

Counselors' Role in Addressing Substance Addiction Issue

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Abstract:

Guidance Counselors play a very important role in addressing this problem and this study wants to identify the effective strategies and support that counselors can provide to help learners who are addicted to cigarettes/vape, alcohol or even illegal drugs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Substance addiction is an escalating concern among students worldwide, permeating educational institutions and significantly impacting the lives of young people. As adolescents navigate the complexities of growing up, many encounter various pressures that can lead to substance use, including peer influence, academic stress, and social environments that normalize drug and alcohol consumption. These pressures are often compounded by a lack of awareness about the long-term consequences of substance use, which can create a cycle of experimentation that is difficult to break. Studies indicate that nearly half of students meet the criteria for at least one Substance Use Disorder (SUD) (American Addiction Center, 2024).

In high school settings, more than half of students consume alcohol by graduation, making it the most commonly abused substance (Turnbridge, n.d.). This statistic is alarming, as it suggests that alcohol use becomes ingrained in the social fabric of high school life, leading students to associate alcohol consumption with social acceptance and normalcy. Approximately one-third of high school students experiment with illicit drugs, including marijuana, cocaine, and prescription opioids, with 31% of 12th graders reporting marijuana use in the past year (Adolescent and School Health, n.d.).

E-cigarette use has also surged, with 7.8% of high school students currently using them, a decline from 14.1% in 2022 (Birdsey et al., 2023). This decline, while seemingly positive, still indicates that a significant portion of students are engaging in risky behaviors. Over 26% of current youth e-cigarette users vape daily, while 38.4% report using e-cigarettes at least 20 days in the last 30 days (U.S. Food & Drug). Flavored e-cigarettes remain highly popular among youth, with more than 87% of current users opting for flavored varieties, particularly fruit flavors (U.S. Food & Drug). This trend raises concerns about the marketing strategies employed by e-cigarette companies, which often target younger demographics, effectively glamorizing vaping and making it appear harmless compared to traditional smoking.

The alarming statistics regarding substance addiction among students worldwide highlight the urgent need for effective prevention and intervention strategies. The prevalence of alcohol and e-cigarette consumption among adolescents necessitates targeted educational programs that can specifically address these issues and promote healthier lifestyle choices among young people. The normalization of substance use in peer groups and media further complicates the issue, creating an environment where students may feel pressured to conform. Educational initiatives must therefore not only provide information about the health

risks associated with substance addiction but also actively engage students in discussions about peer pressure and social expectations, empowering them to make informed choices.

The impact of substance addiction extends beyond individual health, significantly affecting academic achievement. Substance use negatively impacts academic performance, correlating with lower grades, increased dropout rates, and impaired memory and concentration, which hinder students' ability to learn effectively (Turnbridge, n.d.). This correlation raises critical questions about the educational system's responsibility to address substance addiction as a public health issue.

The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) indicates that approximately 28% of students across 36 countries smoke cigarettes, while 57% have consumed alcohol within the past 30 days. In Sub-Saharan Africa, a study across eight countries found overall substance use rates of 11.3% for alcohol and 2% for marijuana among school-going adolescents (Kugbey, 2023). In Erbil City, the lifetime prevalence rates for cigarette smoking were reported at 27.6%, with waterpipe smoking at 23.6%, and alcohol consumption at 3.7% (Mahmood, 2019). These underscore a concerning trend that suggests substance addiction is a global epidemic, affecting not only the health of students but also the educational systems that are meant to support their development.

These findings illustrate that substance addiction is not merely a personal issue but a widespread societal concern that significantly disrupts educational systems globally. The evident correlation between substance use and academic performance stresses the need for interventions that encompass both health education and academic support for affected students. Schools must adopt a holistic approach to substance addiction prevention that includes mental health resources, parental involvement, and community support. Moreover, addressing the stigma associated with substance use is essential, as it can prevent students from seeking help and support when needed.

In the Philippines, high school students commonly abuse substances such as marijuana, methamphetamine (locally known as "shabu"), inhalants, and alcohol. The use of these substances often begins during adolescence, with many students experimenting due to peer pressure or curiosity. Reports indicate that nearly 50% of drug abuse cases start between the ages of 15 to 19, making this age group particularly vulnerable to substance use due to various factors, including accessibility and social influences (Ochoa et al., 2019). This vulnerability is exacerbated by socioeconomic factors, where limited access to education and resources can leave students feeling isolated and more susceptible to peer pressure. The consequences of such early substance use can be devastating, affecting not only academic performance but also long-term mental health and social development.

The situation in the Philippines reflects a pressing need for targeted substance addiction prevention programs aimed at adolescents. The significant percentage of students experimenting with drugs at a young age emphasizes the importance of addressing social influences and improving accessibility to education about the dangers of substance use. Urban schools, often located near city centers, may face higher rates of substance availability and peer pressure, while rural schools may encounter challenges such as limited access to counseling resources and support services. This urgency calls for community and government collaboration to implement effective preventive measures. The consequences of neglecting this issue can ripple through society, leading to increased crime rates, healthcare costs, and a loss of productivity in future generations.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented the Preventive Drug Education Program (PDEP) to integrate drug abuse prevention into the school curriculum, aiming to educate students about the dangers of substance addiction and promote healthy choices (Department of Education, 2018).

The Sulong Kabataan Program, a community-based life skills program, focuses on preventing substance addiction among Filipino youth by enhancing their refusal skills and life skills through interactive learning. Preliminary evaluations indicate positive impacts on participants' confidence in resisting substances (Ochoa et al., 2019). However, the effectiveness of such programs often hinges on consistent implementation and the willingness of schools to prioritize substance addiction education alongside traditional curricula.

Government initiatives like the PDEP and community programs such as Sulong Kabataan are crucial steps toward mitigating the substance addiction crisis in the Philippines. By equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions, these programs aim to empower youth, fostering resilience against the temptations of substance use. However, for these initiatives to succeed, they must be backed by comprehensive policies that address the underlying issues contributing to substance addiction, such as poverty, lack of educational resources, and limited access to mental health care.

Recent incidents involving students being caught with marijuana on school premises underscore the urgent need for effective prevention strategies. For instance, on December 13, 2023, a Grade 7 student at Camarines Sur National High School was apprehended for possessing a significant amount of suspected marijuana leaves, highlighting increased vigilance among school authorities (GMA News, 2023). In April 2023, a Grade 10 student in Negros Occidental was apprehended for bringing a hand grenade and dried marijuana leaves to school, prompting immediate evacuation and raising concerns about safety protocols (Philstar, 2023). These incidents not only point to the growing prevalence of substance addiction but also reveal the potential dangers it poses to school safety and the overall learning environment.

Oco, Valle, Dixie, & Villacorta (2022) conducted an extensive study examining substance use among high school students, focusing on the prevalence, influences, and implications of alcohol use and cigarette smoking. The study involved a total enrollment of 1,984 students, with 350 selected as respondents across various grade levels: Grade 7 (n = 75), Grade 8 (n = 88), Grade 9 (n = 88), Grade 10 (n = 75), Grade 11 (n = 13), and Grade 12 (n = 11). The findings revealed that nearly half (49%) of the respondents had engaged in either alcohol use or cigarette smoking, with alcohol use being significantly more prevalent (35%) compared to smoking (12%). These statistics underscore the considerable scope of substance use among adolescents in the school setting.

The study further highlighted that substance use patterns varied significantly by grade level. Grade 12 students reported the highest rates of engagement, with 100% of respondents admitting to alcohol use and 73% to cigarette smoking, followed by Grade 11 students, where 69% admitted to smoking cigarettes. Even among younger students, the rates were concerning, with Grade 10 reporting 39% for alcohol use. Such patterns indicate that substance use increases as students' progress through school, suggesting a growing vulnerability during late adolescence, possibly linked to increased exposure to peer pressure and greater autonomy.

An analysis of the age of initiation revealed that the majority of students started engaging in alcohol use at 16 years old (38%), followed by 17 years old (24%) and 15 years old (18%). Similarly, for cigarette smoking, the age of initiation peaked at 17 years old (31%), with 15 years old (24%) and 16 years old (21%) closely following. This trend underscores the critical importance of early intervention programs targeting middle to late adolescence, as these ages appear to be pivotal in the adoption of substance use behaviors. The study also explored the social influences driving substance use among students. Friends outside school emerged as the primary influence, with 45% of students citing peer pressure and social

dynamics as motivating factors. This was followed by self-initiative (16%) and classmates (15%), highlighting the significant role of external social environments over in-school peer relationships. This finding raises concerns about the broader social networks students are embedded in and the lack of adequate supervision and guidance in their out-of-school activities.

Despite their engagement in these behaviors, students recognized the lack of tangible benefits from substance use. They reported no improvement in academic motivation or family relationships, indicating that substance use may serve more as a coping mechanism or social tool rather than contributing to personal development or well-being. This dissonance suggests that while students may recognize the negative impacts of substance use, they remain susceptible to social pressures and environmental influences.

The study's findings are both alarming and informative, highlighting the prevalence of substance use among adolescents and the complex interplay of social and developmental factors driving these behaviors. The increasing rates of engagement among older students, coupled with the influence of external peer groups, underscore the urgent need for comprehensive intervention strategies. Schools, families, and communities must work collaboratively to provide targeted education, strengthen social support systems, and implement monitoring mechanisms to mitigate these risks. Addressing these issues holistically is critical in fostering a safer and healthier environment for students to thrive academically and personally. These incidents illustrate the alarming reality of substance addiction in schools and the necessity for enhanced security measures and proactive educational efforts. They serve as a wake-up call for educators and policymakers to reinforce anti-drug initiatives and improve safety protocols within schools to ensure a secure learning environment for all students. Schools must take a proactive stance by implementing not only stricter regulations but also supportive measures that encourage open dialogue about substance use, mental health, and coping strategies.

The effects of substance addiction are profound, affecting not only the individuals involved but also the broader school community. Students who engage in substance use often experience lower academic performance, increased dropout rates, and impaired cognitive functions. This can hinder their ability to learn effectively, contributing to long-term academic challenges. Substance use is also linked to risky behaviors, health complications, and legal issues, which can have long-lasting repercussions on students' futures (Turnbridge, n.d.). This situation creates a cycle of disadvantage, where students who struggle academically due to substance use may be more likely to drop out, thus perpetuating a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities.

The ramifications of substance addiction extend beyond academic challenges, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive support systems for affected students. Understanding the full scope of these effects is crucial for developing effective interventions that can help mitigate the long-term consequences of substance use and foster healthier school environments. Schools must not only focus on prevention but also provide support for those already affected, ensuring that all students have access to the resources they need to thrive.

Counselors play a crucial role in addressing substance addiction among students through various strategies. They often integrate substance addiction education into the school curriculum, focusing on character development, peer pressure, and healthy coping mechanisms. Counselors are trained to recognize risk factors for substance addiction, such as low socioeconomic status, family history of substance use, and peer influence, allowing them to tailor interventions for at-risk students (Allen, 2019). This proactive approach is essential, as early intervention can significantly alter the trajectory of a student's

life, steering them away from potential substance misuse and towards healthier choices.

The proactive approach taken by counselors is vital in preventing substance addiction and addressing the unique needs of students at risk. Their ability to recognize underlying factors contributes significantly to developing targeted interventions that can effectively support at-risk youth and promote overall student well-being. However, the effectiveness of counseling efforts can be hampered by the stigma surrounding substance use, which may prevent students from seeking help or being honest about their struggles.

Counselors provide one-on-one support for students struggling with substance use, discussing available resources, therapy options, and community support services (Allen, 2019). Small group sessions can also be effective, allowing students to share experiences and promote healthy decision-making and coping strategies (Kelly et al., 2024). Additionally, counselors are vital in involving parents in prevention efforts. They can organize workshops to educate parents about the signs of substance use and effective intervention strategies, fostering open communication between families and schools to create a supportive environment for students. The partnership between schools and families is crucial in reinforcing the message that substance use is a serious issue that requires attention and action.

The comprehensive support offered by counselors, including parental involvement and community resources, is crucial for fostering a healthy school environment. Their efforts can facilitate a collaborative approach to substance addiction prevention, reinforcing the importance of communication and support systems both at school and home. Programs like Making Choices and Reducing Risk (MCARR) utilize evidence-based approaches to educate students about the risks associated with substance use while promoting healthy choices. Counselors assess the impact of prevention programs by tracking student attitudes and behaviors regarding substance use over time, refining their approaches to improve outcomes (Kelly et al., 2024).

Evidence-based programs like MCARR exemplify effective strategies for educating students about substance use risks. By continuously assessing and refining these programs, counselors can ensure they remain relevant and impactful in addressing the changing landscape of substance addiction among students. This commitment to ongoing evaluation is essential for creating a responsive approach to substance addiction prevention, ensuring that strategies evolve in line with emerging trends and issues.

School counselors are essential in combating substance addiction among high school students. Through education, individualized support, parental involvement, community collaboration, and evidence-based interventions, they play a pivotal role in fostering a healthier school environment. Their efforts not only address immediate concerns but also contribute to long-term positive outcomes for students' mental health and well-being. The multifaceted approach adopted by counselors is critical in creating a supportive environment that promotes student health and well-being. Their role is vital in both immediate interventions and long-term prevention strategies, ultimately shaping a healthier future for students.

The necessity for a comprehensive, integrated approach to substance addiction prevention and intervention cannot be overstated. As the landscape of substance use continues to evolve, so too must the strategies employed by educators, counselors, and policymakers. Only through collaboration, education, and a commitment to addressing the underlying issues that contribute to substance addiction can we hope to mitigate this pervasive issue and create safer, healthier environments for future generations.

The journey from addiction to recovery for students grappling with substance addiction is complex and often fraught with challenges. School counselors are uniquely positioned to guide students through this difficult transition, providing crucial support that addresses both the emotional and practical aspects of recovery. They play an integral role in creating individualized recovery plans that encompass therapeutic

interventions, academic accommodations, and ongoing support systems. Counselors help students develop essential coping strategies and life skills, fostering resilience and promoting a sense of agency over their recovery journey. By cultivating a safe and non-judgmental environment, counselors encourage open communication, enabling students to express their struggles and seek help without fear of stigma. Furthermore, their involvement can extend to collaborating with families, healthcare providers, and community organizations to ensure a comprehensive support network that surrounds the student. In essence, school counselors serve not only as advocates for students but also as catalysts for change, helping students navigate the path from addiction to recovery and empowering them to reclaim their lives, succeed academically, and build a brighter future. The critical role that school counselors play in this process emphasizes the need for schools to prioritize mental health and substance addiction prevention, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive.

Statement of the Objectives

This study aimed to critically examine the role of school counselors in addressing substance addiction among students. The study sought to address the following questions:

1. To describe the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, and years of experience as school counselors.
2. To reveal various substances that counselors identify as being commonly used by students.
3. To reveal the factors that school counselors find to contribute to substance addiction among students.
4. To describe the intervention strategies implemented by school counselors to address substance addiction.
5. To evaluate the outcomes of the interventions in reducing substance addiction and improving student well-being.
6. To reveal the barriers encountered by school counselors in effectively addressing substance addiction among students.
7. To propose a possible plan of action for enhancing the role and effectiveness of school counselors in preventing and addressing substance addiction among students.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, which emphasizes the influence of multiple environmental systems on a child's development, including the family, school, peer group, and larger community. This theory posits that a child's behavior is shaped by various interconnected layers, beginning with the immediate environments they interact with daily, known as the microsystem (e.g., family, friends, school environment), and extending to broader societal influences, known as the macrosystem, which includes cultural values, societal norms, and economic conditions. Additionally, the theory considers the mesosystem, which encompasses interactions between different microsystems, such as family and school, and the exosystem, which includes external factors that indirectly affect the child, such as a parent's workplace.

Ecological Systems Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding substance addiction behaviors among students by recognizing the dynamic and reciprocal interactions among these systems. For school counselors, this framework encourages a more holistic perspective that considers not only individual risk factors but also broader environmental influences, such as family dynamics, peer relationships, school culture, and community resources or challenges. This approach allows counselors to appreciate how each system interacts and how pressures or support from one system can impact others, affecting the student's behavior and choices.

By using Ecological Systems Theory as a guiding framework, counselors can better understand the complex interplay of factors that may contribute to substance addiction. It enables them to design and implement interventions that are tailored to address the specific needs of students by considering both individual circumstances and broader contextual influences. This comprehensive and systems-oriented approach ultimately supports healthier outcomes, reduces substance addiction risks, and fosters a more supportive environment within the school setting, where students can make safer and more positive life choices.

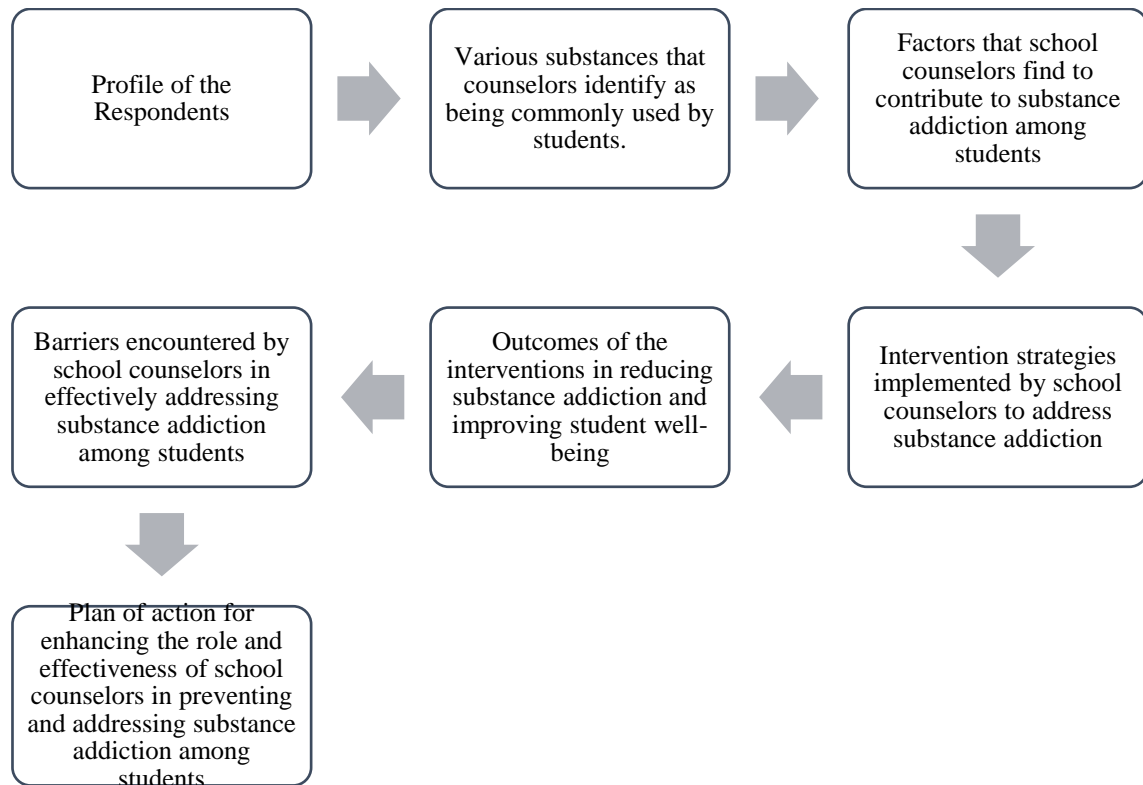


Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

The study utilized semi-structured interviews to gather detailed information on the role of school counselors in addressing substance addiction among students. First, the study will describe the profile of the respondents, focusing on age, gender, and years of experience as school counselors. Structured interview questions will be used to gather demographic information consistently from each participant, allowing for a comprehensive profile of the counselors involved. The structured interviews will then explore the substances that counselors most commonly encounter among students, with questions designed to prompt counselors to identify and discuss specific substances they observe among the student population. This will provide an understanding of the types and frequency of substances most often encountered. Next, the interviews will include questions about the factors that counselors believe contribute to substance addiction among students. Counselors will be prompted to identify social, familial, and environmental influences that they consider to be significant risk factors. Following this, the study will gather information on the intervention strategies implemented by counselors to address substance addiction, with questions ensuring that all participants describe their approaches and techniques in a standardized manner. The effectiveness of these interventions will be evaluated through questions that

prompt counselors to share their observations on the outcomes, particularly focusing on reductions in substance addiction and improvements in student well-being. Additionally, the structured interviews will identify barriers counselors encounter when addressing substance addiction, with questions addressing challenges like limited resources, time constraints, and lack of parental involvement. Finally, based on the counselors' responses, the researcher will synthesize a plan of action to enhance the effectiveness of school-based substance addiction prevention and intervention. This plan will draw from the insights provided by counselors, aiming to strengthen support systems, resources, and strategies that promote healthier outcomes for students in the school setting.

2. METHODS

This section outlines the methodological framework utilized in the study. It describes the research design, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis techniques employed.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to assess the role of school counselors in addressing substance addiction among students. Qualitative research was particularly effective in exploring complex social phenomena, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of school counselors as they navigated the intricate landscape of substance addiction issues in educational settings. By employing this approach, the research captured the subtleties of counselors' perceptions, attitudes, and practices, revealing how they interpreted and responded to the multifaceted challenges posed by substance addiction among students. This design facilitated in-depth discussions and enabled the identification of themes and patterns that informed the development of more effective counseling strategies, tailored interventions, and holistic support systems to address the needs of students grappling with substance addiction.

Research Locale

The study was conducted across various schools within the Tarlac City Schools Division and the Division of Tarlac Province, intentionally including both urban and rural educational institutions. This selection aimed to capture diverse contexts, examining how factors such as socioeconomic status, availability of community resources, and cultural attitudes toward substance use influenced the work of school counselors. By incorporating both settings, the research provided a holistic understanding of the factors contributing to substance addiction among students and the strategies employed by school counselors to address these challenges.

Research Participants

The respondents for this study were 10 registered guidance counselors from high schools within the Tarlac City Schools Division and Division of Tarlac Province. This targeted selection included counselors with varied levels of experience, educational backgrounds, and familiarity with the communities they served. This diversity was essential for capturing a broad range of perspectives on substance addiction issues. The counselors' insights provided valuable information on the types of substances commonly abused, the contexts in which these substances were used, and the implications of these observations for counseling practices. This multi-faceted approach facilitated a deeper understanding of how counselors' experiences shaped their strategies and responses to substance addiction among students, emphasizing the importance of culturally and contextually relevant interventions.

Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was designed to facilitate in-depth discussions with participating counselors. This guide included open-ended questions to encourage counselors to share their experiences,

perceptions, and practices related to substance addiction issues. The instrument focused on three key areas: First, it addressed the various substances commonly used by students. Counselors were asked to identify substances they believed were most frequently abused by their students, including alcohol, marijuana, synthetic drugs, e-cigarettes, and prescription medications. This inquiry aimed to understand the specific challenges counselors face within their schools and the implications these challenges have for intervention strategies. Insights into the types and prevalence of substance use informed the development of targeted prevention and intervention efforts tailored to students' needs.

The second focus area explored the factors counselors identified as contributing to substance addiction among students. This aspect of the research investigated peer pressure, mental health issues, socioeconomic challenges, family dynamics, and cultural attitudes toward substance use. Understanding these underlying causes was critical for developing comprehensive interventions that address both the symptoms and root causes of substance addiction, fostering a more holistic approach to student well-being. Finally, the instrument examined the barriers counselors encountered in providing effective support for students struggling with substance addiction. These barriers included insufficient training in addiction counseling, lack of resources or support services, stigma surrounding substance use, and challenges in engaging parents and the community. Identifying these obstacles was essential for informing recommendations to improve counseling practices and strengthen the support systems available to students grappling with substance addiction.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure for this study commenced with the submission of a formal permission letter to the Schools Division Superintendent of Tarlac Province and Tarlac City Schools Division. The process began with questions about the counselors' demographic backgrounds, including their age, gender, and years of experience. This initial section established a clear profile of each participant, providing essential context for their perspectives on substance addiction issues in their specific school environments.

The next part of the interview focused on the types of substances counselors commonly encountered among students. Participants were asked to identify specific substances, such as alcohol, marijuana, synthetic drugs, e-cigarettes, and prescription medications, and discuss their prevalence and patterns of use within the school setting. Follow-up questions explored trends or emerging concerns, providing insights into the substance-related challenges counselors faced and informing prevention and intervention strategies.

The interview then shifted to factors contributing to substance addiction among students. Counselors were encouraged to discuss influences such as peer pressure, mental health challenges, family dynamics, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural attitudes toward substance use. This section aimed to uncover the root causes driving substance use, offering a foundation for comprehensive intervention programs that address underlying issues rather than just the symptoms of substance abuse.

Following this, participants described the specific intervention strategies they used to address substance addiction. The researcher explored various approaches, including individual counseling methods, school programs, collaborations with support staff, and community partnerships. Additional questions focused on how interventions were tailored to meet the unique needs of at-risk students, providing a detailed view of the strategies currently employed in schools and identifying potential gaps or areas for improvement.

The interviews also examined the outcomes of these interventions, focusing on their effectiveness in reducing substance use and enhancing student well-being. Counselors shared observations, success stories, and examples of measurable improvements in students' behaviors and attitudes toward substance use. This

section highlighted effective practices and areas where interventions might need to be refined or expanded. Barriers to providing effective support were also discussed. Counselors detailed challenges such as limited resources, inadequate training, stigma surrounding substance use, and difficulties in engaging parents and the school community. These systemic obstacles were further explored to understand their impact on the ability of counselors to offer comprehensive support to students struggling with substance addiction.

Finally, the data collected informed a proposed plan of action to strengthen the role of school counselors in preventing and addressing substance addiction. This plan, grounded in the insights provided by participants, aimed to enhance preventative measures and intervention strategies, ensuring they are more effective and responsive to the needs of student populations. The comprehensive nature of the interview guide ensured that the data collected was relevant and directly aligned with the study's goal of improving support systems for students facing substance addiction.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis involved a multi-step approach that emphasized rigor and reflexivity, ensuring the credibility of the qualitative research process. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to accurately capture the participants' words, sentiments, and nuances. After transcription, the data underwent thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes related to counselors' experiences and perceptions regarding substance addiction.

This process was not merely technical but required critical engagement with the data. The researcher remained reflexive throughout, carefully acknowledging and addressing personal biases or preconceptions that could influence interpretation. This reflexivity was vital for maintaining the authenticity and validity of the findings. Additionally, the analysis considered broader social, cultural, and political contexts that influence substance use and counseling practices in schools. By contextualizing the findings, the analysis highlighted how systemic factors—such as resource availability, community attitudes toward substance use, and educational policies—shape counselors' abilities to support students effectively. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies associated with addressing substance addiction in school settings.

The process of conducting thematic analysis involves the following steps:

1. Familiarize Yourself with Your Data

The researcher begins by thoroughly reading and rereading the data to develop a deep understanding. During this process, the researcher notes recurring ideas, patterns, or significant points, ensuring familiarity with the dataset before moving forward.

2. Generate Initial Codes

The researcher breaks the data into smaller, meaningful units by assigning descriptive labels or "codes" to key segments of text. These codes help organize the data systematically, forming the basis for identifying broader patterns later in the analysis.

3. Search for Themes

The researcher identifies overarching themes by grouping similar codes together. This process involves analyzing relationships between codes and refining them into cohesive themes that effectively address the research question.

4. Prepare the Report

The researcher compiles the findings into a structured report, presenting each theme alongside supporting evidence from the data. The report highlights how the themes answer the research question and situates the findings within the study's broader context.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and analyzes the findings of the study, including the profile of guidance counselors, the substances commonly used by students, the factors contributing to substance addiction, the strategies implemented by school counselors, the effectiveness of these interventions, the barriers encountered, and the proposed action plan to address these issues.

3.1. Profile of the Respondents

Understanding their profiles is essential as it provides context for analyzing their qualifications, experiences, and perspectives, which may influence their roles and contributions to the study. Additionally, examining aspects such as age, education, and years of experience helps establish a clearer connection between their professional background and the research outcomes, ensuring the findings are both valid and representative of the target population.

3.1.1. Age

It has been said that therapy does not have an age limit unlike counseling. However, this study identifies the age of counselors as a significant variable to consider when addressing substance addiction issues which can vary depending on the student's age, needs and school environment. This may play a crucial role in facilitating solutions to these issues among students.

Table 1. Age

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
51-60	1	10.00
41-50	3	30.00
31-40	5	50.00
20-30	1	10.00
Total	10	100.00

Table 1 shows the age distribution of guidance counselors, with the highest representation in the 31-40 age bracket (50%), followed by the 41-50 age bracket (30%). Both the 20-30 and 51-60 age brackets account for the lowest representation, each at 10%.

As reported by Zippia (n.d.), school guidance counselors have an average age of 41 years, with roughly 55% being over 40. This indicates that a large proportion of counselors are in their middle age, emphasizing the level of experience and stability commonly valued in this profession.

3.1.2. Gender

It has been observed that gender plays a role in various aspects of counseling, much like other personal attributes. This study highlights the gender distribution of counselors as a significant variable to consider in understanding representation and its potential impact on addressing students' issues effectively.

Table 2. Gender

Gender Identity	Frequency	Percentage
Female	8	80.00
Male	2	20.00
Total	10	100.00

Table 2 presents the gender distribution of guidance counselors. The majority are female (80%), with males (20%) representing a smaller proportion.

According to Zippia (n.d.) 75.3% of school guidance counselors are women, while 24.7% are men, indicating a significant gender imbalance in the profession.

3.1.3. Years of Service

Experience is often considered a vital aspect of effective counseling. This study emphasizes the years of service of guidance counselors as a significant variable, underscoring how their level of experience may influence their ability to address substance addiction issues among students.

Table 3. Years of Service

Years of Service	Frequency	Percentage
11 to 20 years	3	30.00
1 to 10 years	7	70.00
Total	10	100.00

Table 3 shows the distribution of guidance counselors based on their years of service. The majority have served for 1 to 10 years (70%), while a smaller proportion have 11 to 20 years of service (30%).

According to Zippia (n.d.), tenure statistics reveal that a significant portion of guidance counselors are relatively new to the profession, with 18% having less than one year of experience and 26% with one to two years, totaling over 44% with less than three years in the role. Meanwhile, 19% have over 11 years of experience, demonstrating a balance of both newcomers and seasoned professionals within the field.

3.2. Substances Commonly Used by Students

This section presents the substances commonly used by students based on the findings, highlighting trends and patterns observed through the study.

Johnston et al. (2020) identified alcohol and tobacco as the most commonly used substances among adolescents and young adults, especially in academic settings where peer pressure and social interactions play a significant role. Alcohol is often linked to social and cultural norms, while tobacco, including vaping, remains normalized despite known health risks. Degenhardt et al. (2016) observed a rising trend in marijuana use, driven by changing social norms and perceptions of reduced harm, particularly in areas with legalization. Lee et al. (2017) emphasized that stress, academic pressures, and mental health challenges often contribute to substance use as a coping mechanism. These findings align with current research trends, highlighting the need for targeted interventions addressing substance availability and the underlying psychological and social factors influencing student behaviors. By tackling these root causes, educational institutions and policymakers can work toward reducing substance use and promoting healthier behaviors among students.

Table 4. Substances Commonly Used by Students

Question: What is/are the substance/s commonly used by students?			
Participa	Key Points	Codes	Category

nts ID			
RGC F1	"Ang pinaka-madalas naming nakikita ngayon ay vape. Uso kasi ito, at iniisip ng mga bata na harmless dahil hindi ito amoy sigarilyo at may iba't ibang flavors."	E-cigarette/Vape usage	Nicotine Use
RGC M1	"Alak ang pinaka-accessible substance para sa mga kabataan, lalo na sa mga gatherings. Madali nilang makuha kahit sa convenience stores."	Alcohol accessibility	Alcohol Use
RGC F2	"Curious ang mga estudyante sa vape dahil akala nila mas safe ito kaysa sigarilyo. Ang alak naman, normal na sa family gatherings kaya nasisisimulan ng maaga."	Vape curiosity, Family drinking	Nicotine Use and Alcohol Use
RGC F3	"Stress sa academics ang madalas nilang rason kung bakit sila gumagamit ng vape o umiinom ng alak. Minsan, parents pa ang nag-e-expose sa kanila sa bahay."	Parental influence of vape and alcohol	Nicotine and Alcohol Use
RGC F4	"Napakadaling makabili ng vape at alcohol, lalo na sa online shops na walang age verification at sa convenience stores na hindi nagche-check ng ID."	Easy access of vapes and alcoholic drinks	Nicotine and Alcohol Use
RGC M2	"Ang peer pressure talaga ang pinakamalaking factor. Gusto nilang tanggapin ng barkada kaya napapasama sila sa paggamit lalo na ng vape kasi cool daw"	Social pressure of using vape	Nicotine Use
RGC F5	"Maraming students ang nagsisimula sa social drinking. Sa una, special occasions lang, pero tumatagal, nagiging regular na habit."	Social drinking	Alcohol Use
RGC F6	"Ang flavors ng vape ang dahilan kung bakit nahuhumaling ang students. Kaya parang harmless ito sa paningin nila."	Vape flavors	Nicotine Use
RGC F7	"Nakikita namin na ang alak at vape ay normal na para sa ibang kabataan, lalo na kung ito ang nakikita nila sa kanilang community."	Community influence of vaping and alcohol drinking	Nicotine and Alcohol Use
RGC F8	"Ang family environment ang madalas na nagiging dahilan. Kapag exposed sila sa bahay, mas nagiging curious sila. For example, yung batang pumasok na lasing kasi kainuman pala niya pati tito niya."	Family members drinking alcohol	Alcohol Use

THEME: Nicotine and Alcohol Use

Table 4 shows that alcohol and nicotine use, particularly through vaping/e-cigarette, are identified as the most commonly used substances among students.

Based on the interviews, several social, environmental, and psychological factors contribute to this trend. Vaping, as a form of nicotine use, is seen as especially prevalent among students because of its perceived safety compared to traditional cigarettes. Many students believe that vaping is harmless due to its lack of

a strong odor, its appealing flavors, and its reputation as a "modern" alternative to smoking. These factors, combined with the ease of access to vaping products through online stores and convenience shops that often neglect age verification, make vaping highly accessible to students. Peer pressure also plays a significant role, as students report feeling compelled to vape to fit in socially or to appear "cool" among their peers. Additionally, many students turn to vaping as a way to cope with academic stress, further normalizing its use in their daily lives.

On the other hand, counselors say that alcohol use, is influenced by accessibility and normalization in family and social settings. According to the interviews, many students are introduced to alcohol during family gatherings, where drinking is often viewed as a normal part of celebrations. This early exposure sometimes leads to a progression from occasional social drinking to more regular use as students grow older. Stress is another key factor, with some students using alcohol as a way to manage the pressures of academics or personal challenges. The influence of family dynamics is particularly significant, as students who see their parents or other family members drinking regularly are more likely to adopt similar behaviors. Community norms further reinforce the acceptability of both vaping and drinking, making these habits seem like a standard part of social life for many young people.

Republic Act No. 9211, known as the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003, prohibits the sale and distribution of tobacco products within 100 meters from the perimeter of schools, public playgrounds, and other facilities frequented by minors. This law aims to restrict minors' access to tobacco products and reduce exposure to tobacco advertising and promotions near educational institutions. (PhilStar, 2016)

Despite these regulations, enforcement challenges persist. Studies have found that tobacco and nicotine product sales and advertising continue near schools, indicating the need for stricter enforcement and community awareness to protect students from substance exposure. (Institute for Global Tobacco Control, 2023)

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA, 2018), male high school students were more likely than females to engage in alcohol and nicotine use. For alcohol consumption, 18.6% of males reported having been drunk at least once in their lives compared to 14.4% of females. Additionally, more male students (61.6%) drank alcohol with friends compared to females (57.7%). Male students also reported higher exposure to alcohol advertisements on TV (37.1% vs. 32.8%) and were more likely to have tried alcohol before the age of 14 (68.9% vs. 64.9%).

In terms of nicotine use, male students consistently reported higher rates than females across various measures. Among those who smoked cigarettes prior to the survey, 15.8% were male compared to 8.6% female. Similarly, male students reported higher use of any nicotine product (18.4% vs. 11%) and nearly tripled the female rate in the use of all nicotine products combined (27.6% vs. 8.1%). Males also had a higher rate of second-hand smoke exposure (63%) compared to females (51.8%). Despite these figures, a significant majority of all surveyed students (87.9%) reported having attempted to quit smoking, reflecting some awareness of the risks associated with tobacco use.

Regarding alcohol use, 20% of male students and 16.6% of female students reported drinking alcohol prior to the survey, further emphasizing the prevalence of substance use among high school students. Males consistently demonstrated higher involvement in both nicotine and alcohol use compared to their female counterparts. These gender differences may stem from a combination of societal expectations, greater access to substances, and differing coping strategies for stress or peer influence.

These findings align with the current study's results, which identified alcohol and nicotine as the most commonly used substances among students. Contributing factors include early exposure, peer pressure,

and the normalization of these substances within family and community environments. Male students, in particular, exhibit higher levels of engagement, often linked to early initiation, higher consumption rates, and greater exposure to substances and their advertising..

These trends are supported by research from Sussman et al. (2021), which examined substance use behaviors in adolescents and found that males were more likely than females to engage in risky substance-related behaviors, including higher rates of tobacco and alcohol use. The study also noted that male students often experience stronger peer influences to engage in substance use and are more likely to report positive attitudes toward these substances due to social reinforcement.

3.3.Factors Contributing to Substance Addiction Among Students

This section examines the various factors that lead to substance addiction among students. These factors are identified based on the findings of the study and provide insights into the underlying social, psychological, and environmental influences contributing to the issue.

Table 5. Factors Contributing to Substance Addiction Among Students

Question: Why do you think students get addicted to substance/s?			
Participants ID	Key Points	Codes	Category
RGC F1	"Peer pressure talaga ang pinakamalaking factor. Ayaw nilang ma-left out kaya sumasama sila sa uso, lalo na ang vaping."	Peer Pressure	Social and Environmental Influence
RGC M1	"Ang social media at influencers ay nagpo-promote bilang cool at harmless, kaya naakit ang mga estudyante."	Social Media Influence	Social and Environmental Influence
RGC F2	"Curiosity ang malaking dahilan. Gusto nilang subukan ang mga bagong bagay, lalo na kung uso ito sa kanilang mga kaibigan."	Curiosity about substances	Curiosity and Self-Image
RGC F3	"Stress sa academics, lalo na kung mataas ang expectations ng pamilya, nagiging dahilan kung bakit naghahanap sila ng escape."	Academic stress	Stress and Coping Mechanisms
RGC F4	"Minsan, ang sariling pamilya pa ang nagiging factor. Kapag nakikita ng bata na umiinom or naninigarilyo or nagve-vape ang magulang, iniisip nilang normal lang ito."	Family Influence	Social and Environmental Influence
RGC M2	"Ang availability ng substances, lalo na online, ay isang malaking problema. Madali nilang makuha kahit minors sila."	Easy availability of Substances	Social and Environmental Influence
RGC F5	"Nakikita namin na ang mga bata ay nagiging dependent dahil wala silang ibang coping mechanisms."	Coping Mechanism	Stress and Coping Mechanisms
RGC F6	"May mga bata na sinasabing mas confident or cool daw sila kapag gumagamit ng vape"	Boost in Confidence	Curiosity and Self-Image

RGC F7	"Ang pakiramdam na kailangang sumunod sa uso ay isang malaking factor sa addiction ng mga bata."	Trend Conformity	Social and Environmental Influence
RGC F8	"Kapag kulang ang guidance mula sa adults, mas madali silang maimpluwensyahan ng kaibigan at media."	Lack of Adult Guidance	Social and Environmental Influence

THEME: Social Influence, Stress And Inadequate Coping Mechanism Lead Students To Explore Substance Use

Table 5 shows that the overall theme surrounding factors contributing to substance addiction among students highlights social influence, stress and inadequate coping mechanisms as the primary drivers.

The interview shows that social and environmental influences play a significant role, with peer pressure emerging as a key factor. Many students feel compelled to use substances like vape or alcohol to fit in with their social groups or keep up with trends. Social media and influencers further amplify this by portraying substance use as trendy, harmless, or desirable. Family influence is another critical factor, as students who see parents or relatives using substances often perceive such behavior as normal and acceptable. Additionally, the easy availability of substances, especially online, makes access simple, even for minors, exacerbating the problem. The lack of adult guidance also leaves students vulnerable to the influences of peers and media, with little resistance or support to counter these pressures.

Furthermore, curiosity and the desire to enhance self-image also drive substance use among students. Many are motivated to experiment with substances out of a desire to try something new, especially when such behavior is popular among peers. Others believe that using substances, like vaping, boosts their confidence or enhances their social appeal, making it more attractive. Stress and inadequate coping mechanisms further contribute to substance addiction. Academic stress, often stemming from high family expectations, pushes some students to seek relief through substances. The lack of healthier alternatives for managing stress or negative emotions makes substances an easy, though harmful, outlet. Over time, this reliance can lead to dependency.

According to Stallman et al. (2020), students often resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms when faced with stress, which can have significant consequences for their mental health and behavior. These maladaptive strategies, such as social withdrawal or emotional eating, frequently contribute to the development of anxiety and depression. To escape these overwhelming emotions, many students turn to substances like alcohol and nicotine as a temporary form of relief. Alcohol and nicotine, often perceived as quick fixes for managing stress, provide an immediate sense of comfort or escape. However, this reliance on substances can lead to a cycle of dependency, further exacerbating the mental health issues they were intended to alleviate. The use of these substances as coping mechanisms reflects not only individual struggles but also gaps in providing healthier alternatives for stress management among students.

This observation aligns with the findings of the current study, which highlights the prevalence of alcohol and nicotine use among students, often driven by inadequate coping mechanisms. The connection between stress, unhealthy coping strategies, and substance use underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of these behaviors.

3.4.Strategies Implemented by School Counselors to Address Substance Addiction

This portion examines the strategies employed by school counselors to address substance addiction among students, emphasizing their critical role in mitigating substance use and fostering healthier behaviors. Counselors utilize a variety of approaches, including prevention programs, individual and group counseling sessions, and collaboration with families and community organizations. These strategies are designed to identify at-risk students early, provide tailored interventions, and create a supportive environment that discourages substance use. Additionally, this section highlights evidence-based practices, such as cognitive-behavioral techniques, peer mentoring programs, and educational campaigns, aimed at equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to make informed decisions and resist peer pressure. Through these comprehensive efforts, counselors play a pivotal role in addressing the root causes of substance use and supporting students on their path to recovery and personal growth.

Table 6. Strategies Implemented by School Counselors to Address Substance Addiction

Question: What strategies do you implement to address substance addiction?			
Partici pants ID	Key Points	Codes	Category
RGC F1	"Nagbibigay kami ng individual counseling para matulungan ang bata na maintindihan ang ugat ng problema."	Individual counseling	Individualized Interventions
RGC M1	"Nagpapa-seminar kami tungkol sa dangers ng substance use, pati para sa mga magulang."	Awareness seminars	Community and Family Engagement
RGC F2	"We encourage peer mentors para magsilbing role models ng ibang students."	Peer mentorship	Supportive and Preventive Measures
RGC F3	"Nagpapasimula kami ng extracurricular programs tulad ng sports para mabawasan ang oras nila sa paggamit."	Extracurricular activities	Supportive and Preventive Measures
RGC F4	"Nakikipag-usap kami sa mga magulang para malaman ang full context ng behavior ng bata."	Parental collaboration	Community and Family Engagement
RGC M2	"Kapag malala na ang case, nire-refer namin sila sa professionals tulad ng psychologists."	Referral to professionals	Individualized Interventions
RGC F5	"We use behavior contracts para matulungan silang ma-track ang kanilang progress at ma-motivate magbago."	Behavior contracts	Individualized Interventions
RGC F6	"Counseling tapos may mga regular follow-up sessions kami para siguraduhing sumusunod sila sa intervention plans."	Follow-up sessions	Individualized Interventions
RGC F7	"We collaborate with barangays at community officials para i-regulate ang pagbebenta ng vape at alcohol."	Community	Community and Family Engagement

		collaborati on	
RGC F8	"Nakakakita kami ng magandang epekto kapag may support groups kung saan nagkakabuklod ang mga students sa kanilang struggles."	Support groups	Supportive and Preventive Measures

THEME: Individualized Intervention, Peer and Community Support

Table 6 shows that school counselors implement a range of strategies to address substance addiction among students, focusing on individual interventions, peer and community support.

Individualized approaches are central to these efforts, with counselors providing one-on-one counseling to help students understand the root causes of their behavior. For severe cases, referrals to psychologists or other professionals are made to ensure students receive specialized care. Counselors also utilize behavior contracts to track progress and motivate students toward positive change. Regular follow-up sessions are conducted to monitor compliance with intervention plans and reinforce support over time.

Peer support plays a vital role in preventive measures. Counselors encourage peer mentorship programs, where students who exhibit positive behaviors act as role models for their peers. Support groups are also established, creating safe spaces for students to share their struggles and build solidarity with others facing similar challenges. Preventive strategies extend to organizing extracurricular programs, such as sports, to engage students in productive activities and reduce their exposure to substance use.

Community and family engagement are also integral components of these strategies. Counselors organize awareness seminars on the dangers of substance use, targeting both students and parents. Collaborating with parents helps provide a full understanding of the student’s context, ensuring that interventions address both school and home environments. Additionally, partnerships with barangay and community officials are initiated to regulate the sale of substances like vape and alcohol, addressing the issue at its source.

According to Worthen (2019), effective counseling starts with building strong, trusting relationships between counselors and students. This foundation enables counselors to identify individual risk factors, academic needs, and personal challenges that may lead to substance use, allowing them to design tailored interventions. Additionally, engaging parents in the prevention process is crucial. By facilitating communication between students and their families, counselors can foster a supportive home environment that encourages positive behaviors and addresses underlying issues contributing to substance use.

Similarly, Allen (2019) emphasizes the importance of peer influence in shaping students' decisions. School counselors can implement peer mentoring initiatives where older or more experienced students guide younger peers in making healthy choices. This approach leverages the power of peer relationships to encourage substance-free lifestyles and promote positive habits.

These findings align with the current study's emphasis on individualized interventions and peer support as effective strategies for addressing substance use among students. Trust-based counselor-student relationships, parental involvement, and peer mentoring provide a multi-faceted framework for tackling substance addiction. These strategies not only target the root causes of substance use but also create a supportive network within the school and home environments, reinforcing the effectiveness of school-based interventions in fostering behavioral change and promoting healthier choices among students.

3.5. Outcomes of the Interventions

This section outlines the outcomes of the interventions implemented by school counselors to address sub-

stance addiction among students. It examines how these strategies have impacted student overall well-being. This section aims to highlight successes in reducing substance use and promoting healthier choices among students. Understanding these outcomes is essential for refining current practices and developing more effective support systems for students struggling with substance addiction.

Table 7. Outcomes of the Interventions

Question: How effective have these interventions been in reducing substance addiction or improving student well-being?			
Participants ID	Key Points	Codes	Category
RGC F1	“Natutulungan ang mga estudyante na maintindihan ang ugat ng kanilang problema at makahanap ng mas healthy na coping mechanisms.”	Self-awareness and coping skills	Improved Emotional Resilience
RGC M1	“Naa-address ang lack of awareness sa dangers ng substance use, kaya nagbabago ang pananaw ng students at parents. Pero hindi lahat ng parents ay nakakadalo dahil busy sa trabaho o malayo sa school, kaya limited din ang impact ng seminar.”	Increased awareness of substance dangers	Enhanced Awareness and Education
RGC F2	“Epektibo ito para sa mga students na naiimpluwensyahan ng mga kaedad. Nakikita nila ang peer mentors bilang role models.”	Positive peer influence fostering accountability	Strengthened Support Systems
RGC F3	“Napalitan ang idle time ng students ng productive activities tulad ng sports, na nagpapabawas sa paggamit nila ng substances. Bukod sa health benefits, nade-develop din ang self-confidence at teamwork nila.”	Improved self-confidence	Improved Emotional Resilience
RGC F4	“Kapag involved ang parents, nagiging mas malawak ang support system ng bata. Pero sa public schools, maraming magulang ang hindi makapaglaan ng oras dahil sa trabaho o kakulangan ng kaalaman tungkol sa substance addiction. Ang follow-through sa bahay ay madalas nagiging issue rin.”	Stronger family support	Strengthened Support Systems
RGC M2	“Kapag malala ang case, ang referral sa psychologists ay malaking tulong para sa mas focused na intervention. Pero sa public schools, bihira ito dahil kulang ang	Psychologists’ support	Improved Emotional Resilience

	access sa psychologists at mahal ang therapy, na hindi kayang suportahan ng maraming pamilya.”		
RGC F5	“Nakakatulong ang behavior contracts para ma-track ang progress ng students at ma-motivate silang magbago.”	Motivation for change	Improved Emotional Resilience
RGC F6	“Nagiging mas epektibo ang interventions kapag may follow-up sessions dahil na-mo-monitor kung sumusunod ang estudyante sa plans.”	Adherence to intervention plans	Improved Emotional Resilience
RGC F7	“Nababawasan ang availability ng substances tulad ng vape at alak kapag nakikipagtulungan ang school sa barangays at community officials lalo na kapag natutukan mabuti yung hindi pagtitinda ng sigarilyo, vape or alak malapit sa school.”	Reduced access to substances	Strengthened Support Systems
RGC F8	“Ang support groups ay nagbibigay ng safe space para sa students na mag-share ng struggles nila. Malaki ang epekto nito sa emotional well-being nila.”	Sense of belonging	Strengthened Support Systems

THEME: Emotional and Behavioral Change

Table 7 shows the interventions implemented by school counselors have effectively contributed to behavioral change among students, focusing on improving emotional resilience, enhancing awareness, and strengthening support systems.

Many students have developed greater self-awareness and healthier coping mechanisms, addressing the underlying causes of their substance use. Extracurricular activities, such as sports, have not only reduced idle time but also boosted students' self-confidence and teamwork skills. Behavior contracts and regular follow-up sessions have been instrumental in motivating students to stay committed to intervention plans. In more severe cases, referrals to psychologists have provided targeted support, though access to such services is limited in public schools due to financial constraints and lack of resources.

Awareness seminars have increased understanding of the dangers of substance use among students and parents, resulting in shifts in attitudes. However, the impact of these seminars is limited when parents cannot attend due to work commitments or distance from the school. Peer mentorship programs have been particularly effective, as role models from the same age group help promote accountability and positive behavioral changes among their peers. Strengthened support systems have also played a key role in these interventions. Parental involvement has expanded the safety net for students, though challenges such as time constraints and lack of knowledge about substance addiction can limit its effectiveness. Collaboration with barangays and community officials has reduced the accessibility of substances like vape and alcohol near schools, creating safer environments. Support groups have further provided students with a sense of belonging, offering a safe space to share struggles and build emotional well-being.

According to Betters-Bubon and Donohue, programs centered on education and awareness have been instrumental in reducing substance experimentation among students. These initiatives equip students with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, contributing to a decline in substance use. Additionally, schools that implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) have observed significant reductions in disciplinary incidents, demonstrating the effectiveness of structured interventions in fostering positive behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, students involved in counseling and peer support programs report enhanced emotional well-being, including increased feelings of safety and belonging, which are essential for their academic success.

These findings align with the current study's emphasis on strategies such as education, peer support, and counseling to address substance use. The observed reductions in substance experimentation, improved behavior, and enhanced emotional well-being underscore the importance of a holistic approach. Combining educational programs, structured behavioral interventions, and support systems not only addresses substance addiction but also creates a positive school environment that promotes healthy decision-making and overall student success.

3.6. Barriers Encountered

The challenges and obstacles explored in this area limit the effectiveness of interventions targeting substance addiction among students. It examines issues such as insufficient resources, lack of parental involvement, stigma surrounding addiction, and the pervasive influence of peer pressure and social media. Additionally, it highlights systemic barriers, including limited access to trained counselors and the need for more comprehensive support programs within schools. Understanding these barriers is crucial for addressing gaps in current strategies and ensuring that interventions can be more effectively implemented to support students struggling with substance addiction.

Table 8. Barriers Encountered

Question: What barriers do you face in providing comprehensive support for students with substance addiction issues?			
Participants ID	Key Points	Codes	Category
RGC F1	"Maraming magulang ang hindi tanggap na may problema ang anak nila."	Lack of parental acknowledgment	Family and Social Barriers
RGC M1	"Kulang ang resources ng school para makapagpatuloy ng mga programs."	Lack of school resources	Institutional Barriers
RGC F2	"Ang stigma ay dahilan kung bakit nahihirapan mag-open up ang mga bata."	Social Stigma	Family and Social Barriers
RGC F3	"Accessibility ng substances kahit minors sila ay malaking issue."	Easy access	Policy and Enforcement Challenges
RGC F4	"Kapag hindi cooperative ang pamilya, mahirap baguhin ang behavior ng bata."	Uncooperative parents	Family and Social Barriers

RGC M2	"Sobrang lakas ng social media at peer influence. Hindi ito madaling labanan."	Social Media influence	Family and Social Barriers
RGC F5	"Ang workload ng counselors sa school ay napakalaki, kaya hindi lahat natututukan."	High counselor workload	Institutional Barriers
RGC F6	"Minsan, hindi rin supportive ang ibang school staff, kaya hindi unified ang efforts namin."	Lack of school support	Institutional Barriers
RGC F7	"Ang enforcement ng rules sa pagbebenta ng vape at alcohol ay hindi consistent."	Easy access to Substances	Policy and Enforcement Challenges
RGC F8	"Ang environment ng bata tulad ng community ay nakaka-apekto sa effectiveness ng intervention."	Inconsistent policy enforcement	Policy and Enforcement Challenges

THEME: Social Stigma and Institutional Limitations Hinder Effective Counseling for Students

Table 8 shows the barriers to providing comprehensive support for students with substance addiction issues highlight systemic challenges rooted in family dynamics, institutional limitations, and inconsistent policy enforcement.

A major obstacle is the lack of parental acknowledgment of their child’s substance use, which hinders the effectiveness of interventions. Uncooperative families further complicate efforts to bring about behavioral changes at home, while social stigma prevents students from openly seeking help. The pervasive influence of peers and social media, which often glamorize substance use, adds another layer of difficulty for counselors attempting to counteract these messages.

Institutional barriers also pose significant challenges. Many schools lack the resources needed to sustain and expand intervention programs, and counselors often face overwhelming workloads, making it difficult to provide personalized support to students. A lack of cooperation and unified efforts among school staff further reduces the effectiveness of these initiatives. Additionally, policy enforcement is inconsistent, particularly concerning the sale of substances like vape and alcohol. Despite existing regulations, students can easily access these substances, undermining preventive measures. The broader community environment also plays a critical role, as some settings normalize substance use, further complicating intervention efforts.

These barriers reflect a systemic issue that requires coordinated action across families, schools, and communities. Addressing these challenges involves fostering greater parental engagement, increasing school resources and staff support, and enforcing substance-related policies more effectively. A collaborative and unified approach is essential to overcoming these obstacles and providing students with the comprehensive support they need to combat substance addiction.

According to Lander, Howsare, and Byrne (2013), many families lack a comprehensive understanding of Substance Use Disorders (SUD) and the available resources to address these issues. This gap in knowledge often results in inadequate responses to a child's substance use, delaying necessary interventions and support. Without awareness of the nature of SUD and appropriate solutions, families may struggle to pro-

vide the guidance and structure needed to address their child's substance use effectively. This aligns with the findings of the current study, which highlight family dynamics as a key factor influencing substance use among students. The study emphasizes the importance of involving parents in prevention and intervention efforts, including education about SUD and the resources available.

3.7. Proposed Action Plan

Project MELANIE: A model for a Substance-Free Future is a school-based initiative dedicated to the prevention of substance addiction among students. Primarily targeting nicotine and alcohol use, the program integrates educational interventions, advocacy efforts, and active engagement to enhance awareness and foster resilience. By cultivating a supportive and substance-free school environment, Project MELANIE aims to empower students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions and adopt healthier lifestyles.

Mission:

To educate, inspire, and empower students to resist nicotine and alcohol use through awareness, advocacy, and supportive school initiatives.

Vision:

A generation of students making informed, healthy decisions, free from the influence of nicotine and alcohol.

Objectives:

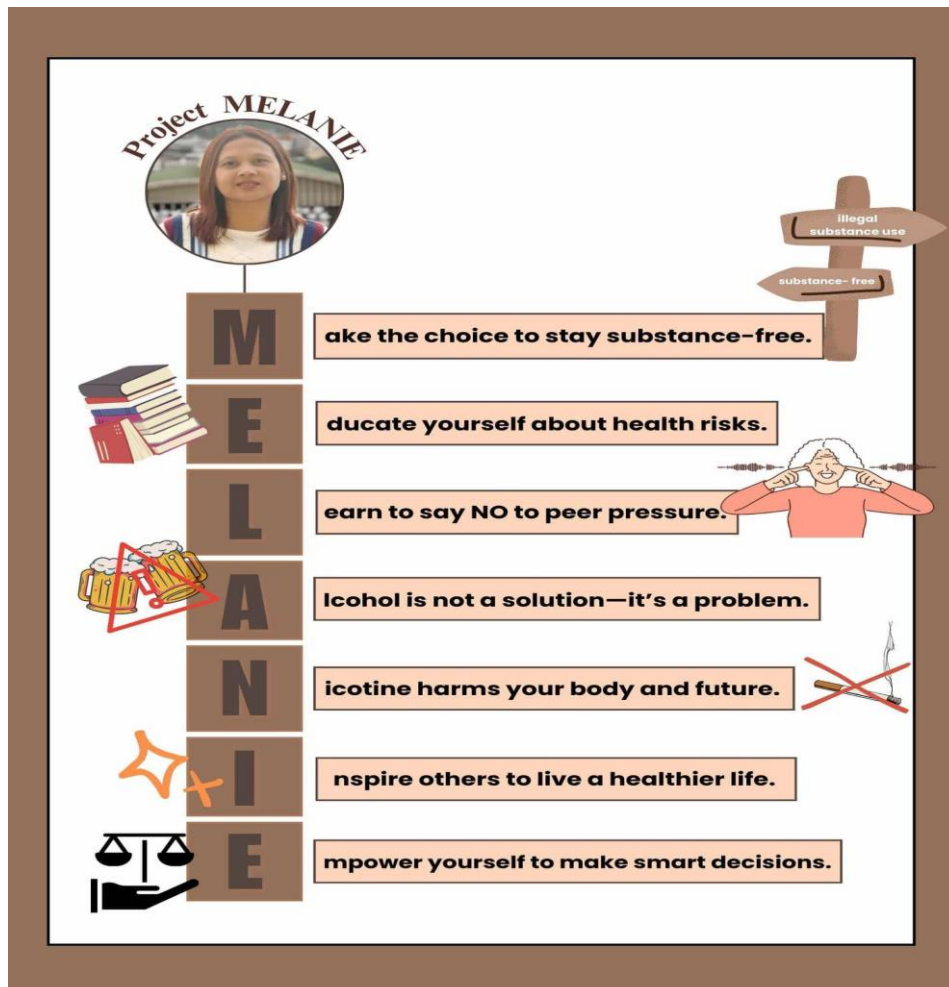


Figure 2. Model for Substance-Free Future

Area of Concern	Strategy	Activity	Means of Verification
Family and Social Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen family involvement and reduce stigma. • Promote parental awareness through integration into school materials. • Create safe spaces for student discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with parents' associations to formalize their role in substance prevention and intervention efforts. (<i>See Appendix F</i>) • Include information on substance use prevention in the School Handbook and distribute guides to parents. (<i>See Appendix G</i>) • Organize peer support groups with trained facilitators and schedule regular group sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed MOA, meeting minutes, and attendance records from parent meetings. • Updated school handbooks, distributed materials, and parent acknowledgment forms. • Attendance logs, session reports, and feedback forms from participants.
Institutional Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance school resources and support systems. • Foster collaboration among school staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose a MOA with the Department of Education (DepEd) to secure funding and training for counselors and teachers on substance use interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed MOA, funding allocation documents, and training reports. • Training schedules, attendance logs, and training evaluations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include substance prevention policies in school governance materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct quarterly training sessions for staff on substance prevention policies and intervention strategies. • Update the School Handbook to include policies on substance use and related disciplinary measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised school handbook, distribution records, and acknowledgment forms from students/parents.
<p>Policy and Enforcement Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen local enforcement of substance-related regulations. • Develop a partnership with local vendors. • Increase awareness through school campaigns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with barangay officials through a joint monitoring agreement to regulate vendors near schools. • Sign a MOA with local businesses near schools to prohibit the sale of vape, alcohol, and tobacco to minors. (<i>See Appendix H</i>) • Implement a substance-free school zone initiative using 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed agreements with barangay officials, vendor inspection logs, and enforcement reports. • Signed MOA with vendors, regular monitoring reports, and inspection schedules. • Visible signage, campaign materials, and reports from student activities.

		posters, banners, and student-driven advocacy campaigns.	
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the results, the following conclusions were derived:

1. Most guidance counselors are aged 31-40, female, and have 1 to 10 years of service.
2. Alcohol and nicotine are the substances most commonly used by students.
3. Factors contributing to substance addiction among students include social influence, stress and inadequate coping mechanism lead students to explore substance use.
4. School counselors implement strategies focused on individual interventions, peer and community support to address substance addiction.
5. The strategies have effectively contributed to emotional and behavioral change among students.
6. Barriers to providing comprehensive support include systemic challenges rooted in family dynamics, social stigma and institutional limitations hinder effective counseling for students.
7. A detailed action plan was proposed to address these barriers and enhance intervention efforts.

Recommendations

Based on the abovementioned conclusions, the following recommendations are given:

1. Provide continuous professional development through workshops and training on advanced counseling techniques, particularly in substance addiction intervention, to enhance the skills of counselors regardless of their years of service.
2. Conduct school-wide awareness campaigns focusing on the dangers of alcohol and nicotine use.
3. Integrate spiritual practices, stress management techniques, mindfulness, and healthy coping mechanism workshops into the school curriculum to help students manage academic and personal pressures.
4. Expand peer mentorship programs by training more student leaders to act as role models and provide support to their peers.
5. Conduct regular evaluations of these strategies to identify which approaches yield the most significant behavioral changes and refine them further.
6. Work closely with parents, local authorities and community officials to strictly enforce laws that limit students’ access to alcohol and nicotine near schools.
7. Implement the action plan.

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