



'Voices' of school dropouts about the use of illicit drugs on the Cape Flats, Western Cape

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Abstract

The social concerns of communities on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape, are perpetuated by the lack of schooling and it contributes to higher unemployment figures. This article aims to provide a voice for school dropouts on their perspective of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem that forms the different levels of influence on their lives. The research was lodged within an interpretive paradigm in order to gain in-depth understanding of what is meaningful and relevant to illicit drug users. The study used a qualitative approach to explore the perceptions of school dropouts on the use of illicit drugs. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents to obtain detailed descriptions of drug abuse. Data was analysed using a deductive content analysis approach. We argue the need for a stronger intervention approach to support the microsystem, in order to alleviate the social concern in communities on the Cape Flats. The theoretical underpinning of the study makes use of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. The article engages with the concepts of family, friends and school within the construct of microsystems. In the construct of the mesosystem we engage with the linkages and processes between the concepts of the microsystem. The concept of community is interrogated within the construct of the exosystem and social values within the macrosystem.

Introduction

The focus on the use of illicit drugs and criminality has assumed a pivotal role in school dropouts in many countries. A recent study reported that the Western Cape is continuously distressed by the drug trade and organised crime (Goga, 2014). The continuous danger on the Cape Flats due to the use of illicit drugs promotes the development of criminal activities and the downward movement of social concerns. The social concerns are perpetuated by the lack of schooling and it contributes to higher unemployment figures. The increased number of children dropping out of school is alarming and it is becoming a concern for society, especially in high poverty communities. Dropouts are referred to in this study as learners that have left school without completing an exit level examination. Mawere (2012: 12) defines 'dropouts' as learners who leave school before the final year of the educational cycle in which they are enrolled: irrespective of the level of schooling.

The key concern in this study was to determine the connection between the use of illicit drugs and the problem of school dropouts from the perspective of the youth themselves.

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