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Urban and Rural Secondary
High School Students' Perceptions On Drug Awareness Programs

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Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	6
Problem Statement	7
Research Questions	10
Definitions of Terms or Concepts	11
The Purpose of the study	11
The Significance of the Study	11
Chapter 2. Literature Review	15
Factors Contributing to Drug Use among Adolescents	15
School-Based Drug Prevention Programs	18
Potential Gaps in the Literature Review	25
Chapter 3: Methodology	26
Research Methodology	27
Research Design	28
Trustworthiness	29
Target Population	31
Sampling Method and Sampling Size	31
Setting	32
Recruitment	32
Ethical consideration	32
Source of Data	32
Data Analysis	34
Data Reduction	34
Data Display	35
Conclusion and Verification	35
Posionality in Data Analysis	35
Study Limitations	36
Chapter 4. Findings	37
Theme 1: Rural and Urban Schools Practices on Drug Awareness	39
Sub-theme 1.1: Internal Support Practices	39
Sub-theme 1.2: External Support Practices	42
Theme 2: Students' definition of drugs	46
Sub-theme 2.1: Students' definition of drugs	46
Sub-theme 2.2: Source of information about drugs	47
Chapter 5. Conclusion	49
Chapter 6. End product. The workshop	51
References	53
Appendices	67

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1. Introduction

Drug addiction among adolescents is a major global problem, impacting millions of adolescents and posing serious threats to their health, academic performance, and future well-being. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), drug misuse among young people is associated with a variety of adverse consequences, including mental health issues, low academic attainment, and an increased likelihood of participating in hazardous activities (WHO, 2021). Peer pressure, stress, easy access to drugs, and a lack of awareness about the harms caused by drug use all contribute to the rising rate of drug use among teens throughout the world (UNODC, 2022).

Drug prevention and awareness programs are widely acknowledged in schools across the world as critical instruments for addressing the start of substance misuse among adolescents. Effective programs frequently incorporate educational materials initiatives, training exercises, and support structures to assist youngsters in resisting peer pressure and making informed health decisions (NIDA, 2021). Despite these efforts, many schools still face limited resources and uneven degrees of program implementation effectiveness (UNESCO, 2020).

The Azerbaijani government has recorded a steady increase in the number of registered drug users, while official numbers sometimes underestimate accurate levels. Experts believe that the actual quantity of drug users is greater than recorded, owing to many addicts' unwillingness to seek treatment or register with regulatory bodies (IWPR, 2011). Furthermore, the economic crisis in 2015, accompanied by a significant devaluation of the national currency, accelerated the problem. Unemployment and a lack of social support have led many people, especially in rural regions, to use drugs as a coping method (RFE/RL, 2023).

Azerbaijan's educational institutions play a critical role in addressing the problem. Schools are fundamental to the lives of adolescents' everyday life, thus they serve an important role in implementing drug awareness and prevention programs. However, the success rate of

these initiatives varies greatly across urban and regional schools. While some urban schools may have greater resources and external assistance, many rural educational institutions face obstacles such as restricted budget, a lack of educated people, and insufficient drug prevention education resources (Baku Research Institute, 2020).

This study seeks to investigate secondary high school students' perceptions and awareness of drug-related hazards in both urban and rural areas of Azerbaijan. It also seeks to evaluate the strategies employed by schools to promote drug awareness and prevention. Through qualitative research involving interviews with teachers, students, and administrators from various schools, this research will provide insights into the current state of drug awareness programs and their effectiveness in different settings.

Problem Statement

According to the World Drug Report issued by the United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime for 2023, the problem of drug addiction is one of the most difficult problems in modern world which leads to serious consequences for individuals and for any society. As per Global Organized Crime Index, disturbingly high level of drug abuse remains one of the central problems of Azerbaijan youth due to mainly the fact that the country became a transit route of drugs, especially synthetic drugs, trafficked out of Afghanistan and Iran, leading to rapidly increasing number of drug addicts in the country.

Thus, as per Report of the State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Combatting Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking, in 2022 Azerbaijan was on the rise by 24% of drug related crimes (sales, cultivation, trafficking) in comparison with 2021 (10,640 and 8,677 cases, respectively). Besides, referring to the report, there was a 20% increase in drug consumption among children between 16-18 years old in comparison with 2011 indicators. According to the publicly available recent official data from State Statistical Committee, in 2022 the number of crimes committed by children aged 14-17 concerning with illegal turnover of drugs and psychotropic substances has also increased by 20% compared to 2021 and 63%

compared to 2020 (Figure 1). However, due to the unavailability in accurate official data and low number of registered youths, the actual number is believed to be much higher (Farhadova, 2011; Khalilov, 2021).

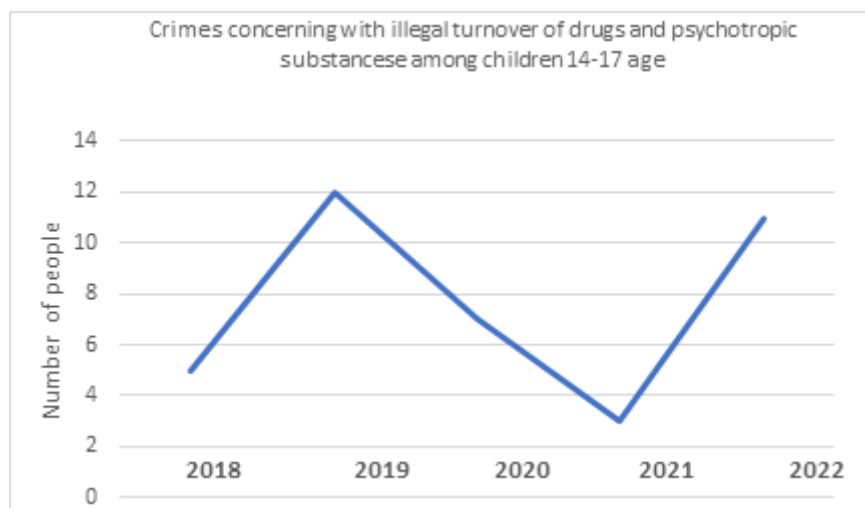


Figure 1

Moreover, the first experience with drug abuse starts in school age, thus more than 70% of drug addicts first tried drugs at the age of 15. In accordance with Figure 2, the youngest person registered at National Drug Centre in Azerbaijan is 14 years old (The State Statistical Committee, 2023).

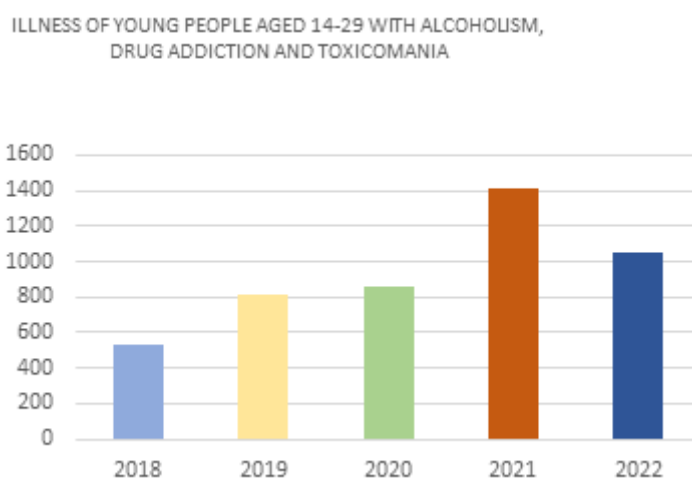


Figure 2

According to preliminary data collected at several public schools located in Baku and Ismayilli region we found out that there are problems with drug awareness among adolescents. We interviewed 2 teachers and 4 students from state and rural schools to identify the level of

awareness on risks associated with drug use. Most students do not have a necessary understanding about the risks of drug use.

As per our findings there were also some cases of drug offering to high schools' students indicating that drug is not limited to only out of school adolescents. Thus, one of the interviewed teachers related a story of a sixth grader who was approached by someone who tried to give him narcotics that were packed as sweets. The significance of drug awareness programs is shown by the alert student's prompt action and knowledge, which prevented possible damage. The interview event is consistent with research highlighting the value of early learning and how it helps children become capable decision-makers (Jones & Brown, 2018). The event highlights the necessity for specialized programs in rural schools that address the particular difficulties that students encounter (Brown & Green, 2019).

The use of drugs during adolescence period can lead to serious long term health problems (Kvillemo et al, 2021). There is a large bulk of sociological and clinical research which confirm that trying drug substances before the age 21 significantly raises the risk of drug dependence or addiction which can lead to brain abnormalities, slowed thinking, destructive behavior and memory issues (Anthony & Petronis, 1995; Bates,Trujillo 2021; [Graff, 2023](#); Schule et al, 2019).

Most researchers (Pyrkosch, et al, 2022; Jeynes, 2009; Rattermann, 2014) have found that long term drug abuse leads to neurocognitive deficit, aversively impacting students' academic performance.

Since children and adolescents spend most of their daytime at school, schools have become a favorable arena for reaching young people and promoting drug awareness initiatives. (Chatterjee et al, 2021). Schools in cooperation with Community of healthcare professionals could be an appropriate setting for addressing the issue of substance abuse among school-aged children before their beliefs and expectations of substance abuse were formulated (Faggiano et al, 2005).

Many countries in the world have already implemented national drug prevention programs. As an example, there is a large amount of published research works on implementation of school-based drug awareness programmes in western countries with documented scientific evidence of their impact (Tobler et al, 1997; Skara et al, 2003). In Turkey, during 2018-2019 academic year, drug awareness sessions were conducted for more than 9 million school students and 2.5 million parents (Yener, 2020), with proven significant positive impact on knowledge and emotional awareness of high school children about alcohol and drug addiction (Büyüköztürk et.al., 2019).

However, there are very few studies of the existence and effectiveness of drug awareness programmes for urban and rural high public schools' students in Azerbaijan. According to General Education Concept (National Curriculum) and the State Standards and Programmes (Curriculum) of General Education, no special mandatory programs on substance use prevention are available at secondary schools in Azerbaijan rather than general information about basic life skills stretched along the mandatory curriculum.

Considering the problem of drug abuse in Azerbaijan and especially among youth and increase in drug addiction rate this paper aims to explore the level of knowledge regarding drug abuse among students and the drug awareness programs at selected secondary schools in various cities of the country.

Research Questions

The research questions raised in the present study are:

1. What practices do urban and rural schools employ to promote drug awareness among secondary school students?
2. How do urban and rural secondary school students perceive drug use?

Definitions of Terms or Concepts

The term “*Urban and rural High secondary students*” can be described as adolescents who attend last phase of the secondary school grade 9-11 and usually aged between 14-17 years” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2023) living and studying in Baku and regions of Azerbaijan.

Substance or drug abuse is defined as “chronic debilitating disease with significant morbidity and mortality which affects individuals and their families” (Abdullahi et al, 2019).

According to the World Health Organisation report (2021) drug abuse is defined as a misuse of any substance in licit, volatile and illicit forms, causing harm to an individual. The term *drug* includes illegal drugs, prescription medicines, tobacco, alcohol etc.

Gafoor (2012) defined that *awareness*, as the level of consciousness, is “the state or ability to perceive, to feel, or to be conscious of events, objects, or sensory patterns”. *Drug awareness programs* can be described as various formal and informal educational policies, set of experiences, procedures and programs contributing to goals on preventing drug abuse.

The Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions and understanding of secondary high school students regarding the risks associated with drug use and to investigate the strategies employed by schools to promote drug awareness and prevention among high school students. Through qualitative research methods, this study aims to gain understanding of students’ perspectives on drug-related risks and school-based initiatives for drug education and prevention.

The Significance of the Study

The main objective is to prevent drug use, especially among teens and young people given the alarming rise in the prevalence of drug addiction. Research has shown the value of primary

preventive mental health programs in schools in reducing drug misuse problems in children and adolescents Durlak and Wells (1997).

- Raising Public Awareness: The effort aims to better inform the general public about the risks associated with drug addiction and its larger social effects. Program tries to address the high prevalence of drug usage among children and adolescents
- Academic Performance: Students who abuse drugs frequently see a reduction in their grades. The initiative intends to decrease this impact by creating support networks and increasing awareness inside educational institutions. Sudip Chatterjee et al., (2011)
- Early Intervention: When it comes to detecting adolescents who are at danger of using drugs, schools are typically the first port of call. Programs for drug education offer a platform for early intervention, helping kids before their substance usage problems worsen.
- Promoting Academic Success: Drug awareness programs aim to mitigate the detrimental effects of substance addiction on academic performance by helping students keep their attention on their academics.

The significance of the study on drug awareness programs in secondary schools in Azerbaijan can be framed within a broader context of the country's healthcare and social welfare system, which has faced slow progress since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Azerbaijan, while possessing substantial financial resources due to its oil wealth, significantly underfunds its healthcare system, a situation exacerbated by a lack of attention to healthcare issues (Sultan, 2021). Furthermore, drug policy in the country remains an under addressed area, echoing trends in the South Caucasus region. Notably, the research made by Sultan (2021) reveals a growing concern: the severe addiction to drugs predominantly afflicts those with limited resources, inadequate access to medical care, and insufficient knowledge of safe drug use. This underscores the urgent need for drug awareness programs in secondary schools as a means of preventing drug-related issues among vulnerable communities.

Moreover, there is a global trend of a decreasing age of drug users, and Azerbaijan is not exempt from this concern. Officially registered drug addiction cases number 18,000, but experts estimate the true figure to be substantially higher (Ministry of Health). The study made under UNESCO Moscow office's request (2007), also underscores the challenge of unavailability of accurate statistical data and underreporting of drug use among young people, particularly those in early adolescence. The age range of 14 to 17 is highlighted as a critical period, as those under 18 often fall into the criminal justice system, limiting their access to specialized services for children and minors (Zulfugarov et al., 2007). This gap in the system underlines the importance of implementing effective drug awareness programs in secondary schools to target this age group and address the root causes of drug-related issues.

In the global context, there is a concerning trend of decreasing the age of drug users, with the data indicating that young people are becoming involved with drugs at an earlier age. The report made by Zulfugarov et.al (2007), highlights that official figures on registered drug addicts do not reflect the actual prevalence of drug addiction in Azerbaijan, suggesting that the problem is more extensive than reported (Zulfugarov et al., 2007). Additionally, the country's geographical location as a transit route for drugs raises concerns about the ease of access to drugs, particularly among youth.

Lastly, this study's significance is heightened by the crucial role that schools play in children's lives. As Michelle (2019) underlines "schools provide a safe space for students, away from the influence of problematic family dynamics and drug-addicted peers". Teachers, therapists, and school administrators serve as mentors and role models to these children, making schools an ideal setting for effective drug prevention programs (Michelle, 2019). For many vulnerable children who lack a support system at home due to broken or dysfunctional families, the responsibility of guidance and protection falls heavily on the educational institutions. Thus, the emphasis should be on the urgency of implementing school-based drug prevention programs

as a means to deter drug-related experimentation among children while fostering a supportive and nurturing environment within schools.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Early drug use increases rapidly during adolescence and is connected with a range of adverse events. Therefore, there is a need for an increase in efforts to prevent the early substance among high school children. The aim of the present literature review is to increase the evidence base for drug awareness programs for high-school children drawing on global research and effective prevention programs and describe all possible factors that contribute to drug use among adolescents as well as the role of schools in these initiatives. Different obstacles, specific to urban and rural areas which can influence in different ways were discussed (Jones, 2018; White, 2019).

The present chapter is divided into separate sections. The first section reveals the main underlying factors of drug use among adolescents and their influence on children's behavior. The second section describes various of the most successful school-based drug awareness programs and their key characteristics. The conclusion part highlights gaps identified in the literature and the need for localized research directly addressing drug awareness programs in Azerbaijan, especially considering the distinctive urban and rural differences within the country.

Factors Contributing to Drug Use among Adolescents

Teenagers' perceptions of the risks associated with drugs differ depending on their upbringing, awareness level, and peer pressure (Johnson et al.; 2020 Smith et al., 2017). According to (Bierman et al. 2003, Griffin et al, 2011, Mayberry et al, 2009,) the start of drug use in children is influenced by multiple risk factors and their impact on behavior. They identified certain reasons for substance use among adolescents such as individual factors, role of families and environmental factors, particularly schools and communities which interact together and directly influence children's drug usage. These factors can be grouped into individual behaviors, family dynamics, and environmental influences, understanding of each is essential for

developing effective prevention strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating the risks before they lead to drug use among children and adolescents.

Individual Behaviors and Early Signs of Risk

Aggression or withdrawal in children can signal a higher susceptibility to drug abuse later in life. Problem behaviors can be seen in the interactions of withdrawn and aggressive boys with families, peers, and in social settings. These behaviors, if persistent, can lead to academic failure, early peer rejection, and later association with deviant peers, which are significant risks for drug abuse during adolescence. By age 14 or 15, children with inadequate academic performance and inappropriate social behavior between the ages of 7 and 9 are more inclined to engage in substance abuse (Bierman et al. 2003).

Family Dynamics and Developmental Risks

Risk factors impact children differently as they grow. Parental influence is among powerful and critical influences on substance use among children in modelling the substance use behavior (Barnes et al., 2000; Mayberry et al., 2009; J. Su et al 2014). This influence is directly linked by parental attitude towards drug use, their personal drug use experience, family conflicts, practicing supporting parenting, behavioral control and consistent and moderate discipline. (Barnes et al., 2000; Mayberry et al., 2009; J. Su et al 2014)

Without positive parental intervention, out-of-control aggressive behavior in early childhood can pose greater risks in the future. These risks may manifest as aggressive behavior in school, resulting in peer rejection, punishment by teachers, and academic failure. In the absence of effective intervention, these experiences can cause behaviors that directly expose a child to the risk of drug abuse, such as skipping school and associating with peers who use drugs. It is essential to intervene early in these risk paths to cultivate protective factors and mitigate risks well before problem behaviors emerge (Bierman et al. 2003).

Environmental Influences and Peer Associations.

Apart from the family, a child's relationships in schools, with peers, teachers, and in the community have a significant impact as risk factors. This encompasses inappropriate classroom behavior, academic failure, poor social coping skills, and association with peers exhibiting problem behaviors.

Thus, due to increased time spent with friends and tends to autonomy after certain age, especially during adolescence period, parents can have less impact on children's drug use in comparison with their peers. According to studies (Henry, 2008; Loke et al., 2013; Gardner & Steinberg, 2005) young people who have substance using peers around are at risk to drug abuse themselves. The most immediate risk for adolescents becomes their association with drug-abusing peers, which can lead to drug abuse and delinquent behavior. The availability of drugs, drug trafficking patterns, and societal attitudes towards drug abuse can also influence young people to start abusing drugs (Bierman et al. 2003).

Besides parental and peer roles in substance use among young people, schools represent an important and even a key factor here. According to Johnson et al, 2001, lack of students' attachment to school or how students value education, low school engagement are considered one of the important factors of students' risky behaviour. Students' poor school performance as a representation of a failure to meet social role expectations can lead to later drug use disorder (McLeod, 2012; Fothergill et al, 2008).

Recent years there has been a particular interest among scholars in comparing children's drug abuse in urban and rural contexts (Rhew& Hawkins et al, 2011; Hanson & Leilinth, 2009). Despite commonly accepted theory that urban youth is more vulnerable and prevalent to substance use than rural one and may be more exposed to drugs, for example, as a result of the nightlife in cities (Brown et al., 2019), recent studies showed a change in drug use patterns, particularly an increase in drug and alcohol prevalence among rural adolescents (Rhew& Hawkins et al., 2011; Hanson et al., 2009). Adolescents from different residential environment may be more or less vulnerable to drug abuse due to different levels of risks and protective

factors for drug use. Most researchers concluded that the drug abuse problem among rural children has been increased due to reduced access to education and treatment services, lack of community material and social resources (Hanson et al., 2009; Jacobson, 2004, Smith et al. 2017). Another reason is serious economic impact caused by decline in agricultural and manufacturing industries over past years (Tilley et al., 2014).

Analyzing these subtleties is essential in customizing drug awareness campaigns to the unique requirements of every demographic. Particularly, D. Tilley Scott and her colleagues (2014) highlighted the importance of considering not only urban but also rural settings in designing curriculum and interventions to meet different requirements and obstacles. Educators, especially in rural regions, should expose students to evidence-based practice and theories within a rural community context and design focused treatments that target socioeconomic and rural differences in drug knowledge (Anderson and Clark, 2018).

School-Based Drug Prevention Programs

Since one of the most effective and cost saving methods of combating substance use among children is prevention (D. Soole, 2008), here is what schools can do to be a part of this solution. Particularly, school-based programs aiming to prevent substance use were recognised as one of the most effective ways in reducing drug abuse among children (Giannotta et al., 2013). Most studies (Alarcó-Rosales et al., 2021; Su, J. et., 2009) find that schools can serve a protective tool against juvenile risk behaviours by taking active steps in engaging adolescents and approaching a large number of people and offering more systematic approach to these problems. The studies that were conducted by Botvin et al. (2007), offer a comprehensive examination of effective drug prevention programs in schools.

However, it's crucial to note that fear-based tactics alone, as identified by Botvin et al., (2007), may not be effective in bringing about behavioral change. Therefore, contemporary prevention programs now emphasize skill-building as a central component, focusing on

developing drug refusal skills, correcting expectations about substance use, and enhancing social and personal competence.

Earlier prevention initiatives in schools were primarily aimed at educating students about the hazards of drug use, often relying on fear-based tactics (Botvin et al., 2007). Nevertheless, studies have shown that merely sharing information does not lead to behavior change. In response to this contemporary prevention programs emphasize certain key characteristics to be effective (Botvin & Griffin, 2007):

The research identifies several key characteristics that make drug prevention programs effective:

1. Programs should be guided by a comprehensive framework that addresses multiple risk and protective factors.
2. The target age group and their life transitions should be considered when selecting information and activities.
3. Programs should focus on helping young people recognize and resist drug use pressures, in addition to offering personal and social skills training.
4. The use of interactive methods like role-playing and group activities boosts participation and skill acquisition.
5. Relevant language and content familiar to the target audience should be used in culturally sensitive programs.
6. Sufficient material and reinforcement are crucial for introducing and reinforcing concepts.
7. Effective program implementation hinges on comprehensive training for providers.

Effective prevention depends on having a thorough understanding of how students see and understand the hazards connected to drug use (Johnson & Smith, 2018; Brown, 2019).

According to School-Based Education for Drug Abuse Prevention (UNODC, 2003) there are several principles which should be considered in successful implementation of drug prevention programs:

Principle 1. The success of school-based teaching for the prevention of drug misuse depends on a focus on learning outcomes, environmental variables, and cooperative relationships.

Principle 2. Drug-related learning objectives have to be covered within the framework of the health curriculum or another relevant subject that may offer continuity, progression, and connections to other health-related concerns that have an influence on students' lives.

Principle 3. The atmosphere in schools should be favorable to reaching learning objectives and forming fruitful collaborations.

Principle 4. It is important to have cooperative alliances in order to make decisions.

Principle 5. Interactive learning and teaching are essential.

Principle 6. Drug misuse prevention education initiatives should be inclusive and flexible.

Principle 7. The efficacy and durability of drug abuse prevention programs are increased when instructors receive training in drug abuse prevention education.

Principle 8. Resources, tactics, and programs should be created to assist educators in achieving drug-related learning objectives and to enhance the school environment and culture over time.

Principle 9. Programs aimed at preventing drug misuse and their results should be routinely assessed in order to demonstrate their value and enhance the creation of new initiatives.

Principle 10. To get a good reaction, policies and procedures for handling drug-related situations at schools should be jointly created and extensively disseminated.

Bierman et al. (2003) highlighted the implementation of multiple programs in high schools to raise awareness about drug use and its consequences. The purpose of these programs is to target different areas of drug abuse prevention, which include developing life skills,

encouraging positive decision-making, and fostering stronger family connections. Additionally, the Preventing Drug Use among Children and Adolescents article highlighted a few noteworthy high school-based programs conducted in various countries, as mentioned by multiple researchers:

- ***Project ALERT Plus***

Project ALERT Plus is an improved version of the original program, implemented in USA and designed for high school students, particularly those in rural areas. The program involves interactive activities to establish and reinforce non-drug norms, develop strong personal convictions against drug use, and build resistance skills against pro-drug pressures. Also, it aims to prevent the initiation of substance use and decrease regular substance use among adolescents.

- ***Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E)***

D.A.R.E was founded in 1983 and became one of the successful educational programs implemented in thousands of schools in USA and other countries such as Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Philippines, United Kingdom, Bahrain, Thailand, and Brazil. The program has been recently renewed to “keeping it REAL” (Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave) becoming more interactive and including behavior-change techniques (Nordrum, 2014). It is intended to improve communication and decision-making skills via role playing scenarios and peer interaction. The focus of the program is addressing emotional and mental health topics, coping skills, risk assessment skills and support networks (Berry, 2022).

The flexibility of the content of this program and its reliance on the universal values contributed to the positive transference of its main concepts into the Russian system of school education implemented in various cities of Russia (Nikolaeva, 2016). This goes along with the fact that topics on prevention of drug use were officially integrated into the Federal State Educational Standards as components of community and individual health in primary grades, as

Biology, Basic of Life Safety and Physical training in middle and higher grades (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2009–2012).

- ***The international Strengthening Families Program***

The Iowa Strengthening Families Program, originally known as this program, implemented in 25 countries of Europe and in USA, is distinct because it includes both parents and 10-14 years old children in learning. The main aim of this educational program is to provide students with knowledge and tools to resist high risk behaviors. The program's focus is on strengthening family bonds and improving parenting skills to minimize the likelihood of substance use and behavioral problems in adolescents. It covers areas such as effective parenting strategies, building positive family relationships, and improving children's social and life skills (Berry, 2022).

- ***Addiction Prevention Training Program (APTP)***

This program has been implemented in Turkey and designed to increase knowledge and emotional awareness about drugs at the national level. It is a unique program which includes protective, preventive and constructive features. The program covers primary, middle and high school students and comprises five steps: Healthy living, Technology addiction, Tobacco addiction, Alcohol Addiction and Substance addiction (Türkiyə Bağımlılıqla Mücadilə Eğitim Programı). The program's main purpose was to serve as an action plan in fighting against substance use among children. Another purpose of the program was teaching trainers how to implement this program. The program has been integrated into National educational system of Turkey and implemented through Public Education Centers in various provinces (Büyüköztürk, 2019).

- ***Central Asia Drug Action Program (CAPAD).***

According to report from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022), in Central Asia in recent years young people used more drugs, than the previous generation. This fact was the crucial in implementing a substance use prevention program in Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in more than 100 schools addressed to parents mainly. The aim of the

program was to support the Central Asian governments in implementing drug related policies and strategies. The positive impact of the program was proved by subsequent evaluation (Chynbaeva et al, 2020).

Methods Used by Schools to Prevent and Raise Awareness About Drugs

A multimodal strategy that goes beyond conventional classroom instruction is required for effective prevention (Miller et al., 2023). The need for early intervention is emphasized by Carter et al. (2023) with the use of comprehensive school-based programs that include interactive workshops, peer mentorship, and community participation. These programs foster a safe space for candid conversation while simultaneously educating adolescents about the dangers of drugs. Hernandez et al. (2022).

Early intervention through school-based initiatives that include seminars, peer mentorship, and community participation is emphasized by Jones et al. (2018). These programs create a safe space for candid conversation while simultaneously educating children about the dangers of drugs (Smith et al, 2017).

Additionally, interactive digital platforms are an excellent way to convey drug awareness material, according to a thorough evaluation conducted by Harris et al. (2019). With the use of apps, online courses and other virtual tools, urban schools in particular have effectively incorporated technology into their preventative tactics.

Furthermore, the worldwide Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project of UNESCO emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate drug knowledge within the larger framework of holistic education. ESD emphasizes a holistic strategy that not only tackles the dangers of drug use but also helps pupils develop their critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and sense of social responsibility (UNESCO, 2018).

The need of integrating drug knowledge into more complete health education frameworks is underscored by UNESCO's comprehensive sexuality education recommendations. This comprises methods that support inclusiveness, age-appropriate content, and open communication

in order to provide students the capacity to make well-informed decisions about their wellbeing (UNESCO, 2020).

Conclusion

The literature review on “Urban and Rural Secondary High School Students’ Perceptions on Drug Awareness Programs” provides a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing drug use among adolescents and the effectiveness of school-based drug awareness programs. The risk of drug abuse among adolescents is significantly influenced by individual behavior, family dynamics, environmental factors, and peer associations. The review highlights the significance of early intervention and the implementation of comprehensive drug awareness programs in schools. Interactive and skill-based programs are essential in reducing drug abuse among high school students. A strong theoretical base, adequate program design, evidence-based and appropriate settings they are used will ensure the efficiency and success of drug education (C. Darcy, 2020). Martine Stead et al (2007) considers drug education can be consistently more successful in case of using highly interactive methods, including resistance skills, normative educational elements and social influences approaches. These programs take a comprehensive approach to preventing drug abuse in high schools by emphasizing skills, knowledge, and family support to guide adolescents away from substance abuse.

To effectively tackle the problem of substance abuse among adolescents, based on the observations and researched analysis, schools should implement comprehensive awareness programs that are multi-faceted, interactive, and skill-based, which will further diminish the level of drug abuse and usage among high school students.

Moreover, the review highlights the necessity for culturally sensitive programs customized for urban and rural students' specific needs. The participation of parents and the broader community is essential in these initiatives for an effective drug awareness strategy. The effectiveness of these programs is dependent not only on the content but also on the method of

delivery, with interactive digital platforms and holistic educational approaches being particularly effective.

Potential Gaps in the Literature Review

Despite the thoroughness of the review, there are notable gaps in the current literature. There is a lack of research on drug awareness among adolescents in Azerbaijan, especially when it comes to urban and rural differences. This gap points to the need for more localized studies that can provide insights into the unique challenges and needs of Azerbaijani students in both urban and rural settings. These studies are essential for comprehending the long-term impact and sustainability of these programs on adolescent behaviour. Currently, there is limited research on the impact of technology and digital media on drug awareness programs. To bridge this gap, it is crucial to integrate literature that specifically examines drug-related issues, awareness initiatives, and prevention strategies implemented in Azerbaijan's urban and rural secondary schools. In other words, addressing these gaps would provide overall a more comprehensive understanding of drug awareness education and its impact on adolescent drug use, particularly in the Azerbaijani context.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The study makes an in-depth analysis of importance of perceptions on drug awareness programs among urban and rural secondary high school students in Azerbaijan, in Baku, Lankaran and Shaki. This research is designed to trigger the awareness towards the increasing drug use among the adolescents, which has become a crucial issue causing the increase in the rate of the white death recently. Despite the fact that the literature review highlights the fact that the spread of the drug use is a hugely dependent on the multidisciplinary factors including the family relations, the atmosphere, the living conditions, and individual behavior, the role of the schools are highlighted as remarkably contributive in the process of establishing awareness about the side effects and hereby plays a preventive role in drug use among the students (Darcy, 2020).

The study analyzes the drug use in two main dimensions including urban and rural secondary high schools of Azerbaijan. The primary goal of the study is to analyze the extent of the perception of the threats generated by the drug use in urban and rural secondary high schools, along with assessing strategies and policies held in the institutional level to combat against the spread of the bad habits among students. In this regard, two following research questions are formulated as the vital standpoint of the study to be further responded:

1. What practices do urban and rural schools employ to promote drug awareness among secondary school students?

2. How do urban and rural secondary school students perceive drug use?

Based on the recent investigations as discussed in literature review, both rural and urban school students are exposed to the risk of drug use and to become vulnerable due to the multifaceted factors such as the time spent with peers, family dynamics, and availability of the social and psychological school services (Darcy, 2020). However, in the context of having a

relatively higher awareness and perception of the life-changing threats of drug use, it is hypothesized that the urban schools are more inclined to take preventive measures. Nonetheless, due to the research gap of the shortage of the studies on the urban and rural schools' drug policies, the following data analysis is aimed to provide more precise conclusions.

Research Methodology

The study implies a qualitative research methodology, through which the main in-depth analysis of the drug awareness perceptions in the urban and rural secondary high schools of Azerbaijan is made by referring primary data. The data collected through interviews, and survey. Namely, the spread of drug use among adolescents is a social and psychological issue, which covers the individual features, social habits, behaviors, and interactions, which can be analyzed in a more detailed and multifaceted way by maintaining qualitative research methodology (Creswell, 2013; Dodgson, 2017). In this regard, throughout the qualitative data collection, the collected data will provide evaluation of the social perceptions about the drug use among rural and urban schools' adolescents, along with assessing to the professional interpretation by the school principals and teachers, which will provide balanced evaluation of the existing conditions.

Considering the fact that the research study gives a room for the evaluation of the existing conditions about the drug use among adolescents in Azerbaijani rural and urban schools, the interpretivism paradigm is maintained in this study. Indeed, the interpretivist paradigm draws attention to reality as a socially constructed phenomenon, which enables the intersubjective interpretivism over reality, which is remarkably defined by the social factors (Potrac et al., 2014). Moreover, the research is implemented by relying on the inductive reasoning, which is in track of following steps in an order, including host setting, formulating the relevant hypotheses, observing and monitoring, and lastly drawing the conclusions, as defined by Schaeken et al. (2000).

Research Design

As a research design, the research study maintains descriptive and case study design in a combined way, which best corresponds to the two main research questions that are primarily set, and hereinto will provide a comprehensive explanation to the reader. Indeed, descriptive research design enables the evaluation of the existing condition of the relevant phenomenon or situation (Dulock, 1993). On the other hand, case study design enables an in-depths assessment of any issue or phenomenon with particularly focusing on its dynamics in the real-world context (Hancock et al., 2021). Hancock et al. (2021) mention the main stages of the case study research design which include identifying the case, investigating the main problems thoroughly, and making a comprehensive evaluation upon the existing problematic factors.

Considering the fact that the first research question mainly focuses on the extent of perceptions about the drug use among the students of urban and rural secondary high schools of Azerbaijan, it is aimed to collect the survey results which will be descriptive in nature, reflecting the existing perceptions about the phenomenon. On the other hand, the case study design is applied due to the motive to explore and assess the real-life practices of Azerbaijani high schools in both urban and rural areas regarding their initiatives, policies, and plans that promote awareness-raising about the risks associated with the drug use among the students. The phenomenon of interest is to assess the varying practices of the high schools of rural and urban areas of Azerbaijan regarding the strategies that they implement to promote the awareness about the drug use among students, along with evaluating the perceptions of the students about the drug-related life threats in both areas.

Trustworthiness

The high trustworthiness rate is intended in the overall research process, in order to ensure that the final findings are reflecting the reality and truth and is relevant to and reflective of the real-life practices in an authentic, objective, and reliable way (Gunavan,2015; Loh, 2013). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the main elements which comprehensively define the level of the trustworthiness of any qualitative research (Kyngäs,2020).

The credibility of qualitative research ensures that the findings of the study are valid and credible and represent reality in an unbiased and objective way (Cope, 2014). In order to ensure the credibility, it is essential to provide detailed description of the context, clearly define the tools and methodology, regularly organize peer debriefings and meetings, and refer to the multiple reliable sources, which altogether provide the data which optimally reflects the reality (Cope, 2014; Loh, 2013). In this study, credibility factor is successfully met, considering the fact that variety of the reliable sources are implied in the literature, constant team meetings are organized, which enables to share the perspectives on varying interpretations, along with clear definition of the tools, research design and methodology which are implemented throughout the research process.

The dependability of the research reflects the fact that the research topic has been investigated by several authors, the findings of which provide commonly consistent evidence (Kyngäs,2020). Hereinto, the peer-reviewed scholarly articles and the documents which are referred in the literature review section provide the commonly justifiable findings, which highlights the fact that the use of drug among high school students in rural and urban schools are dependent on the multidimensional factors such as family dynamics, environmental factors, and individual behavior (Darcy, 2020). Thus, considering the fact that there is no clash of perspectives or evidence, it is possible to claim that the study meets the dependability criteria.

Transferability is essential for maintaining the trustworthy research, which focuses on the applicability of the findings of the research in the general context, which is supposed to be replicable and relevant in similar or other contexts (Kyngäs,2020). Considering the fact that in this study there is a research gap on the availability of the data that reflects the Azerbaijani case of the awareness strategies of urban and rural schools about drug use along with the perspectives of the students, the role of interview findings is undeniably crucial to be able to draw a trustworthy conclusion that can be generalized to overall Azerbaijani context. In this study purposeful random sampling is implied for the interview process, and the number of schools for the interview process is 6 by having 2 from urban and 3 from rural areas. However, having overall 5 schools in which interviews will be held might raise the threats about the transferability criteria, due to the fact that making overall interpretation of Azerbaijani case based on the findings from five schools might lack replicability. This threat is aimed to be included in the limitations section of the paper, through which the future researchers and scholars are recommended to increase the sampling size and area to enhance the transferability rate.

Lastly, confirmability is the other crucial criteria for trustworthiness, which aims to ensure that the findings are objectively and neutrally attained, without leaving room for biased, partial, and subjective intentions (Kyngäs,2020). Despite the fact that interpretivist paradigm is maintained in the research, which enables the interpretation by the authors of the specific social contexts, that interpretation in such sensitive topic of drug use among adolescents are remarkably avoided by objectively focusing on the vital standpoint of the study, which aims at promoting awareness and fighting against the drug use among students of both rural and urban schools of Azerbaijan.

Member checking is maintained as a primary strategy to gain trustworthiness in the research, through which the aforementioned 4 core elements can be well-attained, altogether increasing the reliability and validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). By regularly organized team meetings, review and discussion over the interview questions and transcripts, fostering an open

communication between the team members, and engaging each author in the validation process through the accurate and authentic interpretation of the data are the essence of the member checking process, as asserted by Creswell (2013), which are priorly implemented in the research process. In order to ensure the credibility, it is essential to provide detailed description of the context, clearly define the tools and methodology, regularly organize peer debriefings and meetings as a part of member checking process, and refer to the multiple reliable sources, which altogether provide the data which optimally reflects the reality (Cope, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Loh, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Target Population

According to Michael (2022) under a target population all members who meet the criteria specified for research investigations are meant. The author further states that the target population is a part of population whose characteristics are within investigator's interest (Michael 2022). The population of this study will be high school students of 9-11 grades, secondary school teachers and administrators from urban and rural schools.

Sampling Method and Sampling Size

Sampling is the process or technique of selecting an appropriate or suitable part of the population to determine the characteristics of the whole population (Saumya et al, 2017). In our study the sample identified is 9-11 grade students from urban and rural public schools since the adolescence period is vulnerable period for drug abuse (Gray et al, 2018). Teachers and school administrators from urban and rural schools are within our sampling.

According to (Taherdoost,2016), when probability or random sampling is used each element of the population has equal rights to be selected. Stratified sampling assumes that the population is divided into subgroups or strata and a random sampling is used for each group (Taherdoost,2016). For our research we sorted the population into two strata based on location: urban and rural. This type of sampling best surveys the purpose of our study - provides

opportunity to obtain a sample population which best represents the whole population being studied, assuring that each subgroup of interest is represented.

We used the convenience sampling strategy in school selection considering easy accessibility and willingness to participate (Bernard, 2002). Thus, we selected schools based on the existing relationships with researchers and more open and willing to participate in the study.

Totally for our study we will take survey with more than 90 high school students, three teachers, six school administrators from two urban and four rural schools.

Setting

The setting of the study will be two urban secondary schools located in Baku and four secondary schools located in regions of Azerbaijan.

Recruitment

After identifying and selecting study participants, we will obtain permissions of the participants to be interviewed. Moreover, we will obtain consent form the parents of high school students.

Ethical consideration

Mirza (2023) states that ethics assumes responsibilities of researchers towards participants, society and academical community. According to the author, whenever we conduct research on people, the participants' well-being should be our top priority. (p. 441-449).

Since our topic is sensitive and part of our population are the underaged we will ensure the protection of identity of all research participants. School administrators, teachers and parents will be provided various forms of consent data, also they will be informed about the content of the interview, about their rights and information how their responses will be used.

Source of Data

Interview with teachers and principals and student survey was our primary source of data and the main pillar of our qualitative investigation. Within qualitative research, interview, survey are essential for investigating participants' experiences, perspectives, and insights due to the prevalence of subjectivity and subtlety (Breakwall), 2012

We utilized a semi-structured interviewing technique, which we have selected to blend the focus of structured interviews with the flexibility of unstructured ones. With this approach, participants may freely express themselves, and subjects can be explored with purpose, all while ensuring that important themes and study objectives are covered methodically.

The semi-structured approach offered an engaging platform for free-flowing discussion, enabling participants to expound on their answers, exchange distinct viewpoints, and participate in the collaborative creation of knowledge. In keeping with the model of qualitative research, this deliberate flexibility emphasized the importance of participant voices in influencing the richness and depth of the data.

By means of the sophisticated application of semi-structured interviews, we wanted to reveal complex stories that go beyond superficial revelations and offer deep comprehension of the many levels of our investigation. This methodological decision demonstrates our dedication to preserving the rigor necessary for qualitative research projects while reflecting the richness of participants' lived experiences.

In the present study a cross sectional survey was used to collect information from high school students from rural and urban schools. According to Creswell (2014), the aim of the survey is to identify the current beliefs, experiences and perceptions of students. Thus, our survey was aimed to examine students perception about drugs, the level of their awareness and source of the information about drugs. The survey consisted of both open ended and closed ended questions.

The purpose of the study was explained by one of the researchers to students and teachers. After sending the consent form to parents via whatsapp chat and obtaining the positive response, we invited them to participate in the survey. We distributed the link to the survey questions via

emails and whatsapp groups among one hundred thirty parents and students of nine, ten and eleven grades in two urban and four rural schools. Ninety eight students participated in our survey.

The questions were designed in Azerbaijani language since the majority of students' native language was that language.

Data Analysis

The data constructed by the social scientist is pre-interpreted, making the data “constructs of constructs”, denying the existence of “brute facts” but accepting the relativity of interpretation (Soeffner, 2004, p. 96, 98). While trying to understand the interpretation of other people, the researcher has to question how s/he understands this certain phenomenon (Reichertz, 2004). The researcher's own understanding is of great importance in capturing the picture of a certain phenomenon from the other person's point of view, however, this understanding of them is not stable and can change from time to time related to the nature of their discourse (Kerdeman, 2015).

This research project reflect the data analysis approaches presented by Miles & Huberman (1994). As stated by Miles and Huberman, our qualitative data analysis will consist of three broad stages: 1) data reduction 2) data display and 3) conclusion and verification.

Data Reduction

At the first stage, the data will be collected, analyzed, selected, transcribed and, summarised by preserving “the quality of qualitative data” (Cohen et al., 2007). The audio recordings of the interviews will be transcribed and transcripts of interviews will be coded. Transcripts will be sent to the participants to make sure they agree with the content of the transcribed interview and make corrections if necessary. Survey responses will be analysed through Google Doc tool. Though it is the first step in commencing data analysis, it continues till the end of the research as we will continuously refine the data.

Data Display

After getting respondents' agreement, three stages of coding will be applied to code for "meanings, feelings, actions, events" (Cohen et al., 2007). First, initial codes and categories within the same data will be determined that can be recoded later as the research analysis progress. The second step is axial coding where we will be searching for the relationships between categories. During the third stage, the main codes and categories will be selected that are deemed appropriate to contribute to answering the research questions (Cohen et al., 2007).

Data display is an organized form of information that can be presented in its "immediately accessible" form. Different forms of data visualization form including graphs, diagrams, charts, etc. will be utilized.

Conclusion and Verification

The final stage is drawing a conclusion when we will be ready to present "regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions ... confirmability" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Though presented as different parts, three flows of data analysis are interwoven and will continuously influence one another.

Positionality in Data Analysis

In the process of collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data, positionality in data analysis refers to the researcher's personal position, biases, viewpoints, and social context being acknowledged and taken into account. It acknowledges that each researcher or interviewee has a different background, set of experiences, and set of values that they bring to the research process. These factors might have an impact on how the data is approached and interpreted.

Study Limitations

The non-exhaustive coverage of all schools in this research is an inherent restriction because not all educational institutions could be included due to practical issues. Moreover, interviewing teachers one at a time presents the possibility that the depth of each teacher's perspective would not be adequately captured in a single interview. Due to the diversity of urban instructors, conducting online interviews may provide difficulties in establishing a private and friendly setting, which might affect the candidness and depth of replies. This restriction highlights the necessity of using caution when interpreting data and extrapolating conclusions to a larger group.

Social desirability bias is another limitation of our study which assumes that participants provided responses that are socially desirable feeling fear for judgement or stigma associated with drugs rather than their own true perceptions.

Ethical constraints were about the limitation of our ability to explore certain aspects of students' drug perceptions, since it involves sensitive topics.

Outdated formal statistics data on drug use also affected the study context.

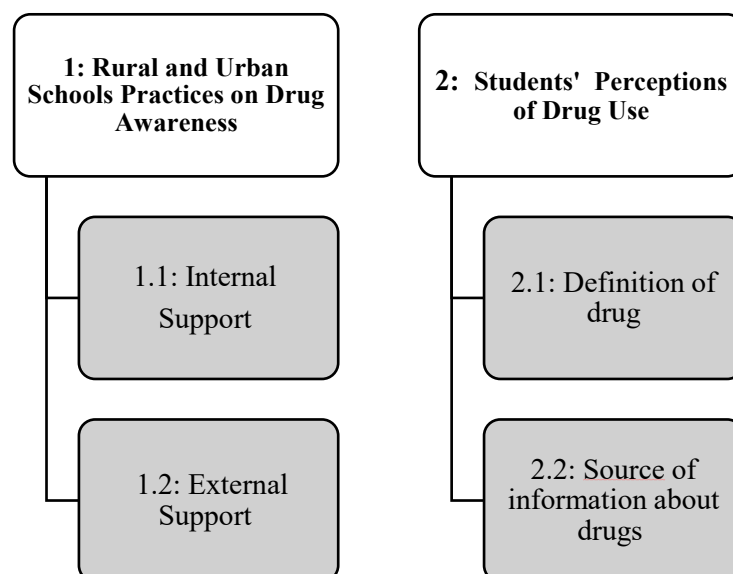
Chapter 4. Findings

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of high school students regarding the risks associated with drug use and to investigate the strategies employed by schools to promote drug awareness and prevention among high school students. In particular, the research focused on practices employed by urban and rural schools for drug awareness and the perceptions of drug use among secondary school students in these settings. The study is guided by two research questions:

1. What practices do urban and rural schools employ to promote drug awareness among secondary school students?

2. How do urban and rural secondary school students perceive drug use?

To answer these questions a semi-structured interview was conducted with 6 principals and six teachers from three rural and three urban schools. Also, a survey on perceptions and attitudes towards drug use among 98 high school students was conducted. After member checking and triangulation of the interview and survey data, the findings are presented in five themes as follows:



Demographic Characteristics of interview participants (principals)

Overall, six principals were interviewed: four of them represented rural schools while two were from urban schools. One of the interviewed principals was male, while others were females (Table 1).

Demographic Characteristics of interview participants (teachers):

Overall, seven teachers were interviewed: five of them represented rural schools while two were from urban schools. One of the interviewed teachers was male, while others were females (Table 1).

Demographic Characteristics of Survey participants (students)

Total number of high school students participated in the survey is 98, 44 male and 54 female students (Table 1). 39 students were from 9th grade, 38 students from 10 and 21 from 11th grades.

Table:

Participants	Forms of data collection	Gender of participants		Location of participants	
		Male	Female	Rural	Urban
Principals	Semi structured interview	1	4	3	2
Teachers	Semi structured interview	1	6	5	2
Students	Survey	44	54	48	50

Theme 1: Rural and Urban Schools Practices on Drug Awareness

Sub-theme 1.1: Internal Support Practices

Respondents	Rural Schools	Urban Schools
Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing curriculum gaps. - Limited resources availability for internal initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing curriculum gaps. - Better resource availability for internal initiatives.
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited curriculum coverage - One school conducting infrequent, small-scale additional sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited curriculum coverage - One school conducting regular additional sessions
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 62% cannot recall drug related lessons in «Həyat Bilgisi». 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 42% cannot recall drug related lessons in «Həyat Bilgisi».

Sub-theme 1.1: Internal Support (Principals)

Findings indicate that the depth and scope of themes connected to drugs in the curriculum provide difficulties for both rural and urban schools. All rural school principals agreed that the existing materials provide very little depth, leaving students unprepared to comprehend or deal with drug-related issues in an effective manner.

In urban schools principals stated that they try to use internal school resources and innovative technologies during “Həyat Bilgisi” lessons. Thus, the use of powerpoint slide shows, some additional videos from internet helps to make lessons more attractive for students and contribute to their attention to this topic “...mən bizim müəllimlərlə danışarkən məsləhət görürəm ki, onlar dərslərdə müxtəlif slaydlar göstərsinlər, video çarxlar tapıb dərslər vaxtı göstərsinlər şagirdlərə. Və biz nəticədə görürük ki, belə interaktiv dərslər çox maraqlı olur şagirdlərə”. *(When talking with our teachers, I recommend that they show different slides in classes, find video clips and show them to students during class. And as a result, we see that such interactive lessons are very interesting for students.)*

However, almost all principals in rural and one principal in urban school expressed concern to raise drug topics in schools. “Bu mövzunu qaldırmaq "dəliyə daş atmaq" kimidir” (*Raising this topic is like "throwing a stone into a hole*).

Sub-theme 1.1: Internal Support (Teachers)

To identify what practices urban and rural schools employ to promote drug awareness among secondary school students, we asked teachers who teach “Həyat Bilgisi” class whether the topics covered in that book can raise the students’ awareness on the threads of drug. Many teachers reported that while national textbooks do mention drug-related issues, the coverage is superficial and limited. There is a general sense among teachers that current curriculum materials do not adequately equip students with the necessary knowledge or skills to fully understand or combat drug-related issues. One of the teachers noted that “Orada o səviyyədə yazılır ki, uşaqların çoxu başqa mənbələrdən məlumatlı olurlar. Yəni, sadəcə olaraq, az bir qism belə deyərdim, çox az məlumat verilir” (*It is written there that most children get information from other sources. That is, I would say only a small part, very little information is given in the textbook*) which shows that very little information is provided to students. Hence, it is possible to notice that there is a gap between the curriculum content and the practical understanding of risks associated with drug use needed by students.

When we asked what additional projects and events aimed at increasing drug awareness among students have been implemented by schools only one urban and one rural school have implemented specific events aimed at increasing drug awareness among students. Particularly, it is possible to mention presentations, discussions and interactive sessions. For instance, according to one of the teachers, “Tədbir dedikdə məktəb psixoloqu ilə birlikdə müəyyən görüşlər təşkil edirik, məlumat verici slaydlar göstəririk, video çarxlar göstəririk”. (*When we say an event, we organize certain meetings together with the school psychologist, show informative slides, and show videos*). Regarding the frequency of these events, one urban school holds them regularly,

while other rural one organizes them less frequently depending on available resources and external support.

Besides, it should be noted that teachers predominantly use video clips and slideshows to illustrate the effects and dangers associated with drug use. One teacher mentioned, “Video çarxlar, internet saytları ola bilər ki, nümayiş elətdirmək üçün əla vasitədir”. (*Videos, websites can be a great way to make a show*).

Meanwhile, most of the teachers expressed a shared belief that such initiatives are necessary and could be beneficial for both students and teachers.

Sub-theme 1.1: Internal Support (Students)

In order to respond to the research question students were asked: “*Do you remember the topics covered in your “Həyat Bilgisi” class? If yes, please share the topic names below.*”

The major finding for this question was that a higher percentage of rural students (62%) compared to urban students (42%) cannot recall information they were taught during these lessons. Moreover, a slightly higher percentage of rural students (16%) compared to urban students (15%) mentioned drug related topics. The following topics of the subjects are extracted from students’ responses on what topics they remember from the lesson (Table 1)

Students’ response on topics they remember from the “Həyat bilgisi” lesson

Yol hərəkəti qaydaları, Təbiəti qoruma qaydaları, Zərərli və Zərərsiz qidalar	<i>Road traffic rules, Nature protection rules, Harmful and non-harmful foods</i>
ilk tibbi yardım	<i>first aid</i>
Sağlam həyat tərz	<i>Healthy lifestyle</i>
Təbii fəlakətlər, qaz sızması zamanı nə etməli?; Təbiətdə baş verən hadisələr; İnsan münasibətləri (böyüklərə hörmət və s); ictimai nəqliyyatda davranış qaydaları; Yol qaydaları; Tolerantlıq və s	<i>What to do during natural disasters, gas leaks?; Natural events; Human relations (respect for elders, etc.); rules of conduct in public transport; Rules of the road; Tolerance etc</i>
Mənəvi borc, doğru və yanlış düşüncə	<i>Moral duty, right and wrong thinking</i>
Təbiət, heyvanlar haqqında kecdiyimiz dərslər olub	<i>There were stories about nature and animals</i>
Din və cəmiyyət, "Dövlət quruluşları", "Dövlət orqanları", "Vergi sistemi", "Ailə", və s.	<i>"Religion and society", "State structures", "State bodies", "Tax system", "Family", etc.</i>

Qohum ailə evlilikləri, Narkotiklə mübarizə və s.	<i>Consanguineous marriages, Anti-drug, etc.</i>
Beli xatırlayıram Dövlət rəngləri, Hüquqlarımız	<i>I remember the state colors, our rights</i>
Sağlamlıq haqqında; narkotikin sığaretin içkinin ziyanlarından v.s	<i>About health; harms of drugs, smoking, drinking, etc</i>

Sub-theme 1.2: External Support Practices

Respondents	Rural Schools	Urban Schools
Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of external involvement. - Rare external programs' initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only one school had collaborations with external experts. - Rare external programs' initiatives.
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not any external support for drug awareness. - Mainly rely on internal resources. - Not any external activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rarely receive external support for drug awareness. - Used guest lectures, seminars by health professionals. - More frequent external activities.
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 35% participated in extra-curricular drug lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22% participated in extra-curricular drug lessons.

Sub-theme 1.2: External Support Practices (Principals)

To further drug awareness initiatives, most principals elaborated on the lack of external assistance or partnerships with governmental or non-governmental organizations concerning drug awareness initiatives. They expressed that their schools primarily relied on internal resources and strategies to address drug-related issues among students, indicating a gap in external support for such programs.

Meanwhile, only one urban school works with some agencies and groups. Thus, the school principal mentioned that they collaborate with healthcare providers and Ministry of Education-approved initiatives. In order to discuss the negative health impacts of drug usage, they also include medical specialists from surrounding clinics. Further, to educate students on the legal ramifications of drug usage, they collaborate with local police agencies and participate in

government-run anti-drug initiatives. “Bəli, xarici təşkilatlar və agentliklərlə əməkdaşlıq narkotiklərlə bağlı maarifləndirmə səylərinin gücləndirilməsinin ayrılmaz hissəsidir. Məsələn, yerli səhiyyə departamentləri və qeyri-kommersiya təşkilatları ilə əməkdaşlıq, narkotik maddələrdən sui-istifadə və onun nəticələri haqqında məlumatlılığı təşviq etmək məqsədi daşıyan icmaya yardım proqramları və maarifləndirici kampaniyaları asanlaşdırır. Bundan əlavə, hüquq-mühafizə orqanları ilə əməkdaşlıq narkotiklərlə əlaqəli problemləri effektiv həll etmək üçün profilaktika və müdaxilə strategiyalarına yönəlmiş təşəbbüslərin həyata keçirilməsinə imkan verir.” *(Yes, collaboration with foreign organizations and agencies is an integral part of strengthening drug awareness efforts. For example, partnerships with local health departments and nonprofit organizations facilitate community outreach programs and educational campaigns aimed at promoting awareness of substance abuse and its consequences. In addition, cooperation with law enforcement agencies enables initiatives focused on prevention and intervention strategies to effectively address drug-related problems).*

Rural schools face challenges in implementing consistent projects due to limited resources and lack of external assistance, despite attempts to raise drug awareness. Thus, rural school principals stressed that they did not have any collaboration about the drug awareness organizations. “Bizi Uşaq Təhlükəsizliyi ilə bağlı UNİCEFin və Elm və Təhsil Nazirliyinin birgə layihəsi var ... ona qoşulmuşuq. O da yalnız uşaq təhlükəsizliyi ilə bağlı narkotik yox ümumiyyətlə Uşaq Təhlükəsizliyi ilə bağlı həmin o təşkilatla biz əməkdaşlıq edirik.” *(We are involved in a joint project of UNICEF and the Ministry of Science and Education on Child Safety. And it's only about child safety... We cooperate with that organization in relation to Child Safety, not drugs)*

All urban and rural principals emphasize how crucial it is to customize drug awareness programs to the unique requirements of each school community's culture. Collaboration and community involvement may become essential elements of successful drug prevention initiatives in rural areas. On the other hand, urban schools could concentrate on utilizing a variety of

resources and knowledge to provide complete programs. The engagement of teachers and staff in educating students about drug risks is emphasized in both rural and urban schools. Instructors are essential in starting conversations, planning exercises, and offering assistance. Staff personnel in one urban school gets training to improve their knowledge and efficacy in managing drug-related concerns, even if chances for professional growth may differ.

Sub-theme 1.2: External Support Practices (Teachers)

There were significant differences between urban schools and rural schools. Urban schools could obtain resources from external organizations. Conversely, as to the teachers at rural schools, they relied solely on internal sources for drug awareness programs.

According to one of the urban teacher, the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan Republic provides the school with necessary video materials regarding the detrimental effects of drugs. In contrast, all other teachers states that there is no external support. However, there is a consensus among teachers about the need for more robust support mechanisms.

In general, it worth mentioning that most teachers express a low level of awareness regarding drug-related risks. The information they have is obtained only thanks to personal research and past experiences. During the interview it became clear that only one urban teacher mentioned that she attended professional trainings on this topic “Bəli məlumatlı olduğumu düşünürəm, çünki bu mövzunu əhatə edən seminarlarda iştirak etmişəm” (*Yes, I think I am knowledgeable because I have attended seminars covering this topic*). However, on the other hand, the teacher from the rural school emphasized that “Heç bir təlimə seminara bu vaxta gədər qoşulmamışıq. Bu mövzu ilə bağlı heç bir təlimə seminara qatılmamışam”. (*I have not joined any training seminar until now. I have not attended any training seminars on this topic*).

Although teachers exhibit differing degrees of knowledge about the dangers associated with drugs, it is evident that they require focused professional development in order to improve their ability to deal with substance usage. Working together with outside parties is necessary to increase support.

Sub-theme 1.2: External Support Practices (Students)

The findings from the students' survey suggest that only one urban school and one rural school implements drug awareness initiatives in various forms. Particularly, when students were asked: "Does your school initiate any practices to raise your awareness on the threads of drug?" it became clear that 35% of rural students and only 22% of urban students participated in extra curriculum lessons dedicated to drug awareness conducted by the school. The subsequent question "if yes, whether do you think that program raised your awareness on the threads of drug?" the majority of rural (80%) and urban students (77%) expressed that they believed the program indeed increased their awareness of the danger and risks posed by drugs.

Certain suggestions for school community were offered by students:

Məktəblərdə əsl psixoloqlar çalışsın	<i>Let real psychologists work in schools</i>
Təkcə mən yox bütün məktəbin maarifi üçün bir anket, təbliği tədbir istəyirəm.	<i>Not just me, I want a poll and promotion event for the education of the whole school</i>
mütəmadi olaraq bu barədə tədbirlər keçirmək, və ya bu barədə ən çoxda mektebdə olan avara tipli şagirdlərlə daha çox məşğul olmaq	<i>to take measures on this regularly, or to deal more with the vagrant type students.</i>
Bu barədə şagirdlərlə tez-tez görüşlər keçirilsin	<i>Have frequent meetings with the students about this topic</i>
Buna marağı ola biləcək uşaqlarla tam ətraflı söhbətlər keçirmək və ya onların bu tədbirlərdə olmasına diqqət etmək	<i>Having detailed conversations with children who might be interested in this, or making sure they attend these events</i>

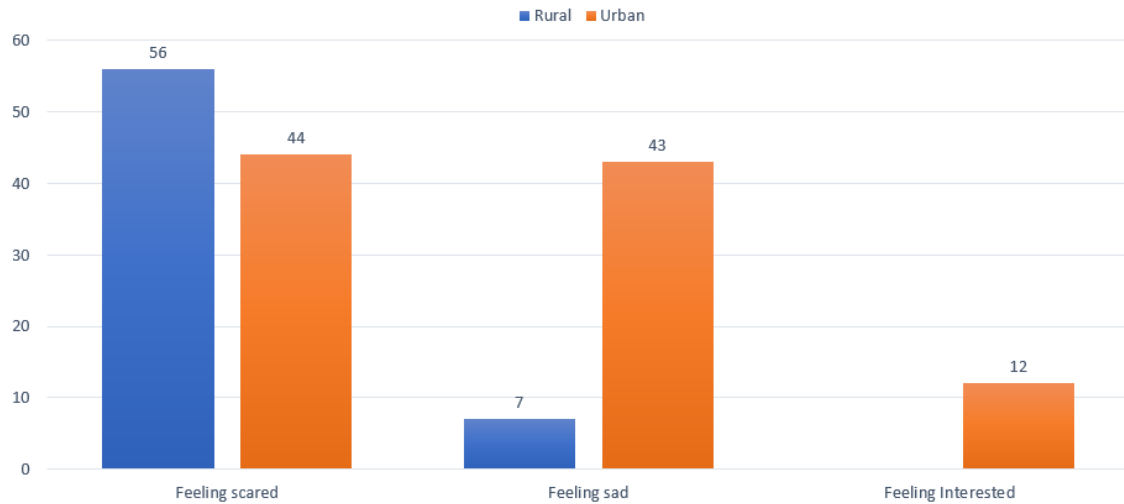
Theme 2: Students' definition of drugs

Sub-theme 2.1: Students' definition of drugs

In order to elicit students' personal definition and understanding of drugs providing insights into their perception and knowledge about the topic we asked the following question: What is “drug”? Almost all students responded to this question by providing definitions. Some extracts from students' response are as below:

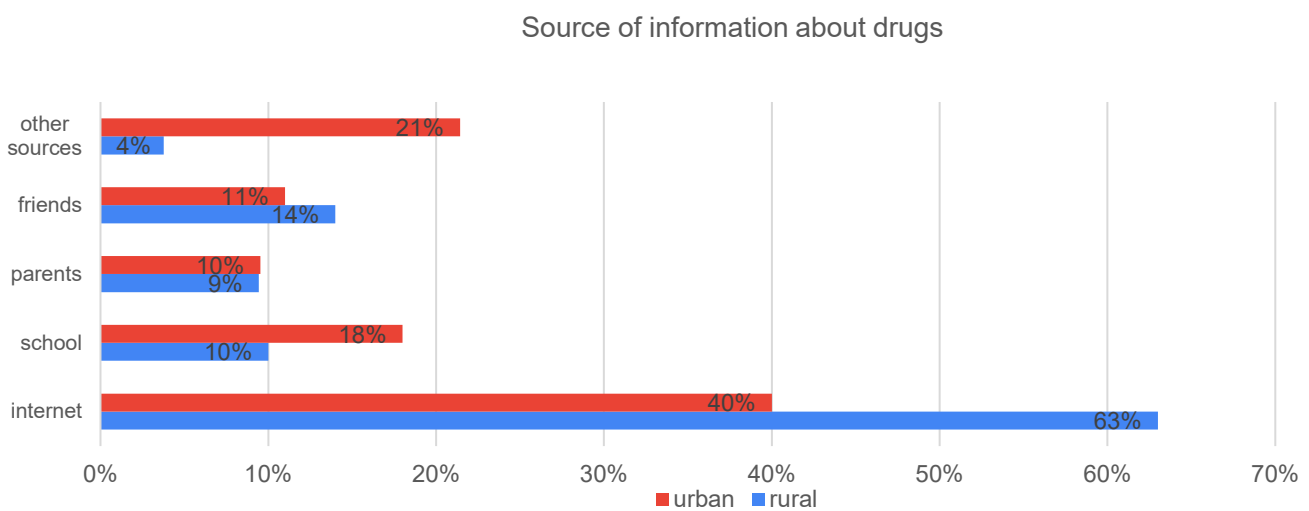
Narkotik insan sağlamlığı üçün çox zərərli olan bir maddədir və o ölkəmizə qanundan kənar vasitələr ilə gətirilir.	<i>Drug is a substance that is very harmful to human health and it is brought to our country by illegal means.</i>
İnsan orqanizminə və ətraf,çevrəsinə zərər verən,özünə aludəçi edən zərərli maddə.	<i>A harmful substance that harms the human body and the environment, and is addictive.</i>
Əsasən, tibbdə istifadə olunan bir maddədir.	<i>Basically, it is a substance used in medicine.</i>
Narkotik bir gəncin həyatını söndürəcək bağımlılıq yaradan maddə	<i>Drug is an addictive substance that will extinguish the life of a young man</i>
Psixotrop maddə	<i>Psychotropic substance</i>
Zərərli vərdişdi insanın həyatını uçuruma aparan bir yoldur.	<i>A bad habit is a path that leads a person's life to the abyss.</i>
Ağ ölüm	<i>White death</i>
Bu ele bir maddedir ki, insanın düşüncesinə menfi tesir edir ve müyyen menada beyni tenzimleyir	<i>This is a substance that has a negative effect on a person's thinking and regulates the brain in a certain way</i>
Əsrin bəlası	<i>The scourge of the century</i>

The question “*How do you feel when you hear about drugs?*” aimed to uncover students' emotional responses or attitudes towards drugs, shedding light on their feelings, concerns, or associations with the topic. Thus, 56% of rural and 44% of urban students confessed the feeling of being scared, 57% of rural and 43% of urban students feel sadness. 12 students were ‘curious’ about this topic.



Sub-theme 2.2: Source of information about drugs

By asking students “Where do you usually get information about drugs?” we aimed to identify their primary source of information and influence regarding drugs which provides insights into the channels through which students acquire knowledge about drugs. As per the table below it is evident that 63% of rural and 40% of urban students get information from internet, and only 10% of rural and 18% of urban students increase their awareness at school.



In order to access the extend and effectiveness of drug-related communication within two vital spheres of influence in students' lives – their families and their school environment we asked students question “*How would you describe the level of communication about drugs in your family or at school?*” 42% of rural students and 28% of urban students highlighted non-existence of any communication on this matter. Additionally, 25% of rural and 21% of urban students indicated they have rare drug related communication with adults either in the family or at school. On opposite, 15% of rural and 36% of urban students have open and frequent communication. However, only 44% rural and 40 urban students responded that they feel comfortable talking to parents and teachers about drugs.

Moreover, students were suggested comment on what they would want to ask their teachers or parents about drugs. Here are some responses we obtained:

İnsanda niyə asılılıq yaradır	<i>Why does it create addiction in a person?</i>
İnsanlar bunu davam etdirirək hara varırlar? və nətür dəyişikliklər baş verir insanda	<i>Where do people go by continuing this? and what kind of changes happen in a person</i>
İnsanlar niyə ona ehtiyac duyur	<i>Why do people need it?</i>
İnsanları ondan necə uzaqlaşdırmaq olacağını danışmaq istərdim	<i>I would like to talk about how to get people away from it</i>
Narkotik adama necə təsir edir? Daha geniş məlumat istərdim.	<i>How does the drug affect a person? I would like more information.</i>
Narkotik edən insanlar nə yaşayırlar və ondan niyə qurtula bilmirlər	<i>What do drug addicts experience and why they can't get rid of it</i>
Narkotikin nə səbəblə istifadə edildiyini	<i>For what reason the drug is used</i>
Narkotikin təsiri altında olanda hansı hislər yaşanır	<i>What feelings are experienced when under the influence of drugs</i>
Onlardan soruşardım ki, narkotik maddəsinin ziyanları nələrdir?, ondan necə qoruna bilərəm?, əgər bir dostumun və ya bir yaxın bu maddədən istifadə ediblərsə onlara necə kömək edə bilərəm? Kimi suallar soruşardım.	<i>I would ask them what are the harms of narcotics? How can I protect myself from it? How can I help them if a friend or relative has used this substance? I would ask some questions.</i>

Chapter 5. Conclusion

The findings of the study demonstrates the complex and multifaceted nature of drug awareness among high school students. All in all, the findings highlighted that students exhibit varying levels of awareness and understanding regarding drugs. There are numerous factors that shape the perceptions of students and the major ones are media exposure, peer influences, and personal experiences. The absence of structured drug education programs contributes to significant gaps in knowledge and misconceptions among students. As a consequence, they become vulnerable to potential risks of drug use. The study revealed the necessity for implementing targeted interventions to promote informed decision-making among students. Effective drug prevention programs should be designed to address their diverse needs. It is critical to provide accurate information, foster critical thinking skills, and promote resilience against external influences. If a supportive and well-informed educational environment is created at schools, it will be possible to combat drug abuse and ensure the well-being of students.

Among other findings revealed during the study it worth mentioning that approximately 30% of both rural and urban students confirmed that they personally know someone who has struggled with drug addiction. This finding highlights the pervasive nature of the problem in both rural and urban settings and the critical need for effective drug awareness programs.

While this research provides valuable insights into the drug awareness among high school students and practices some schools employ to raise it, the study also highlights several areas where further research is needed:

- Conduct more extended surveys, interviews and focused groups with students, teachers as well as parents to gather deeper information to identify common misconceptions and knowledge gaps about drug related risks among students.

- Explore the views of parents and community members on the importance of drug education. Thus, engaging community can provide support for future programs and ensure that they will be culturally and contextually appropriate.

- Conduct assessment of school resources to conduct drug awareness practices and school readiness to adopt such programs.

Chapter 6. End product.The workshop

As a final part of our project, we have conducted a workshop. The main purpose of the workshop was to demonstrate the outcomes of our research and modern approaches and best practices used in most successful drug awareness programs. Also, the workshop provided examples of successful drug awareness programs, lessons learned and practical tips for their implementation.

The workshop took place in an online format with the participation of 1 principal and 10 teachers. It is worth noting that the participants represented one of the schools where we conducted our research. First, we provided statistics to show the significance of the researched problem. Further, research questions, methodology, and data collection processes were presented to the participants.

During the workshop, we discussed three models of school-based drug prevention programs, namely knowledge-focused curricula, social-influence approach, and skills enhancement approach. Knowledge-focused curricula are designed to provide students with factual information about drugs and their effects. The core assumption is that information and fear-arousal techniques will lead to behavioral changes. In turn, the social-influence approach recognizes that social factors play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes regarding drug use. Its main emphasis is on leveraging social dynamics to prevent drug abuse. More specifically, students are trained to resist social pressures to use drugs. Finally, as opposed to aforementioned approaches, the skills enhancement approach focuses on developing a range of practical skills that students need to make informed decisions. Students are taught problem-solving, decision-making, communication, and emotional regulation which are critical to be able to manage stress, peer pressure, and other factors that might lead to drug use.

Furthermore, we proposed our mini program consisting of six lessons. The first lesson focuses on helping students recognize different types of drugs. Students learn both about the

short- and long-term effects of drug use. The second lesson explores the distinction between legal and illegal drugs and explains why certain substances are banned. The major purpose of the second lesson is to debunk common myths about drug safety. The third lesson addresses the reasons why people might use drugs and the risks associated with misuse. Students examine various scenarios where drug use might occur. The fourth lesson focuses on developing students' decision-making abilities with the help of role-playing and group discussions. The fifth lesson teaches students how to handle stress and difficult situations without resorting to drugs. It covers techniques like deep breathing, talking to someone they trust, exercising, and engaging in hobbies. The sixth lesson focuses on strategies for staying safe in environments where drugs and alcohol might be present. Students learn about assertiveness and how to confidently say no to drugs.

Finally, it is necessary to note that since we are not professionals in this field, it would be pertinent to organize future workshops with competent specialists. They will be able to bring more value and provide useful advice.

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Written by: Matt Berry Updated Nov 10, 2022

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Appendices

Appendix A. Survey questions for students

Appendix B. Semi-structured interview questions for teachers.

Appendix C. Semi-structured interview questions for principals.

Appendix D. Interview Consent Form

Appendix A. Survey questions for students

Thank you for participating in this survey.

Please answer the questions based on what you really do and know. Please answer as truthfully as you can. Completing the survey is voluntary. Whether or not you answer the questions will not affect your grade in this class. If you are not comfortable answering a question, just leave it blank.

Your anonymity will be guaranteed!

Please do not indicate your name on the form. Results will be presented only in tables and no results from any single class will be revealed.

1. Age: _____
 2. Grade/_____
 3. Gender: Male Female
 4. Do you live in an urban or rural area? Urban Rural
 5. Do you remember the topics covered in your “Heyat Bilgisi” class? If yes, please share the topic names below:
 6. What is “drug”? (Please share your understanding below)
-
7. Have you ever had a lesson based on the topic “Drug”? Yes/no
 8. If your answer is “no”, then pass to the 10th question.
 9. If you answered “yes”, do you think that lesson raised your awareness on the threads of drug? Yes/no
 10. Have you ever been offered to try drugs? Yes /No
 11. What would you do if someone offered you something that you thought might be a drug?
-

12. How do you feel when you hear about drugs?

- Sad
- Scared
- Curious
- Other _____

13. How do you think why people start using drugs?

- Curiosity
- Urging of friends
- Problems at home
- Escape from reality
- Other _____

14. Where do you usually get information about drugs?

- School
- Parents/Guardians
- Friends
- Internet
- Other (please specify): _____

15. How would you describe the level of communication about drugs in your family or at school?

- Open and frequent
- Occasional
- Rare
- Non-existent

16. Would you feel comfortable talking to your parents or teachers about drugs? Yes /No

17. If yes, what would you want to ask them or talk to them about drugs?

18. Do you know anyone who has struggled with drug addiction? Yes No

19. If your response to the question 18 is “yes”, how has it affected you or your perception of drugs?

20. What is the common cause for drug addiction, to your mind:

- a) Stressful life events
- b) Curiosity or experimentation
- c) Lack of awareness about the consequences
- d) Peer pressure

21. Is there anything else you want to share or ask about drugs? Yes/no

22. Does your school initiate any practices to raise your awareness on the threads of drug?

Yes/no

23. What would be your suggestions for your school community to raise awareness on the threads of drug?

Appendix B. Semi-structured interview questions for teachers.

Introductory questions:

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. How long have you been teaching at this school?

Main questions:

1. How well do our national textbooks communicate drug related threads? Please provide some specific examples.
2. Do you think you, as a teacher, are well-informed about the drug threads? If yes, please share your experience (any workshops, webinars, training sessions, etc)?
3. You have an experience of teaching “Heyat Bilgisi.” Do you think that the topics covered in that book can raise the students’ awareness on the threads of drug?
4. Can you describe the specific programs or initiatives implemented by your school to promote drug awareness among secondary school students? Please share your experience.
5. How are you involved in educating students about the risks and consequences of drug use?
6. What support do you receive from the school administration and the Department of Education?
7. What support would you like to have regarding drug awareness?
8. What resources or materials are utilized in drug awareness programs within the school?
9. Are there collaborations with external organizations or agencies to enhance drug awareness efforts? If so, can you provide examples?
10. How frequently are drug awareness sessions conducted, and what is the format of these sessions (e.g., workshops, presentations, guest speakers)?
11. Were there any drug related cases or instances in your school community? Please share some specific examples.
12. If there were any cases of drug usage among the high school students, what steps did you take to support that student?
13. Do you communicate with the parents about drug related threads?

14. What do you think? What factors contribute to the drug use among high school students?
15. What would be the best way or strategies to raise the students' awareness on the threads of the drug use within the classroom?

Appendix C. Semi-structured interview questions for principals.

Introductory questions:

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. How long have you been working as a school principal?

Main questions:

1. Can you describe the specific programs or initiatives implemented by your school to promote drug awareness among secondary school students? Please share your experience.
2. How are teachers and staff involved in educating students about the risks and consequences of drug use?
3. What resources or materials are utilized in drug awareness programs within the school?
4. Are there collaborations with external organizations or agencies to enhance drug awareness efforts? If so, can you provide examples?
5. How frequently are drug awareness sessions conducted, and what is the format of these sessions (e.g., workshops, presentations, guest speakers)?
6. Were there any drug related cases or instances in your school community? Please share some specific examples.
7. If there were any cases of drug usage among the high school students, what steps did you take to support that student?
8. Do you communicate with the parents, teachers, and staff about drug related threads?
9. What do you think? What factors contribute to the drug use among high school students?
10. Considering your school community and culture, what would be the best practices for drug awareness? (Ask them to provide some suggestions)

Appendix D. Interview Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study. The aim of our study is to explore the perceptions of secondary high school students regarding the risks associated with drug use and to investigate the practices employed by schools to promote drug awareness and prevention among high school students. Participation in the interview should take approximately 20 minutes.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the interview at any time. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about drug related practices in schools.

Your participation is completely anonymous. Thus, no names or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on your personal data, and your responses during this interview will remain confidential.

If you have further questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, contact our Supervisor, Samira Hajiyeva (shajiyeva@ada.edu.az).

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Signing this consent form indicates that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate

Agree _____

Disagree _____