

**PP 24****Does Sri Lanka Need to Reshape the Education for Substance Use Prevention in Schools?**

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**Background:** The age of instigating substance use has decreased globally and school children have become more vulnerable. This is attributed to the scantiness of knowledge regarding substance use and, its' consequences. School-based education for substance use prevention is appropriate and a convenient platform to access the vulnerable adolescence. Further, it will be instrumental in empowering school children against substance use.

**Objectives:** To assess the influence of school education on substance use among the residential rehabilitees.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 113 individuals with substance use disorder who are enrolled in government and non-governmental residential drug rehabilitation programmes. Participants were enrolled in the study using consecutive sampling. Data such as demographics, drug use, factors associated with drug use, were collected using an interviewer-administered questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics due to the descriptive nature of the study.

**Results:** Majority (97%) of the participants were males with the mean age of 27±6 years. All the participants were poly drug users with a mean duration of substance use of 7±5 years. Of the participants, 80% attended government schools and 51% educated up to ordinary levels, 28% up to advanced levels and 10% were graduates. Most (62%) of the participants did learn about substance use and its consequences at school and 89% attended Sunday/Dhamma (religious) school. The mean age of instigating substance use was 17±4 years.

**Conclusions:** Regardless of providing awareness regarding the substance use and its' consequences at schools and Sunday/Dhamma school, individuals instigating substance use at school age. This reveals the need of reshaping the school-based education for substance use prevention by both formal and informal health curricula.

**Keywords:** Education, Sri Lanka, Substance addiction, Young adults

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