

**PP-04-PHS**

**PROPORTION, KNOWLEDGE AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS OF SUBSTANCE USAGE AMONG GRADES 9-11 STUDENTS IN KALUTARA EDUCATION ZONE**

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**Background:** The global impact of drug use extends to family conflicts, crimes, and economic burdens. The rising trend in teenage substance consumption in Sri Lanka requires targeted interventions and educational efforts for a safer future. The lack of focused statistics in Sri Lanka poses a challenge, emphasizing the urgent need for interventions. This study aimed to determine the proportion, knowledge, and associated factors that lead grades 9 - 11 school children towards substance usage, in the Kalutara education zone.

**Methods:** The study was a descriptive cross-sectional study in the Kalutara education zone, involving 145 students in grades 9-11. Data were collected from six classes of two schools using a self-administered questionnaire, on May 15th and 16th 2023. SPSS version 23.0 was used for data analysis. Chi-square test was used to determine the associations at  $p < 0.05$  significance level.

**Results:** Overall, the students with satisfactory knowledge (49.7%) and unsatisfactory (50.3%) knowledge regarding substance usage were approximately equal (mean= 26.60, median= 26.00, mode=25.00 SD=2.93). Significant associations ( $p < 0.05$ ) were found between substance usage among students and substance-using parents (62.5%), substance-using friends (81.3%), social media/ television influence (31.3%), and being bullied by friends (18.8%).

**Conclusions:** The study suggested that factors like age, gender, and knowledge level do not affect substance use. Recommendations include healthcare-supervised education, family involvement, student-friendly committees, and influential figures.

**Key words:** Substance usage, Knowledge, Association, school children, Kalutara education zone