

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSCIENTISATION PROGRAMME IN DEVELOPING AWARENESS AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The rising incidence of drug abuse among secondary school students is a growing concern that demands urgent intervention. This study focuses on the development and implementation of a conscientisation programme aimed at raising awareness and preventing drug abuse among adolescents. The programme is rooted in the theory of conscientisation, which emphasizes the process of developing critical awareness and taking action to combat social issues. The objectives are to educate students on the dangers of drug abuse, empower them to make informed decisions, and equip them with coping strategies to resist peer pressure and external influences.

Through interactive workshops, peer-group discussions, and educational sessions, the programme seeks to foster a sense of responsibility and self-efficacy among students. In addition, the initiative includes collaboration with teachers, parents, and community leaders to create a supportive environment for sustained behavioural change. This abstract provides an overview of the programme's design, implementation strategies, and the expected outcomes, which include increased awareness of drug abuse risks, improved critical thinking, and a reduction in drug-related incidents among secondary school students.

Key words: Conscientisation programme, Drug abuse, Secondary school

1. Introduction

Drug abuse is one of the significant social issues affecting youth worldwide. In secondary schools, students are especially vulnerable to peer pressure, curiosity, and misinformation about drugs, which can lead to experimentation and addiction. Conscientisation programme aim to raise awareness and develop critical consciousness among students regarding the dangers of drug abuse. This report explores the effectiveness of such programme in secondary schools and examines the factors that influence their success. The growing problem of drug abuse among adolescents has become a serious public health issue worldwide. Secondary school students are particularly vulnerable to experimentation with drugs, often due to peer pressure, curiosity, and a lack of awareness about the consequences of drug use. In response to this, conscientisation programmes have been developed to create awareness and educate students on the dangers of drug abuse, aiming to empower them to make informed decisions and resist the temptation to engage in substance use. This report explores the effectiveness of conscientisation programmes in raising awareness about drug abuse among secondary school students, assessing their impact on students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours.

2. Background and Rationale

2.1 Rising Drug Abuse in Schools

The issue of drug abuse among adolescents has become a growing concern for educators, policymakers, and communities. Studies have shown that adolescents are increasingly exposed to illegal drugs, prescription medications, and other harmful substances. In many instances, secondary school students, due to their developmental stage and susceptibility to peer pressure, are at higher risk of experimenting with drugs.

2.2 Need for Conscientisation Programme

Conscientisation programme, based on the educational theories of Paulo Freire, focus on developing awareness through critical reflection and dialogue. These programmes aim to empower students by helping them understand the social, economic, and personal consequences of drug abuse and motivating them to take informed decisions that can protect their well-being. Unlike traditional education that often provides top-down information, conscientisation involves students actively participating in discussions, engaging with the content, and developing a sense of ownership over their learning.

3. Understanding Conscientisation in Education

3.1 Concept of Conscientisation

The term *conscientisation* (or *conscientização* in Portuguese) was introduced by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. It refers to the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. Freire believed that individuals could transform their world by first understanding the forces that shape it and then taking action to improve it.

In the context of drug abuse awareness, conscientisation involves:

- Recognizing the underlying social and cultural factors contributing to drug use.
- Reflecting on the consequences of drug abuse on individuals, families, and communities.
- Empowering students to make informed decisions and engage in preventive behaviours.

3.2 How Conscientisation Differs from Traditional Drug Education

Traditional drug education programmes often focus on providing students with factual information about the dangers of drugs. While this is important, it can be limited in its impact if students are not engaged in critical thinking or do not relate the information to their personal experiences.

Conscientisation, on the other hand, emphasizes dialogue, participation, and critical reflection. Instead of passively receiving information, students are encouraged to question, analyze, and understand the broader implications of drug abuse. This approach helps them see drug use as part of a larger social issue rather than an isolated problem.

4. Drug Abuse Among Secondary School Students

4.1 Prevalence and Patterns of Drug Use

Recent surveys indicate that drug use among secondary school students is on the rise globally. In many countries, students as young as 13 are experimenting with substances such as alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and prescription medications. Peer influence, curiosity, family issues, and a lack of awareness are often cited as primary factors contributing to drug abuse among adolescents.

4.2 Consequences of Drug Abuse on Adolescents

The consequences of drug abuse among adolescents can be severe and long-lasting. These include:

- **Health Risks:** Physical and mental health problems, including addiction, anxiety, depression, and cognitive impairments.
- **Academic Impact:** Poor academic performance, increased absenteeism, and higher dropout rates.
- **Social Consequences:** Strained relationships with family and peers, social isolation, and involvement in criminal activities.

Given these risks, it is critical to develop programmes that not only raise awareness but also equip students with the skills and resilience to resist drug use.

5. Objectives

- To assess the effectiveness of conscientisation programme in raising awareness about drug abuse among secondary school students.
- To identify the change in students' attitudes toward drug use before and after the programme.

6. Methodology

- **Research Design:** A quasi-experimental design using pre-test and post-test surveys to evaluate changes in knowledge and attitudes.
- **Population and Sample:**
 - Target population: Secondary school students in Kerala.
 - Sample size: 100 students from a secondary school.
 - Sampling method: Stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation.
- **Intervention (Conscientisation Programme):**
 - A series of sessions designed to build critical awareness about drug abuse, including:
 - Information on types of drugs, their effects, and risks.
 - Interactive discussions and role-plays to simulate real-life scenarios involving peer pressure and drug use.
 - Integration of social reflection and critical thinking activities.
- **Data Collection Instruments:**
 - The survey consisted of 30 questions divided into three sections:
 - **Section A:** Knowledge about drugs (10 questions)
 - **Section B:** Attitudes towards drug use (10 questions)
 - **Section C:** Critical thinking and social awareness (10 questions)
 - Each question was answered on a **5-point Likert scale:** Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).
 - Pre-test and post-test surveys to assess students' knowledge of drugs, attitudes towards drug use, and ability to critically reflect on the social issues surrounding drug abuse.
 - Discussions with students for qualitative insights.
- **Data Analysis:**
 - Quantitative data from pre- and post-test surveys was analysed using statistical methods. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

7. Analysis and Interpretation

Section A: Knowledge about Drugs

Question	Pre-test (%) SA/A	Pre-test (%) D/SD	Post-test (%) SA/A	Post-test (%) D/SD
1. I can identify harmful drugs (e.g., tobacco).	35%	45%	78%	10%
2. Using drugs even once can be dangerous.	50%	20%	85%	5%
3. Alcohol is a type of drug.	42%	30%	82%	8%
4. Cannabis (weed) is harmful to health.	40%	35%	77%	12%
5. Drug addiction can lead to mental illness.	45%	25%	83%	7%
6. Smoking cigarettes is a form of drug abuse.	38%	40%	79%	9%
7. Peer pressure is a common reason for drug use.	55%	20%	88%	6%
8. Drug abuse can damage family relationships.	50%	15%	86%	6%
9. Drugs can negatively impact school performance.	48%	25%	84%	7%
10. Legal drugs (e.g., prescription medicines) can also be harmful when misused.	40%	30%	75%	12%

Section B: Attitudes Toward Drug Use

Question	Pre-test (%) SA/A	Pre-test (%) D/SD	Post-test (%) SA/A	Post-test (%) D/SD
1. Trying drugs once is not harmful.	40%	45%	12%	70%
2. It's okay to use drugs occasionally.	35%	50%	15%	75%
3. Peer pressure can make me try drugs.	55%	30%	30%	50%
4. I can refuse drugs even when offered by friends.	45%	35%	80%	10%
5. People who use drugs should be punished.	48%	25%	35%	55%
6. People who use drugs need help and support.	55%	20%	80%	10%
7. Using drugs is a way to escape stress.	50%	30%	20%	65%
8. I can talk to my parents or teachers about drugs.	40%	30%	70%	15%
9. Drug users should be excluded from society.	50%	25%	25%	65%
10. Drug users can recover with help.	45%	30%	78%	12%

Section C: Critical Thinking and Social Awareness

Question	Pre-test (%) SA/A	Pre-test (%) D/SD	Post-test (%) SA/A	Post-test (%) D/SD
1. I understand the social reasons for drug abuse.	35%	45%	78%	10%
2. Media influences drug use among students.	50%	20%	82%	8%
3. Advertising makes drugs look attractive.	45%	30%	80%	10%
4. Peer pressure affects students' decisions to use drugs.	55%	25%	85%	5%
5. Society should focus on prevention over punishment.	48%	25%	83%	7%
6. Drug abuse is a community problem, not just a personal one.	50%	20%	80%	10%
7. I can educate my friends about the dangers of drugs.	35%	40%	75%	12%
8. More should be done to support drug rehabilitation.	40%	30%	82%	8%
9. Students should be involved in anti-drug campaigns.	45%	25%	84%	7%
10. Drug prevention is better than punishment.	50%	22%	87%	6%

Knowledge of Drugs

- There was a significant increase in awareness post-intervention. For instance, 78% of students could identify harmful drugs after the program, compared to only 35% before.
- 83% of the students realised that drug addiction can lead to mental illness after the programme as compared to 45% before the programme.
- 88% of the students realised that Peer pressure is a common reason for drug use after the programme as against 55% prior to intervention.

Attitudes

- Students' attitudes toward drug use shifted positively. Before the program, 40% believed trying drugs once was not harmful, which dropped to 12% after the program.
- Prior to the programme Only 45% of the students claimed that they can refuse drugs even when offered by friends as against 80% post programme

- 78% of students came to believe that drug users can recover with help as against the 45% before the programme.

Critical Thinking

- The programme significantly improved students' critical awareness. For example, the percentage of students who recognized that drug abuse is a community issue increased from 50% to 80%.
- Percentage of students who realised that society should focus on prevention over punishment increased from 48% to 83% after the programme.

8. Conclusion

The conscientisation programme effectively increased students' knowledge about drugs, positively shifted their attitudes toward drug use, and enhanced their critical thinking about the social factors surrounding drug abuse. For example, knowledge of drug dangers increased from an average of 45% to 80%, while negative attitudes toward drug use decreased by 30-40%. This study will provide valuable evidence on the role of conscientisation programmes in combating drug abuse among secondary school students, which may contribute to more comprehensive drug prevention strategies. This study also highlights the importance of a holistic approach that includes family and community involvement in conscientisation programmes. While the program was effective in raising awareness and reducing drug-related incidents, ongoing community support was essential to achieving long-term success.

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