

BMR Youth Research Unit on Gauteng youth's high drug, alcohol use

The Youth Research Unit (YRU) of the [Bureau of Market Research \(BMR\)](#) in the College of Economic and Management Sciences at Unisa has released its survey on the drug and alcohol use of Gauteng youth, as part of a schools community engagement research project.



The research, conducted at randomly selected secondary schools in Gauteng, saw 4346 learners from grades 8 to 12 participate in the study.

According to Antoinette Basson, YRU researcher, the study was motivated by the need for contemporary research information on drug and alcohol use among the youth, which remains a distressing matter and place an enormous burden on South African communities and society as a whole.

High usage

The research identified that learners often find themselves in an environment where illicit drugs and alcohol are easily accessible and used by their peers, which make resistance very difficult. Almost three in every 10 learners (26.9%) who participated in the study confirmed that they are using illicit drugs, of which cannabis (dagga) remains the most popular (95.4%), 79.4% students regularly consume alcohol of which the majority (66.6%) have been drunk and almost half (44.8%) had engaged in 'binge drinking'.

According to Basson, peer pressure and the desire to be socially accepted play a significant role in alcohol consumption among the youth.

The study shows that cigarette smoking and hubbly bubbly are becoming more popular among secondary school learners, especially among girls. Hubbly bubbly are often part of entertainment and not associated with the negative consequences of smoking tobacco products.

Attribute substance use to stress

Despite a high level of awareness of the risks and consequences associated with drug and alcohol abuse, the study shows that learners continue using these substances for stress relief and recreational purposes. According to Basson, it is

alarming that many learners, who participated in the study, attribute substance use to stress. This finding suggests that further information is required to provide young people with adequate support to deal with stress effectively.

The study confirmed that many learners (41.3%) are aware of various initiatives directed towards preventing drug and alcohol abuse among the youth. However, despite awareness of these initiatives, more than half of the learners (53.8%) indicated that they trust their parents for advice on drug use and alcohol consumption.

This finding emphasise the imperative role of parents and need amongst children to engage with their parents on the topic of substance use and abuse. According to Basson, it is anticipated that the research findings will provide relevant research information for the development of suitable prevention programs, which will address risks associated with drug and alcohol use and abuse among the youth.

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