

Social Work Perspective on Undue Usage of Psychoactive Substances among School Children

Abstract

Undue usage of psychoactive substances, on the other hand substance abuse among the school children is presently increasing highly in Sri Lanka. Since, Substance abuse significantly associated with serious violent acts in the community it is becoming a socio0 economic problems. Therefore, it is important to pave more attention immediately to identify the direction to preventing the problem. Many school children start using this kind of licit and illicit substances cause of influence on peer groups. The parents and other authorities must pave high attention regarding the problem and the policies must stricter. Addiction to substance, the pursuit and use of substance take center stage in the line and becomes even more important than family, studies and their own welfare.

The main objective of the research is to identify the most popular licit and illicit substance among the school children and its physical and mental harmfulness to them. There are more sub objective sin this research as follow. to establish proper linkage between existing government institutions which presently act on the issue, parents, educators, community leaders and other government officials.

The study depends on the non probability sampling methods and according to that random sampling method was used for data collection. The sample was 09 schools where selected by three Districts in western province in Sri Lanka. The study conclude that the undue usages of Psychoactive substances among the school children are increasing highly and government and nongovernment organizations highly taken action to prevent the problem. Establishing an agency to protect the school children from substance is important.

Key Words: Psychoactive Substances, Substance Abuse, School Children, Mental and Physical Disorders, Addiction

Introduction

Undue Usage of Psychoactive Substances on the other hand Substance abuse among school children is presently increasing highly in Sri Lanka. Since, substance abuse significantly associated with serious violent acts in the community it is becoming a socio-economic problem. Therefore, it is important to pay more attention immediately to identify the ways of preventing the problem. In Sri Lanka – by law, the child is identified as adolescence below age of 18. The age range between years 6 - 18 is the schooling age of children and this is the period of subjecting the child into both physical and mental developments and changes. Also this is the time that the child is considered as dependent. According to WHO Definition, “Substance abuse” refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Some time ago it was focused on psychoactive substances in two categories as licit (cigarettes and alcohol) and illicit (e.g., Cannabis and Heroin). But today in Sri Lankan surface it is expanded up to, Chewing Betel, undue use of pharmaceuticals such as cough syrups, Cosmetic items such as Hair Gel & Spirits such as Surgical Spirits. Then, as observed it is difficult to identify the substances, since the users concern is on novel alternatives time to time, and those are fallen in a large range. Further, it is difficult to control the substance abusing by law, since some of those are not illicit, and even useful in day to day life. Therefore, making the people aware would be more effective than making law enforcements and the identified high-risk groups could be targeted for the preventive programs.

It is critical to draw a distinction between use and abuse of substance. But the abuse of drugs in general concern can be identify as a universal issue irrespective of the culture, economy etc. The concern of this matter has been discussed in many international forums and polices and regulations have been developed to use worldwide. During the past several years, there has been a renewed national concern about substance abuse, with the current tragedy of drugs. Even though child or teenage drug use is an individual behavior, it is embedded in a socio-cultural context that strongly affects the whole society. There are direct and indirect impacts of this issue. The impacts on health both physical and mental are very crucial and significant. Undue substances cause cancers, respiratory problems, impotency, etc. in physically since those substances are vitally affected to the body in growing age. Mental hazards are very significant among the addicts of substance. Addiction of substance is itself a mental disorder and it accumulates in the long run. This problem causes impotent society in future.

Problem

Do Undue Usage of Psychoactive Substances which Make Mental and Physical Disorders among School Children?

Background of the Problem

It is important to prevent usage of undue usage of substance in among the school children and society. However no policy has systematically reviews regarding the problem. The prevention of poor mental and physical health habits and the behaviours among the school children has the potential to provide better health throughout the life span. In order to be better able to initiate preventive intervention, it is important to get an overview of the effectiveness, sustainability and the socio-economic effects of preventing substance abuse. (licit and illicit drugs) Many school children start using this kind of licit and illicit substances cause of influence on peer groups. The parents and other authority figures must pay high attention regarding the problem and the policies must stricter. Addiction to substance, the pursuit and use of substance take center stage in the line and becomes even more important than family, studies and their own welfare.

The policy makers and the relevant government and nongovernment authorities initiate high-quality research on substance abuse in Sri Lanka. But the problem is still in Sri Lanka have no basic evidence to prove to growth on substance abuse among the school children. They are using both licit and illicit drugs, but no evidence base research done for the purposes of prevalence of the situation. The physical and mental wellbeing of children is important In terms of how they experience their childhood but also with respect to their development and mental and physical health in adulthood.

Importance of the Research

Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome - a cluster of behavioral, cognitive, and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated substance use and that typically include a strong desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to drug use than to other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physical withdrawal state. Being impotent both physically and mentally affect the development of the country. Also individually the addict and the family of the addict degrade by economically and socially. The involvement in criminals by students who abused by substances are significant. Children physically feel difficult to tolerate the psycho changes by substances. So eventually they become violent or mentally disordered. This leads crimes in society. Finding money for buying substances also leads in crimes. There should be strong social dialogue concerning substance abuse and its consequences among the school community including students, teachers, administrators, parents etc. Although the substance abuse is spread among various age groups, School children are victimized severely. Therefore there is a potential tendency spread from higher level to premier level.

Objectives

The main Objective of the research is to identify the most popular licit and illicit substance among the school children and its physical and mental harmfulness to them. There are more sub objectives in this research as follow.

- To identify the characteristics, patterns and trends of Substance abuse among the school children.
- To apply the knowledge towards the development of more effective strategies to prevent children from substance abuse.
- To rehabilitate the victims of substance abuse with the expectation of preventing children from substance abuse.
- To establish proper linkage between existing Government institutions which presently act on the issue, Parents, educators, community leaders and other Government officials.

Methodology

- Survey Research Design

School children are the target group of this research. To take out the opinions, thoughts and to analyse the behavior of targeted group, it is necessary to use survey research design.

- Data Collecting Method

In this research use both preliminary and secondarily data collecting methods. In-depth interviews, Questionnaires using to collect data and as secondarily data using existing policies, scholarly articles, News paper articles and manuscripts in related institutions etc.

- Data Analysis Method

Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis would be advantage for this research and according to qualitative analysis collecting data through the structured questionnaire to providing to target group and the teachers. To qualitative data collecting conduct case studies with selected sample and Focus Group discussion with Students, Teachers and

Parents. The Key information would be collected from the related government and nongovernment organization's key personalities.

Limitations of the Study

The target group of the study is school children in Sri Lanka. It is difficult to study all the school children in Sri Lanka. Therefore the research limited to western province and selected 3 types of schools as follow. Mixed schools, girls' schools and boys schools in western province. There are number of schools in western province and those are Colombo, Kalutara and Gampaha. Selected 09 schools from each districts and it is divide to 3 mixed schools, 3 Girls schools and 3 boys school and data collected basically from entire schools.

The types of schools and the percentage of the usage of psychoactive substances among the school children can mentioned as follow according to the field survey.

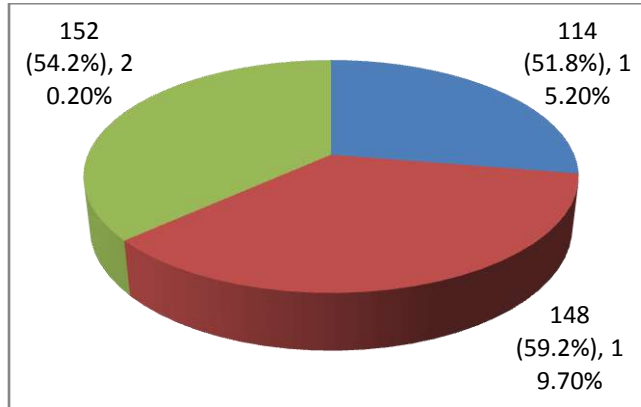
Data Analysis

The total number of school children of the selected Girls, Boys and mixed schools are as follow.

Total Number of the sample

Type of School	Total Students		5% Percentage Selected Sample	
Girls	1700	4400	85	220
	1440		72	
	1260		63	
Boys	960	5000	48	250
	2100		105	
	1940		97	
Mix	2340	5600	117	280
	2120		106	
	1140		57	
Total	15000		750	

Usages of Psychoactive Substances among the school children



There are 15.2% out of the total sample girls schools has been victim of the psychoactive substances and 19.7% was Boys schools. The mixed schools are identified as highly usage of substance in school level. That is 20.2%.

There was identified the Mental and Physical disorders among the school children.

Mental Disorders	Physical Disorders
Personality Disorders Anxiety Phobia Aggressiveness Insomnia Learning Disorders (Memory)	Headache Gastritis Allergies Stomachache Flutter Breathing Problems

Social Work Intervention

Social Work Intervention for Prevent the Problem among the School Children There are no attention of social work in Sri Lankan society but social care. The intervention of social worker in this regard has to pay more attention to detect the problem in grassroots level and make solution to prevent the situation.

Empowering group counseling in the school level is necessary to prevent the problem. It is important to make awareness and special training between the parents, children and the teachers etc. Strengthening family support through this awareness programmes and evaluate the situation is necessary. Beyond that it is necessary to build a social network among the government and nongovernment organizations and the rural awareness and the extracurricular activities among the students can be done from the grassroots level.

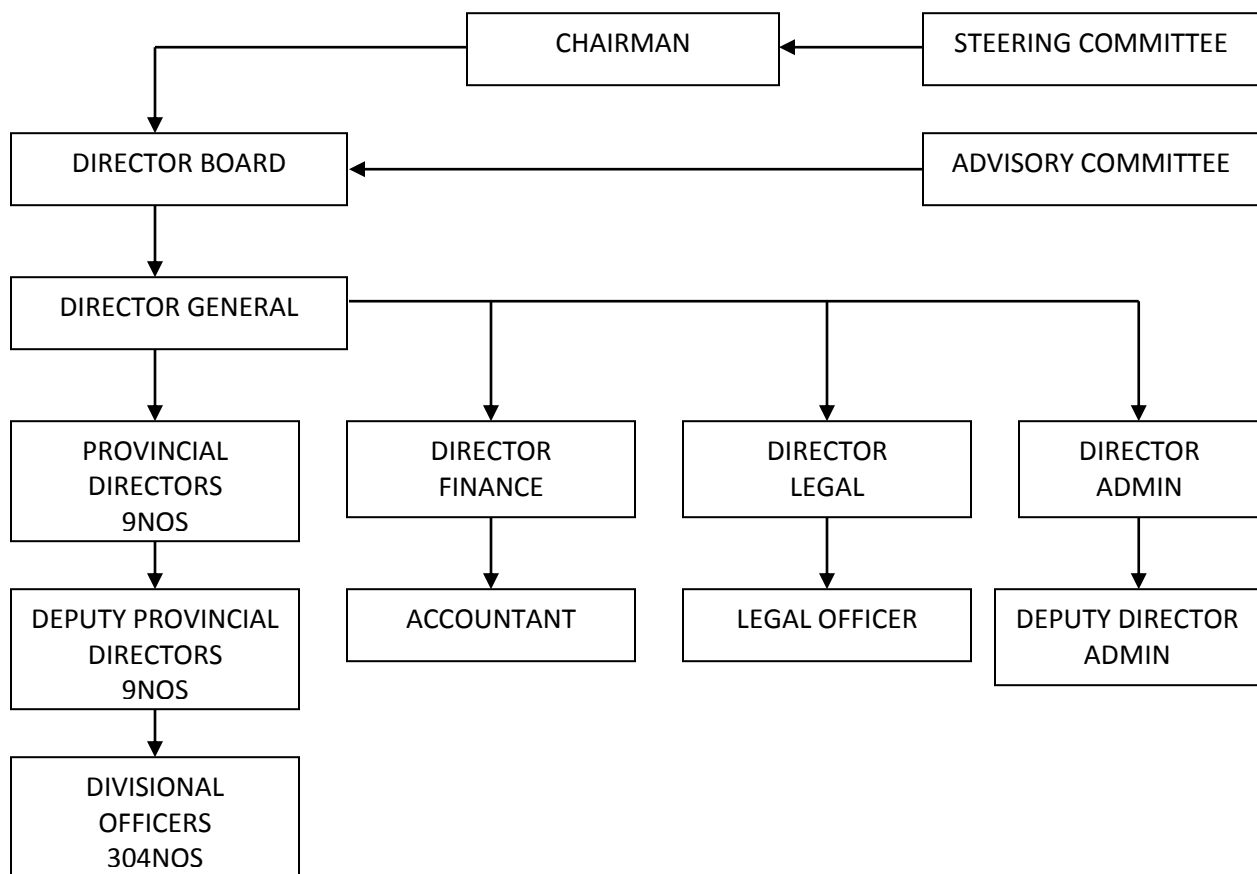
Conclusion

Considering the implementation of the national policy to eradicate drug menace from Sri Lanka it is observed that various government and Non- governmental organizations are involved in this regard. National Dangerous Drugs Control Board has taken some measures in the areas of training, guidance counseling and intervention, education & awareness, and information dissemination. Sri Lanka anti narcotic association is a Nongovernmental organization which functions against the drugs menace of Sri Lanka with the understanding of the need to break the vicious cycle of crime, poverty, poor education, and drug abuse. Apart from these organizations and institutions the Narcotic bureau of Sri lanka police and the Department of Excise also function against drugs specially towards freeing society from scourge of drugs. All these institutions launch their campaigns in order to mitigate the issue of the drugs in Sri Lanka in way of awareness programs, rehabilitation programs leading to take legal actions against drugs. But usage of psychoactive substances among the school children in highly increasing it can be identifying as risk factor.

Suggestions

In addition to abstinence of all psychoactive substances, treatment should focus on areas such as academic and vocational activities, vocational counseling, the environment and social relationships, as well as leisure activities, all of which are critical to the reestablishment of normal adolescent development. Strategies for the prevention are important.

Establishing an “Agency to protect School Children from substance abuse” is highly recommended.



Introducing a policy for Awareness programs and Introducing a Research Policy regarding Substance Abuse is necessary.

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