



Teaching experiences regarding the approach to drug use in secondary educational institutions

Experiencias docentes respecto al abordaje del consumo de drogas en establecimientos educacionales secundarios

Darling Inostroza-Fuentes; Francisca Torres-Moreno; Magdalena Vera-Jackson; Pamela Castillo-Mardones

Darling Inostroza-Fuentes

Universidad de Concepción, Chile
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5809-5765>
 dainnostroza2021@udec.cl

Francisca Torres-Moreno

Universidad de Concepción, Chile
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9578-3429>
 frantorres2021@udec.cl

✉ Magdalena Vera-Jackson

Universidad de Concepción, Chile
<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9617-709X>
 magvera2021@udec.cl

Pamela Castillo-Mardones

Universidad de Concepción, Chile
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0936-0363>
 pamecastillo@udec.cl

Received: March 5, 2025

Accepted: April 29, 2025

Published: August 14, 2025

How to cite this article:

Inostroza-Fuentes, D., Torres-Moreno, F., Vera-Jackson, M., & Castillo-Mardones, P. (2025). Teaching experiences regarding the approach to drug use in secondary educational institutions. *Revista Panamericana de Pedagogía*, 40, e3453. <https://doi.org/10.21555/rpp.3453>

Abstract

Education is a formative space par excellence in the early stages of the life cycle of each person. The teachers play a transcendental role in this stage. In this article we focus on the purpose of characterizing the experiences of teachers with the role of course leader regarding the approach to drug use among high school students in public and private subsidized educational establishments in the southern zone of Chile. The methodology of

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license.



this research is qualitative with a descriptive cross-sectional approach operationalized in a semi-structured interview in which 8 teachers from three regions of Chile participated. The results show that in the discourses of the participants, the presence of normativity and regulation predominates when mediating behaviors or actions of consumption, while the need for more training and tools to adequately address these situations is also recognized. Even so, it is recognized that the work of teachers in charge of courses is related to their own skills of containment and management that each teacher possesses.

Keywords: Educational community, Secondary school students, Teaching role; Drug addiction; Drug use.

Resumen

La educación es un espacio formativo por excelencia en las primeras etapas del ciclo vital de cada persona. El profesorado juega un rol trascendental en esta etapa. En este artículo nos centramos en el propósito de caracterizar las experiencias de docentes con rol de jefatura de curso respecto al abordaje del consumo de drogas entre estudiantes de secundaria de establecimientos educacionales públicos y particulares subvencionados de la zona sur de Chile. La metodología de esta investigación es cualitativa con un enfoque transversal descriptivo operacionalizado en una entrevista semiestructurada donde participaron 8 maestros y maestras de tres regiones de Chile. Los resultados muestran que en los discursos de los participantes predomina la presencia de la normatividad y regulación a la hora de mediar conductas o acciones de consumo, mientras que también se reconoce la necesidad de más formación y herramientas para el adecuado abordaje de estas situaciones. Aun así, se reconoce que la labor de docentes responsables de cursos se relaciona con las habilidades propias de contención y manejo que posee cada profesor.

Palabras clave: Comunidad educativa; Estudiantes secundarios; Rol docente; Toxicomanías; Consumo drogas.

INTRODUCTION

One of the problems that arises in the school environment is the use, possession, or micro-trafficking of drugs among students. The Fourteenth National Study on Drugs in the School Population of Chile 2021, published by the National Service for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Drug and Alcohol Consumption (SENDA) in 2023, reveals that 62.3% of students report having personally seen a student selling or passing drugs in the vicinity of their educational establishment, while 52% admit to having seen someone using drugs within the establishment. Furthermore, according to the *Hablemos de Todo* (HDT) program, carried out during the years 2020-2021 by the National Youth Institute (INJUV), 32.8% of secondary school students use marijuana (2021).

It is known that, depending on the stage of development, adolescents are exposed to a series of risks, among which is drug use, from alcohol and nicotine to other types of illicit

substances. Some of the motivations for consumption are curiosity and pleasure; some young people recognize that drugs only produce momentary effects, while those who continue to consume indicate a third major motivation, that of “artificial support” (Maturana, 2010). Any consumption in adolescence is considered risky consumption because it endangers the integral development of the person (SENDIA, n.d.), whether it is in an initial stage of consumption, such as “experimentation” or in the stage of greater evolution, which is “addiction,” where there is a compulsive search for drugs, relationships break down, organic damage is generated, and withdrawal states appear (Valdés-García & Domínguez-Mateos, 2023).

Several authors have addressed the causes of problematic drug use in school settings, identifying the risk factors that influence the development of this problem among children and adolescents. In this study, we adopt the theory proposed by Carmen Arbex et al. (2002), who, based on the analysis of social programs aimed at children and adolescents, systematize contributions from various specialists in addressing substance use from a comprehensive perspective. From this perspective, risk factors are understood as those sociocultural circumstances and/or individual characteristics that, taken together, increase students’ vulnerability to problematic use. On the other hand, protective factors refer to conditions that decrease the likelihood of a student initiating or maintaining problematic use; therefore, educational institutions and intervention programs should strengthen these. It should be noted that the relationship between these factors should not be understood in a direct causal manner. These are elements that, in their interaction, configure contexts of varying protection against use, which necessitate a comprehensive approach from both structural and subjective perspectives.

Among the factors specifically associated with the school environment, Arbex et al. (2002) include as risk factors the difficulty of adapting to the educational system, feelings of worthlessness and demotivation, truancy, lack of study habits and cultural resources, lack of positive role models in teachers, poor integration into the peer group, lack of interest in school within the immediate environment, difficulties in internalizing rules, repeated experiences of failure and dropping out of school, lack of academic preparation and opportunities, as well as reduced educational and personal expectations. The protective factors indicated are adequate integration into school dynamics, motivation and commitment to the educational process, consolidated study habits, good academic performance, the presence of significant teaching figures, a sense of belonging, adherence to school rules, recognition of effort, and support in overcoming difficulties.

Thus, it is essential to recognize infants and adolescents as subjects with rights, protection, and care at every stage of development. Consequently, all institutions responsible for their education must ensure the effective fulfillment of these rights. The education system must guarantee access to quality education, based on respect for and the promotion of human rights. These principles must also be reflected in public policies, as well as in the daily practices and interactions of the various actors that comprise the educational community (Superintendency of Education, 2017).

Within this comprehensive framework, the responsibility of educational institutions to create opportunities for identifying maladaptive behaviors that could have irreversible consequences for their students’ lives is highlighted (Córdova et al., 2022). Furthermore, it should be

considered that in the school environment, the absence of good relationships, the presence of discrimination, unclear rules, poor security, and the perception of harassment are associated with a higher risk of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use (Kremer-Jiménez et al., 2023).

An Argentine study conducted by Agostinelli and Hernández-Silvera (2024) indicates that there are serious difficulties in addressing complex issues of coexistence and discipline in the context of secondary education (for students approximately between 12 and 17 years old). This suggests that strategies for behavior management must consider an integral and collaborative view of the educational community. In this scenario, it is the most experienced teachers who acquire effective strategies over time.

In line with the above, education is a formative space par excellence in the early stages of each person's life cycle, where teachers play a transcendental role. The homeroom teacher is a key agent and a relevant information channel due to the closeness they can develop with the group of students. In Chile, the role of the homeroom teacher involves accompanying a course throughout the entire school year. This entails an additional responsibility by meeting weekly with the group in the "Course Council" and/or "Orientation" classes, demanding an even greater commitment to the educational process (Ramírez-Muga, 2015), since it is in these instances where issues of relationships, behavior, regulatory adequacy, or behavioral imbalances are addressed. Their functions not only focus on maintaining a close and supportive relationship with students, but also on establishing constant and assertive communication with families and the teaching team, to promote learning by promptly identifying and resolving problems and difficulties that may affect students (Pérez et al., 2007).

Regarding how teachers perceive this issue, a study conducted in a secondary school in Florianópolis, Brazil, by Martini and Furegato (2008) provides a relevant reference. This study addresses teachers' perceptions of drug use, focusing on the concept of the "vulnerable other" or adolescent with multiple needs (familial, social, personal, psychological, and economic) that predispose them to drug use. The participating teachers associate drug use with factors such as family, the difficulty young people have in coping with frustrations in a society that prioritizes "having" over "being," the easy availability of drugs, the lack of public safety, and the misleading influence of the media, especially alcohol advertising. They perceive that the problem affects those who do not conform to social norms or have deficiencies, which generates a dualistic and simplistic view.

Regarding their role, only two teachers mentioned the importance of schools in prevention. However, they propose that schools strengthen guidance for families, establish better connections between youth and adults through counseling programs or smaller class sizes, and provide professional training for teachers to detect signs of substance use. In this way, teachers' perceptions influence how they address critical situations with their students, ranging from the most punitive and rigid to those that are welcoming, supportive, and collaborative with families.

The study "Analysis of three experiences of teacher training in drug use prevention" (Camarotti & Capriati, 2024), conducted in Argentina, reveals that the teaching figure plays a crucial role in implementing preventive strategies within educational institutions, promoting health, and fostering spaces for reflection on substance use. Their role is not limited to the

transmission of information, but also involves creating safe environments, coordinating with other institutions, and promoting students' progressive participation in the development of preventive strategies. Furthermore, research indicates that a prejudiced view or one based solely on prohibition and danger can hinder effective communication with adolescents. On the other hand, if teachers adopt a more critical and contextualized perspective, considering social relations, gender, and socioeconomic context, they can contribute to the development of more effective prevention strategies. Teachers need to review their representations of drug use and work to develop inclusive approaches that allow for open dialogue with students.

Ordoñez-Rodríguez (2022) argues that, in the Colombian context, professional practice in the educational field is primarily oriented towards enhancing the comprehensive well-being of students. One of the most significant findings of her study is the recognition of interventions that extend beyond the academic sphere, focusing on the containment and acceptance of emotional demands that often exceed traditional institutional frameworks. These interventions challenge the established structures of school times and spaces, requiring instances of deep and sustained dialogue to adequately address the diverse needs and conflicts that emerge from the student body.

In the Chilean context, the actions of educational establishments regarding drug-related situations are solely regulated by Circular No. 482, which "Provides Instructions on Internal Regulations of Educational Establishments with Official State Recognition" (Superintendency of Education, 2018). This document requests that the country's educational establishments incorporate prevention strategies and establish an action protocol to address situations related to alcohol and other drugs, strengthening a preventive culture and acting promptly within the educational community (SENDA, 2019). Based on the training of educational establishment staff, SENDA published the guide in 2018. *Preventive School Management in Educational Establishments*, aimed at creating preventive cultures by strengthening pedagogical leadership. This indicates that management and teaching teams are key figures in prevention, since they act as references and trainers, and must therefore be prepared with appropriate strategies to respond to the diverse needs of the students.

Additionally, in 2019, SENDA published the *Guide to Developing Early Detection Strategies in Educational Establishments*, which provides tools for a comprehensive response to substance use. This guide proposes three fundamental conditions: (1) a common and coherent discourse, (2) attitudes aligned with care and protection, and (3) timely and consensual actions, with an emphasis on prevention. The goal is to intervene before the problem worsens or affects other areas of children's and adolescents' lives. Additionally, the guide outlines a protocol for addressing situations related to alcohol and other drug use, in accordance with Circular No. 482. This protocol suggests:

- Gathering information for adequate case management.
- Contacting the adult responsible for the student.
- Depending on the student's condition, intervening at the institution or referring the student to the health network.
- Evaluating the need for treatment or specific interventions.
- Monitoring the case and maintaining coordination with the support network to ensure support throughout the educational process.

According to the article “Perception of educational stakeholders on protocols for action on alcohol and drug use in Chilean schools” (Córdova et al., 2022), the protocols are disseminated primarily through school coexistence regulations, with other dissemination mechanisms not being considered. Additionally, there is a lack of participation from the school community in the development of this type of protocol. Even so, there is a positive assessment of these protocols; however, it does not imply they are sustainable solutions that facilitate behavioral change in this type of situation. For their part, Jiménez-Moreno and Bolaños-Arias (2025) note that, in the Mexican context, it is crucial to consider students’ perspectives to develop effective programs for consumption prevention, given the multifaceted nature and the special importance it holds for the educational community.

In the global context, the International Standards on Drug Prevention, in their updated second edition of 2018, are a joint publication of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). This document summarizes the available scientific evidence on effective interventions and policies to prevent the use of psychoactive substances, including tobacco and alcohol, in addition to controlled drugs. The report highlights the importance of a comprehensive, health-centered approach tailored to different developmental stages (from childhood to adulthood) and risk levels and underscores the need for a robust national prevention system grounded in research, multisectoral coordination, and ongoing evaluation. The report categorizes prevention interventions and policies by the developmental stage of the target audience, ranging from early childhood to adulthood, encompassing prenatal visitation programs, early childhood education, parenting skills programs, personal and social skills education, school policies, brief interventions, and workplace programs. For each strategy, the characteristics associated with its effectiveness are described, as well as those linked to a lack of effectiveness or adverse effects. In addition, areas requiring further research are identified, such as after-school activities, non-prescription drug use, prevention in especially at-risk populations, and the influence of new media.

On the other hand, the report *A focus on adolescent substance use in Europe, Central Asia and Canada* (Charrier et al., 2024), from the international study *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC) 2021-2022 is a World Health Organization (WHO) publication that delves into substance use among adolescents aged 11, 13, and 15 years in 44 countries and regions across Europe, Central Asia, and Canada. The study’s primary objective is to generate knowledge on the health and well-being of young people, identify the social determinants of health, and inform policies and practices aimed at improving their lives. The survey findings reveal a pronounced increase in the use of all substances with age, with the largest increase observed among those aged 13 to 15. Of particular concern is the rise in e-cigarette use, which now exceeds traditional smoking in many places, underscoring the urgent need for policies to prevent its use, given its high addictive nature and the marketing directed at young people. The report highlights that socioeconomic inequalities in substance use vary; smoking is more prevalent among adolescents from low-income families, while e-cigarette use, alcohol consumption, and drunkenness are more common among those from high-income families. Consequently, the report advocates strengthening evidence-based prevention initiatives that are gender-sensitive, developmentally appropriate, and ethical, implementing comprehensive actions at the family,

school, and community levels, along with the enforcement of laws, effective fiscal policies, and advertising bans to reduce the appeal of substance use among adolescents.

Based on the above, this research seeks to characterize the experience of teachers with course leadership roles in secondary education establishments in the southern part of the country who have addressed a situation of drug use, possession, or micro-traffic-king by their students. The importance lies in the fact that they are the ones who play a fundamental role in the comprehensive training of students, influencing the other staff of an educational establishment, since they are the ones who spend the most time with the group, contain and accompany them, thus seeking to generate bonds of trust (Fuentes-Pino, 2021). The approach is qualitative, examining natural scenarios to interpret social phenomena based on the meanings people attribute to them, drawing on their individual experiences and sociocultural context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach, which allows us to “understand social life through meanings and from a holistic perspective, since it involves understanding the set of interrelated qualities that characterize a given phenomenon” (Mejía-Navarrete, 2004, p. 278). Following the line of the holistic perspective that the author mentions, the understanding of the phenomenon must focus on capturing its interrelated meanings and qualities, so, “qualitative methodology gives access to human experience and allows researchers to describe as intimate aspects of people’s life-worlds” (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008, p. 263). This allows us to investigate the description of the experiences of homeroom teachers when faced with situations of drug use by their students. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the complexity of the subject when talking about drug use in minors, therefore, we seek to understand the experience of professionals who are in direct contact with students through a phenomenological design, whose “main purpose is to explore, describe and understand the experiences of people concerning a phenomenon and discover the common elements of such experiences” (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014, p. 493).

Participants and context

Regarding the profile of the participants, the inclusion criteria were: being a homeroom secondary school teacher, currently working in public and subsidized private establishments in the southern region of Chile and having experience in addressing drug use in their students, so that failure to comply with these characteristics is a reason for exclusion from the research. Considering the participant profile, the educational context of Chile is taken into account, focusing on public and subsidized private establishments that offer secondary education, located in the Bío-Bío, Los Lagos, and Los Ríos regions.

A total of eight teachers participated: six from the Bío-Bío region, one from the Los Lagos region, and one from the Los Ríos region. They ranged in age from 28 to 64, with experience in the profession ranging from three to 30 years. Four of them work in public schools, and the other four work in subsidized private schools.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview was employed in this research. The instrument, developed by the researchers, underwent a validation process based on expert judgment, comprising two evaluations, followed by a pilot test that allowed for adjustments to achieve the research objective. The instrument consists of open-ended questions, enabling informants to expand on their responses. This allowed researchers to gain different perspectives on the same topic from various viewpoints. In the words of Denzin and Lincoln, “When researchers are not present to experience the activity for themselves, they have to ask those who experienced it” (2011, p. 178). When analyzing results based on subjective information, it is essential to collect the perspectives of those who have lived through these experiences, as this enriches our understanding of the phenomenon being studied, providing valuable data that allows us to interpret reality from multiple perspectives and contexts. The data collection process ends when the saturation point, or the point at which no new information is obtained from the informants, is reached. Additionally, a Coherence Matrix was prepared, which facilitated the development of this instrument and subsequently enabled the analysis of the information obtained.

Table 1
Methodological Coherence Matrix

General objective	Specific objective	Topics	Dimensions /categories	Codes
Determine the aspects to be strengthened in the prevention and approach of drug use in adolescents, from the role of key professionals in public educational establishments, public and private subsidies in the southern region of Chile	To characterize the experiences of teachers with course leadership roles regarding addressing drug use among secondary school students in public and subsidized private educational establishments in the southern region of Chile	Teacher experiences	Support mechanisms	Institutional support networks
				Available resources
				Ways to provide student support and containment
			Safeguarding the intimacy and identity of the student	Confidentiality protocol
				Handling of sensitive information
			Reporting procedure in case of a criminal record	Reporting channels
				Legal procedures
		Addressing drug use	Information gathering (Diagnosis)	Student Interview
				Guardian Interview
				Interview with Other Teachers
			Referral Actions	Document Review
				Report Generation
				Contacting and Connecting with other Institutions
			Follow-up actions	Networking with referral institutions
				Psychosocial support for students
				Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress

Table prepared by the authors based on the Methodological Coherence Matrix.

Analysis

The creation of the coherence matrix aims to establish the foundations that enable the collection of data for later analysis. Given the nature of this qualitative study, the stages of the process are neither linear nor simultaneous, as described by Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014). The stages comprise actions undertaken to achieve the research objectives and address the study's questions. By simply observing what occurs, data is collected and analyzed, and the process is constantly adjusted to accommodate the sample. Regarding the analysis of the data obtained, meanings, episodes, roles, and processes are taken as units of analysis, since they are relevant to address the informants' experience in situations of consumption by their students, denigrating their role in that situation, as well as the meaning that they give to the experience, under the need to demarcate each episode that they have experienced and the process that they have had to carry out for an effective intervention.

Ethical and rigor criteria

Finally, the researchers rely on ethical aspects presented in the 2010 Singapore Declaration on Research Integrity (National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research, 2013), such as Honesty: It is crucial to guarantee honesty in all aspects of this research to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the experiences and challenges of teachers. Data collection and analysis will be carried out transparently, without manipulating information to favor specific results. Accountability: The researchers will assume responsibility for planning, conducting, executing, and reporting the research, while complying with ethical and regulatory standards. This entails ensuring that all steps of the research, from data collection to the dissemination of results, are carried out with the highest degree of care and professionalism, thus guaranteeing the validity and reliability of the results obtained on addressing drug use in educational establishments. Professional Courtesy and Impartiality: A relationship of respect, equity, and justice will be maintained with all research participants and collaborators. A respectful, inclusive, and fair work environment will be promoted, ensuring impartial interactions and avoiding any type of bias that could influence the research results. Good Management: The research will be managed efficiently and transparently, ensuring the appropriate use of resources and protecting the confidentiality of the data collected. Effective management involves the organization and supervision of all aspects of the study, ensuring that resources are utilized efficiently and that the rights of participants are consistently protected. Therefore, we carry out our work with integrity, ensuring the rigor and confidentiality of the information.

It should be noted that the study's results were reviewed and evaluated impartially by the Department of Social Work at the University of Concepción, ensuring that the findings are evaluated objectively and lending credibility to the research.

RESULTS

Regarding the results corresponding to the objective presented in this article, it is noteworthy that all teachers interviewed provided support and containment to at least one student, regardless of the type of school (public or subsidized private) where they worked,

and also had a clear opinion about drug use among adolescents, taking into account the consequences this action entails for their students. Mostly, it is the schools' support team who contacts, connects students, and develops networking with external institutions, such as SENDA, *Carabineros de Chile*, the Investigative Police, and/or Community Family Health Centers (CECOSF); or in more complex cases, with Family Courts or the Public Prosecutor's Office, through reports prepared primarily by the social worker at the schools where they work, or in other cases, by the school's directors.

In subsidized private schools, the existence of both human and financial resources is evident; however, these resources are insufficient for the entire school community. As for municipal schools, they have limited resources, indicating that the available resources are insufficient to meet their needs.

It is also highlighted that, in all the establishments where the interviewed teachers work, there is an internal school protocol in place for dealing with drug use by a student. This protocol begins with the homeroom teacher, who must notify the school support team, where interviews with the student and their guardians are arranged. Corresponding referrals are made if necessary.

Finally, the identity of students involved in suspected or suspected drug use is respected and protected in schools. Additionally, regarding the handling of sensitive information, teachers must be certain of the information they receive regarding any student suspected of or involved in a situation related to drug use, including interviews and referrals.

Table 2
Frequencies of categories and codes in the analysis

Categoría	Código	Frecuencia
Teaching approach (72)	Teacher perception of consumption	27
	Impact on the teacher	23
	Ways to provide support and containment	22
Derivative actions (38)	Contact and link to other institutions	27
	Generate reports	11
	Networking with referral institutions	25
Follow-up actions (60)	Psychosocial support for students	18
	Continuous monitoring and evaluation of progress	17
Support mechanisms from the establishment (41)	Institutional support networks	23
	Available resources	18
Internal procedure for action in the event of cases of consumption and/or a history of any crime (42)	Internal school protocol	26
	Reporting channels	10
	Legal procedures	6
Information gathering (36)	Information gathering	21
	Interview with student	12
	Interview with other teachers	3
Safeguarding the intimacy and identity of the student (28)	Handling of sensitive information	15
	Right to honor	13

Table prepared by the authors based on the Research Objective.

Table 2, and considering the Research Objective, shows that within the category “Teaching Approach”, all the teachers interviewed have had to provide support and containment to at least one student in situations related to drug use, regardless of the type of establishment (public or subsidized private), in which they work, in addition to having a clear opinion about drug use in adolescents, taking into account the consequences that this action brings for their students.

Within the categories “Referral Actions” and “Follow-up Actions”, it is mostly the school support team of the establishments that contacts, links the students, and develops a network with external institutions, such as SENDA (National Service for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Drug and Alcohol Use), *Carabineros de Chile*, Investigative Police, and/or Community Family Health Centers (CECOSF); or in more complex cases, to Family Courts or the Prosecutor’s Office, through reports prepared primarily by the social worker in the facilities where this professional is employed, or in other cases, by the facility’s directors.

On the other hand, in the category “School support mechanisms”, subsidized private schools demonstrate the existence of both human and financial resources; however, these are insufficient for the entire school community. Municipal schools, in contrast, have minimal resources, indicating that the limited resources they have are insufficient to meet their needs.

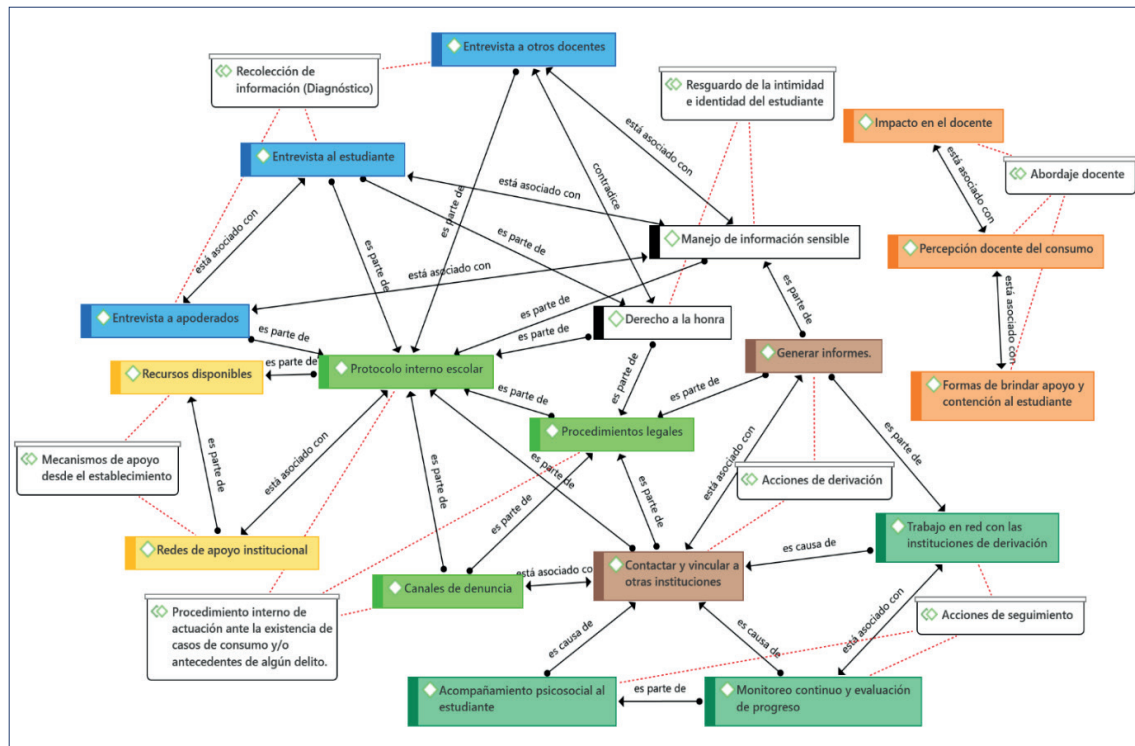
In the category “Internal procedure for dealing with cases of drug use and/or prior criminal record,” it is highlighted that all the schools where the interviewed teachers work have an internal school protocol. This protocol requires the teacher to notify the school coexistence team, which arranges interviews with the student and the parent. This is linked to the category “Information Collection,” and corresponding referrals are made if necessary.

Finally, in the category “Protection of Student Privacy and Identity,” the identities of students involved in suspected or actual drug use are respected and protected. Furthermore, regarding the handling of sensitive information, teachers must be certain of the information they receive regarding any student suspected or involved in drug use, which may be related to other codes, such as interviews and referrals.

In Figure 1, it can be seen that the central node is the code “Internal School Protocol.” This means that, being the central axis of this network, teaching experiences are largely guided by the procedures established within the educational institution in which they work. Teachers initially gather information through the “Student Interview” and “Parent Interview,” which are directly related to the “Handling of Sensitive Information.” Part of this process is carried out after identifying early signs of drug use in students, as expressed below:

(...) we started to place the alerts, in my case as homeroom teacher, what I did immediately when I started to suspect, eh... First, we did what the protocol tells us: we have to interview the student, interview the parent, give them clues about what we observe, which, generally, eh... It is a change in behavior (Interview Participant No. 2).

Figure 1
List of the main findings



Likewise, it is highlighted that the “interview with other teachers,” the “Right to honor” of students, the “Institutional support networks,” the “legal procedures,” the “Reporting channels,” and the “Contacting and connecting with other institutions” are also part of the “Internal School Protocol,” which guides the referral process that the teacher must carry out.

There’s a very clear protocol here, which is followed by the homeroom teacher, coexistence. From coexistence, referrals are made within the same area. We have psychologists who are drug experts, and if they don’t request it, right? It’s true, where they can be sent, either to Senda or to a drug addiction shelter. Yes, we’re clear about that. Depending on the student’s needs and vulnerability, we decide where they will be referred, and we request it (Interview Participant No. 6).

The “Internal School Protocol” structures the process, from information gathering to psychosocial intervention and collaboration with external networks. On the other hand, the “Teaching Approach” provides us with information on “Teachers’ Perception of Consumption” and how this is associated with the “Impact on the Teacher” and the “Ways of Providing Support and Containment to Students.” In this regard, the following quote is presented:

(...) you are exposed to a group of students who are going to have other types of responses. Other types of reactions, a student who doesn’t use drugs is very different from a student who does use them, then, uh... because a student who is exposed to drug use inevitably sees their most basic needs violated, and they arrive at the classroom without having rested well, without having eaten well, even if they live in a socioeconomic context that can provide good

well-being, but they are going to neglect them and in the same way, in the same way and, on the other hand, that can also generate a level of greater aggressiveness in student behavior. We are then exposed to having students capable of responding in a way that is much more extreme than we would like (...) (Interview Participant No. 1)

In the experience previously presented, it is seen that under the “Teacher perception of consumption” teachers can in a certain way identify if a student incurs in drug consumption, which generates an “Impact on the teacher” that allows them to react to these situations and work in various “Ways to provide support and containment to students”; on the other hand, these situations present a risk situation for the teacher and the educational community.

DISCUSSION

Regarding the objective of the research, the results reveal that the experience of teachers with roles as course leaders regarding the approach to drug use among their students is strongly mediated by the application of the Internal School Regulations of the educational establishment in which they work. In most cases, the homeroom teacher assumes an active role at the beginning of this process, focusing their actions on conducting the initial interview with the student involved, notifying the parent or legal guardian, and contacting the internal institutional support network. The case is referred to the school’s support team, which is responsible for activating institutional protocols and connecting with external support networks, such as prevention, treatment, and social intervention programs offered by SENDA, and following up on the case.

This process aligns with the provisions of the Superintendency of Education (2018) in Circular No. 482, which establishes the minimum mandatory content for action protocols in situations involving drug use and/or possession within educational establishments. The circular provides that educational establishments must have clear procedures, previously socialized and adjusted to the principles it establishes, such as the dignity of the human being, the best interests of children and adolescents, non-arbitrary discrimination, legality, a fair and rational procedure for disciplinary measures, proportionality, transparency, participation, passion, autonomy and diversity, and responsibility, since it is the duty of the entire educational community to respect and comply with these principles (Superintendency of Education, 2018).

This approach is frequently framed within a sanctioning action, which includes the development of a legal process and the connection with police entities such as *Carabineros* and/or Investigative Police, applying laws such as Law 20.000 “That Punishes the Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances” or Law 20.084 that “Establishes a System of Responsibility of Adolescents for Violations of the Criminal Law”, depending on the severity of the situation and the age of the student, to activate formative measures for the school community subsequently.

However, these normatively valid actions are strained when observed from the perspective of the protection of children’s rights, as stipulated in *The Convention on the Rights*

of the Child, ratified by Chile in 1990, where Article 33 establishes that the State parties will provide all necessary measures to protect children and adolescents from drug use, production, and trafficking (UNICEF, 2019). This is an international treaty that is reproduced in Law 21,430 “On Guarantees and Comprehensive Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents”, which reinforces a comprehensive vision, emphasizing the right of children and adolescents to an adequate standard of living, development and environment, that is, they have the right to live in a safe environment and have a standard of living that allows for their greatest realization, and the law also highlights and supports the fundamental right to honor, privacy and self-image (Ministry of Social Development and Family, 2022).

In cases of drug use by adolescents, it is expected that remedial measures and actions will be applied. These measures should be aimed at restoring the adolescent’s well-being, addressing the factors that lead to drug use, and promoting prevention strategies. Curbing punitive actions can help raise awareness and prevent the stigmatization or criminalization of the student involved.

The need to strengthen the socialization spaces of existing mechanisms by disseminating and sharing institutional regulatory information is identified. This aligns with the point made by Córdova et al. (2022), which emphasizes the importance of disseminating and collaborating on action protocols for addressing situations or behaviors associated with drug use among students.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that during the analysis of the information obtained, most teachers agree that they lack the necessary resources and tools to address the problem optimally, as they do not receive sufficient information from the relevant institutions regarding the prevention of substance use.

The results of this research, as noted by authors such as Agostinelli and Hernández-Silvera (2024), underscore the need to reevaluate the role of teachers in collaboration with homeroom teachers as key agents in fostering protective environments within educational institutions. These actions require an educational policy that supports, trains, and provides them with real resources and tools, both human and material, to act effectively. This enables us to shift towards an educational culture centered on care rather than punishment, recognizing adolescent consumption as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that can be addressed through community engagement and student participation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results presented above, the internal school protocols of both municipal and privately subsidized establishments are closely tied to the country’s legal provisions. Circular No. 482 has been mentioned, highlighting the importance of ensuring that the internal protocol complies with the regulatory framework for addressing drug use among secondary school students.

Furthermore, it is possible to identify that teachers in leadership roles are key actors in implementing the protocols. They are the ones who comply with the collection and management of sensitive information, as the coordination and conduct of interviews are

essential, both with the student involved and their guardian, thereby gathering accurate and relevant information for the action process. On the other hand, within the establishment, they must contact the school support and/or psychosocial team to guarantee a comprehensive approach to the case. The latter must also link the students and their families to institutional support networks, such as SENDA, *Carabineros*, or Investigative Police, as well as Health Centers. However, although teachers have an idea of how to act, constant training is necessary regarding legal regulations related to drug use in students, to proceed appropriately and understand the legal scope involved.

Projections

The issue of risky drug use among children and adolescents, and how teachers in leadership roles address it, is a topic that should be further studied. It represents a persistent reality nationwide, and at the same time, it acquires multiple complexities in its approach and prevention within schools. While drug use in some of these educational institutions is already an issue that cannot be addressed given the perspective of parents or, rather, the student's environment, the consequences of drug use and how they are addressed from a comprehensive perspective (legal, social, biological, psychological, etc.) in the delivery of information to students is a growing issue that is currently a focus in some areas of Chile.

For this reason, we seek to use this research as a foundation for the study of the problem, to generate greater opportunities for action to minimize the future impacts of this population with risky consumption and, in turn, to dignify the different professions that make up the educational community, as a protective factor that is in direct contact with students in the various problems that arise during their school year.

Limitations

The main limitations presented in the research carried out are due to the lack of informants interested in participating within the province of Concepción, which is why different forms of dissemination had to be used. One of these was the in-person delivery of information, where the research team visited establishments to request participation from interested teachers. Another technique was distribution through social media, which did not yield results and instead led to dissemination among well-known individuals, who in turn added others.

In terms of time, despite the difficulties in finding informants and the shortage of available spaces for teachers with leadership roles (who had different obligations during the informant search period, resulting in a limited number of participants), the point of theoretical saturation of the data was adequately reached.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE AUTHORS

Darling Inostroza-Fuentes: Project administration; Formal analysis; Conceptualization; Data curation; Writing - original draft; Writing - review and editing; Research; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Funding acquisition.

Francisca Torres-Moreno: Project management; Formal analysis; Conceptualization; Data curation; Writing - original draft; Writing - review and editing; Research; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Funding acquisition.

Magdalena Vera-Jackson: Project management; Formal analysis; Conceptualization; Data curation; Writing - original draft; Writing - review and editing; Research; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Funding acquisition.

Pamela Castillo-Mardones: Formal analysis; Writing - review and editing; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Funding acquisition.

REFERENCES

- Arbex, C. A. (2002). *Guía de Intervención: Menores y consumos de drogas*. Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo. Plan Nacional Sobre Drogas (PND). <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/media/www/pag-43058/menoresyconsumos.pdf>
- Agostinelli, V. A., & Hernández-Silvera, D. I. (2024). Percepciones y prácticas docentes frente a la disciplina instruccional en enseñanza media: un estudio descriptivo en CABA. *Revista Panamericana de Pedagogía*, 38, 78-109. <https://doi.org/10.21555/rpp.vi38.3108>
- Camarotti, A. C., & Capriati, A. (2024). Análisis de tres experiencias de formación docente en prevención del consumo de drogas. *Revista Debate Público. Reflexión de Trabajo Social*, 14(28), 115-122. <https://doi.org/10.62174/DPdp.10107>
- Charrier, L., Van-Dorsselaer, S., Canale, N., Baska, T., Kilibarda, B., Comoretto, R. I., Galeotti, T., Brown, J., & Vieno, A. (2024). *A focus on adolescent substance use in Europe, central Asia and Canada: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children international report from the 2021/2022 survey, Volume 3*. WHO Regional Office for Europe. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/376573?locale-attribute=en>
- Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica. (2013). *Establece principios y normas obligatorias para investigadores de proyectos de CONICYT: Declaración de Singapur sobre la Integridad en la Investigación*. https://www.conicyt.cl/wp-content/blogs.dir/28/files/2013/05/157-13-REX_declaraci%C3%B3n-de-Singapur.pdf
- Córdova, K., Fernández, K., & Vergara-Morales, J. (2022). Percepción de actores educativos sobre protocolos de actuación en conductas de consumo de alcohol y drogas en establecimientos escolares chilenos. *ACADEMO*, 9(2), 165-178. <https://doi.org/10.30545/academo.2022.jul-dic.5>
- Denzin, M., & Lincoln, Y. (2011). *El campo de la investigación cualitativa, Manual de investigación cualitativa. Vol. I*. Editorial Gedisa.
- Fuentes-Pino, A. (2021). *Lazos significativos entre educadores y estudiantes*. Ministerio de Educación. <https://convivenciaparaciudadania.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Lazos-significativos-entre-educadores-y-estudiantes.pdf>
- Hernández-Sampieri, R., Fernández-Collado, C., & Baptista-Lucio, P. (2014). *Metodología de la investigación científica* (6a ed.). McGraw-Hill Educación.

- Instituto Nacional de la Juventud (INJUV). (2021). *Documento técnico: Consumo de alcohol, tabaco y otras drogas en jóvenes*. Programa Hablemos de Todo. <https://hablemosdetodo.injuv.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Consumo.pdf>
- Jiménez-Moreno, J. A., & Bolaños-Arias, G. (2025). Prevención en el uso de drogas. Una mirada desde el bachillerato. *Revista Panamericana de Pedagogía*, 40, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.21555/rpp.3387>
- Kremer-Jiménez, A., Román-Mella, F., & Gálvez-Nieto, J. L. (2023). Clima escolar y consumo de sustancias en una muestra de adolescentes chilenos. *Revista de Psicodidáctica*, 28(2), 164-172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psicod.2023.03.001>
- Martini, J., & Furegato, A. (2008). Representaciones sociales según los profesores al respecto del uso de drogas en una escuela de educación básica. *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem*, 16, 601-606. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-11692008000700016>
- Maturana H., A. (2010). Consumo de alcohol y drogas en adolescentes. *Revista Clínica Las Condes*.
- Mejía-Navarrete, J. (2004). Sobre la investigación cualitativa. Nuevos conceptos y campos de desarrollo. *Investigaciones Sociales*, 8(13). <https://doi.org/10.15381/is.v8i13.6928>
- Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia. (2022). *Ley 21.430 sobre garantías y protección integral de los derechos de la niñez y adolescencia*. Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile. <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1173643>
- Ordoñez-Rodríguez, V. Y. (2022). El docente y su percepción de las competencias socioemocionales en su labor. *Revista Panamericana de Pedagogía*, 35, 80-101. <https://doi.org/10.21555/rpp.vi35.2724>
- Pérez, L. M., Cortese, I., & Gallardo, G. (2007). *Construyendo una alianza efectiva familia-escuela. Manual para profesores jefe. Reuniones de apoderados. Experiencia de Conchalí*. Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia (Unicef). <https://bibliotecadigital.mineduc.cl/handle/20.500.12365/18415>
- Ramírez-Muga, M. Á. (2015). La labor del/la profesor/a jefe/a y su des-politización. *Revista Iberoamericana de Producción Académica y Gestión Educativa*, 2(4), 1-23. <https://www.pag.org.mx/index.php/PAG/article/view/295>
- Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del Consumo de Drogas y Alcohol (SENDA). (2023). *Décimo cuarto estudio nacional de drogas en población escolar de Chile 2021*. Observatorio Chileno de Drogas. https://www.senda.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/14_EstudioDrogas_Poblacion_Escolar.pdf
- Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del Consumo de Drogas y Alcohol (SENDA). (2018). *Gestión escolar preventiva en establecimientos educacionales para la prevención del consumo de alcohol y otras drogas*. <https://bibliodrogas.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Gestion-escolar-preventiva-en-establecimientos-educacionales-para-la-prevencion-del-consumo-de-alcohol-y-otras-drogas-2018.pdf>
- Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del Consumo de Drogas y Alcohol (SENDA). (2019). *Guía para desarrollar estrategias de detección temprana en establecimientos educacionales*. <https://bibliodrogas.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Guia-de-deteccion-temprana-EE-web-03-10-20-con-datos.pdf>

- Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del Consumo de Drogas y Alcohol (SENDA). (s. f.). *Tipos de consumo*.
- Superintendencia de Educación. (2017). *Resguardo de derechos en la Escuela. Una responsabilidad compartida*. <https://bibliotecadigital.mineduc.cl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12365/2461/mono-1083.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Superintendencia de Educación. (2018). *Aprueba Circular que Imparte Instrucciones Sobre Reglamentos Internos de los Establecimientos Educativos de Enseñanza Básica y Media con Reconocimiento Oficial del Estado*.
- Unicef. (2019). *Convención Sobre los Derechos del Niño*. <https://www.unicef.org/chile/informes/convencion-sobre-los-derechos-del-nino>
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) & World Health Organization (OMS). (2018). *International standards on drug use prevention* (2nd ed.). https://www.unodc.org/documents/prevention/UNODC-WHO_2018_prevention_standards_E.pdf
- Valdés-García, L. E., & Domínguez-Mateos, A. (2023). Consumo de drogas: enfrentamiento a un problema latente. *Medisan*, 27(2). <https://medisan.sld.cu/index.php/san/article/view/4269>
- Willig, C., Stainton-Rogers, W. (2008). *Qualitative research in psychology*. Editorial Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607927>