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'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.

Degenhardt and Hall (2012: 58) suggest that the use of illicit drugs is dependent on social factors and drug availability, as well as characteristics of the users and their social setting. This is supported by Chetty (2015: 54), who indicated that people from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to use illicit drugs due to risk factors such as poverty and availability of drugs. Research on school dropout and illicit drug usage, has been dominated by quantitative studies providing a generalised opinion (Hughes, 2005; Sanders & Lankenau, 2006). There is a significant call on addressing the issue of school dropouts and the use of illicit drugs mainly from a preventative perspective. However, to address prevention it is necessary to hear the voices of the youth that have dropped out due to the use of illicit drugs.

Research context

The UNISA Bureau of Market Research (2012) reported on drug use and alcohol consumption among secondary school learners in the Western Cape, and revealed that 53.3 percent of learners confirmed that drugs are easily accessible and 30.7 percent of the learners were aware of friends who used drugs (Chetty, 2015: 54). This backdrop reveals the exposure to drugs from early adolescence which would further perpetuate social ills among people on the Cape Flats. The Cape Flats in the Western Cape was deemed historically to comprise of what was predominantly disadvantaged communities (The Cape Flats Website, [sa]). Communities who ended up on the Cape Flats were as a result of various reasons such as forced removals, to migration by choice. The majority of adolescent drug users on the Cape Flats use marijuana/cannabis (colloquially known as '*dagga*') and methamphetamine (also commonly called 'crystal meth' and locally known as '*tik*') according to Pluddermann, Flisher, Mcketin, Parry and Lombard (2010: 14).

The aim of this article is to explore the voices of users of illicit drugs leading to their dropout from school in the Cape Flats. The article further makes a contribution through interrogating the marginalised voices of illicit drug users, specifically young people. This engagement with the voices of youth provides an understanding of the broader social contextual issues and their interrelatedness towards addressing the concerns on the use of illicit drugs. This would hopefully result in improved strategies to address the problem of school dropouts as caused through the use of illicit drugs among South African adolescents. Related problems could also be addressed such as violence (Mncube & Harber, 2013: 3) and poverty (Kalichman, Simbayi, Kagee, Toefy, Jooste, Cain & Cherry, 2006: 1641), which would have a positive effect on the wellbeing of South African adolescents.

In considering the above, the following research question was posed to guide the study: To what extent do the aspects of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model influence adolescent drug users to drop out of school?

The concern in relation to the abuse of illicit drugs, disrupts the educational processes through breaking down the aspiration to achieve and increases the levels of truancy among learners which lead to their dropout from school. This inevitably contributes to juvenile delinquency which impacts on crime.

Theoretical underpinning

The focal point of the study is the former school learner's perspective on the effect of illicit drugs on school dropouts. The researchers used a sociological perspective to understand how social interaction of users of illicit drugs influences the notion of school dropouts. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem as theoretical underpinnings of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecological model, was used to interpret and position the perspective of illicit drug users who have dropped out of school. The developing adolescents' field surrounds them, according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, like "a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007: 814). The field closest to the developing individual who is at the centre is called the microsystem. The microsystem is surrounded by the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem respectively.

This article focuses on the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem to understand the social context of school dropouts. The microsystem is explained as a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1993: 39). This can be regarded as the family, school and friends. Bronfenbrenner (1993) describes the mesosystem as a system of microsystems. It implies that the mesosystem comprises linkages and processes between components in the microsystem.

It is important to note that it is not only characteristics of the individual, the family, friends and the school factors that contribute to school dropouts, but it is also the interaction between these factors that could increase the chance of dropping out of school (Jozefowicz-Simbeni, 2008: 56). Jozefowicz-Simbeni (2008: 56) explains that behavioural changes in adolescents could be seen as a threat by teachers, which in turn creates a need by the teacher to exert greater controlling behaviour, which learners could experience negatively, thereby leading them to drop out of school. The other constructs of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecological model is briefly explained below.

The exosystem is further removed from the individual. However, the individual is influenced indirectly as a result of processes taking place that influence the setting in which the individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1993: 40). This relates to the community and could include the parents' work, family, friends and neighbours. Swart and Pettipher (2005) expand the setting to include health care centres, mass media, friends of the family, welfare centres and parents other than those of the individual. The macrosystem encompasses the exosystem and affects the individual at the centre through the mesosytem and exosystem. The macrosystem refers to the characteristics of a culture or subculture (Bronfenbrenner, 1993) which could include ideologies, economics, social values and politics (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecological model also distinguishes a chronosystem which encompasses change or consistency over time in the characteristics of the individual, as well as the community in which the individual lives. Changes referred to include the family structure, socioeconomic status, employment and place of residence. In this article the chronosystem would cover the schooling period while using illicit drugs to the period of dropping out of school.

Methodology

The research was set in an interpretive paradigm in order to gain in-depth understanding of what is meaningful and relevant to illicit drug users. The study made use of a qualitative approach to obtain detailed descriptions from the perspective of the participants as a way of examining the issues being investigated.

Non-probability sampling was used as the authors were not able to determine who the entire population was and it would have been difficult to gain access to the entire population who have dropped out of school due to the use of illicit drugs. The non-probability sampling method used was purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The study purposely selected people who met the criteria for the sample, i.e. persons who used illicit drugs and who had not completed their schooling. With regard to snowball sampling, the study began with two participants who were known to have left school due to substance abuse. These participants supplied names that they thought met the criteria for the research, which in turn provided more names. Not all the names provided were willing to participate in the research. The sample consisted of six participants that were willing to share their experiences in an interview.

The study used a qualitative data collection method, an unstructured interview. This could be regarded as a conversational interview. Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014: 188) explain that this type of interview allows one to be as open and adaptable as possible to the responses of the participant. This provided us with the ability to gain optimal in-depth data by allowing us to probe the responses received. Analysis of data used a deductive content analysis approach. Data was thematically categorised and analysed according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. The data analysis process involved the understanding of the data and what information it had relating to school dropouts and their use of illicit drugs.

The following ethical issues were considered that affected the participation in the study: informed consent; dealing with sensitive information; avoiding harm; dealing with confidentiality and anonymity and avoiding any deception. Respondents provided consent to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study at any time for any particular reason. The participants were assured of anonymity and that their responses would be treated with confidentiality. We further assured them that their real names would not be used and that pseudonyms would be used instead.

Findings and discussion

The salient findings that emerged from the analysis of interviews with school dropouts on the use of illicit drugs are discussed below under the constructs of the theoretical framework. The findings are discussed under themes relating to the constructs of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

Findings associated with the microsystem

Key findings which emerged from the interviews with school dropouts that can be associated with the microsystem are family, friends and school.

Family

Family influence plays a major role in the use of illicit drugs by adolescents. It is supported by Brook, Morojele, Pahl and Brook (2006: 30) that indicate parental use of drugs bears a significant contribution to the behaviour of the adolescents. One of the respondents indicated: "*…we as kids were influenced by the way our fathers or uncles have been living and made us want to do the same…"* (Ossie). It is noted from this response that the example provided at home by parents/guardians/adults was not appropriate for adolescents. It can be further argued that the non- exposure of illicit drugs to adolescents could minimise children's tendency to want to experiment with drugs. The family should be seen as a support structure for adolescents and not a contributing aspect to drug usage or crime. According to McCrady and Epstein (1996), family should be a strong and continuing theme in a support approach to adolescents dealing with abuse of drugs. However, the study has found that parents that are absentare unable to play a supportive role to adolescents. There are various reasons for this: certain parents are users of illicit drugs themselves and others have abandoned their families. A single parent household, with mostly mothers or grandmothers taking care of children is common in poor communities. The role of the environment remains an important predictor in the onset of deviant behaviour. According to Field (2002: 736), adolescents in non-traditional families have a greater tendency to exhibit substance-use-related behaviour earlier than their counterparts from traditional families. This is evident as indicated in the following responses:

"Terwyl ek 'n laaitie was, ek het by my ouma gebly. My ouma het ons groot gemaak, my ma was te involved met die gangsters" [We lived with my granny when we were small. My granny raised us because my mother was too involved with gangsters] (Annie).

"I slept on the yard by my friend's house because his parents didn't mind and my tannie (mother) was never at home to check on me. She was permy [permanently] *on a high"* (Romepie).

"Look, my dad was too busy working. You know in his mind he thought that being a father is being the provider, but that's just a human responsibility to us weaker younger humans" (Ossie).

There is a strong indication that family members should provide strong role models for adolescents. Brook et al (2006: 27) argues the quantity and quality of time that parents and caregivers spend with adolescents is linked to the child's proneness to use illicit drugs. Jeftha (2006: 72), found in her study that for boys growing up on the Cape Flats, gangsterism was a defining feature of their social context, with graphic accounts of the pervasiveness of gang-related violence, which was described as being the result of economic need, peer pressure, boredom and an escape from bullying and low self-esteem. It is implied that spending time with adolescents, enhances their feeling of self-worth and may minimise the use of drugs and exposure to crime. This is supported by a study conducted by Meghdadpour, Curtis, Pettifor and MacPhil (2012) among South African adolescents between the ages of 15-24 that showed that family supervision was significant in curbing drug use.

Friends

Respondents stated their initial use of drugs were with friends through experimenting with tobacco to serve recreational purposes. The experimenting phase soon escalated to the use of marijuana. When respondents were asked who introduced the drugs to them, four of the six respondents indicated that their friends were the first people to share marijuana with them. In the case of the other two, they reported that they were responsible for introducing their friends to the use of marijuana:

"*…I used to watch my brother cleaning the dagga and rolling a zol* [South African slang for a hand-rolled marijuana cigarette, also known as a 'joint']*, it was cool and always wanted to try it. So one day I went to go skarrel* [search or scrounge] *for the weed and decided to try it with my bra'se…"* ['brothers' as in 'my friends/mates'] (Jimmy).

Brook et al (2006: 27), argue that the strongest and most consistent predictor of drug usage among adolescents is the usage by their friends. The influence of friends can safely be assumed to be a contributing factor to use drugs which could lead to additional criminal behaviour. Friends encourage each other to either participate, or in certain instances, to not participate in usage. Respondents were asked what they do after they are intoxicated. All of the respondents reported wanting to find something to eat. Five of the respondents further indicated that the drug is an important catalyst towards the desire to commit a crime. The most common criminal activities that they were involved in were vandalism and burglary. It could be interpreted that this was for the purpose of acquiring money to further their addiction.

"…ja, as 'n man so gerook is dan vang ons sommer enige kak aan; ons breek in by plekke dan soek ons ou scrap metal wat ons kan verkoop" […yes, when we are so 'high' then we perpetrate any shit (make trouble); we break in (burgle) at places and look for any scrap metal that we can sell] (Vano).

"...you see the places where we chill is often quiet and min mense [few people] *come past there, so now we sommer* [just] *write on the walls or break the windows...we don't think straight then"* (Romepie).

The above views are supported by Brook et al, (2006: 28) who state that drug users influence other young people to use drugs and engage in deviant and criminal behaviour. It can be related to the lack of support by the family structure therefore adolescents seek acceptance by their friends. Hoberg (2003: 255), concluded that adolescents have great respect for the opinions of members of their peer groups. Respondents indicated that they were more comfortable with their friends, as they understood them better than their families when asked why they do not approach their families for help. Mohasoa and Fourie (2012: 36) revealed that friends were considered the primary providers of support for adolescents dealing with drug abuse. Masitsa (2006: 179) further argues that friends tend to influence each other to drop out of school. However, friends could also encourage their peers to remain in school.

School

In relation to school attendance, all the respondents left school between the ages of 14 and 16 and it was generally during the secondary school phase. It was reported that drugs were available on school premises and in certain instances drugs were used at the school. The South African School's Drug Abuse Policy Framework stipulates that teachers receive suitable training to equip them to deal with social problems as they are presented in the classroom. However, teachers in the Cape Flats do not receive such specialist training. In the United States, there has long been a call for similar training, but little has been implemented. Four decades ago, Weinberg (1971: 102) stressed the need to train teachers appropriately and suggested that teachers spend time at drug clinics to observe and learn first-hand about difficulties and successful strategies in treating drug addicts. Teachers in training, Weinberg (1971: 103) feels, need to spend time with social workers who can demonstrate techniques suitable for dealing with siblings and parents of addicts. Although parents bear the primary responsibility for learners, teachers are frequently obliged and expected to act in loco parentis in many situations because parents themselves are drug users, criminals or part of gang-life. Rosebrock (1996: 147), views the school as an integral component of the lives of poor and vulnerable children: poor societies often expect the school to deal with substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, gangsterism and violence. However, the hope of the school being a cure-all is usually an illusion. The school should recognise and deal with drug issues or gangster encroachment, but realistically this does not happen, because teachers are too few, rarely trained, afraid or ill-equipped to do so. Poor schools in disadvantaged communities like the Cape Flats, in particular, lack basic educational resources and have too little support from government agencies to tackle social issues such as drug abuse.

"...Nee, ja, primary school so van Standerd vyf begin ons rook en begin ek die Yakkies [gang name] *te volg. En dan kom dit so dat ek high school toe gaan en dan begin ek elke dag te bunk want ek was met die Yakkies. So kom dit, dat ek Standerd Sewe los ek skool*

want dits te boring en gangster lewe is meer interesting…" [No, yes, primary school from about Standard Five (Grade 7) we started to smoke and follow the Yakkies. Then it came about that I went to high school and then I began to play truant (bunked) since I was with the Yakkies. Then when I got to Standard 7 (Grade 9) I left school since it was boring and gangster life far more interesting] (Annie).

It could be interpreted that low aspirations and lack of suitable role models influence adolescents wanting to drop out of school. Matthews, Griggs and Caine (1999: 36) state that when school lessons are not stimulating, learners are more likely to become prone to using drugs. On the Cape Flats, the majority of schools are situated in disadvantaged communities. Zulu, Urbani, van der Merwe and van der Walt (2004: 173) report that alcohol and illicit drugs are brought to and consumed on the premises of certain schools, particularly in disadvantaged communities. This is an indication that the Department of Education needs to have stringent intervention strategies in place to deal with the availability of illicit drugs at schools, as it is a contributing factor to usage and the problem of school dropouts. If not addressed, schools remain a fertile ground for criminal and anti-social behaviour at disadvantaged schools on the Cape Flats viewed from a social, political and economic perspective (Chetty, 2015: 59).

Drug abuse disrupts the classroom, breaks down the aspiration to achieve and increases the levels of juvenile delinquency. Such communities deserve to be compensated today; not left to drift ever further behind previously advantaged schools. Even before the demise of apartheid, Pinnock (1984: 54) extended the list of social problems experienced on the Cape Flats to include breakdown of family control and extended family ties, lack of discipline in schools, an escalated divorce rate, increase of single parent households and tension within homes. An underlying concern is the need for schools and teachers to address the social ills in the classrooms and communities. Schools would then be able to inspire learners to want to achieve better scholastically and increase their aspirations. Learners' attitudes towards school and their belief in teachers influence them towards staying in school rather than dropping out with their friends. The findings noted that school dropouts experience school as boring and they indicate as their alternative, illicit drugs and criminal behaviour.

"…school was of no benefit to me, so I wanted to start working. Find a job, which I did! But three days later I walked out, I don't like working, I only know skarrelling [scrounging] *and smokkel* [smuggling or in this context dealing/trafficking]. [Be]*cause I have two children and I must provide for them"* (Kariema).

On the contrary, one respondent indicated:

"I enjoyed going to school because I could see other kids and stuff, hang out and have fun. But then I didn't have the material things that they had and it was about who looked good and what they had. And I didn't get that" (Ossie).

This is an indication of the influence of friends that had an impact at school. It can be interpreted as the friends – school aspect of the mesosystem. A further concern raised in relation to schools was the ability to sell illicit drugs to school learners.

"...you see, we bought the goods at school through the fences. The suppliers will come to the school during break times and we will las [contribute/pool] *together for the stuff. One day my bra's* [friend] *uncle was walking past the school and nearly caught us buying the stuff"* (Jimmy).

It is an indication of the tolerance that the community has for the buying and selling of illicit drugs to school learners. Community members are aware of this, yet they do not report it. There is a significant relation between drug use and community tolerance as communities have lost faith in authorities who fail to respond to address the issue (Parry, Morojele, Saban & Flisher, 2004: 371). An investigation by Morojele, Brook and Kachieng'A (2006: 217) reported that Afrikaans and isiXhosa-speaking communities on the Cape Flats blamed community tolerance for the widespread selling and use of drugs at their schools. It is necessary for society in general to focus efforts on addressing the root issues in relation to the use of illicit drugs. Instead of solely focussing on how to deal with illicit drug users after they have become addicted, there should be a stronger focus on the prevention within schools.

Findings associated with the Mesosystem

The mesosystem is associated with the processes that influence the relations between the aspects of the microsystem. The findings from the interviews provide clear linkages between the family, friends and school. This is a clear indication of the relationships between the respondents' different environments in which they directly interact (Lopez, Wang, Schwartz, Prado, Huang, Hendricks Brown, Pantin & Szapocznik, 2009: 635). The findings of the mesosystem are discussed in the linkages of: 'family/friends', 'family/school' and 'friends/school'.

In considering the construct of the mesosystem, it would be expected that these relationships are the ones that would support and protect adolescents from association with illicit drugs. Lopez et al (2009: 625) reviewed in their study that processes within the family – school and family – peer mesosystems were found to protect adolescents against affiliation with substance using peers and against adolescent substance use. In contradiction, this study found that the respondents tended to be inclined to use illicit drugs and prone to criminality as a result of their mesosystem. One respondent indicated:

"My cousins and uncles on my daddy's side are all gangsters and Glennie [pseudonym] *is not a gangster but he's a nommer* [member of one of the numbers gangs in prison], *a 26! Maar op my ma se kante is almal gangsters* [But on my mom's side all are gangsters]. *Ja so, my chommies* [mates] *all wanted to be with me cause we were connected. Here in Mitchells Plain I don't have to go far for drugs, we work with the drugs"* (Romepie).

Another respondent indicated that her family initially attempted to protect them as children from drugs. However, they were still exposed to drugs on visits to her mother.

"My mom lived in a deurmekaar [mixed up/confused] *area and it was boring so we stayed with my ouma* [grandmother]. *We grew up by her and we were three children. But when we visited our mother there was always mense* [people] *there and smoking dagga and coke…"* (Kariema).

These findings relate to the theme of the family – friends construct of the mesosystem. It could be noted that the link of family – friends who are required to protect adolescents from the use of illicit drugs, often tend to be a contributing indicator for the use of drugs on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape.

In relation to the family/school process, it was noted that the lack of role models from a family perspective often influenced adolescents to drop out of school. However, a respondent reported that he wanted things to be different for his child:

"…there were some kids that you could see that they were influenced by the way their fathers or uncles have been living, these things affect a person. My father wasn't present enough to make sure I'm at school, my dad was too busy working. You know in his mind he thought that being a father is just being a provider…Now with my boy I make sure he is in school and he can't follow the same path I did. I will moer [beat up] *him if he thinks of touching any drugs…"* (Ossie).

From the above findings it can be deduced that the lack of family involvement in the schooling of their children contributes to the use of illicit drugs and the ultimate dropping out of school by learners. Hill and Taylor (2004: 161) supports this argument, suggesting that parents' involvement in children's school related activities decreases the risk of poor school performance and thereby decreases the risk of adolescents' association with illicit drugs. Parent involvement requires the monitoring of their children. However, this cannot take place if parents are absent due to being intoxicated or as a result of socio-economical demands of parents to have to work extended hours in order to provide for their families. A further concern identified in the findings was how parents or families intervened at schools. A respondent reported on how she dropped out of school:

"*…the teacher smacked me and I went to go fetch my granny and she beats him up like really. And so I left school. I was just never interested in high school. I can't make no excuse…"* (Annie).

This is an indication of the lack of the family to encourage adolescents to remain in school. It can further be interpreted that parents lack the knowledge to follow the correct processes or procedures to address aspects of concern in the school system. The lack of discipline in schools with reference to learners and teachers, are of concern in the South African education system when violence or assault is reported. Responses from interviews in relation to schools

imply the mistrust and lack of faith in the competence of schools. It raises the issue of the functionality of schools. It is argued that the use of illicit drugs and school dropouts are rife in areas where the functionality of schools on the Cape Flats is in question. Lopez et al (2009: 625) concur that poor functioning schools accounted for more substance use and less parental involvement in schools.

Findings associated with the exosystem

Ennett, Foshee, Bauman, Hussong, Faris, Hipp, Cai, DuRant and McNaughton Reyes (2008: 1778) describe the exosystem as the neighbourhood and community where adolescents reside. This article focuses on the aspects of community and support structures within the construct of the exosystem. It is interpreted that the exosystem relates to the immediate environment of adolescents. Key findings from the interviews are discussed under the themes of community and support structures.

Community

Onya, Tessera, Myers and Flisher (2012) reported that community antisocial behaviour and run down communities could be significantly linked to high school learners' use of illicit substances. Antisocial behaviour of communities is a common aspect on the Cape Flats especially in disadvantaged communities. A respondent indicated as mentioned above that illicit drugs are easily accessible in their community and the exposure to the drugs include working with it through packaging and distribution of the drugs (Romepie). It is an indication of the tolerance that adults have for allowing adolescents to be exposed to these illicit drugs. A further concern is that communities turn a blind eye to the trade of illicit drugs by adolescents and adults. Parry et al (2004) concluded that community tolerance can be associated with the use of illicit drugs and how easily it is obtained. The lack of policing, as well as their lack of response to call outs, were highlighted (Parry et al, 2004: 371). Morojele et al (2006: 218) reported that the members of disadvantaged communities on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape blamed community tolerance for the widespread trading and use of drugs in their neighbourhoods.

A concern raised in terms of the community, relates to the lack of resources in neighbourhoods which promotes the use of illicit drugs as an alternative for adolescents. A response boldly captured this concern:

"*…I didn't have much to do there where we live. Nothing interesting for us to do and we can also get dagga, tik and even heroin sommer maklik* [very easily]. *The parkies* [public parks] *were our territory to do drugs"* (Romepie).

Although there are recreational sites in the communities, these sites are used for criminal activities. Marojele et al (2006: 217) revealed that the accessibility of drugs is considered by adolescents as a reason for the use of illicit drugs. The communities further allow these criminal activities to proceed and the police do not respond to these concerns when brought to their attention. This is supported by a respondent reporting that she found life on the street more interesting and stating that the police would not follow-up on them

sitting around in recreational parks late at night. A crucial aspect to adolescents' drug usage relates to the concern in the difficulty experienced by government to create sufficient employment opportunities to uplift disadvantaged communities (Van Zyl, 2013: 585).

Findings associated with the macrosystem

According to Bronnfenbrenner (1993) the macrosystem encapsulates all the above mentioned systems of the individual. The macrosystem is regarded as the outermost level of an adolescents' ecological structure, which has an influence throughout the inner levels and affect individuals in any number of similar or different ways (Rosa & Tudge, 2013: 250). Swart and Pettipher (2005) explain that the characteristics of a macrosystem include cultural and sub-culture aspects. The study identified the cultural traits and social values as a factor impacting on adolescents who use illicit drugs and inevitably leave school. A respondent indicated from a cultural perspective:

"*…nah, we mos* [are ofcourse] *Coloureds,*[mixed race] *so this is the life we must follow… we must dala* [hustle]*, you know we skarrel* [scrounge] *and rob mense* [people] *so that we can get our next fix…"* (Jimmy).

It is evident from the above quote that certain adolescents feel that their future path is determined by their cultural heritage. Thurley (2005: 26), makes a similar argument that people tend to make their past part of their future. The school of thought for the aforementioned can be dispelled with the correct support systems and structures in place. The support systems and structures refer to family, schools, friends and very importantly government intervention. Government intervention could be through the increase of funding to address the shortfall of law enforcement.

Social values

Social values refer to a society's organisation and the ideological foundations for which it stands (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). Simplistically, social values can be regarded as the goodness or desirability of society. In the article we associate social values with social learning in which adolescents' behaviour is conditioned by modelling and physiological triggers. Capece and Lanza- Kaduce (2013: 504) assert that these triggers are directly imposed on an individual by family and influential actions of friends.

From the findings it was noted that a respondent's own child was being influenced by the values of the environment in which he was being raised:

"…the gangster life is exciting, yah, but I have to cut it off. Because my smallest son, he wants to be a gangster. He acts like a gangster, so clearly I must be an example for him…" (Annie).

This is an indication of the influence the community and family has on an individual. It can be interpreted that the macrosystem can either unite or disintegrate a society. The above

finding indicates how social learning of the criminal behaviour and possible use of illicit drugs may affect the macrosystem which can lead to social disorganisation (Moon, Patton & Rao, 2010: 846).

Although the respondents were all school dropouts and users of illicit drugs, they were capable of identifying social rules and understanding the establishment of society and communities. This was evident in statements made by respondents:

"…but at the same time I need to also follow the rules like most of society, like most of the people. Because certain rules, they require the certificate, so get the certificate, I'm just having to go do that…" (Ossie).

"My dad, I think he influenced the way we learned things. He read a lot and studied a lot. And we'd see him reading and studying. Eventually he took the Bible, he was never religious, he always viewed it from a scientifical point of view. To see how is things possible…he was going to study to be a doctor back in the day when it was apartheid in Jo'burg, but his mother was so conditioned by my grandfather and the laws of the government, and asked 'whose gonna look after me?' So I think my father had a lot of disappointments in his life. So I learnt from his life mistakes or I picked up on is demons or whatever he was dealing with…" (Romepie).

It is interpreted that with sufficient support and protection, adolescents dealing with the abuse of illicit drugs can indeed be rehabilitated to manage their situations for the better. It can further be deduced that the influence of the macrosystem has implications for reform. Kelso, French and Fernandez (2005: 7) suggest that adolescents develop attitudes and behaviour through reinforcement, punishment and modelling, as these responses are an imitation of learned behaviours used to cope with specific situations. This could be interpreted for both the negative and positive aspects. Negative, in the sense that incorrect behaviour learned, could lead adolescents to use illicit drugs or lead them to criminal behaviour. The interpretation of positive aspects could relate to good examples being engendered in the family or community, which promotes the development of the adolescent in line with the rules of society. This can be seen in the statement above from a respondent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In considering the discussion of the findings above, the study made the following recommendations. In relation to the microsystem:

- Stronger intervention strategies are required for adolescents at risk of dropping out of school, due to the use of illicit drugs.
- Reassessment of the support structure provided in marginalised communities by local governments.
- An inquiry into the effectiveness of safety and security measures at schools where drug trafficking and criminality is rife.

In relation to the mesosystem:

- The evaluation of current prevention programmes to consider the inclusion of an outreach component for the linkages and processes of the family, friends and school.
- To provide the mesosystem of adolescents with concrete strategies and information on which conversations can be based in communities.

In relation to the exosystem:

- The monitoring of strategic support provided to communities needs to be addressed, as it appears to be non-existent. This recommendation would be directed at policy makers and the government.
- The government and local government should increase the allocation of resources and funds to provide amenities in marginalised communities that could serve the purpose of learning and recreation.

In relation to the macrosystem:

- It is often the recommendation for more resources. In this article, we recommend increasing the funding in order to increase the number of law enforcement officials with the purpose of disrupting the economic cycle of illicit drugs in marginalised communities. This would also monitor amenities and resources provided in these communities.

Conclusion

In a marginalised community such as on the Cape Flats, the microsystem of an individual who uses illicit drugs tends to exacerbate the problem instead of alleviating it, which should be the case. The concern is exacerbated due to the lack of appropriate support structures. This lack of support permeates throughout the community, impacting on greater crime in these marginalised communities. The authors noted the integral role of a collaborative approach to address the problems of illicit drugs especially among the key stakeholders, the provincial Education Department, the Department of Social Development and NGOs. The key stakeholders should work in partnership with the community and the schools. We see this as a restorative step in dealing with crime in marginalised communities, given the history of relocation and dispossession. Biccum (2005), suggests that the lack of education, resources and services in these communities, increases poverty and social ills such as drug abuse, gangsterism and criminal behaviour. Effective schools in the Cape Flats, especially in high poverty neighbourhoods, would benefit from a strategic plan that incorporates a range of supportive interventions such as basic educational resources, professional development programmes for teachers and leadership seminars for principals on how to tackle drug abuse. The strategic intervention should also provide relief for hungry children, support for scholars with behavioural and learning problems and ways to limit the drug market in the schools (Chetty, 2015).

The greatest impact for change would occur, when the influence closest to the individual (microsystem) is rectified and supported to improve conditions in communities. The low levels of support lead to higher levels of social problems such as the use of illicit drugs and criminality. Hearing the voices of school dropouts who use illicit drugs, it is clear that we need to move closer to the individual in order to stem the increasing school drop-out crisis and drug abuse among adolescents.

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