as an excuse to abuse alcohol since alcohol causes a great deal of harm that, if left unchecked, might result in death. In certain cases, it creates a vicious cycle and results in even worse poverty.

In order to assist youth: To avoid alcohol misuse, parents should become engaged. Authorities in Milan, Italy, urge parents to take responsibility because "parents of children under the age of 16 who consume, buy, or even possess alcohol will face a fine of 2021-2026," according to an item on page 2 of the Sunday Times on July 19, 2019. The high rates of unemployment and poverty in South Africa may make it impossible to implement this sort of intervention, but it may act as a disincentive for those who can afford it. Although incarceration is an option for individuals who

cannot afford it, it may not alter behavior. Programs like teaching good parenting techniques and enforcing laws to safeguard children should be closely watched. A concerted effort is required for the inappropriate behaviors to be changed, however a focus on moral regeneration may help. It is essential to plan and execute with well-defined monitoring and assessment systems. In order to solve the issue, the community must assume responsibility. The resources of the larger social structure, such local institutions and community groups, might be employed.

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2016:25) refer to the theoretical framework for the eco-systemic perspective that would include the whole social system, wider community and local community including families and individuals.

The focus should be on continuous education in all spheres such as families, schools, social clubs, churches and professionals such as social workers, priests, nurses or teachers should take the lead and share knowledge such as recommendations from the WHO. The WHO Africa (2018:4) promotes public education on the harmful effects of alcohol consumption, which can help raise awareness of the harm caused by alcohol in the community and stimulate active engagement in policy initiatives. The education approach should involve the community, schools, media, social media marketing campaigns, and passive strategies like warning labels. Persistently motivating the community to change their perspective and become self-sufficient is challenging. More action and support from the community are needed. In terms of the distribution of knowledge, instruction, and training, community development can be a solution as it empowers individuals to take charge of their own growth. Identifying and involving specialists, role models, and community leaders would enhance efforts to solve the alcohol problem. Ambassadors, champions, and role models are necessary for the alcohol harm-reduction plan, according to Mkhize (2016:4). The structures such as government departments, civil society, business and tribal authority could identify people in their respective areas to facilitate change.

Maladaptive behaviors, such as high episodic drinking at parties, weddings, other typical celebrations, should be avoided and behavior modification urged. According to Zawaira (2019:7), risk factors that contribute to drug and substance misuse include a lack of cultural constraints. Reintroducing cultural teachings might help alter behavior. The goal of interventions should be to modify behavior through the use of life skills, law enforcement, school spot checks, and general education on safe drinking. Social professionals ought to help their clients unlearn unhelpful behavior. Therefore, behaviour modification as an intervention approach could be used to change maladaptive behaviour and also change the environment to make it responsive to peoples' needs. McLeod, (2010) is of the view that behaviour is learned and can therefore be unlearned. It means then that alcohol use is learned and therefore can be unlearned. By establishing norms, enforcing social control patterns, and offering or failing to provide environmental chances, the social environment shapes behavior (Berkman & Kawachi, 2020:7). Communities, various helping professions, and workplaces would all be included in behavioral treatments that incorporate the social environment in order to bring about behavioral change.

Multi-level synergistic interventions

According to Stimson (2016:9), multi-level synergistic interventions separating drinking from risky activities should be developed at various levels.

Enforcement of laws aimed at drug and substance abuse reduction

There are laws such the Liquor Act (Act No 59 of 2003) and National Drug Master Plan in South Africa that focus on alcohol use, covering aspects such as the production, distribution and consumption of alcohol. The main informants' knowledge suggested that this law is not being enforced very well. Controlling the use of home-brewed drinks is extremely challenging since they are offered in unregistered establishments, their manufacture is uncontrolled, and they are not documented. Beer and distilled beverages are also sold at the unregistered establishments. Alcohol use in African nations comprises both commercial and home-brewed beverages, which raises the overall quantity consumed, according to WHO Africa (2018:2). Due to the uncontrolled manufacture of alcohol, this usage presents problems with regard to the amounts drunk and safety concerns.

However, dealing with the challenge requires a concerted effort from all role players. The synergy between all role players would certainly reduce the harm caused by alcohol if all are focusing on addressing the problem. It would require better coordination and enforcement of the laws. Teamwork is one way of ensuring that all coordinate their efforts. Enforcement of the Liquor Act No 59 of 2003 requires more police who are well resourced, if they are to manage the problem. It would necessitate that alcohol vendors participate in programs that warn the public about the risks associated with alcohol consumption. Instead, than prioritizing financial gain over people's well-being, they ought to assist them in managing their alcohol consumption. Even if it requires spending more money on improved control and enforcement measures, laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol to minors must be upheld. Certain restrictions

are required to manage the availability of alcohol. According to WHO Africa (2018:5), control has shown to be a successful tactic in a range of sociocultural contexts.

One example of stricter control is found in the Western Cape province, which has developed a law to address drug and substance abuse. In an attempt to gain more authority over the liquor sector, the Western Cape Liquor Act (Act No. 4 of 2018) was proposed. The goal is to manage trade hours, impose tougher requirements for successful licenses, and limit the number of liquor stores by forbidding shebeens from opening in residential neighborhoods. According to reports, the Western Cape has 3,200 licensed retailers and around 30,000 illicit shops. It is projected that between 60,000 and 100,000 jobs might be lost if the aforementioned Act is put into effect.

While it is true that people who sell alcohol from their houses would lose money as a result of these measures, the shebeens have long-term social ramifications for community safety and well-being. About 600 shebeen owners and employees demonstrated against new legislation enacted in November 2018 at the Western Cape legislature, citing the likely loss of income as their reason. The Western Cape administration, however, is more worried about the damage than the loss of revenue. To help individuals in need, it is imperative that community awareness, mobilization, and support systems for other revenue-generating methods be established. In order to address the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including alcohol, and the harm that comes with it, as well as the rehabilitation of individuals in various institutions and their reintegration into their communities, the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act (Act No 70 of 2018) was created. More personnel (professional and auxiliary workers) are required in order to implement preventative programs that are ongoing rather than one-time and to provide more intense therapy. Rehabilitation facilities that specialize in treating drug abuse issues are needed. To lessen harm to individuals, hospitals may set up a ward for drug and substance addiction patients to be admitted to, where a multidisciplinary team could provide the necessary care. Employment of additional social workers who specialize in substance addiction programs is necessary.

Changing of drinking culture of communities

The drinking surroundings and culture in the two regions were of concern to the main interviewees. Cultural change is extremely challenging, particularly when it has gone out of control and there is a lack of understanding among those who misuse alcohol. Nonetheless, initiatives to educate individuals about the risks of drug and substance usage must involve shebeen proprietors. The drinking situations should be included in the scope of education. To educate the public on the Liquor Act (Act No 59 of 2003) and emphasize the importance of topics like alcohol manufacture and licensing, the Liquor Boards may, for example, hold road shows. Prioritizing education above enforcement is a good idea. According to Stimson (2016:9), competent hosts would go above and beyond the call of duty to help guests become responsible drinkers. Reversing negative drinking standards to positive ones may lessen the harm that drug and substance misuse inflict. It would also be advantageous to change the strategy-making process from a national to a community-based approach (from a one-size-fits-all to a community-specific answer).

Helping individuals to take responsibility for positive change

If beneficial improvements are to be realized, individuals are still in charge of own recovery. According to Robson and Marlat (2016:257), harm reduction might involve working one-on-one with drinkers to help them better understand and manage their issues. Information distribution and awareness campaigns are intervention strategies that empower individuals to make well-informed decisions. As a preventative approach, teaching life skills to kids early on might help them understand the risks of alcohol, make wise decisions, and take charge of their lives. It is important to emphasize responsible drinking so that people may take charge of their life. In particular, heavy episodic drinking is harmful, and people should be mindful of its consequences.

A multidisciplinary approach to address the alcohol problem

Stimson (2016:9) states that multi-sectoral responsibility and partnerships are essential to manage the problem of drug and substance abuse. The Youth-Network ES Project has a variety of tasks to complete in order to minimize the harm caused by alcohol. A balanced approach is required to address alcohol and related issues, including, but not limited to, enforcing the opening and closing hours of alcohol establishments, making sure that health regulations are followed, ensuring that streets have enough light, and maintaining social order. These might help eliminate or lessen the damage caused by alcohol. All stakeholders must be included in order to carry out their tasks and obligations, and this may be accomplished if everyone works together to solve the issue. In order to solve behavioral and socioeconomic issues, it is essential that individuals and groups fulfil their obligations. Various positions contribute unique abilities, expertise, and experience that may produce positive outcomes. Strong collaborations with defined roles and duties and an emphasis on alcohol harm reduction techniques can lead to good improvements. In order to

solve the issue, the National Drug Master Plan (2021–2026) advocates for strong partnerships and shared responsibility, which will undoubtedly lessen the harm to people and others in their social surroundings. Partnerships ought to be formed in order to split expenses, but above all, to tackle the issue from every angle.

Prevention, early intervention, treatment, after-care, and reintegration techniques were all covered in the strategy. The policies also cover information management, therapeutic practice management, capacity building, and community-based intervention. The goal of this thorough action plan is to make it easier for the many sectors, partners, and stakeholders to contribute and to define their roles. There are still several obstacles in the way of the Youth-Network Engaged Scholarship Project and LADGAC teams' efforts to carry out the National Drug Master Plan and the Prevention of and Treatment of Substance Abuse of 2024. There have been clear shortcomings in the way these policies and programs have been implemented and monitored. For the strategy to be successful, relevant players must take strong, consistent, and cogent action. The Department of Social Development is the leader in reducing the abuse of both legal and illegal drugs, according to a May 2024 media statement from the then-Minister of Social Development. However, other government departments and non-governmental organizations must be involved to ensure that they mitigate the impact of the problem by providing prevention and treatment services.

Infrastructure, human, and financial resources must be available for effective execution for the intervention to be successful. Social workers listed staff and the office as some of the issues that needed to be resolved. The poor budgetary expenditures for treating alcohol-related issues in Africa were also brought to light by Zawaira (2019:13). As a result, measures intended to solve the issue are not implemented.

Conclusion

Since socioeconomic issues are complex, Youth-Network ES Project must acknowledge that they are addressing issues like poverty, unemployment, and a lack of education and skill development in addition to drug and substance abuse in order to implement effective intervention strategies to reduce these problems in the chosen areas. Building stronger family units that can offer appropriate direction and support is also crucial in order to guarantee that future generations are founded on a firm foundation. All stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community and faith-based organizations, must thus implement a comprehensive, multi-level, multi-sectoral intervention. To assist reduce the harm that alcohol does, everyone should prioritize focusing on their area of competence. Civil society and community members must be active in the fight against drug and substance abuse and related problems. To understand the distinct conditions of different places, study is required. An ongoing evaluation of current policies and intervention strategies should be conducted in order to determine the impact on certain challenges. The results of the evaluation and study would subsequently be used to inform practice and policy development.

Both the quantity of treatment facilities and the accessibility of affordable, effective treatment and rehabilitation must be increased, especially in public institutions where more people may obtain it. It is the duty of all important players, including the tribal government, to control the alcohol supply and impose limitations on alcohol consumption. For the Youth-Network ES Project to address alcohol and related concerns, appropriate evaluation is necessary. Particular targeted groups should get interventions that take into account their socioeconomic status. Multi-level and multidisciplinary collaboration and initiatives should always be considered and improved. Rataemane and Rataemane (2016:25) stated that policies and intervention methods must be regularly assessed to ensure that a dynamic situation is given attention and the issues are resolved. "The magnitude of the alcohol and drug issue demands coordinated national efforts in every area," the Minister of Social Development highlights in the NDMP, 2021–2026 preamble. This sense of unity must be embodied in our coordinated and integrated approach to the goal of a drug-free society.

Progress has also been made in promoting 'good practice' in the prevention area. For instance, statements on best practices for youth-focused preventive programs have been created with support from the Youth-Network Engaged Scholarship Project. However, a lot of programs continue to use antiquated methods, such one-time presentations in schools that occasionally use fear tactics. Moreover, the majority of projects concentrate on just one element (Berkman & Kawachi, 2020:43). Regarding alcohol in particular, programs have been put in place that target certain groups (pregnant women, for example) as well as the broader public (by raising alcohol tariffs, for example). At the provincial level, new measures are being created to limit alcohol advertising, add warning labels to containers, and establish a unified liquor outlet regulation.

The South African government recently strengthened banking regulations to make money laundering more difficult, established programs to better monitor the importation and manufacturing of precursor chemicals, and used asset forfeiture provisions to more aggressively pursue those involved in organized crime in an effort to reduce the supply

of illegal drugs. In conclusion, while some progress has been made in South Africa over the past decade, much more needs to be done to ensure that the advances described by Limpopo (LADGAC), Gauteng and Western Cape Province are reflected to a greater degree in policy and practice.

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