

Increasing Awareness of Substance Abuse and Addictions: Does Early Childhood Drug Education Provide Diversion from Using Drugs and/or Alcohol?

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this research was threefold:

- Increase awareness of a spiraling community problem related to substance abuse and addiction.
- Share findings from a small sample research study related to early education, drug, and alcohol use.
- Gain an understanding of the potential effect of early childhood education related to the use of drugs and alcohol.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

- The authors hypothesized that drug use and related issues could be reduced with standardized substance abuse education offered throughout childhood and adolescence.
- While some prevention programs exist, they often fall below recommended guidelines.
- Encouraged the researchers to pursue this nationwide issue and find a possible standardized solution.

METHODS

- Descriptive methods approach - quantitative and qualitative data to examine the correlation between drug and alcohol use and early childhood education.
- Convenience sample of 17 adults recruited from two transitional homes within a rural community in Indiana (one female only; one male only). Both homes provided full-time living quarters and a program focused on assisting those with addictions to transition back into the community after recovery.
- Subjects - voluntarily and anonymously surveyed on their thoughts and beliefs regarding drug and alcohol education received during their adolescent years.
- Literature review.

SAMPLE POPULATION DATA

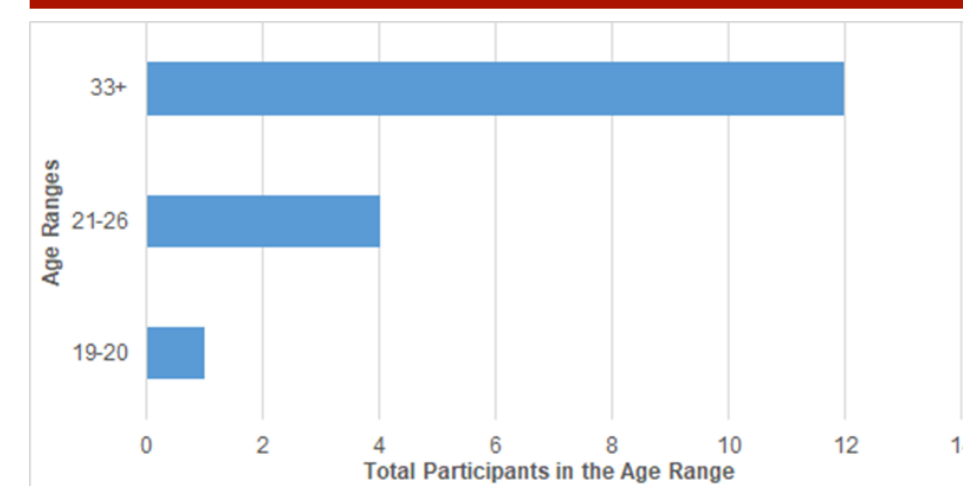


Figure 1: Age of participants. This figure illustrates the age range of participants.

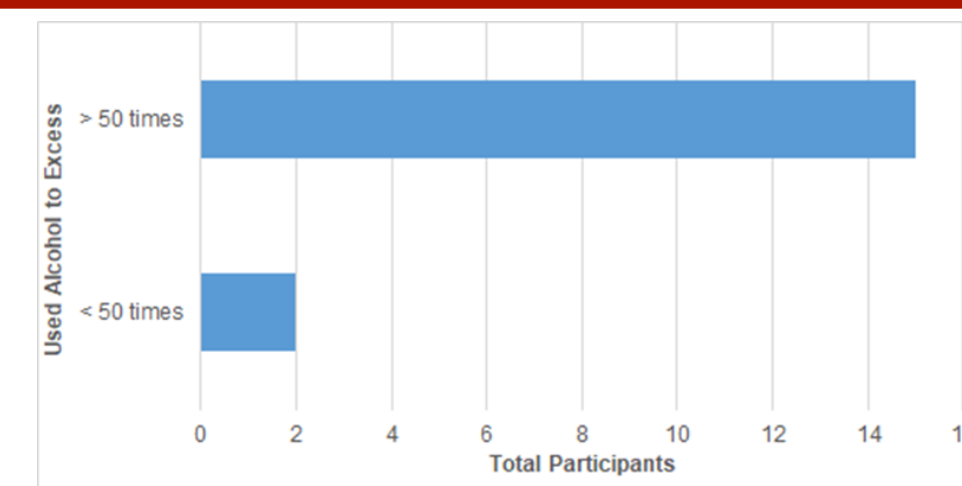


Figure 2: Excess alcohol use. This figure illustrates how many times the participant has used alcohol to excess.

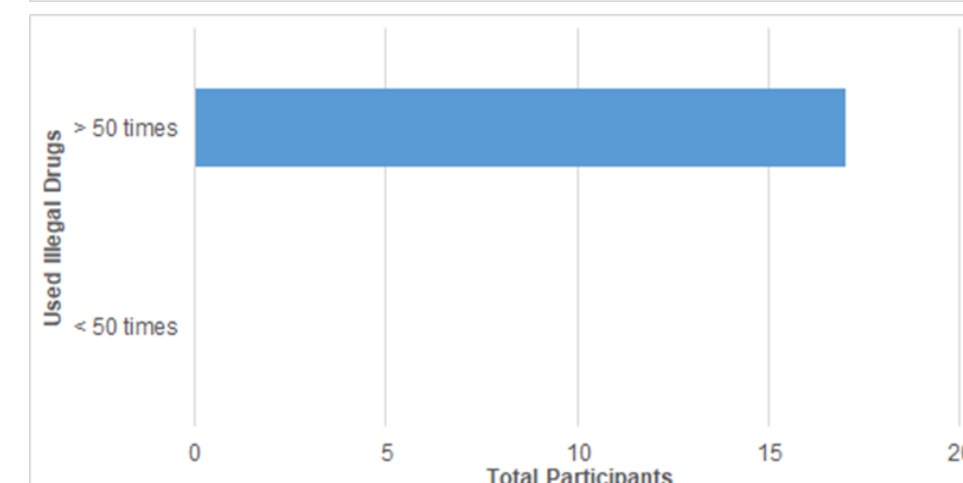


Figure 3: Illegal Drug Use. This figure illustrates how many times the participants used illegal drugs.

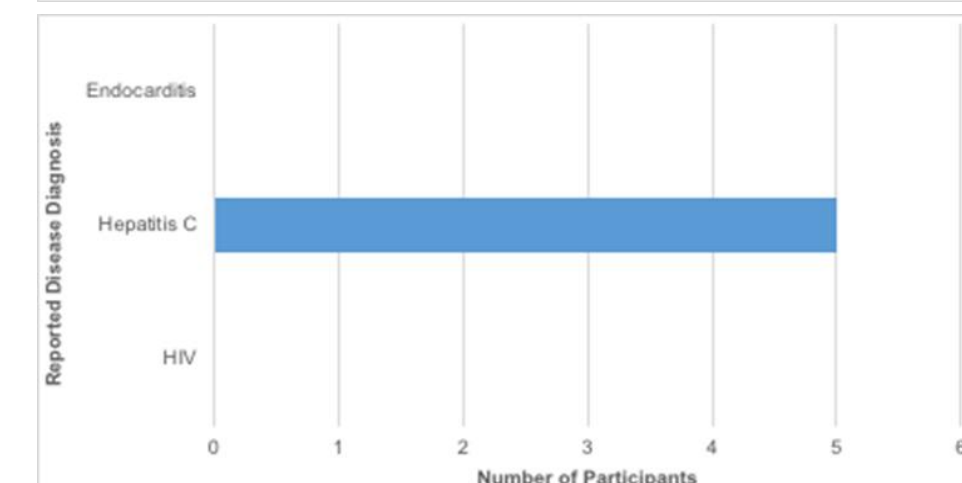


Figure 4: Reported Diseases. This figure illustrates how many participants have been diagnosed with Hepatitis C.

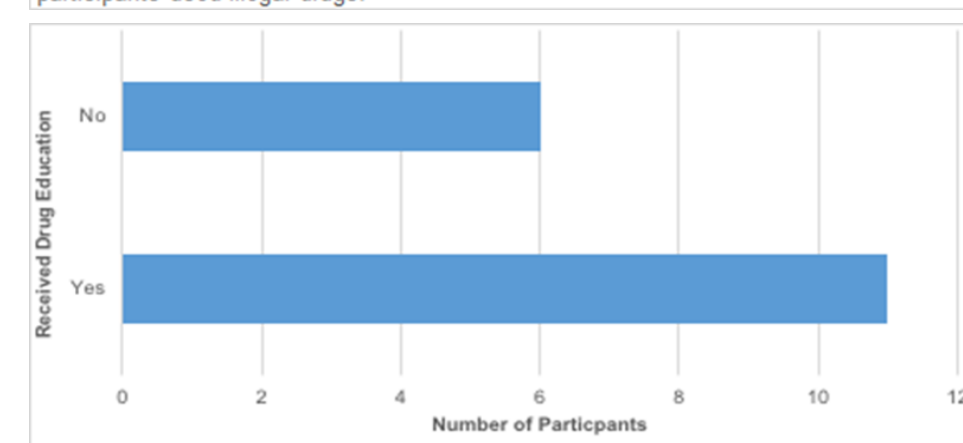


Figure 5: Drug education. This figure illustrates how many participants received drug education from schools, communities, and/or family during adolescence.

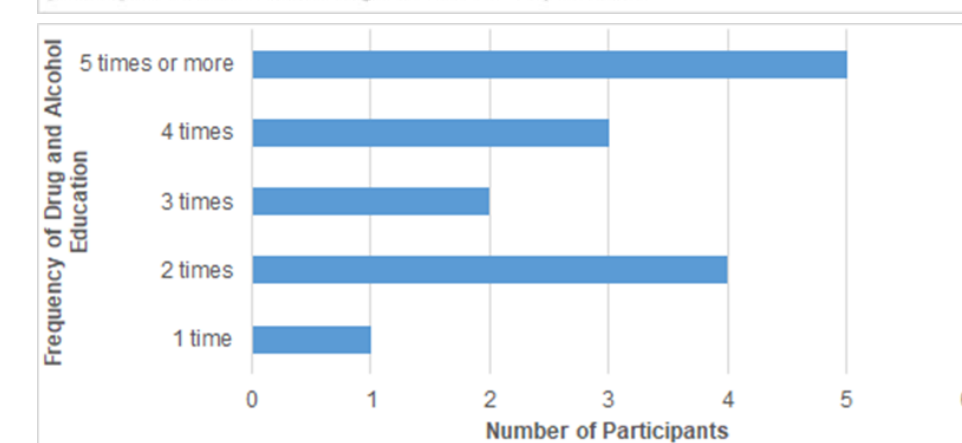


Figure 6: School years. This figure illustrates how many times participants received drug education throughout their school years.

RESULTS

Survey Question #11: "Why you think you use or did use drugs/alcohol?"

Type of Response	Actual Response
Social*	"group of friends", "for attention", "to be in the "in" crowd", "social acceptance", "to fit in", "being around it"
Family*	"messed up home life", "stepparent introduced me to weed and I saw him using meth", "bad childhood", "being around it", "not being around my father", "brother committed suicide", "family problems"
Emotional	"to cover up my feelings", "a need for something more", "low self-esteem", "to escape reality", "resolve my problems or at least numb my pain", "cope with loss", "stress", "I am a believer that I was born an addict"

Notes. N = 17 (total number of adults)

Participants were asked to list two open-ended responses, however some participants submitted more than one response.

*One response, "being around it", is classified as being both Social and Family.

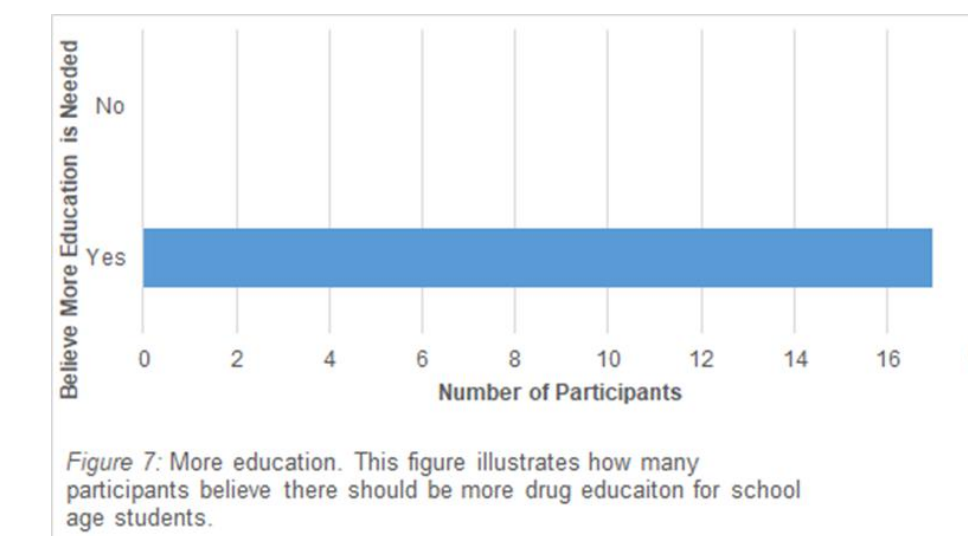


Figure 7: More education. This figure illustrates how many participants believe there should be more drug education for school age students.

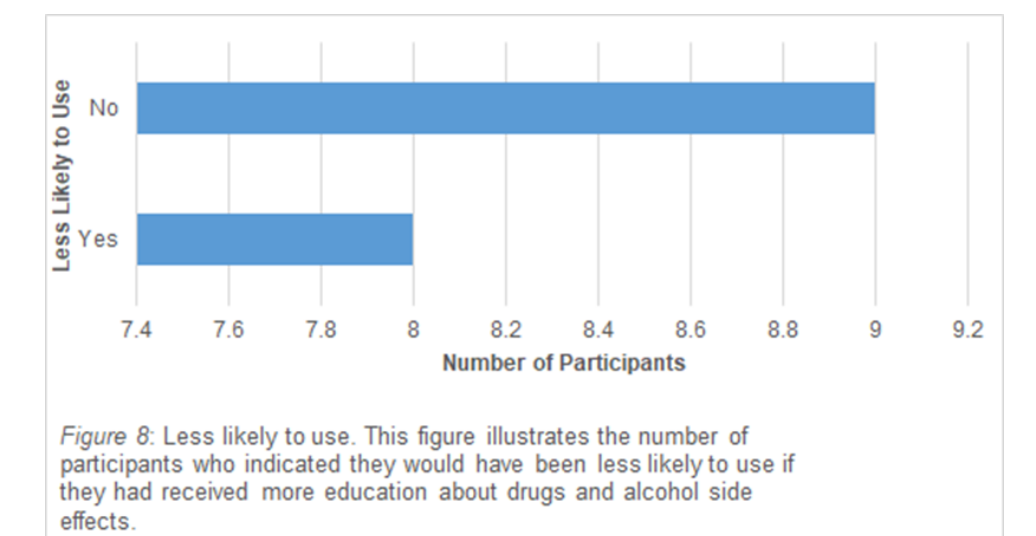
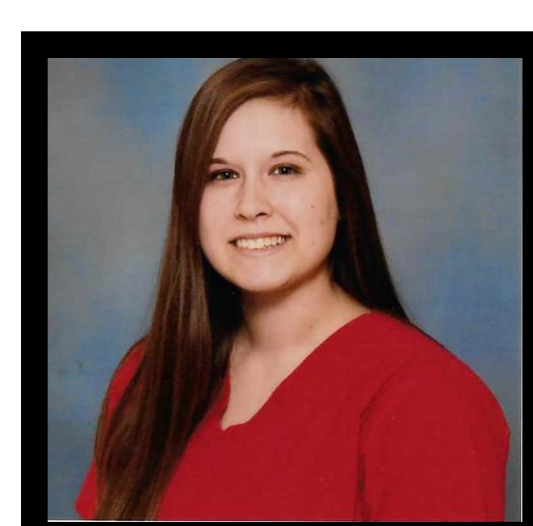
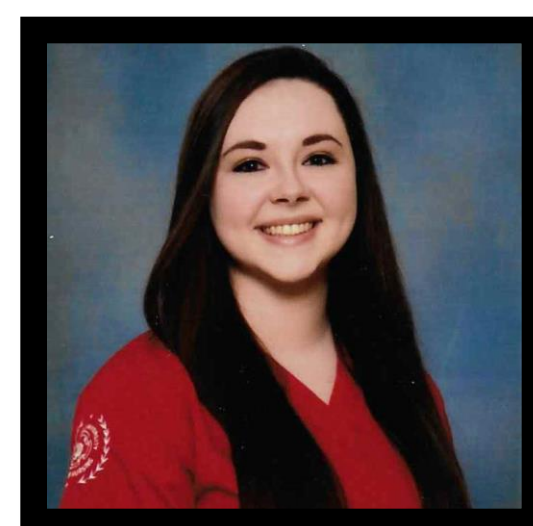


Figure 8: Less likely to use. This figure illustrates the number of participants who indicated they would have been less likely to use if they had received more education about drugs and alcohol side effects.

The results revealed that there is a need for a more standardized drug and alcohol education program in later adolescent years that portrays the true effects of the use.

CONCLUSIONS

- Substance abuse continues to escalate at the national level.
- Increased efforts to research and understand the problem are vital.
- Standardized education provided to adolescents appropriately can lead to more knowledgeable decisions to avoid drug use in adulthood.
- The authors suggest implementation of a standardized program, such as Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT), which may be customized to fit local needs and could provide the consistent messaging needed to mitigate risky behavior in childhood and adolescence.
- HECAT highlights differences in individual and social contexts to shape values, beliefs, and attitudes, which are essential elements to include in an effective adolescent drug education program.



*A complete list of references are available on the handout provided or by contacting one of the researchers.