e-Bangi Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities

eISSN: 1823-884x

Volume 21, Issue 4, DOI: https://doi.org/10.17576/ebangi.2024.2104.06

Article

Exploring Crystal Methamphetamine Use Among School-Going Learners: A Qualitative Case Study in South African Schools

Thembinkosi Peter Singwane* & Dillo Justin Ramoshaba

University of Limpopo, Department of Social Work, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa

*Corresponding Author: thembinkosi.singwane@ul.ac.za

Received: 29 July 2024
Accepted:17 October 2024

Abstract: The increasing prevalence of drug use in schools poses significant challenges for educational environments and society at large. Persistent substance abuse among students is linked to various negative outcomes, including poor academic performance, strained relationships, physical injuries, violence, heightened sexual activity, and suicidal ideation. This qualitative study employed a multiple case study design to investigate crystal methamphetamine use among community members and learners in selected schools in Polokwane, South Africa. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which provided rich insights into the experiences of school-going learners regarding crystal meth use. The findings reveal that learners who engage in crystal meth use experience considerable declines in both physical and mental health. Many participants reported noticeable physical changes, such as significant weight loss. Additionally, the study identified adverse behavioural changes among these learners; they often exhibited disruptive behaviour and a lack of respect towards teachers, further complicating classroom dynamics. These results underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address substance abuse in educational settings and promote healthier behaviours among students.

Keywords: Crystal Methamphetamine; learners; South Africa; schools: drugs

Introduction

In 2019, approximately 5.5% of the global population aged 15–64 reported illicit drug use, indicating a growing trend in drug consumption. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated challenges for drug users, complicating treatment access and increasing risks of addiction. Unlike the rapid development of vaccines for COVID-19, effective drug addiction treatments remain difficult to implement, leading to heightened struggles for individuals with substance use disorders during this crisis. Some parts of the world experienced a spike in drug use. (Layman et al., 2022; Singwane & Ramoshaba, 2023), while some parts experienced a decrease or no changes in their drug use (Price et al., 2022). In essence, the societies, communities and mostly schools that saw an increase in drug use were influenced by societal factors such as boredom, lack of activity and spending more time with others with whom they use these drugs (Price et al., 2022). The latter lays the foundation for this paper. Several schools in South Africa had to shut down after the President pronounced lockdown restrictions (De Villiers et al., 2020). . Several learners reported back to school having developed certain abnormal habits including observable physical changes and behavioural problems (Waters et al., 2021). The use of crystal methamphetamines amongst school-going learners, especially in rural settings has not been adequately addressed.

This is despite the drug use endemic being disconcerting to societies, including the school environment. The persistent drug use within schools and its associated behavioural problems sometimes lead

to poor academic performance, impaired relationships, physical injuries, violence, increased sexual activities and even suicide (Singwane & Ramoshaba, 2023). For example, Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Several schools in South Africa had to shut down after the President pronounced lockdown restrictions(De Villiers et al., 2020). Drug use continued to manifest leading to a sizeable number of school-going children being confined in their households and exposed to several illicit drugs amongst other things (Price et al., 2022).

Despite the corpus research done regarding drug use in Schools, there is still a paucity regarding crystal methamphetamine use in Schools, particularly in under-resourced areas such as the Limpopo Province in South Africa. Hence this study sought to explore and describe the perspectives of community members regarding crystal meth use amongst selected schools in the Limpopo Province, South Africa.

This qualitative research paper employed the multiple case study research design to explore crystal methamphetamine use among community members and learners in the selected schools in Polokwane, South Africa. A Multiple Case study design through semi-structured interviews was key in gathering invaluable data on crystal meth among school-going learners. Thematic content analysis technique was applied to make the data meaningful. This technique was used to find, analyse, and report patterns in a data set, enabling descriptive arrangement of the data in a way that makes it easier to understand different parts of the data.

Literature Review

1. Substance Use in South Africa

Several studies show that in South Africa, national and regional statistics on alcohol use indicate that most high school students have tried substances such as drugs and alcohol (Reddy, Resnicow, Omardien & Kambaran, 2007; Peltzer & Ramlagan, 2009; Reddy, Panday, Swart, Jinabhai, Amosun, James, Monyeki, Stevens, Morejele, Kambaran, & Omardien, 2018). The use of substances among South African adolescents is a concern as the use of substances is associated with a range of negative consequences including school drop-out, unprotected sexual behaviour that places the adolescent at risk for infectious disease and unwanted pregnancies, and the later development of substance use and other mental disorders (Reddy, Resnicow, Omardien & Kambaran, 2007).

According to Tshitangano and Tosin (2016), in South Africa, substance abuse is extremely serious, with drug usage reported as being at twice the world norm. Over 15% of the population suffers from a drug problem. Reports by the South African Police Service show that drug abuse accounts for 60% of all crime in the country (Thomson, 2013). Flisher, Parry, Evans, Muller, and Lombard (2003) identified several intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental risk factors for adolescent substance use such as age, grade level, gender, race, self-esteem, and psychological problems.

2. Substance Use in Schools

International and global studies (Kumar, O'Malley, Johnston, Schulenberg & Bachman, 2002:Liao, Huang, Huh, Pentz, & Chou, 2013) have opined that during adolescence, “peer pressure” may strongly shape substance use behaviour, as peers may provide access to substances or actively encourage or discourage use. In other words, learners can influence each other to use or not use substances. Somehow some learners may use substances at school because of what they have perceived from their family members back at home (Liao, Huang, Huh, Pentz, & Chou, 2013). In addition, Windle, Haardörfer, Lloyd, Foster, and Berg (2017) aver that perceived use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol and marijuana is associated with student substance use. Furthermore, Tshitangano and Tosin (2016) aver that worldwide studies have presented evidence of substance abuse among high school learners. Tshitangano and Tosin (2016) further opined that schools are dominated by learners who are in the adolescent stage wherein they tend to explore different experiences such as consuming drugs. In the same breath, Fagan, and Najman (2005) posit that adolescence is a critical period for initiation and experimentation with substances and a process that is shaped by social factors.

Local studies have shown evidence of drug abuse amongst high school learners in various parts of the country. In a study by Onya Tessera, Myers and Flisher, amongst rural high school students in Mankweng, Limpopo Province, South Africa, the researchers documented that there was the use of alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis, glue, and spirits by learners.

In the South African population, adolescents are among the groups that experience alcohol or drug abuse and are mostly found in schools as averred by Damarasingh, Marcenes, Stansfeld & Bernabé (2018).

3. Theoretical Framework

Theories offer a thorough analysis of crucial aspects, and they provide a comprehensive consideration of why certain things occur as they do. Since this study sought to explore the crucial perspectives of community members, the Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) was very vital in the understanding of crystal meth use amongst high school learners from the perspective of the community. TPB is a psychological theory that links beliefs to behaviour. The crux of TPB lies in the three core components, namely, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. These three components shape an individual's behavioural intentions (Abbasi et al, 2021). As a result, one of TPB's core principles is that behavioural intention is the most direct predictor of human social behaviour (Abbasi et al, 2021). TPB asserts that an individual's intentions and sense of behavioural control directly influence their behaviour (Worthington, 2021).

Essentially, the theory of planned behaviour provides a valuable lens for understanding how various factors influence the behaviour of high school learners regarding crystal meth use. This theory emphasizes the relationship between beliefs, intentions, and behaviours, making it particularly relevant in analyzing substance use among adolescents, in South African Schools(Worthington, 2021). The researchers applied this theory to understand the attitudes of learner's evaluation of crystal meth use. For example, if a learner believes that using crystal meth will lead to negative consequences (e.g., health issues, social stigma), their attitude may deter them from using it(Worthington, 2021). Conversely, if they perceive some benefits (e.g., temporary euphoria or peer acceptance), their attitude may promote usage. Moreover, the researchers also explored the learner's subjective norms through TPB particularly the perceived social pressures that learners feel regarding crystal meth use. This is related to the notion that when learners believe that their peers or influential figures in their lives approve of drug use, they may be more inclined to engage in it(Worthington, 2021). For example, if a learner perceives that many friends are using crystal meth, they might feel compelled to conform to this norm despite personal intentions to abstain.

Lastly, the learner's Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), was crucial in understanding their ability to resist or engage in crystal meth use. For example, if a learner feels they have the resources and support to avoid drug use (e.g., access to counselling or supportive friends), they are more likely to intend to stay away from it. However, if they perceive barriers (e.g., lack of support or overwhelming peer pressure), their confidence may diminish, leading to an increased likelihood of use(Worthington, 2021). Overall, the Theory of Planned Behavior was effective in providing a lens on how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape the intentions and behaviours of high school learners regarding crystal meth use. By understanding these dynamics, interventions can be tailored to address specific beliefs and social influences that contribute to substance use among learners in schools(Worthington, 2021). Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control may not always predict intentions in the same way. Sometimes, a person's intentions may be largely influenced by their attitudes, with little to no bearing on subjective norms. (Worthington, 2021). Sometimes, however, attitudes may have little or no impact, and an individual's intentions may be largely shaped by subjective norms.

In essence, The TPB posits that intentions lead to behaviour; however, intentions do not always guarantee behaviour. In the context of this paper, for example, some learners might intend to avoid the use of crystal meth but not follow through with their intentions and end up smoking crystal meth. This means that the strength of the link between intentions and behaviour is influenced by several factors including factors such as action, target, context, and time (Hasheela, Ananias, & Schenck, 2020). Therefore, a learner might intend to avoid crystal meth use, however, over time, the environment, or the society within which the learner finds themselves or triggers from other people might lead to them smoking.

Fundamentally, the Theory of Planned Behaviour focuses on rational reasoning and excludes the role of emotional and subconscious influences (Worthington, 2021, p.1). It should be noted that Drug use, particularly Crystal meth negatively affects psychological functioning. It can be concluded that the theory of Planned Behaviour provided a vital grounding for the understanding of learners who use crystal meth, and it provided

a lead in terms of exploring the perspectives of community members regarding the learners who use crystal meth.

Methodology

1. Research Design

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach, and data was collected within the natural setting of the participants (Creswell, 2014:234). Following exploratory research, a case study design was used to explore crystal methamphetamine use amongst community members and learners in the selected schools in Polokwane, South Africa. A Multiple Case study design was key in gathering invaluable data on crystal meth among school-going learners. A case study design was also relevant because it entails a thorough and in-depth examination of a specific incident, or an organisational unit as stated by Yin (2018)

2. Population and Sample

Furthermore, regarding the population and sample of the study, the researchers triangulated purposive and snowballing sampling methods. According to De Vos et al. (2011) in purposive sampling, a case is chosen because it demonstrates some feature that is of interest to a particular study. In addition, Greeff (2011) holds that respondents in purposive sampling are selected based on their relevance to the topic under study. This was helpful to the researcher in that data was collected only from learners who use crystal meth. Snowball sampling was key in leading the researchers from one case to the other (Manamela, Rapholo & Singwane). Male and female participants from the Community members and learners aged between 15 and 20 years participated in this study.

3. Data Collection Process

As opined by Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger(2020), three types of interviews are common within qualitative research, namely; structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews, which can be done face-to-face, over the phone, or online. For the present study, the researchers used semi-structured interviews to collect participant data. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researchers to interview learners individually and also to express themselves freely. The choice of this data collection process was based on the notion that the semi-structured enables researchers to learn about a person's subjective experiences, beliefs, and motives which were crucial for this present study (Busetto et al, 2020). For his study, the researchers utilized open-ended questions and an interview guide to define broad areas for the questions on participants (Busetto et al, 2020). The researchers also prepared a list of themes and questions which were used uniformly by the participants, the researchers were flexible as other participants offered deeper insights. The Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to voice their thoughts based on their knowledge and experiences (Alam, 2020)**.** The semi-structured interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed, before data analysis as described in 4 below. Data collection continued until no new themes were generated from the interviews with the participants. After analysing the responses from the participants, it became evident that additional data were not providing new insights regarding crystal meth use amongst learners, signalling that saturation had been reached. This point was identified based on the consistency of recurring themes and patterns, in line with established qualitative research guidelines(Busetto et al, 2020). 4. Data analysis

4. Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data (Soratto et al.,2020). The data was analysed through the 6 steps of thematic data analysis. Firstly**,** Step 1 involved familiarising with the data, which studying and understanding the transcripts. Secondly, the researchers generated initial codes, in a quest to organize the data from participants in a meaningful and systematic way. Thirdly, the researchers searched/generated themes from the collected data (Braun and Clarke,2006). Moreover, the researchers reviewed the preliminary themes which were generated in step 3. For step 5, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researchers refined the themes and identified each essence of the generated themes as discussed under the findings section. To ensure the quality of the findings, prolonged engagements, member checking and peer examination were

ensured, and field notes were written directly after each interview with each respondent for auditing purposes. To further ensure the quality of the findings, credibility, conformability, transferability, and dependability were followed (Soratto et al.,2020). Credibility through prolonged engagement, member checking and peer examination was ensured, and field notes were written directly after each interview with each participant for auditing purposes to ensure the conformability of the findings. Data was correctly coded for dependability purposes.

Findings

This section focuses on the presentation and analysis of data obtained from the respondents. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and respondents provided consent to be recorded. The authors elected to present the findings and discussion in an integrated manner. The following two themes and subthemes were analysed from the findings of this study:

1. Physical Changes in Learners Who Use Crystal Meth

Some of the respondents reported that they have noticed physical changes in the learners who are using crystal meth. In the same breath, Lanza and Collins (2002) state that people who use substances experience body changes such as increased breast size and body curviness. The respondents went as further as mentioning that learners who smoke crystal meth become slim wherein even the school uniform does not fit them as it used to. In addition, some respondents reported physical changes on their face, wherein the crystal meth user's facial appearance would change and appear indecent. The respondents also reported that such learners stop bathing and at school, they spend most of their time in the bathrooms without going to classes. Some of the respondents echoed that:

> *"The wearing of masks assisted us from suffocating from the indecent smell of crystal meth users as they do not bath, they no longer go to their homes because they chased themselves away. They no longer come to school; we see them at spaza shops robbing people".*
>
> (Participant A)

> *"In our school, the number of crystal meth users increased, I am not sure if they use it to cope with the pandemic or school pressure, but most of them you will see them by loss of weight".*
>
> (Participant B)

In addition, another respondent echoed that:

> *"Some of the learners who used to be clean changed as a result of using crystal meth, some of them their appearance changed, you could see that they do not bath".*
>
> (Participant C)

The findings above show that some learners experienced physical changes because of using crystal meth. Thus, it can be noted that crystal meth negatively affects the livelihood of learners. According to Degenhardt, Charlson, Ferrari, Santomauro, Erskine, Mantilla-Herrara and Vos (2018), alcohol and drug use can have negative consequences on the health and social aspects of individuals. In the same breath, Price, Collier and Wright (2018) posit that the use of substances can cause body changes and medical issues for individuals. In other words, learners who use crystal meth are also likely to experience medical issues as much as they experience body changes.

2. Behaviour of Learners Who Use Crystal Meth

The use of crystal methamphetamine (CM) is associated with a range of physical and mental health harms particularly among school-going children as their brain is still developing (Kaye, Lewandowski, Bowman, & Doyle, 2021, p.1). The mental and physical harms, unfortunately, lead to unprecedented behavioural problems, depending on short-term and long-term use (Pinias, Munyaradzi, & Kudzai, 2022). The findings of this study

revealed that several learners using crystal meth exhibit behavioural problems inside and outside the classroom setting. The following subthemes emerged.

Behaviour of Learners who use Crystal Meth in Class

Most of the respondents said that learners who smoke crystal meth behave similarly in that they are disrespectful in class and towards their teachers and classmates. Some respondents said that learners who smoke crystal meth disrupt their class as teachers constantly must reprimand them wherein at times some teachers end up being irritated by the unruly behaviour which affects the teaching and learning process in the classroom. In addition, Mohale and Mokwena (2020) posit that substance use in schools disrupts the learning activities of learners and causes some learners to experience scholastic problems which push some of them to drop out of school. Some respondents echoed that:

> *"Crystal meth makes them not listen in class, they disrespect teachers, and they make jokes while teachers are educating us. Moreover, the learners that I know who smoke crystal meth, when teachers are teaching, they make unnecessary comments and disturb the class".*
>
> (Participant B)

> *"The learner whom I know is smoking crystal meth, previously he was a good boy, and he used to attend school normally. He used to be very passionate about his future and loved school. He got influenced by his peers then started smoking, and then his behaviour changed. He started becoming a problematic learner to teachers and ended up dropping out of school."*
>
> (Participant C)

In addition, another echoed that:

> *"Such a learner may appear as no longer okay in the head. He would do things that he was not doing before he started smoking crystal meth—his behaviour changed. For instance, when a teacher comes into class, the learner might make unnecessary comments even when the teacher has not said anything. The person makes jokes in class so other learners can laugh and not concentrate on what the teachers present. Moreover, such a learner may spend his/her time galivanting the school premises without going to class or staying at the school toilets. Others also laugh alone in class when the teacher is speaking".*
>
> (Participant E)

The findings above show that school-going learners who use crystal meth are very disrespectful and disruptive in class. The findings indicate that they speak even when they are not supposed to in class and go as far as making fun of teachers to entertain other learners. According to Miller and Meyers (2015), students who use substances in schools are more ill-mannered than other learners such as those with emotional disturbances. It must be noted that some of these learners were well-mannered before they started using crystal meth. This is in line with, Marsden, Stillwell, Barlow, Boys, Taylor, Hunt, and Farrell (2006) who state that learners start changing their behaviours after using substances in schools in that those who were disciplined in class become ill-disciplined. Those who were active in sporting activities started losing interest in sports.

2. The Behaviour of Crystal Meth Users Towards Other Learners

Some respondents shared that they were negatively affected by crystal meth users in their school to the point where they could not concentrate in class due to the smell and fear of crystal meth users. In addition, learners who use crystal meth were reported to be bullying their classmates in school. According to Rigby, Haroun, and Ali (2019), bullying in schools which is mostly propagated by learners who use substances is a serious issue which causes some students to feel unsafe and live in fear. Some respondents echoed that:

> *"I remember one day, one boy who smokes crystal meth came to me while I was eating. He removed his face mask and forced me to eat with him, I refused, and he ended up slapping me"*
>
> (Participant D)

"I had a female friend from my school, who smokes crystal meth. We used to spend time together until this year in term 2. She started threatening me because I did not smoke what she smoked. She threatened me by saying that if I don't give her money, she will forcefully take my spectacles."

(Participant E)

Another respondent echoed that:

"Learners who use crystal meth behave abnormally, even at home I have a brother who uses it. He would leave home with plastics and go to the bush. When he comes back, he would have collected litter and would pour that in the room that he sleeps, we did not know the reasons behind that."

(Participant F)

The findings of this study show that some learners experience some form of bullying from learners who use crystal meth in their schools. Moreover, they force some learners to live in fear as they threaten and forcefully take their belongings. In the same breath, Midgett and Doumas (2019) posit that some learners in schools are bullied or bullied by other learners, affecting their learning process. In addition, Kelly, Newton, Stapinski, Conrod, Barrett, Champion and Teesson (2020) state that the prevalent cases of bullying in schools highlight the need for schools to implement effective interventions to address it as it affects the well-being of its victims. It can be deduced from the findings that crystal meth instigates many other challenges such as bullying in Schools.

Discussion

The above findings reveal significant physical changes and behavioural issues that not only affect the users but also have broader implications for the educational environment and peer relationships in South African schools. The study highlights alarming physical changes observed in learners who use crystal meth. Particularly with many participants reporting noticeable weight loss, changes in personal hygiene, and alterations in their overall appearance. For instance, some learners even neglect basic hygiene practices, leading to an unpleasant odour that affects their peers. This aligns with existing literature indicating that substance abuse can lead to significant health deterioration (Degenhardt et al., 2018; Price et al., 2018).

It is evident that users often spend excessive time in school bathrooms, outside classrooms or sleeping in class rather than attending classes, indicating a withdrawal from both academic responsibilities and social interactions. The physical manifestations of Crystal meth use not only reflect a decline in personal care but also signify broader neglect of educational duties. The findings suggest that the physical deterioration of learners creates an uncomfortable environment for their peers, who may feel repulsed or threatened by the visible signs of drug use. Moreover, the study indicates that these physical changes can lead to social stigma and isolation within the school community. As learners become more visibly affected by their drug use, they may withdraw further from social interactions, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and alienation. This cycle of neglect and isolation can have profound implications for the mental health and academic performance of both users and non-users alike.

The behavioural consequences of crystal meth use are particularly concerning within classroom settings. Respondents reported that learners who use crystal meth often exhibit disrespectful and disruptive behaviours, significantly impacting the teaching and learning process. Many participants noted that these individuals frequently interrupt lessons, make inappropriate comments, and show a general lack of respect towards teachers and classmates. This disruption not only hinders the educational experience for users but also compromises the learning environment for their peers (Kaye et al., 2021). It can be deduced that previously well-behaved students may undergo significant behavioural changes after beginning to use crystal meth. Some participants in the study shared stories of once-passionate learners who became disengaged and problematic due to peer influence and substance use. This regression is supported by research indicating that substance abuse can lead to cognitive impairments and behavioural problems among adolescents (Miller & Meyers, 2015; Marsden et al., 2006). The transformation from disciplined students to disruptive individuals underscores the urgent need for interventions targeting substance abuse in schools.

Interactions with Peers

There appear to be troubling dynamics in peer interactions, as learners who use crystal meth often engage in bullying behaviours towards their classmates. Reports of intimidation, threats, and coercion illustrate a climate of fear among non-users, which can severely impact their ability to focus on studies (Rigby et al., 2019). Respondents recounted instances where users forced classmates into uncomfortable situations or threatened them if they did not comply with demands for money or belongings. These bullying behaviours create an unsafe school environment where victims feel threatened both physically and emotionally. The fear instilled by such actions can lead to decreased academic performance and increased anxiety among students (Midgett & Doumas, 2019). Furthermore, the prevalence of bullying linked to substance use highlights the need for effective interventions within schools to address these issues comprehensively (Kelly et al., 2020).

The findings in the study emphasise the multifaceted challenges posed by crystal methamphetamine use among school-going learners in South Africa. The physical changes associated with crystal meth use reflect a broader public health concern that necessitates immediate attention. In addition, the behavioural issues stemming from substance use highlight the urgent need for comprehensive interventions aimed at promoting healthier lifestyles among youth. Effective strategies should include educational programs focused on substance abuse prevention, mental health support services, and policies designed to foster safe learning environments free from bullying. Addressing these issues holistically will be crucial for improving not only individual learner outcomes but also enhancing the overall educational experience within schools affected by crystal methamphetamine use. By tackling both the physical and behavioural aspects of this crisis, stakeholders can work towards a healthier future for all students involved.

Conclusion

In the denouement, the study underlines the detrimental impact of crystal methamphetamine (CM) use among school-going learners, revealing a host of physical, behavioural, and social issues. This study reinforces the notion that crystal meth use among learners not only hinders their academic performance and social interactions but also poses serious health risks, as noted by Degenhardt et al. (2018) and Price et al. (2018). The significant changes in behaviour and physical health among users necessitate urgent intervention and support systems to mitigate these adverse effects and promote a safer, more conducive learning environment.

Addressing the issue of crystal methamphetamine use among school-going learners, particularly in under-resourced communities like Limpopo, requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses targeted interventions and policy initiatives. First, schools should implement comprehensive substance abuse prevention programs that educate students about the dangers of CM and promote healthy coping mechanisms for stress and peer pressure.

Additionally, mental health support services must be readily available to assist learners struggling with addiction and its associated behavioural issues. Policies should also be established to create safe school environments, including anti-bullying initiatives that specifically address the violence and intimidation perpetrated by users against their peers. Given Limpopo's socio-economic challenges, it is crucial to engage community stakeholders, including parents and local organizations, to foster a supportive network for at-risk youth. By addressing these issues, we contribute to existing knowledge on substance abuse in educational settings while aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and Goal 4 (Quality Education). These efforts not only aim to improve individual outcomes for learners but also enhance the overall educational experience and community resilience in regions affected by substance abuse.

It is recommended that future research focus on longitudinal studies to track the long-term effects of crystal meth use on learners' physical and mental health, academic performance, and social behaviour. This approach would provide comprehensive insights into the sustained impact of CM use over time. Furthermore, future research can also focus on Intervention Efficacy and psychosocial factors whereby an Investigation into the efficacy of various intervention programs designed to prevent and reduce crystal meth uses among school-going children. This includes evaluating school-based educational programs, counselling services, and community outreach initiatives. Whilst it can Explore the psychosocial factors contributing to crystal meth use among learners. Understanding the underlying reasons for substance abuse, such as peer pressure, familial issues, and socio-economic status, can help in developing targeted prevention strategies. By addressing these

areas, future research can contribute to a deeper understanding of crystal meth use among learners and inform the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies to combat this pressing issue.

Acknowledgement: Gratitude to the participants in the study who dedicated their time to this study.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Abbasi, G. A., Kumaravelu, J., Goh, Y. N., & Singh, K. S. D. (2021). Understanding the intention to revisit a destination by expanding the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). *Spanish Journal of Marketing-ESIC*. https://doi.org/10.1108/SJME-06-2020-0082

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. SAGE Publications.

Damarasingh, M., Marcenes, W., Stansfeld, S. A., & Bernabé, E. (2018). Illicit drug use and traumatic dental injuries in adolescents. *Acta Odontologica Scandinavica, 76*(7), 504-508. https://doi.org/10.1080/00016357.2018.1452836

De Villiers, C., Cerbone, D., & Van Zijl, W. (2020). The South African government's response to COVID-19. *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management, 32*(5), 797-811. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBAFM-06-2020-0074

Degenhardt, L., Charlson, F., Ferrari, A., Santomauro, D., Erskine, H., Mantilla-Herrera, A., & Vos, T. (2018). The global burden of disease attributable to alcohol and drug use in 195 countries and territories, 1990–2016: A systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 5*(12), 987-1012. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30337-7

Fagan, A. A., & Najman, J. M. (2005). The relative contributions of parental and sibling substance use to adolescent tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use. *Journal of Drug Issues, 35*(4), 869-883. https://doi.org/10.1177/002204260503500408

Flisher, A. J., Parry, C. D., Evans, J., Muller, M., & Lombard, C. (2003). Substance use by adolescents in Cape Town: Prevalence and correlates. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 32*(1), 58-65. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1054-139X(02)00458-X

Hasheela, M. W., Ananias, J. A., & Schenck, C. (2020). The mushrooming of alcohol establishments: A case study of Greenwell Matongo, Windhoek, Namibia. *eBangi: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 17*(8).

Kaye, S., Lewandowski, A., Bowman, J., & Doyle, M. F. (2021). Crystal methamphetamine use among young people entering custody: Prevalence, correlates, and comorbidity. *Drug and Alcohol Review, 40*(7), 1266-1274. https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13278

Kelly, E. V., Newton, N. C., Stapinski, L. A., Conrod, P. J., Barrett, E. L., Champion, K. E., & Teesson, M. (2020). A novel approach to tackling bullying in schools: Personality-targeted intervention for adolescent victims and bullies in Australia. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 59*(4), 508-518. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2019.03.005

Kumar, R., O'Malley, P. M., Johnston, L. D., Schulenberg, J. E., & Bachman, J. G. (2002). Effects of school-level norms on student substance use. *Prevention Science, 3*(2), 105-124. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015431300629

Lanza, S. T., & Collins, L. M. (2002). Pubertal timing and the onset of substance use in females during early adolescence. *Prevention Science, 3*(1), 69-82. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014665812876

Layman, H. M., Thorisdottir, I. E., Halldorsdottir, T., Sigfusdottir, I. D., Allegrante, J. P., & Kristjansson, A. L. (2022). Substance use among youth during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review. *Current Psychiatry Reports, 24*(6), 307-324. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-022-01308-2

Liao, Y., Huang, Z., Huh, J., Pentz, M. A., & Chou, C. P. (2013). Changes in friends' and parental influences on cigarette smoking from early through late adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 53*(1), 132-138. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.01.020

Marsden, J., Stillwell, G., Barlow, H., Boys, A., Taylor, C., Hunt, N., & Farrell, M. (2006). An evaluation of a brief motivational intervention among young ecstasy and cocaine users: No effect on substance and alcohol use outcomes. *Addiction, 101*(7), 1014-1026. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2006.01436.x

Manamela, N. P., Rapholo, S. F., & Singwane, T. P. (2024). The lived experiences of cluster foster parents in caring for foster care children with special needs in Mpumalanga, South Africa. *eBangi: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 21*(3).

Mathebula, W. N., Makhubele, J. C., & Singwane, T. (2022). The nexus between harmful alcohol use and intimate partner violence: A case study. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science, 11*(9), 280-288. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i9.2070

Midgett, A., & Doumas, D. M. (2019). Witnessing bullying at school: The association between being a bystander and anxiety and depressive symptoms. *School Mental Health, 11*, 454-463. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-019-09320-2

Miller, C. E., & Meyers, S. A. (2015). Disparities in school discipline practices for students with emotional and learning disabilities and autism. *Journal of Education and Human Development, 4*(1), 255-267. https://doi.org/10.15640/jehd.v4n1a23

Mohale, D., & Mokwena, K. E. (2020). Substance use amongst high school learners in the south of Johannesburg: Is this the new norm? *South African Family Practice, 62*(4). https://doi.org/10.4102/safp.v62i1.5114

Onya, H., Tessera, A., Myers, B., & Flisher, A. (2012). Adolescent alcohol use in rural South African high schools: Original. *African Journal of Psychiatry, 15*(5), 352-357. https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpsy.v15i5.42

Peltzer, K., & Ramlagan, S. (2009). Alcohol use trends in South Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences, 18*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2009.11892603

Pinias, C., Munyaradzi, C., & Kudzai, D. M. (2022). Exploring effectiveness of peer counselling in mitigating drug and substance abuse in Zimbabwean secondary schools: Rural learners' perspective. *e-BANGI Journal, 19*(3), 18-32.

Price, H. R., Collier, A. C., & Wright, T. E. (2018). Screening pregnant women and their neonates for illicit drug use: Consideration of the integrated technical, medical, ethical, legal, and social issues. *Frontiers in Pharmacology, 9*, 961. https://doi.org/10.3389/fphar.2018.00961

Price, O., Man, N., Bruno, R., Dietze, P., Salom, C., Lenton, S., Grigg, J., Gibbs, D., Wilson, T., & Degenhardt, L. (2022). Changes in illicit drug use and markets with the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions: Findings from the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System 2016–20. *Addiction, 117*(1), 182-194. https://doi.org/10.1111/add.15683

Reddy, P., Resnicow, K., Omardien, R., & Kambaran, N. (2007). Prevalence and correlates of substance use among high school students in South Africa and the United States. *American Journal of Public Health, 97*(10), 1859-1864. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2006.086330

Reddy, S. P., Panday, S., Swart, D., Jinabhai, C. C., Amosun, S. L., James, S., Monyeki, K. D., Stevens, G., Morejele, N., Kambaran, N. S., & Omardien, R. G. (2018). Umthenthe Uhlaba Usamila-The South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (2002). Cape Town: South African Medical Research Council.

Rigby, K., Haroun, D., & Ali, E. (2019). Bullying in schools in the United Arab Emirates and the personal safety of students. *Child Indicators Research, 12*, 1663-1675. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-018-9609-x

Singwane, T. P., & Ramoshaba, D. J. (2023). It's like an uncontrollable demon in your body: The lived experiences of youth using crystal meth during the COVID-19 pandemic in Witbank, Mpumalanga. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science, 12*(5), 286-294. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i5.2474

Singwane, T. P., & Ramoshaba, D. J. (2023). Social workers' roles and contemporary responsibilities in addiction management: The case of selected treatment centres. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science, 12*(2), 170-176. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i2.2277

Singwane, T. P., & Sandhleni, I. B. (2023). The livelihoods and challenges faced by caregivers of children with disabilities in South Africa. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review, 6*(7), 552-565. https://doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v6i7.875

Thomson, K. (2013). Overview of the drug abuse problem in South Africa. *Addiction Harmony Addiction Clinic*.

Tshitangano, T. G., & Tosin, O. H. (2016). Substance use amongst secondary school students in a rural setting in South Africa: Prevalence and possible contributing factors. *African Journal of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine, 8*(2), Article a1098. https://doi.org/10.4102/phcfm.v8i2.1098

Visser, M., & Moleko, A. G. (2012). *Community psychology in South Africa* (2nd ed.). Van Schaik.

Waters, L., Allen, K.-A., & Arslan, G. (2021). Stress-related growth in adolescents returning to school after COVID-19 school closure. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, Article 643443. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.643443

Windle, M., Haardörfer, R., Lloyd, S. A., Foster, B., & Berg, C. J. (2017). Social influences on college student use of tobacco products, alcohol, and marijuana. *Substance Use & Misuse, 52*(8), 1111-1119. https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2017.1290116