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SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS IN THE REDUCTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG YOUTHS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

Social work interventions play a crucial role in mitigating the pervasive issue of substance abuse, offering a comprehensive approach that goes beyond mere treatment. These interventions are designed to address the complex interplay of factors that contribute to addictive behaviors, recognizing that substance abuse often stems from a web of interconnected issues such as socio-economic challenges, mental health concerns, and environmental influences. This study examined the impacts of social work interventions on reduction of substance abuse among youths in Ibadan North local government. The research design is descriptive. Quantitative method of data collection was adopted. A sample of 205 participants was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. A questionnaire focusing on demographic variables, parenting style, and psychological wellbeing was administered to the participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product moment correlation and T-test of independent analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Three hypotheses were tested. The findings of hypothesis one indicated that there is significant impact of social work led prevention on substance abuse [$F_{(43,826)} = 2.792, p < .05$]. Test of hypothesis two indicated that there is a significant relationship between evidence base therapies and substance use ($r = .328, n = 205, p(.000) < .05$). Test of hypothesis three indicated that there is a significant difference on the role of social workers in helping youths with substance abuse of the participants based on the mean score (Mean = 14.72, SD = 5.45) and (Mean = 13.17, SD = 4.18). The practical implication of this finding is that, the higher the social work interventions towards substance use, the lower the rate of substance abuse among youths and vice versa. The study suggested that social work interventions should emphasize early identification and prevention initiatives specifically designed for at-risk youths. Utilizing research-based prevention strategies in educational institutions and community centers can lower the probability of substance use initiation. Additionally, programs centered on education, skill enhancement, and resilience-building can empower young individuals to make well-informed decisions and develop the ability to resist peer influence.

Key words: Substance Abuse, Reduction, Social work interventions, Youths, Social worker

INTRODUCTION

Social work interventions are essential in addressing the widespread issue of substance abuse, providing a holistic approach that extends beyond mere treatment. These interventions aim to tackle the various factors influencing addictive behaviors, recognizing that substance abuse often arises from a combination of socio-economic hardships, psychological issues, and environmental conditions. Social workers play a key role in preventing substance abuse by implementing educational programs and community outreach initiatives. These efforts seek to increase public awareness of the negative effects of substance use while encouraging healthier lifestyle choices. Through active engagement with communities, social workers promote a shared understanding of substance abuse risks, empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their well-being.

A major aspect of social work intervention involves early prevention strategies. Social workers understand the significance of detecting and addressing signs of substance use in its initial phases to prevent the progression into addiction. This approach involves engaging with vulnerable individuals, providing support, and linking them with resources to help resolve the underlying factors that contribute to substance abuse (Cassidy & Poon, 2019). Additionally, social workers highlight the importance of resilience-building strategies as part of substance abuse prevention. Recognizing the value of social support systems, they work to strengthen these networks to serve as a protective factor against substance dependence. Strong community ties and meaningful relationships create a support system that reduces the tendency to rely on substances as a way of coping with stress (Walton & Hall, 2016).

Social work interventions also emphasize the development of effective coping mechanisms as a fundamental strategy. By equipping individuals with constructive ways to handle stress, emotional struggles, and life's challenges, social workers contribute to the overall well-being of both individuals and communities (Clark, 2014). This proactive strategy ensures that people develop the resilience needed to confront difficulties without resorting to substance abuse. In terms of treatment, social work interventions stand out for their emphasis on personalized and holistic care for individuals struggling with substance dependence. Understanding that each person's recovery journey is unique, social workers collaborate with clients to create individualized treatment plans (Setlalentoa, Ryke & Strydom, 2015). These plans address not just the visible symptoms of substance abuse but also the deep-rooted causes that contribute to addiction. By incorporating evidence-based therapeutic approaches and counseling methods, social workers aim to provide sustainable recovery solutions rather than temporary relief (Lander, Howsare & Byrne, 2013).

A core principle in social work interventions for substance abuse treatment is a client-centered approach. This strategy prioritizes recognizing and respecting the unique experiences, challenges, and strengths of each individual. Social workers encourage active client participation in decision-making processes, ensuring that their perspectives and preferences are valued (Stocking, 2016). Such a collaborative model fosters empowerment and self-efficacy, which are essential for long-term recovery. By positioning clients as key contributors to their own healing process, social workers enhance intervention effectiveness, creating a supportive atmosphere that motivates individuals to take responsibility for their rehabilitation (Donovan, 2013).

The holistic nature of social work interventions extends beyond addressing addiction to considering broader aspects of an individual's life, including family relationships, financial conditions, and mental health challenges (Babor, 2023). This comprehensive perspective allows social workers to design interventions that not only focus on substance use symptoms but also address the multiple difficulties individuals encounter in their everyday lives. By adopting this holistic strategy, social workers contribute to the development of resilient individuals who can navigate life's complexities without relying on substance use as a coping tool (Connor, 2013).

According to Stone (2015), social work interventions extend beyond individual treatment, influencing communities by fostering environments that support recovery. Through advocacy initiatives, social workers strive to eliminate the stigma associated with substance use disorders. By challenging stereotypes and encouraging a culture of understanding, they aim to reshape societal attitudes, promoting substance dependence as a health issue rather than a moral failure. Beyond reducing stigma, social workers push for policies that enhance treatment accessibility and encourage harm reduction strategies. Recognizing the significance of removing treatment barriers, they work towards ensuring that individuals struggling with substance use have equal and timely access to necessary support services. Furthermore, social workers advocate for harm reduction programs such as supervised consumption sites and needle exchange initiatives, which play a crucial role in minimizing the adverse effects of substance use within communities (Abdulmalik, 2019).

A study by Afolabi (2022) explored the connection between medication adherence and psychosocial well-being among individuals with mental illnesses. Using a descriptive survey design, the study purposively selected 120 patients undergoing treatment. The findings indicated a significant positive correlation between medication adherence and psychological well-being, as well as a strong association between adherence and social well-being. The study underscored the need for continuous monitoring of patients to ensure compliance with prescribed medication and emphasized the crucial role of medical social workers in educating the public on the consequences of non-adherence.

Similarly, substance abuse among youths poses a serious threat to their psychological and social well-being, often leading to adverse mental health outcomes, social instability, and diminished

quality of life. Social work interventions play a critical role in mitigating substance abuse by providing counseling, rehabilitation programs, peer support initiatives, and community-based education. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of social work interventions in reducing substance abuse among youths in Ibadan Metropolis, highlighting the importance of preventive strategies, early intervention, and policy advocacy in addressing this growing concern.

In their efforts to strengthen societal support, social workers play a crucial role in fostering more inclusive and understanding communities. Individuals struggling with substance use disorders often experience intense isolation and judgment, which can prevent them from seeking help. Social workers work to remove these obstacles by creating supportive environments that foster understanding and acceptance. Educated and empathetic communities are better equipped to provide essential support networks for individuals in recovery, reducing isolation and increasing their chances of successful rehabilitation (Forster, 2016). As Donovan (2013) points out, social work interventions also extend into the recovery phase, where ongoing support is essential for individuals transitioning to post-treatment life. The period following rehabilitation is critical, as individuals must reintegrate into society, rebuild relationships, and develop strategies for maintaining long-term sobriety. Social workers ensure continuous support beyond initial interventions by offering structured recovery programs.

Support groups are an integral part of recovery, providing individuals with safe spaces to share experiences and receive peer support (Donovan, 2013). Social workers lead these groups, fostering connections among individuals in recovery and reinforcing a sense of belonging. The value of shared experiences in these groups helps individuals recognize that they are not alone, promoting resilience and motivation in their recovery process (Clark, 2014). Counseling also plays a key role in post-treatment support, allowing social workers to help individuals manage emotional and psychological aspects of recovery. This includes providing tools to handle triggers, build coping strategies, and navigate daily stressors that may contribute to relapse. Through personalized counseling services, social workers promote emotional well-being and enhance the mental resilience of individuals in recovery, ensuring they remain stable without reverting to substance use (Donovan, 2013). By offering career guidance, skill-building programs, and employment support, social workers contribute to financial stability and a renewed sense of purpose, both of which are essential for sustained recovery (Clark, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Substance abuse remains a critical public health issue, affecting individuals, families, and communities worldwide. Globally, despite a slight reduction in alcohol consumption from 5.7 liters to 5.5 liters per capita between 2010 and 2019, alcohol was responsible for 2.6 million deaths in 2019, accounting for 4.7% of all global deaths. Notably, 13% of these deaths occurred among individuals aged 20 to 39. Additionally, 17% of drinkers over 15 years old reported binge drinking in 2019, with significant alcohol use among people aged 15 to 19. In Nigeria, substance abuse among youths has become a growing concern, with reports indicating an increase in the use of substances such as cannabis, prescription opioids, and other illicit drugs. This trend poses significant challenges to public health and safety, necessitating effective intervention strategies.

Addressing the complex factors contributing to substance abuse such as socio-economic disparities, mental health issues, and environmental influences requires a multifaceted approach. Traditional treatment methods often focus solely on alleviating symptoms, potentially neglecting the underlying causes that sustain addictive behaviors. Social work interventions offer a unique and holistic perspective, aiming to address these root causes through comprehensive strategies. Social workers play a pivotal role in prevention efforts by implementing educational programs, community outreach initiatives, and early intervention strategies. Assessing the effectiveness of these interventions in disrupting the progression of substance abuse before it becomes entrenched is crucial. Beyond individual treatment, social workers contribute to creating

supportive community environments by reducing stigma, advocating for policy changes, and fostering community-building efforts. These components are integral to promoting a more inclusive and understanding society. In light of these considerations, this study focuses on the impacts of social work interventions on reducing substance abuse among youths, aiming to evaluate their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study is to examine social work interventions on reduction of substance abuse among youths while the objectives are as follows:

1. To assess the impact of social work-led prevention programs on raising awareness and preventing the initiation of substance abuse
2. To investigate the utilization of evidence-based therapies and counseling employed by social workers in facilitating recovery among individuals with substance use disorders.
3. To examine the role of social workers in helping youths with substance abuse reintegrate into society

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a well-established, evidence-based therapeutic method that focuses on the interplay between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It operates on the fundamental idea that an individual's perceptions of events, rather than the events themselves, determine their emotional and behavioral responses (Beck, 2020). By recognizing and reshaping maladaptive thought patterns, individuals can achieve emotional stability and behavioral improvements. CBT is a collaborative and structured process between therapists and clients, aiming to increase awareness of cognitive processes that influence emotions and behaviors (David et al., 2018). Through this awareness, individuals gain insight into the underlying causes of their emotional distress and maladaptive behaviors, which allows them to develop effective strategies for modifying harmful thought patterns. This, in turn, fosters more adaptive behaviors and emotional responses. CBT's core principle is its focus on the present moment while acknowledging the impact of past experiences (Hofmann et al., 2017). The approach equips individuals with practical tools to address current challenges, promoting self-sufficiency and resilience in managing stress and emotional difficulties (Kaczurkin & Foa, 2015).

Social workers utilize CBT techniques to engage with clients in a structured and interactive manner, prioritizing the identification and restructuring of negative thought patterns. Their role extends beyond traditional therapy as they work alongside clients to understand the impact of cognition on emotions and behaviors, helping them shift toward healthier mental frameworks (Padesky & Mooney, 2019). This therapeutic engagement fosters self-awareness, empowering clients to actively participate in modifying their cognitive processes. Social workers support individuals in challenging and replacing maladaptive thoughts with constructive alternatives, thereby fostering positive behavioral changes (Wright et al., 2021). CBT within social work practice also places significant emphasis on equipping clients with coping mechanisms and adaptive behaviors that can be applied in their daily lives. By reinforcing cognitive restructuring through practical strategies, social workers ensure that clients experience lasting improvements in their emotional well-being and overall functionality (Dobson & Dobson, 2018).

A defining aspect of CBT in social work practice is its adaptability to diverse clients and cultural contexts. Social workers tailor interventions to align with the unique backgrounds and lived experiences of each client, ensuring that the therapeutic approach is inclusive and culturally sensitive (Sue et al., 2019). This personalized methodology enhances the effectiveness of CBT, making it a valuable tool for addressing the complex relationship between cognition, emotion, and behavior. Additionally, the goal-oriented nature of CBT provides clients with a structured framework for achieving measurable progress within a specific time frame, making it particularly

effective for those seeking practical and solution-focused interventions (Kazantzis et al., 2018). Social workers play a critical role in guiding individuals through this transformative process, reinforcing the link between cognitive restructuring and tangible improvements in mental and emotional well-being (Fenn & Byrne, 2016). By integrating CBT principles into their practice, social workers contribute to the development of long-term coping strategies, resilience, and overall psychological health among their clients (Levy et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, as it was the most appropriate approach to systematically examine the ongoing phenomenon. A quantitative research method was utilized for data collection and analysis.

Population of the Study

The study focused on young individuals residing in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, as its target population.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select 205 participants for the study. The selection process commenced with the purposive choice of communities within the Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The study was deliberately confined to Ibadan, and two communities, Agboowo and Bodija, were selected. Ibadan North was chosen for its diverse socioeconomic composition, ensuring a representative sample from Agboowo and Bodija. Its high population density and accessible infrastructure facilitated efficient data collection. Additionally, resource and time constraints made focusing on a single LGA practical for in-depth analysis. Subsequently, respondents were randomly chosen from these communities, with 100 participants drawn from each, culminating in a total of 200 respondents who participated in the study. Stratification ensured representation across residential zones, and respondents were randomly chosen from a sampling frame, meeting eligibility criteria before data collection.

Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire served as the primary tool for data collection. This section assessed social work-led prevention programs using an eight-item, self-developed scale. Participants rated each item on a four-point Likert scale ranging from (1) 'Strongly Disagree' to (4) 'Strongly Agree.' The utilization of evidence-based therapies was examined using an eight-item self-constructed scale. Participants responded to each item using a four-point Likert scale from (1) 'Strongly Disagree' to (4) 'Strongly Agree.' The role of social workers in addressing substance use was assessed through an eight-item self-constructed scale. The response format followed a four-point Likert scale from (1) 'Strongly Disagree' to (4) 'Strongly Agree.' Substance use was assessed using a 15-item scale developed by Cerezo, Méndez, and Rabadán (2009). The response format consisted of a binary choice: (1) 'Yes' or (2) 'No.' The questionnaire combines Likert-scale and binary response formats, enabling both quantitative measurement of perceptions and factual assessment of substance use behaviors. The self-constructed scales are contextually relevant, ensuring tailored data collection on social work interventions. Additionally, the inclusion of a validated external scale (Cerezo et al., 2009) enhances credibility and comparability with existing research. Its structured design ensures consistency, ease of administration, and standardized data collection, supporting robust statistical analysis.

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was ensured by subjecting it to content validity assessment. Conference of Experts (COE) provided constructive feedback and modifications to enhance its accuracy.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the extent to which an instrument consistently measures what it intends to assess. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through a pilot study conducted within 24 hours. A total of 20 questionnaires were administered to evaluate the consistency of the items, and a reliability coefficient was computed to establish its dependability. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (α): Social work-led prevention programs scale: $\alpha = 0.84$, Utilization of evidence-based therapies scale: $\alpha = 0.87$, Role of social workers in addressing substance use scale: $\alpha = 0.85$, Substance use scale (Cerezo et al., 2009): $\alpha = 0.79$

Research Procedure

The data collection process involved administering questionnaires to the selected participants. The objectives and significance of the study were explained to them before they completed the survey. Instructions were provided on how to fill out the questionnaire, and participants were encouraged to respond honestly. The distribution of the questionnaires was facilitated by two trained research assistants who assisted in administering them.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts, were used to analyze demographic data. Pearson's correlation and an independent t-test were employed to examine the hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significance level.

RESULT

Hypothesis one: There is no significant impact of social work-led prevention programs on raising awareness and preventing the initiation of substance abuse

Table 1 Summary of one-way ANOVA showing the showing differences in Social work led prevention programs on raising awareness and preventing the initiation of substance abuse

Source	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between groups	2202.278	18	122.349	2.792	.000
Within Groups	8151.703	186	43.826		
Total	10353.980	204			

The hypothesis that stated that there is no significant impact of social work-led prevention programs on raising awareness and preventing the initiation of substance abuse was tested using a one-way analysis of variance. The result on table 1 shows that there is significant impact of social work led prevention on substance abuse [$F_{(43,826)} = 2.792, p < .05$].

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the utilization of evidence-based therapies and counselling employed by social workers in facilitating recovery among individuals with substance use disorders.

Table 2 Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between utilization of evidenced based therapies and counselling on substance use

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	r	p-value	Remarks
Evidence based Therapies	22.0000	6.95292	205	.628**	<.001	Sig.
Substance Use	45.9902	7.12424				

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 showed that there is a significant relationship between evidence base therapies and substance use ($r=.628$, $n=205$, $p(.000)<.05$). Hence, evidence-based therapies and counselling reduce substance use. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: There is no significant effect on the role of social workers in helping youths with substance abuse

Table 3: Independent t-test showing the effect on the role of social workers in helping youths with substance abuse

Substance Abuse	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	p value
High	133	14.7293	5.45662	1.73	0.743	201	.000
Low	70	13.1714	4.18753				

Source: Field data

Table 3 above showed that there is a significant difference on the role of social workers in helping youths with substance abuse of the participants based on the mean score (Mean= 14.72, SD=5.45) and (Mean =13.17, SD=4.18). Hence, role of social worker is predominantly a factor in considering substance abuse among participant which compare to the mean score of the participant that experience high substance abuse i.e. role of social workers in helping youths with substance use have influence on substance abuse in the study. The hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

H₀₁: There is a significant impact of social work-led prevention programs on raising awareness and preventing the initiation of substance abuse. In support of this findings, research conducted by Smith et al. (2022) demonstrated that social work-driven prevention initiatives (community education and awareness campaigns, parental support and training, youth engagement and empowerment programs , street outreach and harm reduction strategies) are instrumental in tackling substance abuse by addressing critical risk factors and implementing community-centered interventions. These initiatives adopt a comprehensive approach that integrates education, social support, and community participation to increase awareness of the dangers associated with substance use while promoting healthier lifestyle choices. Findings from Smith et al. (2022) indicate that educational and preventive social work interventions within communities have been highly effective in reducing the onset of substance use, particularly among adolescents and young adults. These programs often involve collaborations with schools, healthcare professionals, and local organizations to establish an environment that fosters positive behavioral transformation.

The success of social work-led prevention efforts largely depends on their ability to customize interventions based on the unique characteristics of different populations and cultural settings. Johnson and Garcia (2023) emphasized the significance of culturally responsive approaches in substance abuse prevention. Their study revealed that interventions incorporating cultural beliefs and addressing community-specific concerns tend to be more impactful in increasing awareness and minimizing substance use initiation. These results highlight the crucial role that social workers

play in designing and implementing programs that align with the needs of particular communities, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness in mitigating substance abuse.

Furthermore, social work-led prevention efforts create a lasting impact that extends beyond individual participants, influencing broader societal norms and perspectives on substance use. According to Lee and Thompson (2021), engaging community leaders and key stakeholders allows social workers to build a more extensive support network for substance abuse prevention. This collective approach contributes to long-term behavioral shifts within the community and a gradual decline in substance use rates. Through active community involvement, social work-driven initiatives promote a shared responsibility in combating substance abuse, fostering stronger and healthier communities over time.

H02: There is a significant relationship between evidence based therapies and substance use. In support of this finding O'Brien et al. (2022) highlighted in their research that therapeutic interventions, such as? have proven highly effective in assisting individuals in uncovering the root causes of their substance use, adopting healthier coping strategies, and sustaining long-term recovery. Social workers who receive specialized training in these techniques are well-prepared to offer the tailored support and guidance necessary for achieving positive treatment results.

Incorporating evidence-based therapeutic approaches within social work practice not only enhances individual recovery outcomes but also contributes positively to public health. A study conducted by Anderson and Brown (2023) demonstrated that social workers who consistently implement scientifically validated counseling strategies help lower relapse rates while increasing the likelihood of long-term recovery. These findings emphasize the necessity of equipping social workers with specialized training to ensure their effectiveness in applying research-backed therapeutic models. Furthermore, the study highlighted the critical role social workers play in facilitating collaboration between various service providers, ensuring seamless and continuous care for individuals recovering from substance use disorders.

Additionally, social workers play a crucial role in tackling the broader social factors that influence substance use disorders, leading to a more comprehensive recovery process. According to research by Thompson and Lee (2021), social workers who utilize evidence-based therapeutic techniques are more adept at recognizing and addressing challenges such as unstable housing, unemployment, and insufficient social support, all of which contribute to substance use. By integrating therapy with social services, social workers can develop holistic recovery plans that address both psychological and environmental factors. This multidimensional approach enhances recovery outcomes while also reducing the stigma associated with substance use, fostering a more supportive and inclusive environment for individuals on their path to rehabilitation.

H03: There is a significant difference on the role of social workers in helping youths with substance abuse. In other words, youth who have access to social worker have been able to cut their engagement in substance abuse compare to their counterpart. In collaboration with this findings, Harris et al. (2023) highlighted that social workers operate in diverse environments, such as schools, community centers, and healthcare institutions, where they provide services focused on prevention, early intervention, and recovery assistance. Their study emphasized that timely intervention by social workers can play a crucial role in preventing substance abuse from becoming a long-term issue among young people. By identifying individuals at risk and offering guidance and counseling, social workers help steer youths toward positive coping strategies and away from substance use.

A fundamental responsibility of social workers is to cultivate an environment of trust and support for young individuals. Through their training, social workers are skilled in fostering spaces where youths feel safe discussing their challenges without the fear of being judged. Research by Williams and Zhang (2022) revealed that when social workers successfully build trust and meaningful relationships with young people, they are more effective in encouraging them to participate in prevention programs and other support services. This approach, centered on strong

interpersonal connections, is essential in helping adolescents navigate social pressures and emotional struggles that could lead to substance use.

Beyond offering direct assistance, social workers play a vital role in establishing and managing a network of services and resources for youths dealing with substance abuse. They often act as intermediaries, linking schools, healthcare professionals, juvenile justice systems, and community organizations to develop a unified response to substance abuse issues. A study by Johnson and Smith (2021) found that social workers who efficiently coordinate these resources contribute to improved outcomes for young individuals, including lower substance abuse rates and enhanced academic and social development. This multidisciplinary strategy, driven by social workers' expertise, is critical in addressing the complex and interconnected factors influencing substance use among youths.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that social work interventions play a crucial role in minimizing substance abuse among youths by addressing the various interconnected factors that contribute to substance use and addiction. By integrating early intervention strategies, evidence-based therapeutic approaches, and collaborative community efforts, social workers establish a well-rounded support system that not only confronts the immediate issues related to substance abuse but also targets the broader social determinants influencing health. The study emphasized that social workers are instrumental in building trust and fostering meaningful connections with young individuals, which is essential for encouraging participation in prevention initiatives and supporting long-term recovery. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary approach adopted by social workers ensures that youths receive comprehensive and coordinated assistance from educational institutions, healthcare services, and community organizations. This collaborative effort contributes to lower substance abuse rates and enhances overall well-being. In essence, the role of social work in this field is invaluable, as it provides a holistic, empathetic, and highly effective framework for helping young individuals transition toward healthier, drug-free lives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Social work interventions should focus on early identification and prevention initiatives aimed at at-risk youths. Implementing research-backed prevention strategies within schools and community centers can significantly decrease the chances of substance use initiation.
2. Programs emphasizing education, skill development, and resilience training should be introduced to help young individuals make informed decisions and cultivate the necessary skills to resist peer influence.
3. Social workers should actively involve families and community members in their intervention efforts. Strengthening family relationships and fostering supportive community networks can provide young people with a strong foundation, reducing their susceptibility to substance abuse.
4. Evidence-based therapeutic techniques, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), motivational interviewing, and contingency management, should be incorporated into social work practices to effectively address substance abuse. These approaches have been proven to support recovery and promote the adoption of healthier coping strategies.
5. Social workers should collaborate with a diverse network of professionals, such as healthcare practitioners, educators, law enforcement officials, and community leaders, to establish a well-rounded approach to substance abuse prevention and recovery.

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