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Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of Substance Abuse on Learner Discipline and Academic Achievement in Rural Secondary Schools in Limpopo Province

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Abstract

Substance abuse among school learners has become a significant challenge in South Africa, particularly in rural areas such as the Capricorn District in Limpopo Province. This study examines teachers' perceptions of the effects of substance abuse on learner discipline and academic achievement in selected secondary schools, namely Mushubaba Secondary School and Mamolemane Secondary School. Teachers are well positioned to observe the behavioural and academic consequences of substance use due to their daily interaction with learners.

A qualitative research approach with a descriptive design was adopted for the study. Data were collected from 30 teachers through purposive sampling across the two selected schools. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain detailed insights into teachers' experiences and observations regarding substance abuse among learners. The data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to discipline and academic performance.

The findings indicate that substance abuse contributes significantly to learner indiscipline, including absenteeism, aggression, lack of concentration, and disrespect towards teachers. These behaviours disrupt classroom activities and negatively affect the overall teaching and learning environment. In terms of academic achievement, learners who abuse substances often exhibit low motivation, incomplete schoolwork, and poor academic performance.

The study concludes that substance abuse has a detrimental impact on both learner discipline and academic outcomes in the selected schools. It recommends the implementation of school-based intervention programmes, strengthened collaboration with parents, and support for teachers to effectively manage substance abuse-related challenges.

Keywords: Substance Abuse, Learner Discipline, Academic Achievement, Teachers' Perceptions