

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE PRESEVENTION AMONG SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA**



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Abstract

Substance abuse is an act of misuse or excessive use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs which has become one of the world's leading problems today. The number of adolescents involved in illegal substances and illicit drugs in Malaysia has increased over the years. Statistics reveal that almost 80% of the students claim that they began smoking while still in school. Since the figure is alarming, it is important to investigate this matter. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to identify problems of substance abuse among secondary school students and also investigate the effectiveness of prevention measures that have been implemented in secondary schools. A mixed-method approach was chosen to triangulate the data obtained in this study. Five different instruments namely teacher questionnaire, student questionnaire, checklist, interview questions, and quiz were used to collect both the quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 18 high risk secondary schools were selected from Selangor, WPKL, Penang, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka. Finally, a total of 270 teachers and 1800 students from the 18 high risk schools were selected from these states. The results showed that more than half of the student respondents have 1 to 3 friends who were involved in smoking. Generally, the results also showed that secondary school students nowadays are exposed to many risk factors in school. The results showed that more than half of the student respondents did not think that smoking, consuming alcohol, using Marijuana, carrying a weapon to school, trying to steal/have stolen a motorcycle/car, quitting school, joining gangsterism, hitting a friend, vandalising, playing truant, watching pornography, and sniffing glue as an offence. Besides that, approximately 20% to 40% of the student respondents indicated that they have been invited to smoke, hit a school friend, vandalize, play truant, and watch pornography at different stages of their schools life. This is an issue of concern and needs to be addressed. Furthermore, the findings indicated that only 59.7 percent of the teachers involved in the study 'agreed' that they 'know how to identify types of substances'. On the aspect of substance abuse counseling, only slightly more than 30% 'agreed' that they were 'good in Substance Abuse / PPDa counseling with parents and students'. The distribution of the students' marks in the anti-drug prevention test also indicated that a substantial number of students (63.7%) are at the moderate level (21-40 & 41-60). Nevertheless, the number of students involved in substance abuse is still considerably small. Roughly half of the teacher respondents (48.0%) agreed that negative peer pressure was one of the most serious problems in school to influence drug abuse among students. The findings indicated that programmes such as SEGAK, Anti-Drug Talks, Exhibition and Video Screening, Anti-Drugs Week, Drawing/ Colouring Poster, Quiz, Poem Recitation, Nasyeed, and Avoid Drugs Message Program were quite commonly conducted in most of the respondents' schools. The most popular activity organized was Program Mesej Jauhi Dadah, Video Showing, and Drawing/Colouring Competition. A majority of the respondents agreed that the PPDa programmes in their school have made them more interested in PPDa itself and they were now more aware of the dangers of drug abuse. Majority of the student respondents also agreed that upon attending the various programmes they are now able to identify the different types of drugs. As a result of the programmes, a majority of the students also agreed that they will say "no" to cigarettes, never smoke, never try drugs, and stay away from drugs. The majority of the respondents also agreed that they will be able to convey the PPDa information to both their friends and family. As a result of the PPDa programmes, a substantial number of the respondents 'agreed' that students were aware of leading a healthy lifestyle and majority 'agreed' that students could identify negative influences from the mass

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Currently, substance abuse is a serious problem in Malaysia. Due to the alarming rate of substance abuse offenses committed, an in-depth research should be done in order to discover the gap of information behind this serious transgression. Merriam-Webster (2011), defines substance abuse as (1) an overdose usage of alcohol, drugs or any other harmful substances and, (2) an outlaw utilization of any dangerous substances without any medical needs or permission. In another definition by Tull (2008), substance abuse is defined as a type of uncontrolled behavior or addiction caused by harmful usage of any substances such as alcohol, drugs or any other dangerous substance that will lead to several detrimental effects of the individual's life. Thus, substance abuse can be defined as a dangerous behavior of uncontrolled addiction towards any unhealthy substances that will cost the abuser in terms of physical and mental health. Therefore for the purpose of this study, substance abuse is defined as the exploitation or abuse of any dangerous substances that in the long term will cause detrimental effects on the person misusing the said substances.

Background of the Study

In the Malaysian context, substance abuse can be found in various levels of the Malaysian society. Since the deed is not only limited to adults the abuse can be considered as widely spread in the country. According to psychiatry-malaysia.org (2011), there has been a steady climb in the number of forbidden or prohibited drug usage in the last 10 years (NDA, 2006). By looking at this data, it is fair to assume that substance abuse in Malaysia is getting worse by the year. Apart from that, the National Drugs Agency (NDA) also stated that via its