

Chess Game As A Preventive Intervention For Drug And Substance Use At A Private Christian School In Grange, Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

The intervention focused on prevention of drug and substance use amongst learners at a private Christian school in Grange, Harare in Zimbabwe. Eighteen learners who were randomly sampled from fifty members of the chess club participated in the intervention. A total of ten chess games were conducted twice weekly over period of a month. Data for the intervention was analysed using content analysis. Group discussions conducted after each chess game session indicated that being involved in chess game improved participants' decision making and drug evasion skills.

Keywords: Chess game; intervention; drug; substance; abuse

Date of Submission: 07-03-2024

Date of Acceptance: 17-03-2024

I. Introduction

The UN has noted high prevalence of drug and substance abuse especially amongst learners worldwide. In Zimbabwe notable trafficking of dangerous drugs and substances has been reported in some border communities (Ndlovu, 2020). High drug and substance abuse prevalence rate (43% to 57%) reported in Zimbabwe is attributed to porous borders and economic challenges (Ndlovu, 2020). Other studies conducted in Zimbabwe have shown increasing learner interest in drug and substance use (Maseko, Ngwenya & Maunganidze, 2014). Recently, the age range 10 to 18 years has been considered to be vulnerable for drug and substance use (Muthengo Development Solutions www.development.solutions.co.zw, Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network zcldnzim.net). The consequences of drug and substance abuse include depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, increased juvenile delinquency, pregnancies, violence, poor academic achievement and indiscipline (Frey, 2017). The President of Zimbabwe has declared drug and substance abuse as a security issue and has mandated that a multi-sectorial approach should be adopted to deal with this new pandemic. However, few preventive interventions for drug and substance abuse have been reported in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the researcher conceived and implemented Chess Game Intervention at a private Christian school in Grange, Harare to prevent drug and substance use amongst learners. Chess is a fast moving and evasion game which originated from India in the sixth century. It involves manoeuvring chess game character of rook, knight, bishop, queen, king and pawn. The rationale for using a game intervention was that learners enjoy and learn while playing together. In addition, through play, learners acquire exploration, imagination and decision making skills.

Participants And Setting

This intervention was implemented on eighteen grade 3 to 7 learners at a private Christian school in Grange in Harare, Zimbabwe. Learners who participated in the intervention were randomly selected from 50 members of the school chess club. Twelve 12 males and 6 females were included in the final sample. At the time of the intervention, participant ages were between 8 years and 12 years.

Intervention Procedure

After written informed consent forms were obtained from parents of participants, a total of ten chess game sessions (two sessions weekly) were implemented over period of a month. The first session which lasted for one hour was meant to raise learner awareness of drug and substance abuse. Another one hour session was

for teaching chess game rules and strategies. For example, learners were told that black chess team represented drugs while white chess team represented learner's life. During the third session the researcher delivered a one hour psycho-education on the effects of drug and substances. Learners were observed playing the chess game and their evasion strategies were documented for discussions scheduled after each chess game.

Data Analysis

Content analysis (Elo&Kyngas, 2008) was used to analyse and draw themes from the data. The aim was to attain a condensed and broad description drug and substance use evasion strategies participants acquired through playing chess game. This involved analysing data captured during discussions which were conducted immediately after each chess game session. Observations made while participants were playing chess game were also content analysed. The researcher used independent observers' notes to ensure reliability. Intervention findings are presented in the section which follows.

II. Result

Twenty-five percent of the boys lost in the chess games played while sixty-seven percent of girls lost the chess games played. No draws were recorded. The rules and tactics of chess game are related to tactics used to evade the dangers of life associated with drugs and substances. Boys appeared to have acquired better evading and decision making skills than girls. However, the absence of draw (win - win) means that the effects of drugs and substances are detrimental to both gender. From the discussions, it was noted that chess game is both enjoyable and therapeutic. It is therefore, possible for learners to use the rules and tactics of chess game to control their own lives. More specifically learners can use the chess game tactics to control their minds so that they do not succumb the negative consequences of drug and substance abuse (Rappaport, 1987). This view is endorsed by Guti (2021) who noted that problems start from the mind. Playing chess game is also an opportunity to embrace diversity among players and chess pieces.

III. Conclusion

The intervention was an opportunity for learners to learn rules and tactics of chess game and subsequently use them to evade drug and substance use. This is so because chess game is a danger evasion participatory approach. Knowledge of the rules and tactics of chess game promotes its effective application in the fight against drug and substance abuse.

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