

The Links between School Violence and Drug Usage in Schools: External or Internal Factor?

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ABSTRACT Drug abuse in schools is a global problem that poses a severe threat to the goal of establishing peace and democracy. Schools are not inaccessible fortresses, but rather relatively open spaces where children and adults, who are often vulnerable, play and work. This parallels our increasing concern about the extent and sources of drug abuse by learners. If schools and community can work together in fighting the distribution of drugs, the risks of drug abuse by learners will be reduced. The basic question concerning drugs in the schools is whether drugs are a reflection of community problems or are a function of the internal characteristics of the schools themselves. This article explores the sources of drugs in schools using data from six provinces in South Africa. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and observations. Purposive sampling of four schools in each province was used to select participants of the study. The findings to this study revealed five themes in relation to drug abuse at school, namely: types of drugs used by learners at school; corrective measures schools put in place; evidence of drugs and the relationship to violence; sources of drugs; and reasons for students' intake of drugs. The study recommends cooperation of stakeholders such as education leaders, the government, law enforcement agencies and community leaders to overcome drug abuse in schools.