



**AN ANALYSIS OF GHANA'S NARCOTICS CONTROL COMMISSION DRUG  
PREVENTION EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION BY STUDENT**

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute.

I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR**

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication, UniMac-IJ.

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## **DEDICATION**

My outmost dedication is to Allah Almighty, for all things are possible through him. To my inspiring wife, Rashida Issahaque Sabuluu for her support in my quest to reach this milestone in my pursuit of academic excellence, my work colleagues Patrick Ofosu Agyapong, Deo-Donne Dafeamekpor and Helena Akworkor Mensah.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West Africa States
<b>GPS</b>	Ghana Police Service
<b>GIS</b>	Ghana Immigration Service
<b>NACOC</b>	Narcotics Control Commission
<b>NIB</b>	National Investigation Bureau
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drug and Crime

## **ABSTRACT**

Since 2010, Ghana has seen a shift towards polysubstance abuse, with many patients using a combination of marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. The rise in global production of these drugs is expected to increase local consumption. However, Ghana lacks effective harm-reduction strategies, including public education on the dangers of illicit drug use. The Demand Reduction Directorate, through its Education and Prevention Department, is actively addressing drug abuse and trafficking by targeting both supply and demand. A study was conducted to evaluate the Narcotics Control Commission's (NACOC) drug prevention education programs, utilizing qualitative research methods and interviews with NACOC officials. The findings revealed that NACOC implements various preventive initiatives, primarily targeting adolescents in schools, religious organizations, and workplaces. These programs have significantly created awareness of drug abuse, especially among the youth. However, challenges such as insufficient funding, cultural stigma, and a lack of trust in external initiatives hinder effective implementation. To combat the drug menace, the Ghanaian government is urged to increase funding for NACOC, collaborate with international partners, and build partnerships with mental health professionals, educational institutions, and community organizations to enhance coordination and address drug-related issues comprehensively.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Drug trafficking has become a significant transnational security problem that jeopardizes world security. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that the global illegal drug market was valued at US\$321.6 billion in 2003. Considering the global GDP of US\$36 trillion at that time, the illicit drug transaction can be estimated to account for around 1% of the whole global commerce (UNODC, 2010).

The production, distribution, and consumption of illicit substances such as marijuana, heroin, and cocaine have garnered worldwide attention in recent years (Ellis, 2009). Although drug trafficking may bring financial benefits to the countries involved in production, transit, and destination, the negative consequences such as money laundering, threats to human and national security outweigh these advantages. Furthermore, it is alarming to note that there is an emerging link between drug trafficking and terrorism (M. Shaw, 2002).

The rise of West Africa as a transit hub for the global illegal drug traffic in the mid-2000s, and the subsequent increase in the number of drugs passing through the region, have been extensively recorded. Nevertheless, the substantial increase in drug consumption within the countries in this region and the difficulties encountered by the growing population of individuals who engage in drug use receive significantly less media coverage (Bird, 2019).

For an extended period, analysts have proposed that the effect on domestic consumption was insignificant, concealing a developing issue to the point where it has been nearly imperceptible in global discussions. There is a growing acknowledgment that the drug trade has had a much

more substantial socio-political influence on the region than initially thought. The rise in drug trafficking is eroding governance systems through corruption and illegal money transactions (Bird, 2019).

Since 2010, drug consumption trends in Ghana have shifted towards polysubstance misuse. The majority of individuals seeking treatment have been found to be using a combination of marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. The recent escalation in the worldwide manufacturing of heroin and cocaine, which are among the most frequently abused illegal substances in Ghana, is expected to result in a rise in the local consumption of these drugs (WACD, 2014). Moreover, the emergence of allegations regarding the initiation of methamphetamine manufacture in Ghana suggests that law enforcement and the health system may face an additional obstacle in the near future (Simone et al., 2018).

Ghana, like other West African countries, has long adopted a 'war on drugs' strategy, considering harsh imprisonment as a crucial method to eliminate drug consumption. However, Ghana lacks harm-reduction techniques such as public education initiatives on illegal drug use (Bird, 2019). These programmes aim to reduce drug consumption by raising awareness about the dangers of illicit drugs in the country. The Demand Reduction Directorate, through its Education and Prevention Department plays a crucial part in addressing the issue of illegal drug use and trafficking in Ghana and serve as a proactive approach to tackling both the supply (manufacturers and sellers) and demand.

They can discourage individuals, particularly young people, from engaging in drug use and trafficking by disseminating information about its hazards and repercussions. Efforts should be focused on organising awareness campaigns in schools, community centers, and through media

channels to disseminate information about drug use and trafficking, including its health, legal, and socio-economic consequences.

This research study examines Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission's drug prevention education programmes, employed to reduce substance abuse, especially among the youth. With the increasing prevalence of substance abuse worldwide, there is the growing need for evidence-based prevention strategies that can help mitigate the public health concern. Drug prevention education programmes have been widely implemented in schools, communities and work places, aiming to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to make informed decisions about substance use. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate the strategies and types of drug prevention education programmes employed by the Commission.

The increasing prevalence of drug abuse and addiction among the young people has significant implications for public health, social welfare, and economic development. Effective drug prevention education programmes are crucial in addressing this issue, as they have the potential to reduce the risk of drug abuse and promote healthy behaviours. However, the effectiveness of these programmes in achieving their intended outcomes, is not well understood, and there is a need for rigorous evaluation and analysis to inform evidence-based practice. The motivation for conducting this research study on analyzing Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission's drug prevention education programmes, stems from a desire to investigate the strategies and types of drug prevention education programmes implemented by NACOC to reduce substance abuse among the youth in particular.

The analysis of drug prevention education programmes is a crucial area of research, as it can provide valuable insights into the factors that influence programmes effectiveness, the most

effective strategies for preventing drug use and the ways in which programmes can be improved to better meet the needs of diverse populations. This research study, will therefore contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge on drug prevention education programmes and ultimately inform policy and practice in the drug prevention field, with the ultimate goal of developing evidence-based prevention interventions and reducing the prevalence of substance abuse especially among the youth.

### **Role of Development Communication in Drug Prevention Education**

Development communication plays a vital role in drug prevention education. Development communication refers to the strategic use of communication to facilitate social, economic, and cultural development. It aims to empower individuals, communities, and societies to make informed decisions, adopt positive behaviors, and improve their quality of life like (Adu-Gyamfi & Brenya, 2015; Bird, 2019; Ligbi, 2017; Selby, 2011).

Therefore employing development communication strategies in drug prevention education can help provide relevant information, facts, consequences and advice about drugs, upon which individuals can base decisions and make informed choices (Adu-Mireku, 2003).

Effective communication allows for early identification of potential substance use issues enabling timely interventions and support. Beyond its role as an empowerment tool, communication promotes people's participation in development activities. Particularly, citizens rely on knowledge and information to successfully respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic, cultural, political and technological changes (Ligbi, 2017). Though development communication is indispensable in sustainable development drive, many people still struggle to appreciate its underlying philosophical underpinnings, conceptual

intentions, core principles and methodologies, hence their failure to make the concept practically relevant in development practice. Besides, the poor appreciation of the underpinnings of development communication contributes to the exclusion and isolation of many people especially the rural people from the process of development (Ligbi, 2017).

A drug prevention education professional, just like a development communicator, is expected to possess knowledge, skills and professional techniques and clearly grasp their use and should also know the audience. Also, they prepare and distribute relevant drug abuse education messages and information to all stakeholders in such a way that they are received and understood, accepted and applied to bring about development.

The Demand Reduction Directorate of the Narcotics Control Commission of Ghana (NACOC) plays a vital role in ensuring public health and safety, the core object of the Commission. The Directorate is responsible for implementing measures aimed at reducing the public desire for illicit drugs. The Commission, having recognized this, has through its Education and Prevention Department under the Demand Reduction Directorate, employs some development communication strategies and theories such as Social Learning Theory which Focuses on how human beings learn behavior by observing others and imitating and modeling these behaviors (Bandura, 1977).

Problem Behavior Theory focuses on the individual within his/her environment, and states that multiple risky behaviors have the same or common root, or base (Jessor, R., & Jessor, 1977). Ecology of Human Development States that systems or contexts outside the individual (e.g., family, peers, school, parents' work situation, culture, community characteristics, time/history, socio-cultural factors) influence how that individual behaves (Bandura, 1977).

Theory of Planned Behavior shows the link between attitudes and behavior, and states that three sets of perceptions/attitudes guide behavior: beliefs about the outcomes or consequences of the behavior, beliefs about the normative expectations of others (or social acceptability) toward the behavior, and beliefs about the barriers and enhancers to the performance of the behavior (can it be done) (Ajzen, 1991).

More recently, prevention scientists have developed theories that are unique to drug prevention science. Here are five examples of such theories. Theory of Triadic Influence suggests three influences that contribute to risky behavior: cultural factors (e.g., perceived tolerance for adolescent alcohol use), social or interpersonal factors (e.g., having parents who use drugs or are negligent), intrapersonal factors (e.g., poor impulse control) (Flay, 1999; Petraitis et al., 1997).

Within each stream of influence, there are additional levels of influence, such as, personal attitudes or perception of peer approval of a behavior and those more distant, such as, neighborhood unemployment rates. Risk and Protective Factors examines both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies to identify risks to substance use, that are divided between societal and cultural factors, and provide the legal and normative expectations for behavior and intra- and inter-personal factors (families, school classrooms, and peers) (Hawkins et al., 1992b).

Positive Youth Development emphasizes the importance of enhancing and reinforcing positive development (Catalano et al., 1999). Resilience Theory states that some individuals have special competencies to adapt to stressful situations and events (Werner, E. E., & Smith, 1982). Nurturing Environments combines many aspects of these other theories and focuses on risk reduction, the promotion of resilience and other positive attributes (Biglan, A., & Hinds, 2009).

Key among the functions of the Education and Prevention Department include;

1. Education and Awareness: this the department strives to achieve through effective communication to educate individuals about the dangers of drug use and the benefits of staying drug-free. This includes sharing evidence-based information about the risks and consequences of substance abuse,
2. Building Skills: This Program often focus on developing strong communication skills, enabling individuals (particularly students) to express their feelings and concerns openly.
3. This helps them resist peer pressure and make informed decisions, this the commission does through its flagship Drug-Free Club initiative in some selected Junior and Senior High Schools in some selected regions in Ghana,
4. Creating Supportive Environments: leading open communication within families, schools, and communities to create a supportive environment where individuals feel understood and valued. This support also reduces the likelihood of turning to drugs as a coping mechanism,
5. Promoting Healthy Behaviors: By reinforcing positive behaviors and providing clear, consistent messages, through effective communication, individuals are encouraged to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles,
6. Early Intervention: Effective communication allows for early identification of potential substance use issues, enabling timely intervention and support. Most of the theories mentioned have been translated into theoretical models. These theoretical models generally include an outcome or behavior of interest and those factors that explain the performance of the behavior. These models not only include specific factors but also the relationship between and among the factors.

The Narcotics Control Commission's Education and Prevention Department is tasked to disseminate relevant information to the general public and in particular target groups like the youth, workers, parents, law enforcement personnel among others, on the harmful effects of drug abuse.

Despite the Commission's efforts through their Education and Prevention Department to reduce illicit narcotics drug use through their demand reduction programmes, projections show a significant increase in drug use across the country. For instance, in 2014 the West Africa Commission on Drug (WACD) concluded that incidence of drug trafficking and consumption over the last decade had increased, raising concerns about the drug trafficking scenario in Ghana and the wider region (WACD, 2014). It is against this backdrop that the study seeks to conduct a thorough analysis of Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission's drug prevention education programmes.

### **Profile of the Narcotics Control Commission, Ghana**

The Government of Ghana in 1990, recognizing the havoc caused by illicit narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances, ratified the three (3) major United Nations Conventions on drugs aimed at addressing the world drug problem. The conventions are:

1. The 1961 single convention on Narcotics Drugs.
2. The 1971 convention on psychotropic substances.
3. The 1988 convention against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

In the same year, the Government of Ghana promulgated the Narcotic Drug (Control, Enforcement, and Sanction) law, 1990, also known as PNDC Law 236, under the United Nations Conventions and Protocols. Section 55 of PNDC Law 236 established Narcotics

Control Board (NACOB) as Ghana's lead and coordinating agency for addressing the drug problem.

Mr. Kofi Bentum Quantson, the first executive Secretary of NACOB, started the operations of NACOB with fifteen (15) officers. NACOB operated from PNDC liaison office at Kanda, behind the then Accra Zoo. In 1994, the office was relocated to the premises of the Ministry of Interior. In 2006, the office was again relocated to its current office complex situated at Airways Avenue, Airport Residential Area.

The first Board Chairman of NACOB was Mr. C.K. Mawuenyega, then Deputy Minister for the interior. Naval Captain Baffour Asase Gyimah (retired) was the Chairman of the Governing Board of NACOB (2009-2014) during the tenure of Mr. Yaw Akrasi Sarpong (Esq) as the Executive Secretary.

COP William Kwasi Aboah was the last Chairman of the Governing Board from (2014 – 2016) during the regime of President John Mahama.

On Friday, 20 March 2020, the parliament of Ghana passed the Narcotics Control Commission Act 2020 (Act 1019), which was assented to by His Excellency the President of the Republic, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo on Monday, 11 May 2020.

Act 1019 subsequently repeals PNDC Law 236 (1990). Section 1 of Act 1019 establishes the Narcotics Control Commission (NACOC) to replace the Narcotics Control Board (NACOB). On the inauguration of the Governing Board, Mr. J. Kaiffe Mensah became the first Board Chairman of NACOC, with Mr. FK Torkornoo being the first Director-General.

## **Mission and Vision of the Narcotics Control Commission**

The mission of the commission is to implement legislations and conventions on Narcotic Drugs, Precursor chemicals and Psychotropic substances through a motivated workforce and effective collaboration.

The vision of the commission is to become a reference drug law enforcement agency of excellence in Africa.

## **Objects of the Narcotics Control Commission**

The objects of the commission are to:

- (a). Ensure public health and safety
  - (i) by controlling, preventing and eliminating traffic in prohibited narcotic drugs and plants.
  - (ii) By taking measures to prevent the illicit use of precursors.
- (b) Collaborate with relevant bodies to develop measures for the treatment and rehabilitation of persons suffering from Substance Use Disorders.
- (c) Develop, in collaboration with other relevant bodies, alternative means of livelihood for persons who cultivate narcotic plants; and
- (d) Facilitate the confiscation of proceeds from narcotic related offences.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The significance of substance addiction prevention is currently highly esteemed as a result of the prevalent mental health concerns affecting both individuals and society as a whole (Guran, 2017). The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) states in its world drug report that approximately 200 million individuals aged 15 to 64, which accounts for 5% of the global population, have consumed a substance with addictive properties at least once within the 12 months leading up to the report's publication. Furthermore, the number of users has consistently risen over the past 15 years (UNODC, 2015). Guran (2017), states that prevention initiatives

aim to educate and provide assistance to individuals and communities in order to avoid drug use, drug abuse, and the onset of substance use disorder.

The anti-drug use advertisements or initiatives developed by the Narcotics Control Commission with the aim of discouraging drug consumption primarily rely on intuition and conjecture. They commonly utilised graphical scare techniques and fear-inducing textual messaging to dissuade youngsters from drug use. The primary focus of these ads revolves around instilling fear, namely through the utilisation of fear appeals.

These appeals include showcasing photos of cancer-ridden organs, presenting alarming and exaggerated stories of addicts, highlighting the risk of jail, and displaying visuals of drug-related injuries and fatalities, among other tactics. Additionally, they emphasize the punitive repercussions and employ authoritative slogans such as "say no to drugs," "don't do drugs," and "stay away from drugs." Nevertheless, the majority of these programmes have proven ineffective in attaining their objectives, since studies indicate a surge in illicit drug consumption.

Projections suggest a significant rise in drug usage, with expectations of more than doubling by 2050 (Cadri et al., 2021). In addition, health experts employed at psychiatric hospitals supported by the state believe that approximately 10% of patients receiving inpatient care and between 20% and 30% of patients receiving outpatient care are currently associated with substance misuse. Consequently, state healthcare services are overwhelmed due to the scarcity of specialised drug-use treatment centers, resulting in a significant load.

Prior studies, done by multiple academics (Ane, 2018; Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2015; Bird, 2019; Cadri et al., 2021), have primarily concentrated on the public health implications of illicit drug use and the resulting increase in illicit drug trafficking and consumption. Bird (2019), utilised both field and secondary research to analyse drug use patterns and investigate the demographic characteristics of the community.

In their study, Cadri et al. (2021), utilised the health belief model to investigate the factors that either promote or hinder the act of seeking healthcare among those who engage in drug use within the Sunyani Municipality of Ghana. The study by Appiahene-Gyamfi (2015) elucidates Ghana's entanglement in the intricate network of worldwide illicit drug trafficking and drug consumption.

While scholarly study have focused on illicit drug trafficking in Ghana and the West Africa sub-region, there is a significant absence of explanations for why the issue of illicit drug usage continues to exist despite the implementation of many prevention measures by the Narcotics Control Commissions.

Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the Narcotics Control Commission's drug prevention education has become necessary to understand the effectiveness of the types and strategies implemented by the commission in tackling the drug abuse menace in Ghana. This thesis aims to address these research gaps by pursuing an in-depth investigation into Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission's drug prevention education programmes.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Research**

The main objective of this study is to conduct a thorough analysis of Ghana Narcotics Control Commission's drug prevention education programmes.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Undertake a detailed examination of the types of drug prevention education programmes implemented by Narcotics Control Commission.
2. Conduct a thorough review of the strategies employed by Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission in implementing its drug prevention education programmes.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research seeks to answer the following questions

1. What types of prevention programs does the Narcotics Control Commission implement to address drug abuse in Ghana?
2. What strategies are employed by the Narcotics Control Commission in implementing its drug prevention education programmes.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This research will perform a detailed examination of the drug prevention education programmes implemented by the Narcotics Control Commission of Ghana. It further aims to probe the types and strategies of the commission's drug prevention education programmes. The research study covers present and former directors of the Drug Demand Reduction Directorate and officers of the Education and prevention Department of the Commission. The study covers a fair balance of male and female employees of the commission, senior division and other ranks. The study also seeks to address the following questions:

1. What types of prevention education programmes does the Narcotics Control Commission implement in addressing abuse in Ghana?
2. What strategies are employed by the Narcotics Control Commission in implementing its drug prevention education programmes

### **1.6 Relevance of the Study**

This study is relevant because the issue of substance abuse has become a significant public health concern due to its far-reaching consequences affecting individuals, families, communities and society as a whole. It is also relevant due to the non-traditional modes of preparing and administering illicit drugs especially among the youth in recent times.

The study will therefore help gain insights into the nature of the strategies designed to address drug abuse and the effectiveness envisioned when implementing such measures. The findings of the study will provide valuable lessons and an in-depth understanding of how stakeholders (government agencies and non-government organizations) could effectively collaborate in addressing the canker of drug abuse through evidence –based interventions. Additionally, it will deepen understanding of the successes and challenges concerning the strategies implemented in addressing drug abuse in Ghana.

The findings of the study will also help inform policy-makers on the need and ways to confront and manage drug abuse using science and data. additionally, because of the depth of empirical studies on measures implemented to address drug abuse, this study will serve as a useful starting point for further academic inquiry to guide stakeholders with insights on strategies in the fight against drug abuse in Ghana.

The study will further explore the Narcotics Control Commission's drug prevention education measures to determine its effectiveness in reducing drug abuse among various demographics, particularly the youth.

The findings from this research will inform policymakers on what works and what does not, leading to more effective and targeted drug prevention strategies.

The study will help understand the effectiveness of current programs as well as contribute to broader public health knowledge, helping to shape future interventions and educational campaigns.

This research will highlight the role of community participation in drug prevention, highlighting successful models that can be replicated in other parts of the country.

This study will also help identify the most impactful drug education programs, resources can then be allocated more efficiently, ensuring that funding and efforts are directed towards the most effective strategies implemented.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One comprises the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, Brief Methodology, Scope of the study, and Organization of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of literature related to the study and the theoretical perspectives that are used to guide the study. Chapter Three presents the methodology of the study, which comprises the research design as well as the methods for data collection and analysis. Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings of the study. It presents the socio-demographic distribution of the

respondents, among others. Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND PROPOSITIONS**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This section presents the literature review by exploring the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical aspects of NACOC's drug prevention education programmes, focusing on their efficacy and impact. The idea is to detect the shortcoming that exists in the literature and then construct a conceptual framework to appreciate the connection that exist among the key variables of the research.

#### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

The conceptual review covers the definition of key concepts of the study, which include the definition of Drug Prevention, strategies and Global principles of Substance Abuse Prevention, Ghana's role in drug prevention education, Global Substance use problem and Ghana's role in Drug trafficking and consumption.

##### **2.1.1 Definition of Narcotic Drug**

A psychoactive substance that may be utilized for therapeutic purposes but can induce dependence and harmful effects when consumed in excess. Narcotics include substances such as heroin, cocaine, and synthetic opioids, which are banned under international treaties designed to protect public health from narcotics with high misuse potential (WHO., 2021). It also encompasses certain prescription medications permitted for medicinal purposes, although may be utilized for the experiences they elicit rather than for therapeutic necessity (UNODC, 2020). The repercussions of narcotic usage are severe, encompassing immediate hazards such

as overdose, as well as societal impacts including widespread criminality and economic inefficiencies (NIDA, 2017).

Narcotics are directly associated with several public health and safety concerns. The UNODC (2020), states on its website that narcotic consumption typically exacerbates mental health disorders, increases treatment expenses, and destabilizes families. Furthermore, the illicit drug industry fosters organized crime and corruption, presenting numerous obstacles to law enforcement agencies and governments globally. Narcotics trafficking has emerged as a significant worry for Ghana in recent years, attributable to its geographical location, which has rendered the country a transit hub for narcotics, between South America, Europe, and other regions of Africa (Owusu, 2021). It is imperative to implement measures for the regulation and prevention of narcotics-related activities.

Globally, drug control has shifted from punitive measures to prevention and user management. The WHO (2021), identifies reduction strategies that mitigate the impact of substance use, including the utilization of sharps and the implementation of opioid substitution therapy. Ghana's NACOC aligns this strategy with its broader framework for addressing drugs issues, which encompasses education on drug preventive measures, positioning itself alongside similar global organizations. NACOC is poised to attain its objectives of mitigating drug addiction by eradicating ignorance and socioeconomic inequities, which are fundamental causes of substance use, while concurrently fortifying society against the detrimental effects of substance use.

### **2.1.2 Drug Abuse**

Substance dependency, defined as the habitual use of psychoactive substances for non-medical purposes, constitutes a global issue with varied repercussions. It is a disorder characterized by

inappropriate and excessive consumption of alcohol, drugs, and other illicit substances that adversely impact individuals and communities (WHO., 2021). It is frequently associated with a range of social, economic, and health problems that result in criminal behavior, deteriorating public health, and, most significantly, increased strain on the healthcare system (UNODC, 2020).

The use of illicit substances is a pervasive societal concern, particularly impacting vulnerable populations, such as the youth and economically disadvantaged areas. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (2022) identifies peer pressure, economic hardships, and practices in high-stress environments as primary contributors to substance use. Socio-culturally, drug abuse has become prevalent in certain societies, and there is often a lack of awareness regarding the harms linked with substance intake.

The prevalence of illicit drug usage among the adolescents in Ghana is growing significantly. As noted by Asante et al. (2019), the increased accessibility and affordability of illicit substances such as cannabis, tramadol, and cocaine further promotes this trend. Research indicates that individuals residing in metropolitan environments, characterized by congestion and significant income inequality, are more prone to engage in drug-related activities (Owusu, 2021). Nonetheless, rural accessibility remains susceptible, since drug cartels use rural areas for production and transit (Mensah, 2020).

The health consequences of drug abuse are significant, including bodily harm, psychological impairment, and social issues. The physiological consequences of substance addiction encompass chronic ailments, including hepatic illnesses, cardiovascular troubles, and neurological conditions (NIDA, 2017). Psychologically, it is associated with disorders

including depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, and psychotic disorders. Drug misuse results in familial dysfunction, fosters criminal behavior, and engenders stigmatization and social isolation (WHO., 2021).

In doing so, he acknowledges that addressing drug abuse necessitates a combination of strategies concerning prevention, treatment, and legislative reform. Preventive measures aim to eradicate drug use by enhancing public awareness of associated hazards. NACOC implements its drug prevention education programs in schools, communities, and businesses to accomplish this objective. These programs aim to equip individuals with the necessary information and skills to preserve their integrity and make informed decisions (NACOC, 2021). Aside from counseling and rehabilitation facilities, therapy options and medical care for drug abusers in Ghana are scarce. Nonetheless, these abstinence-based therapies are effective for addiction management but constrained by limited facility and resource availability (Asante, Oti-Boadi, & Azumah, 2019). Moreover, individuals may hesitate to seek assistance due to societal stigma; hence, government and nonprofit groups should allocate resources to awareness campaigns that urge those struggling with substance misuse to pursue help (Owusu, 2021).

Policy reform is equally crucial in combating drug abuse.

Consequently, it can be posited that decriminalization, alongside innovative harm reduction strategies, has demonstrated efficacy in countries such as Portugal, where the incidence of substance-related fatalities and HIV among drug users has markedly declined (Greenwald, 2009). NACOC in Ghana has advocated for a balanced strategy of enforcement and prevention/rehabilitation, which is considered best practice (Narcotics Control Commission., 2020).

Substance abuse is a significant public health issue that is mostly linked to and promotes criminal behavior. Substance abuse correlates with criminal behavior, since data indicates that

individuals engaged in substance use are prone to theft, assault, and other criminal behaviors to sustain their addiction (UNODC., 2022). This association underscores the necessity of addressing drug dependence to effectively confront the social repercussions of drug addiction. Drug addiction prevention initiatives have shown minor results globally, as detailed in the remarks below. The UNODC (2022), underscores that comprehensive school-based programs are highly effective in avoiding substance beginning. The Life Skills Training program in the United States has been shown to decrease drug usage by 50% among participants (Botvin, G. J., & Griffin, 2004). The effectiveness of program implementation mostly depends on cultural factors and contextual awareness (Nordfjærn et al., 2019).

Since the inception of NACOC, there has been a notable enhancement in the organization's educational programs, particularly within the Ghanaian environment. Asante, Oti-Boadi & Afram (2019), indicated that these efforts have enhanced awareness of drug-related hazards but have not led to permanent behavioral change. This necessitates the development of innovative ways to enhance community engagement and effectively address the socio-economic issues that contribute to substance use and misuse (A. Mensah, 2020).

It is not an exaggeration to assert that family and community play a crucial role in combating drug misuse. Hawkins et al. (1992), illustrates that cohesive families and adequate community support are two protective factors against substance use. The programs encompass parental involvement and community participation in the prevention of drug abuse and narcotics control. NACOC collaborates with leaders and local groups to cultivate resilience against drug-related dangers at the grassroots level (Ghana News Agency, 2022).

### **2.1.3 Drug Prevention Education**

Drug prevention education serves as a fundamental element in addressing the extensive issue of drug use. It encompasses structured initiatives aimed at preventing substance use, educating

individuals about its implications, promoting sound health-related choices, and eradicating environments conducive to substance use. Such programs are typically promoted in schools, communities, workplaces, and mass media to target various populations with specific messages (UNODC, 2020).

In the Ghanaian context, initiatives focused on delivering drug prevention education align with the cultural and socio-economic attributes of Ghanaians, as executed by NACOC. The identified effective programs engage local residents and utilize community frameworks to tailor messages for the intended audience, hence enhancing program efficacy (Narcotics Control Commission., 2020). This section examines the theories, practices, and challenges associated with drug prevention education, along with NACOC's contributions to this endeavor.

Drug prevention education is founded on many theoretical frameworks that elucidate the implementation of the programs. In the Social Learning Theory proposed in 1977, Bandura asserted that individuals acquire behavior through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. This theory is particularly relevant in elucidating the susceptibility of youth to peer and media pressure. NACOC's school programs employ positive role models and participatory ways to mitigate the allure of drug use.

The understanding of psychological motivations behind health-related actions is informed by frameworks such as the Health Belief Model (HBM) (Rosenstock, 1974). The Health Belief Model (HBM) examines the perceived risks, rewards, and barriers faced by individuals, thereby establishing a framework for crafting preventive messages that resonate with their lives. NACOC's community education campaigns illustrate the detrimental impacts of drug usage on

health and the justice system while promoting accessible resources (Ghana News Agency, 2022).

The Risk and Protective Factor Framework by Hawkins et al. (1992), enumerates additional factors relevant to predicting substance abuse. Socio-economic challenges and familial instability are addressed through risk-oriented interventions, educational assistance, and community-based academic protective measures, which are strengthened through collaborative engagement (Mensah, 2020).

In the realm of preventive education, NACOC leverages collaboration among government entities, NGOs, and communities to disseminate drug-related messages effectively. Essential tactics encompass:

**Institutional Initiatives:** Given that the youth are particularly vulnerable to substance use, NACOC collaborates with the Ministry of Education to integrate anti-drug programs into the curriculum. These programs employ lectures, debates, and simulations to equip students to withstand peer pressure. Asante, Oti-Boadi, & Azumah (2019) discovered that such initiations heightened awareness and inclination towards drug use among students.

**Community Outreach:** The program's goal is education of parents, traditional leaders and youth groups in constituencies to be targeted by NACOC through community-oriented prevention. Mandatory and voluntary city meetings, including public lectures, workshops, and cultural activities, are utilized to educate individuals and foster a sense of responsibility. Campaigns in urban neighborhoods have been mobilizing individuals to report incidents of drug-related activities, as noted by (Owusu, 2021).

**Workplace Interventions:** The transportation and mining sectors are classified as high-risk areas with a probable high prevalence of substance use. NACOC's daily workplace programs

instruct employees on identifying and addressing drug-related issues. Employer relations are also necessary to establish suitable drug-free workplace policies and employee assistance initiatives (Mensah, 2020).

Media Initiatives: NACOC enhances its campaign message through awareness creation utilizing printed materials, television, radio, and social media platforms to reach a broad audience. Awareness campaigns are done through radio and television, and social media influencers, and campaigns on community radio where important points are ‘suspended’ out to the general public where everyone can get them (Narcotics Control Commission., 2020).

The effectiveness of drug prevention education programmes is a matter of achieving a drug prevention education behavioural outcome. The strategic interventions defined in NACOC have registered some positive outcomes like, Social attitude change and increased community sensitization on risks associated with drug abuse. Nevertheless, there are challenges still, for instance, insufficient finance, weak as Inter-Agency cooperation and some cultural elements (Owusu, 2021). Asante and colleagues believed that there were beneficial gains in knowledge, but concerning behavioral change, they were less durable, and therefore underline the necessity to follow up on the participants.

The comparison study indicate the strengths that can complement the issues faced by NACOC and show best practices that can improve the performance. For example, Kenya’s National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) is participating in a program based on the multi-sectoral approach comprising religious organizations, NGOs and local authorities. This methodology has gone further in creating impact than Ghana’s largely state driven efforts. The implementation of comparable cooperation strategies might boost NACOC’s programmes.

#### **2.1.4 The Drug Situation in Ghana**

The abuse of drugs remains a worldwide issue that requires immediate attention and a comprehensive strategy. Marijuana remains a substance of concern for Ghana and other African nations (World Drug Report, 2022). The consumption of psychotropic or psychoactive substances is a longstanding tradition in Ghana. Alcohol drinking has always been integral to socializing in Ghana. Prevalently misused narcotics in Ghana encompass alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, among others (Bird, 2019).

Bird contends that in Ghana, drug usage patterns have transitioned from single-substance use to polysubstance use since 2010, with the majority of treatment-seeking drug users reportedly having consumed marijuana, cocaine, and heroin concurrently. The Ghana Narcotics Control Commission (NACOC) estimates that 50,000 individuals aged 12 to 35 engage in the use of psychoactive substances, with 35,000 of these users being students enrolled in junior high, senior high schools, and tertiary institutions (Ligbi, 2017). There are no comprehensive estimates regarding the total number of psychoactive substance users in Ghana.

Olurishe (2019) examined the drug situation in Ghana and other West African nations, asserting that drug abuse and misuse are global concerns that often have severe consequences. He asserts that the illicit use and misuse of prescription pharmaceuticals and other psychoactive chemicals remain a significant problem, particularly and paradoxically in regions with little resources and employment prospects, as observed in several West African nations.

In his short review of drug and substance misuse in Anglophone West Africa, Olurishe (2019) asserts that existing research demonstrates that drug consumption and usage remain a significant issue in the West African sub-region. He asserts that marijuana (cannabis) is the most widely overused substance in Ghana. According to Olurishe, secondary and tertiary students constitute a significant portion of the drug-abusing demographic in Ghana, influenced by curiosity, peer pressure, familial impact, and advertising.

Consistent with Olurishe (2019), researchers such as (Adu-Gyamfi & Brenya, 2015; Bird, 2019; Ligbi, 2017; Selby, 2011) assert that drug misuse is on the rise in Ghana, with marijuana being the most affordable and widely abused narcotic, notwithstanding the lack of statistics on drug consumption. Adu-Gyamfi and Brenya (2015) concur that cocaine and heroin usage is uncommon in Ghana due to their elevated cost; however, Ligbi (2017) and Bird (2019) contend that the country's status as a favored transit point for traffickers has led to an increase in the consumption of these drugs.

This rise indicates that users would utilize narcotics such as cocaine and heroin through injections and other means, resulting in the proliferation of diseases like HIV, which poses a global public health issue (Ligbi, 2017). In a study conducted by Sagoe (2014) regarding drug use among Ghanaian youth, he contends that drug consumption is widespread among young individuals in Ghana and is regarded as a national calamity that threatens the nation's prosperity, familial stability, and social security. He contends that adolescent drug users in Ghana perceive drug use as reprehensible and regrettable. Furthermore, numerous individuals state that drug use enhances their confidence to confront challenges and overcome shyness. Adu-Mireku (2003), asserts in his study on the prevalence of alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use among senior secondary students in urban Ghana that Africa, including Ghana, has become a prime target for drug market expansion due to the insufficient and lax enforcement of anti-drug legislation, in contrast to Western societies. He asserts that contemporary adolescent drug usage has become a significant issue of concern for scholars, politicians, and the government. Similar to other African nations, Tetteh et al. (2020) assert that the legalization of marijuana has sparked considerable discourse in Ghana, both in formal and informal contexts. Tetteh et al. (2020) assert that Ghanaian laws have historically imposed stringent regulations on marijuana, encompassing minor infractions such as possession and consumption, until the enactment of the Narcotics Control Commission Act 2020 (Act 1019), which aimed to

decriminalize the use and cultivation of marijuana for medicinal and commercial purposes (NACOC, 2020).

Nonetheless, it does not provide a universal license for marijuana growing nationwide, and the production or possession of marijuana without a valid authorization remains illegal (NACOC, 2020). Any cannabis-derived substance containing more than 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is classified as a high-grade drug and is banned in Ghana (NACOC, 2020). In Ghana, drug misuse and dependency are already addressed as public health concerns according to existing legislation (NACOC, 2020). Although data on the prevalence of drug use among adolescents in Ghana is lacking, research from multiple studies (Adu-Gyamfi, & Brenya, 2015; Adu-Mireku, 2003; Bird, 2019; Ligbi, 2016; Olurishe, 2019; Owusu-Sarpong & Agbeshie, 2019; Selby, 2011) reveals an increase in marijuana and other drug abuse among this demographic.

These studies effectively illustrate the fundamental aspects of the current research by revealing a significant problem with drug misuse and substance use disorder in Ghana, highlighting the necessity for legislation and interventions to combat this public health and social crisis.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

There has been a substantial amount of literature and observation on the subject matter. This section of the study seeks to review and examine a substantial number of empirical studies that are of the essence to this study.

Parsons (2005), conducted a study on the effects of a cognitive-Based intervention on Drug Awareness in Private School Preadolescent Students. This study was designed to provide preadolescent children in a home - based settings with information about the dangers of drugs as well as to provide them with resistance skills to help them remain healthy and drug free.

Parsons (2005), utilized the Too Good for Drugs (Mendez foundation, 2004) curriculum (Grade 7), a 10- lesson school-based prevention programme designed to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors related to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. She conducted workshops for teachers and parents that promoted a participatory approach to help teachers and parents acquire the requisite skills that will enable them to address the topic completely with their students and children respectively.

At the end of the intervention, parents and teachers were to confirm that the requisite information was provided to the students thereby (a) reducing the risk for drug initiation and use and (b) providing them with tools to deal with peer pressure to use drugs. Based on parents' exposure to drug- related information by way of attendance at planned workshops, students were to confirm whether or not access to such information impacted parent / child discussion about drugs. An analysis of the data suggested that although the programme largely achieved its objectives, getting parents to discuss drug related matters with their children require another type of approach.

Masiye & Kaonga (2016), conducted a study on 'Drug and Alcohol Abuse prevention in selected secondary schools in Zambia ". The study sought to establish current practices and policies in drug and alcohol abuse prevention education in selected secondary schools in Zambia. This need was necessitated by the fact despite escalating incidence of drug and alcohol abuse among school going children, little was known concerning prevention practices and policies used in Zambia's secondary schools.

Masiye & Kaonga (2016) study aimed at answering questions such as (1) what were the practices in drug and alcohol abuse prevention in secondary schools? (2) What were the drug

and alcohol prevention policy guidelines used in secondary schools? (3) How were the drug and alcohol abuse prevention activities conducted in secondary schools? The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to collect, analyze and interpret both qualitative and quantitative data from 514 respondents.

The study found that learners were taught more of factual information than skill-based and normative education. The study also revealed that there were no specific documents on drug and alcohol prevention policy in all the secondary schools. The elements of drug prevention policy guidelines used were punitive in nature as opposed to educational. The study further found that although a variety of prevention activities were used, the most frequently conducted were lectures and discussions. In addition, prevention education activities were irregularly conducted.

On the basis of the study findings, Masiye & Kaonga (2016), recommended that providers of prevention education should teach content that has the potential to reduce abuse by learners in the schools such as drug refusal skills in combination with social life skill training. Policies should focus on educational and remedial measures. He further recommended that prevention education should be provided on regular basis by means of multiple sessions and booster sessions.

Maithya (2009), conducted a research study Drug Abuse in the Secondary School in Kenya: developing a programme for prevention and intervention. The study sought to establish the current trend of drug abuse among students in Kenya Secondary Schools, and to analyze the strategies used to address the problem. The ultimate aim of the study was to propose a programme for prevention and intervention.

The key findings from the study were that drug abuse among students is common, both boys and girls have abused drugs, with the majority being in boys' schools, the greatest ratio of drug abusers to non-abusers among the sampled schools are aged between 20 and 22 years. The study further revealed that, there is a significant relationship between drug abuse and age, use of drugs by other family members, and easy access to drugs.

According to the study, a variety of factors contribute to drug abuse with the majority students citing curiosity, acceptance by peers and ignorance as to the dangers of drug abuse, as the main reasons. The study makes a number of recommendations regarding policy and further research, and also a number of guidelines for developing programmes for prevention and intervention. Brian (2002), thesis "The effectiveness of A Drug Education Programme in Silverwood Primary School: An Action Project, aim to examine the effectiveness of the drug education programme in a primary school. The study was conducted within a single primary school, involving years five and six pupils during a three-year period.

The findings of the study clearly indicate that drug education is seen by the majority of those involved to be of enormous value and should be taught in the primary school. The study found that most of the children, by the time they reach the end of key stage 2, had quite an extensive knowledge of drugs and drug issues. However, according to the study this is not the case for all the pupils. Evidence from the study showed that there is a degree of variability in the level of awareness between years five and six.

(Brian, 2002), finally suggests that there is the need to address several areas of concern expressed by both staff and pupils. The areas needing careful consideration include: (i) the

length of individual sessions (ii) extension of the number of sessions during the year and (iii) developing further life skills sessions.

## **2.3 Theoretical Review**

This part of the study reviews applicable theories that can be used to explain the various variables in the study. The study is steered by two theories, the Systems theory, and the Social Learning Theory. (SLT)

### **2.3.1 Social Learning Theory (SLT)**

The Social Learning Theory (SLT), created by Albert Bandura in 1977, is suitable for elucidating the drug prevention educational initiatives of Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission (NACOC). This renders Social Learning Theory highly relevant for developing substance abuse prevention measures due to its emphasis on how individuals acquire positive or negative behaviors and attitudes. This theory provides the foundation for elucidating behavioral changes coming from educational intervention, so rendering it suitable for analyzing NACOC's initiatives.

### **Fundamental Principles of Social Learning Theory**

Social Learning Theory posits that conduct is acquired by contact with the environment and one's own actions. Another foundational theory for the current approach is social learning theory, which, in contrast to the behaviorist perspective that posits learning occurs through direct reinforcement, asserts that individuals can learn by observing the consequences others experience as a result of their actions (Bandura, 1977). The principal mechanisms of SLT encompass:

Observational Learning: They obtained knowledge by observing others, whether peers, relatives, or figures of authority. In drug prevention education, a student may observe the behaviors and attitudes of role models, such as instructors, community figures, or media personalities, who abstain from drug use.

The author may have instructed her husband on the indicators of lung cancer by observing and emulating the behaviors of those whom she trusted. NACOC in schools employs peer educators, operating on the premise that pupils emulate the behaviors of their peers.

Reinforcement: According to Social Learning Theory (SLT), reinforcement plays a crucial role in amplifying behavioral strengths. The social researchers concluded that positive incentives, such as providing rewards for abstaining from drugs, would encourage individuals. Another form of reinforcement is negative reinforcement, wherein an aversive stimulus is evaded to elicit a specific behavior (e.g., addiction or legal issues).

Cognitive Processes: Individuals evaluate the probable outcomes of actions prior to executing or participating in them. This aligns with NACOC's educational initiatives that utilize team-building activities and fun fairs to teach groups, aiding them in making rational decisions against drug use and highlighting the positive consequences of such choices.

NACOC's drug prevention education initiatives aim to facilitate behavioral transformation by implementing policies that target the sociocultural and environmental variables contributing to drug usage. These domains are well elucidated by Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals acquire knowledge by seeing the behaviors of others, contingent upon engaging in the requisite cognitive processes to adopt specific behaviors.

SLT emphasizes the significant influence of family and peers on behavior. Families are regarded as the primary agents of socialization, and their attitudes toward substance use

significantly influence children. For example, the early role models a child encounters through their parents; if parents endorse drug use, the child raised in such an environment is likely to replicate these behaviors (Bandura, 1977). The outreach programs done by NACOC primarily involve partnership with parents, aiming to educate and empower them to foster a drug-free home environment.

This is accurate, as peer pressure is a significant component likely to affect a child's decisions, particularly during the right developmental stage. Friends exert detrimental impacts that lead others to engage in hazardous behaviors, including substance usage. NACOC implements a school-based peer education program that educates young adolescent drug users on the significance of abstaining from substance use. This aligns with SLT's strategy, as it offers positive models to facilitate behavioral improvement.

NACOC's experience demonstrates the principle of observational learning through the implementation of media campaigns. Publicized institutional measures encompass television, radio, and social media to disseminate messages highlighting the detrimental effects of drug use and the beneficial outcomes of rejection. Such advertisements may take the shape of success narratives from former drug users or the authentic experiences of celebrities regarding the consequences of substance usage. Bandura (1977), concluded that effective imitation of modeled behavior is more likely when the model is credible and resembles the observer.

Community members and influential figures, including opinion leaders, have designated roles in drug prevention within NACOC. These icons are positioned to emulate as they demonstrate commendable behavior and combat drug use tendencies. For instance, the leaders and senior individuals who publicly denounce drug use are effectively cultivating a culture of drug abstinence within their society.

SLT posits that cognitive processes are crucial in altering individuals' behavior. Similar to several programs offered by NACOC, these initiatives employ role-playing, conversations, and multimedia devices to maintain students' cognitive engagement. All these enactments enable individuals to contemplate the ramifications of drug use or the benefits of adopting positive behaviors. Such programs align well with SLT's aims about the examination of observation, cognition, and behavior.

A multitude of researchers validate the application of Social Learning Theory in the prevention of substance abuse. Botvin, Griffin, K. W., & Nichols (2000) conducted a study demonstrating that school-based prevention utilizing modeling and reinforcement effectively addressed teenage substance use. Incremental research utilizing an equivalent extrapolation of SLT, as revealed in an observational study by Asante, Oti-Boadi, Azumah (2019) in Ghana, demonstrated improved educational interventions and alterations in knowledge and attitudes toward drug use.

In the Ghanaian context, the utilization of culturally relevant models, along with community engagement via community-based organizations, enhances the application of SLT for NACOC. It thereby guarantees that its interventions align with the perceived norms of the target community. NACOC's messages are designed to be linked with reputable community members.

### **2.3.2 System Theory**

As initiators of the system theory, Durkheim and Max Weber applied it to biological organisms and applied it to human social systems. Rhodes & College (2012), described a system as a set of elements with particular characteristics who work together to accomplish a distinguishable

outcome. Shaw (1965), further established that a system is an entity that takes in inputs, operates and comes out with outputs.

Katz & Kahn (1966), applied the System Theory to organizational behavior by mapping the recurrent sequences of input, throughput, output, and feedback among an organization and its external environment. They explain that the systems obtain inputs from the environment either as information or in the form of resources. The system then processes the input internally, which is called throughput, and discharge outputs into the environment to re-establish balance to the environment. After the outputs, the system then seeks feedback to establish if the output was successful in re-establishing balance. Therefore, according to Katz & Kahn (1966), the system approach emphasizes the means used to maintain organizational survival and emphasizes long-term goals rather than short-term goals.

Durkheim on the other hand also applied the system theory intending to acquire knowledge on how societies were organized and how they maintained cohesion. Durkheim concluded that, unlike other organisms, humans had a social system, therefore orders can be maintained through the consent of individuals who share the same values (Friedman & Allen, 2014). And to achieve this order, Durkheim suggested that division of labor can contribute to upholding cohesion in a highly organized society.

Hence individuals specialize in the performance of certain roles, thus creating a degree of reciprocal interdependence. Although the individual assigned to certain roles may change, the role itself persists over time, therefore, maintaining a cohesive society. Durkheim illustrated that crime and suicide both occurred as a result of disruptions and imbalances in the integration of individuals and societies (Friedman & Allen, 2014; Kay, 2015). He weighs this in the macro

sense. For instance, the role of law enforcement agencies especially the police is to maintain law and order in society.

However, society becomes threatened when its protectors (police) abuse its powers. Durkheim also came up with the concept of "anomie" to describe an individual who does not conform to societal expectations, therefore, alienating society. In essence, the system exists in the social environment and certain factors in this environment affect the outcome and output of the system. The systems also interact with other systems and if the system is not compliant with the norm, then it is considered dysfunctional.

Max weber is a contemporary of Durkheim known for his work on social institutions and organizations. However, unlike Durkheim who believed that societies are maintained with the consent of individuals to comply with expectations, Weber was of the view that bureaucracies are coercive and are maintained through the legitimate use of violence or force (Friedman & Allen, 2014).

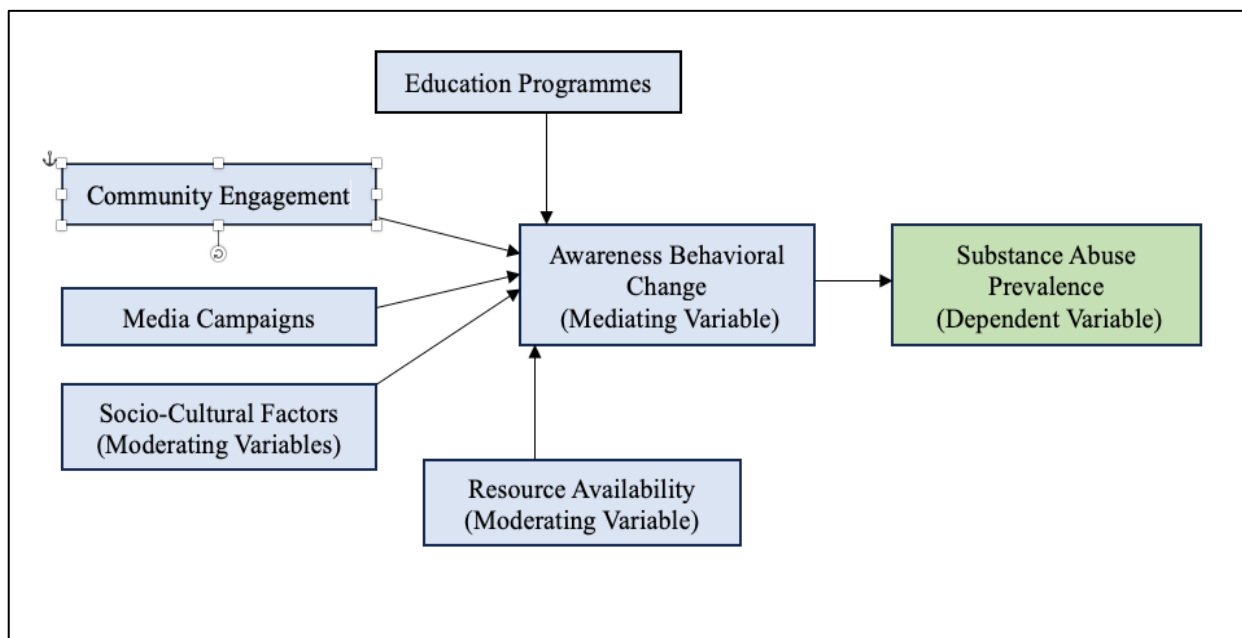
With regards to Durkheim's assertion ineffectiveness of institutions mandated to fight drug trafficking disrupt the system. Thus the continuous operation of traffickers could be blamed on the weaknesses of our institutions. On the other hand, the system is also supposed to provide these institutions with incentives and the necessary resources to enable them to work effectively. Therefore, institutions cannot be solely blamed for the drug menace. On the other hand, Weber believes that enforcement of the powers of those who have been given the mandate should be enough to curb illicit operations. However, the drug trade has invaded these enforcement institutions and drug barons sometimes have control over people at the helm of affairs thus they are unable to enforce law and order.

## 2.4 Conceptual Framework/Model

The term “conceptual framework” can likewise be utilized from a more extensive perspective that incorporates the real thoughts and convictions that the specialist holds about the peculiarities, concentrating on whether or not these are recorded (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Bryman (2016), defined a conceptual framework as a speculated model distinguishing the model under study and the connection between the reliant and free factors.

Several elements constitute the conceptual framework of drug prevention education programmes, each playing a crucial role in managing the dynamics of drug prevention and enhancing the understanding of the program's impact on behavioral and societal outcomes. The subsequent descriptions provide a comprehensive analysis of the components, emphasizing their significance and interrelationships.

**Figure 2.4 Conceptual framework of Prevention education programmes**



**Source: Author's construct**

## **Education Programmes**

Consequently, educational programs serve as the foundation for drug prevention initiatives. These structured treatments entail educating juveniles and other interested individuals about the dangers of substance usage, training them to resist such temptations, and fostering the development of decision-making strategies. NACOC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, incorporates drug prevention courses into the school curriculum. These modules encompass role-play, group debates, and peer education, all grounded on the Principles of Social Learning Theory as articulated by (Bandura, 1977).

Educational institutions are targeted because students are particularly vulnerable throughout their adolescent years, characterized by curiosity and frequently resulting in dangerous behaviors. According to Asante, Oti-Boadi, Affram (2019), youth participating in drug prevention education develop an improved understanding and a positive attitude towards drug use. NACOC promotes early intervention messages to cultivate responsible societal members who will abstain from illegal substance use.

## **Community Engagement**

The engagement of the community is essential for the execution of NACOC's strategies, as it improves collective accountability and community assessment. Engaging parents, religious institutions, traditional authorities, and youth organizations fosters awareness of the programs in accordance with Ghanaian culture. Social engagement and cultural activities, such as seminars, public lectures, and other culturally connected events, establish a platform for discussing substance usage.

This NACOC strategy emphasizes encouraging local residents to combat drug trafficking within their neighborhoods. Public awareness initiatives in metropolitan areas have resulted in improved community policies against drug dealers and users (Owusu, 2021). Involving

traditional leaders guarantees that recipients are unequivocally assured of the messaging, as these leaders embody societal standards.

### **Media Campaigns**

Media campaigns enhance the dissemination of drug prevention information by using both conventional and contemporary methods. NACOC collaborates with radio and television stations, as well as social media influencers, to disseminate pertinent content tailored to those audiences. For instance, messages designed for young individuals can be disseminated via social media and settings, while programs in local languages are broadcast through community radio stations.

The management of media enables NACOC to achieve its objectives despite geographical barriers, as it facilitates timely information dissemination. Utilizing real-life narratives of individuals who have successfully overcome substance misuse, fictional scenarios illustrating the impacts of drugs, and engaging in question-and-answer sessions. The research conducted by the UNODC (2020), indicates a compelling justification for the belief that media campaigns effectively alter individuals' attitudes and behaviors around substance misuse.

### **Awareness and Behavioral Change (Mediating Variable)**

Knowledge and modification are the critical outcomes of effective drug prevention strategies. These initiatives aim to raise knowledge about the detrimental impacts of drug use, alter perceptions to diminish substance usage norms, and advocate for appropriate drug use as a healthy practice. Prevention programs typically emphasize the dangers of ongoing drug use by providing information on the significant health, legal, and social consequences of substance consumption.

Behavioral change is characterized by reduced experimentation with the substance by users, increased support from peers regarding the necessity of abstaining from the substance, and a heightened intention to seek aid when confronted with substance-related challenges.

Consequently, the prevention of both the emergence and recurrence of dangerous behaviors necessitates the continual reinforcement of messages and the availability of pertinent resource support, as indicated by (Mensah, 2020). NACOC's engagement technique fosters the maintenance of awareness, thereby converting that awareness into enduring behavior.

### **Socio-Cultural Factors (Moderating Variable)**

This study demonstrates that socio-cultural factors significantly influence the adoption and implementation of drug prevention education. The ethnic and cultural variety of Ghana indicates that opinions of substance use and its prevention vary between districts and among different ethnic groups. For example, certain traditional norms and beliefs may condone the use of substances such as alcohol for recreational purposes, while other cultural taboos disapprove of their consumption.

To address the problem of discrepancies, NACOC currently adapts its programs to align with the cultural systems of other nations. The involvement of monarchs, religious institutions, and cultural landmarks guarantees that preventative messages are effectively communicated and culturally embraced. Furthermore, understanding sociocultural issues enables the identification of obstacles to change in drug prevention initiatives and the development of strategies to surmount those obstacles.

### **Resource Availability (Moderating Variable)**

The availability of resources solely affects the scope and efficacy of the activities implemented by NACOC. Self-sufficiency is essential to enable the acquisition of appropriate teaching and learning resources, qualified personnel, and additional support systems necessary for the effective implementation of the programs. Conversely, it imposes limitations on the scope of the preventive activities.

Poor funding may result in inadequate training of facilitators, insufficient or inappropriate dissemination of information, education, and communication (IEC) resources, or a limited number of community outreach activities. The lack of advanced information technology and data networking capabilities may hinder the monitoring and evaluation of the program's performance. This is peculiar, as Owusu (2021) advises that increased expenditure is necessary to amplify preventive efforts due to existing investment gaps.

It is essential for the program's operation that NACOC secures requisite funds via grants from governmental and international sources, in addition to corporate entities. An further resource issue that could be alleviated by inventive tactics involves establishing partnerships with technology companies to develop sophisticated mobile applications for preventative education.

### **Substance Abuse Prevalence (Dependent Variable)**

The objective of NACOC's drug prevention education programs is to ultimately reduce the prevalence of substance abuse in Ghana. This is accomplished by the following variables: the number of individuals apprehended for drug offenses, hospitalizations due to substance misuse, and self-reported drug use in community samples. A diminished level typically signifies that preventive measures have been effective concerning substance usage.

The levels of substance abuse are closely associated with several community-level issues, including economic status, police efficacy, and community resources. Additional objectives of NACOC encompass the identification of the underlying causes of drug use and the facilitation of the acquisition of attributes that deter individuals from engaging in substance misuse.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section of the study spells out the methodology. It deliberates on the stages taken by the researcher to accomplish the achievement of the research objectives as stated above. Specifically, it considers the Research design and Strategy, Research Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures, Data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques, and how the data was handled.

#### **3.2 The study area**

The Government of Ghana in 1990, recognizing the havoc caused by illicit narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances, ratified the three (3) major United Nations Conventions on drugs aimed at addressing the world drug problem. The conventions are:

1. The 1972 protocol amended the 1961 single convention on Narcotics Drugs.
2. The 1971 convention on psychotropic substances.
3. The 1988 convention against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

In the same year, the Government of Ghana promulgated the Narcotic Drug (Control, Enforcement, and Sanction) law, 1990, also known as PNDC Law 236, under the United Nations Conventions and Protocols. Section 55 of PNDC Law 236 established Narcotics Control Board (NACOB) as Ghana's lead and coordinating agency for addressing the drug problem.

Mr. Kofi Bentum Quantson, the first executive Secretary of NACOB, started the operations of NACOB with fifteen (15) officers. NACOB operated from PNDC liaison office at Kanda,

behind the then Accra Zoo. In 1994, the office was relocated to the premises of the Ministry of Interior. In 2006, the office was again relocated to its current office complex situated at Airways Avenue, Airport Residential Area.

The first Board Chairman of NACOB was Mr. C.K. Mawuenyega, then Deputy Minister for the Interior. Naval Captain Baffour Asase Gyimah (retired) was the Chairman of the Governing Board of NACOB (2009-2014) during the tenure of Mr. Yaw Akrasi Sarpong (Esq) as the Executive Secretary.

COP William Kwasi Aboah was the last Chairman of the Governing Board from (2014 – 2016) during the regime of President John Mahama.

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the parliament of Ghana passed the Narcotics Control Commission Act 2020 (Act 1019), which was assented to by His Excellency the President of the Republic, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

The Act 1019 subsequently repeals PNDC Law 236 (1990). Section 1 of Act 1019 establishes the Narcotics Control Commission (NACOC) to replace the Narcotics Control Board (NACOB).

On the inauguration of the Governing Board, Mr. J. Kaiffe Mensah became the first Board Chairman of NACOC, with Mr. FK Torkornoo being the first Director-General.

### **Mission and Vision of the Narcotics Control Commission**

The mission of the commission is to implement legislations and conventions on Narcotic Drugs, Precursor chemicals and Psychotropic substances through a motivated workforce and effective collaboration.

The vision of the commission is to become a reference drug law enforcement agency of excellence in Africa.

## **Objects of the Narcotics Control Commission**

The objects of the commission are to:

- (a) Ensure public health and safety
  - (i) by controlling, preventing and eliminating traffic in prohibited narcotic drugs and plants.
  - (ii) By taking measures to prevent the illicit use of precursors.
- (b) Collaborate with the relevant bodies to develop measures for the treatment and rehabilitation of persons suffering from Substance Use Disorders.
- (c) Develop, in collaboration with other relevant bodies, alternative means of livelihood for persons who cultivate narcotic plants; and
- (d) Facilitate the confiscation of proceeds from narcotic related offences.

### **3. 3 Research Strategy and Design**

Patton (2002) defines qualitative methodology as a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as a "real-world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2012; Teye, 2008). The qualitative research approach allows a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Minichiello, 1995). This study, therefore, employed a qualitative research approach to examine the types of drug prevention education programmes implemented by Narcotics Control Commission.

### **3.4 Population**

A research population is a well-defined gathering of individuals with a particular set of features from which the sample is drawn. The study population involves participants of the research. Key in-depth interviews were conducted on officers from Narcotics Control Commission's Drug Demand Reduction Directorate. The Commission was selected because it is the lead

agency charged with eliminating the cultivation, use, processing, manufacture, sale, importation and exportation of illicit drugs in Ghana.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedures and Sampling**

Research sample is the segment of the population that is chosen for the research. The sampling frame is the inventory of all units in the population from which the sample will be selected. A purposive sampling technique was used in this study to sample drug prevention officers who took part in the research. A purposive sample, also known as selective sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher when choosing who to participate in the research (Palinkas et al., 2013). Drug prevention officers from Narcotics Control Commission were selected purposively for the key in-depth interview. This was largely informed by their rank and years of service.

The study involved a sample of 20 participants. This is because according to (Warren, 2001), the sample size for a qualitative study must be between 20 and 30 to prevent the concept of saturation where no new data emerges from the responses given by respondents. The breakdown of respondents includes five (5) present and former heads of the Drug Demand Reduction Directorate, ten (10) senior officers and five (5) other ranks.

### **3.6 Data Collection Techniques**

Key in-depth interviews were conducted with some 20 drug prevention officers. Five (5) present and former Heads, ten (10) senior officers and five (5) other ranks of the Demand Reduction Directorate of NACOC. The interview mostly centered on strategies and types of drug prevention education programmes implemented by the Narcotics Control Commission. Additionally, they were quizzed on the types and strategies implemented by Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission in its drug prevention education programs. Information from them was

very constructive and aided in giving much clarity and insight to the issues examined. The secondary data sources used included reports on world drug, as well as books, journal articles, publications, and working papers related to drug prevention programs in Ghana.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Techniques**

In this study, transcripts of the audio-recording interview were referenced with pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity of participants. Since the English language was used for all interviews, transcription was done with very little difficulty. The data was then coded by grouping them into smaller units to make interpretation easy. Codes were developed into themes based on the objectives of the study. Each theme was then analyzed for each interview. Discussions were done based on sub-headings of the literature review and were also linked to the objectives. Comments and views of participants were quoted in the discussions to buttress some points. Data was analysed using Nvivo Version 11. The software was used to explain the patterns generated by qualitative data. This software was used to help explain the patterns generated by qualitative data. Manual coding was also used to help group codes into themes.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

The purpose of the study and its main features will be clearly explained to participants before the interview. Interviews will be recorded with the permission of participants. Also, anonymity will be assured to each participant. Pseudonyms will be employed to ensure that the identities of the participants were kept confidential. Ethical approval were obtained from the Ethics Committee before the commencement of the project.

In conclusion, this study employed a qualitative data collection approach. The methodology was carefully designed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. While the study's limitations such as reliance on self-reported data are acknowledged, mitigation strategies,

including data triangulation and member checking, were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the results.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSIS OF GHANA'S NARCOTICS CONTROL COMMISSION'S (NACOC) DRUG PREVENTION EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research findings that correspond to the specified research questions and study objectives. The analysis begins with studying the demographic characteristics of the participants from the selected units and departments of the Narcotics Control Commission. Afterwards, it provides an in-depth analysis of the data, outlining the types of prevention programs and the strategies employed by the agency in implementing its drug prevention education programmes. This study delves into the types of prevention programs the Narcotics Control Commission implement to address drug abuse in Ghana, and the strategies that are employed by the agency in implementing these strategies. The results of this study are extensively analysed in the following sections.

#### **4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Key Respondents**

There were a total of 20 key informants, selected from Units and Departments at the Narcotics Control Commission. The group consisted of 12 males and 8 females, resulting in a significant gender imbalance. The predominance of male informants can be explained by the fact that the field of security and law enforcement in Africa is primarily dominated by men.

The majority of responders fell within the age range of 20 to 39 years. This suggests that the group of workers being assessed was considerably younger and is presently involved in security and anti-drug-trafficking activities. The relatively young age of those serving in these organisations may suggest that the security jobs they do require mobility and physical agility.

These tasks often involve rigorous military-style training and the ability to adapt to a dynamic and unpredictable work environment.

The results revealed that the overwhelming majority of the respondents possess some type of post-Secondary education. These are especially noticeable in their prominent security positions among the surveyed security personnel. This is because the type of University education necessary for these roles necessitates a comprehensive understanding and proficiency in several areas, enabling individuals to effectively carry out and make informed decisions in intricate security operations.

Religious affiliation: According to the findings of this study, the majority of individuals with high numbers identified themselves as Christians. Christianity is the predominant religion in Ghana, since it holds the highest level of adherence in the country's religious demography. The religious composition of the respondents is likely to accurately reflect the overall cultural environment in which these security professionals work. As a result, it may impact the values and ethical perspectives they hold inside their respective professional domains.

The demographic characteristics of the participants provide important context for understanding the perspectives and experiences expressed in the study. The gender disparity in these security professions indicates a need for increased gender inclusion, while the age distribution highlights the significant contributions of younger individuals to the fight against drug abuse and trafficking. The respondents' significant degree of higher education highlights the importance of formal education in attaining and carrying out security responsibilities. The religious connections of the respondents provide valuable information about the likely cultural and ethical frameworks that may influence their approach to addressing drug trafficking.

Accurate demographic information is essential for implementing effective interventions and policies to improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of efforts to combat drug trafficking in Ghana.

#### **4.2 Types of Prevention Programs Implemented**

Educational prevention programs should be established as the foundation for combating drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking, addressing both the root causes of drug use and the environmental and cultural conditions that facilitate the proliferation of drug trafficking networks. These initiatives are essential for increasing awareness, diminishing demand, and equipping individuals, particularly the youth, with the knowledge and skills to reject drugs and trafficking.

Educational programs function as a preventive strategy to diminish the demand for illegal drugs by informing the populace about the detrimental effects on their health, social relationships, and legal standing. Given its singular objective, diminishing demand has become equally crucial as halting supply to disadvantaged areas, as this will directly impact the profitability of trafficking networks (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2021). Preventive education in schools and communities may combat disinformation regarding drugs, effectively dispel myths, and underscore the long-term repercussions of substance usage.

Moreover, education will furnish individuals with the resilience and decision-making abilities necessary to withstand peer pressure and evade recruitment into drug trafficking. Young individuals, frequently targeted by traffickers, derive significant advantages from programs centered on life skills, including critical thinking, communication, and stress management. A program done in many nations, termed "Life Skills Training," has demonstrated significant

impact on reducing substance use (Botvin, G. J., Griffin, K. W., & Nichols, 2000). This underscores the necessity for organized preventive measures that can optimally safeguard vulnerable groups.

Furthermore, educationally promoted preventative activities contribute to fostering resilience within the community. These programs empower families, enhance schools, and link local organizations, fostering collaborative agendas that address the socio-economic causes driving drug trafficking. Socio-economic barriers such as poverty and unemployment may compel individuals towards criminal conduct. These preventative projects offer alternatives to at-risk groups by providing vocational training and facilitating work placements, thereby diminishing the appeal of trafficking as a means of survival (UNODC, 2020).

Given the significance of adopting preventive programs to combat drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking, it was necessary to analyze specific actions conducted by the Narcotics Control Commission (NACOC) in addressing this issue. As a result, respondents were solicited to offer insights into the preventive measures the business had devised and executed.

The results indicated that NACOC has predominantly concentrated on activities centered around information dissemination. These campaigns are purposefully crafted to enhance community knowledge of frequently abused substances and their related detrimental effects. These programs focus on sensitization to provide community members with the knowledge required to identify and combat the dangers associated with drug usage and illegal trafficking activities. This is what Officer John from the Education Department has to say:

*“The Commission's preventive initiatives include school, faith-based, community, and workplace programs, utilizing interactive PowerPoint presentations, photo exhibitions, and discussions to engage students, religious groups, communities, and employees in raising awareness about the risks of*

*drug abuse and trafficking*". (Interview on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

Since the use of social media platform has become a powerful medium for raising awareness, disseminating information, respondents also made mention of employing this medium as preventive program for raising awareness. They were of the view that since social media platforms enable them to reach a vast and diverse audience in the country, their preventive message mostly penetrate various demographics, ensuring that critical information about the dangers of illicit drug use reaches individuals in urban, rural, and remote areas. This is what Officer Rapheal has to say:

*"We at the Education Department at NACOC mostly use social media as one of the medium to facilitates direct and immediate interaction with users. As one of our prevention programs, we use this feature to answer questions, address misconceptions, and provide support in real time. This interactive aspect enhances the effectiveness of awareness campaigns by fostering a sense of connection and trust between NACOC and the general public. (Interview on 21<sup>th</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).*

The findings from respondents above is in line with a study by National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in the United States, which found that by implementing preventive programs focus on sensitization to provide community members with the knowledge required to identify and combat the dangers associated with drug usage and illegal trafficking, every dollar spent on this program yields up to ten dollars in saving on treatment and criminal justice costs (NIDA, 2017).

Utilizing Systems Theory, preventive programs are recognized as interventions that stabilize and augment the resilience of interrelated societal systems. According to Structuration Theory, these programs enhance human agency and affect structural dynamics to challenge the environment facilitating drug trafficking. Collectively, these frameworks substantiate the

necessity of implementing preventative programs as a systemic requirement and a structural imperative in the fight against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

#### **4.2.1 Targeted Population of Preventive Programs**

To obtain a greater comprehension of the target demographics for the preventative programs, respondents were requested to specify the groups primarily aimed at by these activities. The majority answered that the programs are predominantly aimed at adolescents in educational institutions. Participants emphasized that substance use in adolescents often results in more severe and enduring repercussions than in maturity. They noticed that, throughout the years, substance use among adolescents disrupts cognitive development, impairs academic achievement, and results in social and legal concerns. Thus, the programs primarily target adolescents in educational institutions to alleviate these risks by encouraging healthy habits and endorsing positive life choices. This is what officer Rita at the NACOC Headquarters has to say:

*“Targeting teenagers for preventive programs is strategic and essential due to their developmental susceptibility, vulnerability to external influences, and the long-term advantages of early intervention. This program, referred to as school-based programs, employs interactive and age-appropriate techniques to inform pupils about the dangers of drug misuse.”* (Interview on 21<sup>th</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

The findings above corroborate Botvin & Griffin (2004), findings that Educational institutions offer a systematic setting conducive to effectively engaging teenagers. School-based initiatives, such the Life Skills Training Program, have demonstrated substantial decreases in drug use among participants by improving critical thinking, coping mechanisms, and self-esteem.

Respondents indicated that while most preventive programs primarily target adolescents in schools, they also design initiatives aimed at adults in various religious institutions and

workplaces, as these venues significantly influence value formation, offer support systems, and address community issues. Respondents believed that they also targeted religious sites and offices due to their centrality in communities, their ability to attract individuals of various ages, and their diverse socioeconomic origins. They assert that this broad reach renders them optimal venues for spreading information, enhancing awareness, and holding educational sessions regarding the perils of drug abuse.

The findings also revealed that religious leaders and organizations are frequently regarded with great confidence in their communities. Their participation in preventative programs enhances credibility and raises the possibility that individuals will regard the messages seriously and engage actively in preventive initiatives. This is what officer Mumuni from the Preventive office has to say:

*“The involvement of religious institutions and offices in preventive efforts by our Education Units across the country has greatly enhances the effectiveness and outreach of drug control initiatives. Through the use of their moral authority, broad networks, and supportive environments, these institutions can help to build resilience, and create healthy lifestyles and drug-free communities.”*  
(Interview on 21<sup>th</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

Research by Francis & Katz (2012), highlights that faith-based organizations effectively mobilize communities for social causes, making them ideal partners for disseminating information on drug prevention. These findings is in line with the finding of this study that religious institutions function as reliable, accessible, and impactful entities that can tackle both the underlying causes and effects of substance dependence.

#### 4.2.2 Success and Challenges of Implementing Preventive Programs

Preventive drug addiction programs have shown significant success globally by Identifying and addressing the root causes, enhancing awareness, and mitigating substance use across diverse populations. Therefore it was necessary for the study to find out what have been achieved since their implementation of these preventive programs by NACOC.

Respondents were of the view that since the implementations of the preventive programs such as the school-based programs like the establishment of drug-free clubs in selected schools, has significantly raised awareness of drug use, especially among youth. Evaluations by NACOC indicate that such campaigns have improved the knowledge of participants about the risks of using drugs, which is linked to a reduction in drug experimentation. This is what officer John has to say:

*“Our school-based preventive programs targeting adolescents, implemented through the establishment of drug-free clubs, have demonstrated significant success. These clubs provide training on drug-resistance skills, leading to a substantial reduction in the initiation of drug use.”* (Interview on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

Participants were also of the view that utilizing the organizational digital platforms and social media campaigns in preventive programs has markedly improved their reach and effectiveness. It was revealed that NACOC Information Technology (IT) Department, in conjunction with the Education Department, effectively use internet resources and social media platforms to communicate evidence-based information regarding drug prevention. This cooperative strategy has effectively involved millions of users nationwide, cultivating extensive knowledge and encouraging informed choices. An officer from the IT Department was of the view that *“.....digital programs have increased accessibility and provided interactive learning opportunities, especially for adolescents. We have been able to reach out to a lot of audience across the country with positive feedback”*.

Despite the utility of preventive programs in combating drug abuse, their implementation remains challenging. These problems present substantial obstacles to the efficacy and sustainability of these projects, underscoring the necessity of contextual consideration. Respondents were asked some of the challenges they faced and continue to face in the implementation of preventive programs.

Most of the respondents were of the view that one of the main challenges for carrying out preventive drug abuse programs is the lack of funding and resources. According to them, these types of programs also often come at significant cost, including expenses for training staff, producing materials, awareness activities and outcome monitoring. The study revealed that inadequate funding restricts program coverage, limiting their ability to reach vulnerable populations, especially in low-income or underserved areas. This is what officer Rita has to say:

*“Financial constraints hinder the organization's preventive programs, reducing quality, consistency, and sustainability. Limited funding affects initiatives like expanding drug-free clubs in schools, restricting their effectiveness. Addressing these challenges is essential to enhance program reach and impact.”* (Interview on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

Respondents also highlighted the challenges faced by communities and individuals resisting preventive efforts owing to cultural views, stigma associated with drug misuse, or a lack of faith in external initiatives. They disclosed that this resistance has resulted in diminished involvement and engagement levels in certain areas around the nation. Respondents indicate that the stigma associated with drug misuse in certain areas has hindered open talks and involvement in preventive programs. It was revealed that individuals at risk or already afflicted may be reluctant to participate in these activities owing to fear of judgment or social marginalization, posing a difficulty for NACOC in implementing their preventive programs.

Respondents also raised issue of having digital divide as a major concern since digital platform has been one of the majority tools used in disseminating preventive programs. They were of the view that people who are in remote or less privileged areas mostly do not have access to broadband internet, digital gadgets or even cannot make use of the technology since the digital awareness and digital intervention programs are carried out. Officer Rapheal has this to say:

*“Limited internet access in remote areas and financial constraints hinder the reach of digital educational programs. These challenges highlight the need for increased funding and infrastructure to ensure equitable access to preventive education nationwide. (Interview on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).*

From the challengers given above, solutions such as a synergistic integration of resource mobilization, institutional and human resource development, stakeholder engagement, and the implementation of research-based and culturally relevant treatments. Eliminating these hurdles will enhance the efficacy and reach of preventive initiatives addressing drug usage.

### **4.3 Strategies Employed to Implement Prevention Programs**

The second objective of the study was to examine various strategies utilized by Ghana’s Narcotics Control Commission in executing its drug prevention education programs, as interactive methods are crucial for enhancing engagement, comprehension, and retention in initiatives aimed at combating drug trafficking and abuse. My meeting with officers at NACOC indicated that the organization's strategy is divided into three components: School-based, Community-based and Faith-based.

#### **4.3.1 Schools Based Strategy**

A primary strategy employed by NACOC in implementing its preventive initiatives, as indicated by respondents, is Peer-to-Peer education. They indicated that employing this

technique, which utilizes peer educators, fosters a sense of trust and openness, for substantive discussions regarding drug misuse. Officer Ike states: *“Our peer educators are trained to share personal experiences and practical strategies, cultivating a supportive environment that encourages behavior change and informed decision-making.”*

Another strategy used by NACOC at the school based according to respondents is the integration of multimedia tools in their educational programs. According to the findings, incorporating multimedia tools greatly improves the effectiveness of preventive programs. They revealed that interactive simulations for substance abuse are normally created in videos and animations, which provides users with realistic situations that can be easily visualized by the participants. Furthermore, they also pointed out that interactive multimedia content contribute to increased learners’ attention and participation and helps to make better results in lectures. This is what officer Rita has to say:

*“Incorporating multimedia tools greatly improves the effectiveness of preventive programs. We used to text when giving lectures to students, and too often, when using text, important information is quickly forgotten, but when there are videos, animations, and infographics, it is easier for people to see and remember the negative effects of drug abuse.”* (Interview on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

#### **4.3.2 Community Based Strategy**

Under the community-based strategy, respondents revealed that the one of the strategy the use is the community-based forums, where there are open discussion forums, which are most effectively conducted within community settings. They further revealed that such forums necessitate the involvement of stakeholders, including participants, community leaders, experts, and other contributors, for live conversations, inquiries, and brainstorming sessions, and that by incorporating diverse perspectives, they help identify locally relevant challenges

and co-create practical solutions in the fight against drug trafficking and drug abuse in such communities.

This is what officer Rapheal has to say: *“...for the past years, we have used the community-based forums as a strategy because it encourage collective responsibility, empowering participants to take ownership of preventive efforts. This approach strengthens community bonds, enhances trust, and ensures that interventions are tailored to the unique needs of specific populations”*

Another strategy being made mention by respondents is using feedback from communities. it was revealed that using feedback is a necessity in order to improve outcomes of the preventive activities. Most of the instruments like surveys, polls, live voting, open conference allow the participants to convey their thoughts, ideas, and stories. This strategy according to them helps develop the feeling of ownership and belonging, thus, making programs to meet the needs of the targets. According to officer John, *“...feedback helps the education and research departments identify where there is a gap, and where and how changes have to be made to respond to emerging challenges. The gain achieved by developing feedback communication systems is the trust established in reinforcing high preventive measures that may lead to increased efficiency and possibly the sustainability of such measures.”*

Another strategy employed by NACOC according to the finding is by designing culturally relevant content used for their preventive programs. They revealed that culturally appropriate content in designing preventative programs enhances the reception of intended information within the target population especially remote communities. They further revealed that incorporating local cultures, rituals, and languages renders the programs more relatable, hence enhancing individual engagement. Officer Mumuni revealed that *“...the education department have been utilizing storytelling, folklore, proverbs, and culturally recognized artwork in communicating information about the repercussions of drug misuse in most communities in the*

*country*". Respondents were also of the view that the approach also mitigates resistance and stigma associated with the program while embracing the community's cultural norms. Culturally sensitive interventions effectively enhance group involvement, ensuring that all designated groups benefit from the developed interventions. This strategy further enhances awareness and durability in managing drug usage among various population groups.

The findings above on strategies employed by NACOC in implementing its preventive programs corroborates Kumpfer, et al. (2008), findings that through group work, brainstorming, and community projects are effective ways to ensure that drug prevention takes a collective responsibility from all members of the group. These activities enhance group learning and cohesion advancing on anti-drug perceptions

#### **4.4 Obstacles in Executing Strategies used in Implementing Preventive Programs**

While interactive strategies enhance the effectiveness of preventive programs against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking, their implementation is often met with several challenges and obstacles. Therefore the study also examine some of these obstacles NACOC officials face when executing these strategies.

Respondents were of the view that, the peer-to-peer education which is one of their stratetagy for school based preventive program face several drawbacks which can cause low efficiency. It was revealed that training peer educators requires substantial time, resources, and professional human resource in imparting the appropriate knowledge and skills in the articulation of the intended massages. Additionally, they also revealed that peer educators most at times may have no sufficient authority or recognition to persuade some of the participants, especially those who doubt their subject knowledge. On the part of officers, respondents also acknowledged that supervision and support of peer-let programs and their quality as well as

their monitoring can be rather difficult. Officer Eva from the Education Department has this to say:

*“Peer-to-peer education in school programs is impactful but faces challenges due to limited resources for training educators. Insufficient funding and materials hinder the program's implementation and sustainability, reducing its potential to enhance preventive education effectively.”* (Interview on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

Respondents were also asked if there are practical solutions to the school-based strategy of peer-to-peer program. They were of the view that the organization has always and will continue to ask for support both in the form of money and technical expertise from non-governmental organizations and from private sectors as well as from international organization. They also pointed out that help have been coming from some of this organization. Another solution being mention by respondents is that NACOC is in talks with the Ministry of Education to try and incorporate peer-to-peer education modules into school curricula which will help organize the usage of resources properly. Officer John also revealed that *“... we are also trying to get teachers employed in this program to help foster the sustainability of this program without having to hire other trainers from outside”*

Another obstacle echoed by respondents during the study findings has to do with their community-based strategy. According to respondents, Community-based forums face significant obstacles, including low participation rates due to time constraints, lack of interest, or inadequate outreach. They cited examples like, officers organising programs during office hours but these times are mostly not convenient for participants because they may also be going to work. Another obstacle being mention was cultural and language barriers which further hinder engagement, they were of the view that in some of the communities, officers lack the cultural and language knowledge of the communities especially in the hinter lands, such

obstacles discourage participants in taking part. Another limitation in the implementation of the community-based strategy is limited funding which according to them often affects logistics, such as venue availability and material distribution, reducing the program's effectiveness. Additionally, skepticism or mistrust of external organizers can deter participation

In pointing out some of the solutions, the Head of the Education Department posited that, while preventive education programs are predominantly scheduled during working hours, efforts are being made to arrange forums at times more conducive to community attendance, such as evenings or weekends. Furthermore, regarding the utilization of local languages, he indicated that the organization is striving to promote ethnic diversity within the Education Department. He asserted that this initiative will mitigate language barriers during educational outreach, as presentations and discussions will be conducted in languages familiar to the community, thereby ensuring inclusivity. He noted that the Education Department is attempting to integrate interactive activities such as role-playing, group debates, or games to sustain interest and promote active involvement.

The utilization of multimedia in the improvement of preventive programs is an effective means of disseminating information. Multimedia resources, including movies, infographics, podcasts, and virtual reality simulations, elucidate concepts more effectively due to their enhanced clarity and visual appeal compared to traditional content. In the context of drug misuse prevention, multimedia information effectively depicts real-life scenarios, elucidates their implications, and instructs individuals on resistance strategies. Respondents believed that challenges in utilizing multimedia stem from inadequate technology, particularly in rural regions, limited computer knowledge, and the high costs of the resulting products, which may impede program delivery.

The IT Head at NACOC believes that elevated production costs primarily hinder the execution of this approach; however, there is an effort to optimize current resources by utilizing low-cost tools such as smartphones and free software for content development. He also noted that they have developed content that may be disseminated via USB drive for areas with restricted internet connection. NACOC is seeking collaboration with media groups or technology companies to finance content production and distribution.

Feedback mechanisms are crucial for assessing the efficacy of preventative programs, enabling the evaluation of a program's effects and potential enhancements. Nonetheless, establishing infallible feedback mechanisms poses difficulties. Respondents identified a significant issue: participants often provide biased comments owing to fear of others' opinions or potential repercussions. Moreover, respondents indicated that numerous places they visit for community activities lack the technology resources essential for gathering and assessing feedback. Respondents also said that time and money restrictions have further impeded the adoption of comprehensive feedback methods.

Addressing this challenge, the Director of Education at NACOC stated that the Department is implementing anonymous surveys or suggestion boxes to promote candid feedback without the fear of condemnation. Furthermore, they are utilizing user-friendly digital platforms or mobile applications for feedback collection, which are available even in remote regions. She also said that they are attempting to integrate feedback loops, whereby they will respond to received comments and convey modifications to participants, so reinforcing their role in program creation. Regarding the issue of budgetary constraints, she stated the following:

*“We do not only depend on non-governmental and international organizations; we are also trying to get the government involve where the financing of this programs can be included in government budgets that will provide steady financing for all our preventive programs in the country. This guarantees continued funding for our programs since the concept of policy integration*

*continues to be actively implemented.*” (Interview on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

Although these interactive strategies can be a powerful tool they need comprehension planning, enough funding, capacity building and support from the different stakeholders to meet these challenges. The elimination of these challenges will guarantee the effective utilization of interactive preventive programs against illicit drug trafficking.

#### **4.5 Recommendation to Enhance Preventive Initiatives and Strategies**

The inefficient preventative strategies addressing illicit drug consumption diverge from contemporary difficulties and require strategic advancements to improve their efficacy. The subsequent recommendations from respondents aim to enhance these initiatives by employing optimal technologies, adopting refined methodologies, and involving communities.

Most of the respondents touched on the need to expand the organisations sources of funding for their preventive programs. They pointed out that lack of sufficient funding is one of the ongoing challenges to successful prevention. Officer John has this to say:

*“The backbone for sustaining all our preventive programs funds. We need funding from governments and stakeholders in order to keep these preventive programs going. Funding is useful for recruiting and training qualified personnel, developing extensive information to educate everyone, including forming large campaigns”.* Interview on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2024, NACOC Headquarters).

Respondents were of the view that the possibility to attract corporate funds through the introduction of tax incentives for donations to preventive programs could also stimulate their investment. One respondent cited an example that, governments can work with pharmaceutical firms to fund anti-drug campaigns or use advertising funds to supply informational materials to teachers and health care providers. The stewardship of public philanthropic cedis means that

fiduciary responsibility must be at the forefront, efficiency and transparency will make difference matters personal to donors, and timely and relevant information empowers philanthropy to act.

Respondents emphasized the necessity to integrate and enhance technology to better the spread of their preventive initiatives. Extending access to more population groups necessitates the integration of information technology. Technology include components such as social media platforms, smartphone applications, and e-learning tools that can disseminate evidence-based messaging regarding drug prevention across diverse population groups. They believed that although the organization utilized IT in its preventive programs, it must implement engaging and educational initiatives to foster participation and maintain participants' interest. These programs, in their opinion, could encompass various formats, including quizzes, videos, or live webinars. Some further proposed that the organization constructs a custom mobile application to disseminate information and contacts for supportive services related to drug addiction for individuals and families, thereby enhancing the reach of the issue. VR simulations also instruct learners on the detrimental impacts of substance usage inside a secure environment. This can mostly be accomplished when NACOC collaborates with telecommunications companies to provide subsidized or complimentary rates to the organization.

Concentrating on adolescents was also recommended by respondents as a method to enhance their preventive initiatives. The majority said that youth are particularly susceptible to drugs and alcohol, representing a substantial demographic for intervention. Educational initiatives, including peer education, drug-free groups, and counseling, should be promoted in schools to provide consistently reinforced programs that enhance students' knowledge and skills in resisting drug use. Respondents assert that such programs should not only impart knowledge to teenagers but also cultivate settings that empower kids to make sound decisions and act appropriately. The Head of the Education Department stated that “...*the numerous programs*

*designed to deter students from drug use must be extended to additional schools nationwide, as drug prevention education ensures that students acquire sufficient knowledge regarding the dangers and effects of drugs”.*

Furthermore, respondents underscore the necessity of parental involvement in preventative initiatives, as this will strengthen the messages children get in school and foster a conducive home environment. The Head of the Education Department asserts that this can be accomplished through the organization of workshops, counseling, and ongoing communication with parents.

Respondents strongly recommended the promotion of multisectoral collaboration, since the prevention of drug misuse and trafficking necessitates a comprehensive intervention or multisectoral approach to address a universal issue. Respondents proposed an inclusive partnership with mental health experts, educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations to unite in addressing their common challenges and resources. Respondents indicated that such operations should encompass analogous sensitization programs, an integrated data bank, and comparable training initiatives for the operational workforce to ensure broad alignment of paradigms. One officer stated that effective teamwork enables them to tackle prevention, treatment, and reintegration to ensure that their objectives align with societal demands.

It was also advised that regional association should be developed, as many drug issues transcend borders. These networks can engage in information exchange, coordination, and collaboration on various scales to address challenges related to drug problems. Consequently, enhancing multilateral contacts and collaboration might augment the efficacy of drug misuse prevention, treatment, and control measures through the shared accountability these partnerships provide.

Respondents did not conceal their sentiments by disclosing their poor performance in the realm of feedback mechanisms. The majority of respondents suggested that NACOC should augment feedback systems to better their preventive activities. Given that feedback is essential for the enhancement and efficacy of preventive programs addressing illicit drug abuse, employing anonymous feedback mechanisms such as questionnaires, suggestion boxes, or hotlines whether online or in paper form will enable affected individuals to share their experiences and provide feedback without the fear of stigma. This is highly beneficial for program creators to identify successful elements and areas needing improvement. Improvement in this area ensures that participant satisfaction, usability surveys, and focus group sessions confirm that the programs are relevant, culturally acceptable, and responsive to the needs of the communities served.

It was also recommended that the Education Department broaden its discussions among diverse groups, since such engagements enhance opportunities to involve key stakeholders, including leaders, educators, and adolescents, in the program. Utilizing feedback metrics and converting them into data analysis facilitates the formulation of suitable strategies for the program. These provide an understanding of the implications of these patterns and the formulation of particular strategies to address them. Ultimately, effective feedback methods foster trust, continuous participation, and, importantly, maximize the success of any preventive initiatives.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This segment of the study presents summary of major findings from the study with respect to objectives of the study. The section also offers a conclusion based on the findings and the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Also included in this section is a recommendation based on the research findings.

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The study assesses Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission's drug prevention education programs. The findings of the study were derived from analysis of data gathered from literature reviews and interviews from Narcotics Control Commission personnel at the various Units and Departments. The key findings are examined below.

Educational programs function as a preventive strategy to diminish the demand for illegal drugs by informing the populace about the detrimental effects on their health, social relationships, and legal standing. The findings of the study indicated that NACOC has predominantly concentrated on activities centered around information dissemination. These campaigns are purposefully crafted to enhance community knowledge of frequently abused substances and their related detrimental effects.

It was revealed that the Commission implements several preventive initiatives, including: (1) school-based prevention programs, which utilize interactive PowerPoint presentations to

engage students; (2) faith-based prevention programs, conducted through PowerPoint presentations and/or discussions within religious settings; (3) community-based prevention programs, delivered through photo exhibitions and/or discussions to raise awareness at the community level; and (4) workplace prevention programs, employing interactive PowerPoint presentations and discussions to educate employees about the risks and consequences of drug abuse and traffickin.

The findings of the study also revealed that apart from the four types of preventive programs used by NACOC, its Education Department mostly use social media as one of the medium to facilitates direct and immediate interaction with users. As one of its prevention programs, they use this feature to answer questions, address misconceptions, and provide support in real time. This interactive aspect enhances the effectiveness of awareness campaigns by fostering a sense of connection and trust between NACOC and the general public.

When it comes to NACOC targeted groups for its preventive programs, the findings revealed that the programs primarily target adolescents in educational institutions since drug use during this time disrupts cognitive development, impairs academic achievement, and results in social and legal concerns these risks by encouraging healthy habits and endorsing positive life choices.

It is also revealed in the findings that while most preventive programs primarily target adolescents in schools, they also design initiatives aimed at adults in various religious institutions and workplaces, as these venues significantly influence value formation, offer support systems, and address community issues.

When it comes to success since the implementation of the preventive programs, the findings revealed that preventive programs such as the school-based programs like the establishment of drug-free clubs in selected schools, has significantly raised awareness of drug use, especially among youth. Evaluations by NACOC indicate that such campaigns have improved the knowledge of participants about the risks of using drugs, which is linked to a reduction in drug experimentation. The findings further revealed that utilizing the organizational digital platforms and social media campaigns in preventive programs has markedly improved their reach and effectiveness.

Despite the utility of preventive programs in combating drug abuse, their implementation remains challenging. The findings pointed out that one of the main challenges for carrying out preventive drug abuse programs is the lack of funding and resources.

It was further revealed highlighted that the challenges faced by communities and individuals resisting preventive efforts owing to cultural views, stigma associated with drug misuse, or a lack of faith in external initiatives.

As a challenge, it was further revealed from the findings that the issue of having digital divide as a major concern since digital platform has been one of the majority tools used in disseminating preventive programs. They were of the view that people who are in remote or less privileged areas mostly do not have access to broadband internet, digital gadgets or even cannot make use of the technology since the digital awareness and digital intervention programs are carried out.

The second objective of the study was to examine various strategies utilized by Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission in executing its drug prevention education programs. It was

revealed that primary strategy employed by NACOC in implementing its preventive initiatives in schools is Peer-to-Peer education. They indicated that employing this technique, which utilizes peer educators, fosters a sense of trust and openness, for substantive discussions regarding drug abuse.

Another strategy used by NACOC at the school based according to the findings is the integration of multimedia tools in their educational programs. According to the findings, incorporating multimedia tools greatly improves the effectiveness of preventive programs.

Under the community-based strategy, the findings revealed that the one of the strategy the use is the community-based forums, where there are open discussion forums, which are most effectively conducted within community settings.

Another strategy revealed in the findings is using feedback from communities. It was revealed that using feedback is a necessity in order to improve outcomes of the preventive activities. Most of the instruments like surveys, polls, live voting, open conference allow the participants to convey their thoughts, ideas, and stories.

The findings further revealed that another strategy employed by NACOC is by designing culturally relevant content used for their preventive programs. It was revealed that culturally appropriate content in designing preventative programs enhances the reception of intended information within the target population especially remote communities.

While interactive strategies enhance the effectiveness of preventive programs against illicit drug trafficking, their implementation is often met with several challenges and obstacles. The findings revealed that the peer-to-peer education which is one of their strategy for school based preventive program face several drawbacks which can cause low efficiency. It was

revealed from the findings that training peer educators requires substantial time, resources, and professional human resource in imparting the appropriate knowledge and skills in the articulation of the intended messages.

The findings further revealed that Community-based forums face significant obstacles, including low participation rates due to time constraints, lack of interest, or inadequate outreach.

Additionally the findings revealed that another obstacle was cultural and language barriers which further hinder engagement, they were of the view that in some of the communities, officers lack the cultural and language knowledge of the communities especially in the hinter lands, such obstacles discourage participants in taking part.

On the issue of feedback for improving the preventive programs the findings of the study identified a significant issue, where participants often provide biased comments owing to fear of others' opinions or potential repercussions. Moreover, respondents indicated that numerous places they visit for community activities lack the technology resources essential for gathering and assessing feedback.

In providing recommendations to improve the preventive programs, the finding revealed that most of the respondents touched on the need to expand the organisations sources of funding for their preventive programs. They pointed out that lack of sufficient funding is one of the ongoing challenges to successful prevention.

It was further recommended in the findings that there is a need to integrate and enhance technology to better the spread of their preventive initiatives. Extending access to more population groups necessitates the integration of information technology.

The findings also revealed that NACOC should also concentrate more on adolescents based preventive programs. Since the youth are particularly susceptible to drugs and alcohol, representing a substantial demographic for intervention. Furthermore, the findings underscore the necessity of parental involvement in preventative initiatives, as this will strengthen the messages children get in school and foster a conducive home environment.

Additionally, respondents advocated for multisectoral collaboration, since the prevention of drug misuse and trafficking necessitates a comprehensive intervention or multisectoral approach to address a universal issue. Respondents proposed an inclusive partnership with mental health experts, educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations to unite in addressing their common challenges and resources.

The findings further revealed that NACOC should augment feedback systems to better their preventive activities. Given that feedback is essential for the enhancement and efficacy of preventive programs addressing illicit drug abuse, employing anonymous feedback mechanisms such as questionnaires, suggestion boxes, or hotlines whether online or in paper form will enable affected individuals to share their experiences and provide feedback without the fear of stigma.

The findings also revealed that the Education Department broaden its discussions among diverse groups, since such engagements enhance opportunities to involve key stakeholders, including leaders, educators, and adolescents, in the program.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

Following the results obtained from the study, the research reached the following conclusions; It is concluded from the study that Narcotics Control Commission personnel are on course in their fight against illicit drug trafficking and drug use through their preventive education programs, but the existence of numerous challengers will not only undermine their performance, but will expose the country's youth to illicit drug use and further expose the country to international drug trafficking.

The study also concludes that even though both the government and Narcotics Control Commission's Education Departments continue to collaborate and cooperate with its international and national partners in combating illicit drug abuse and trafficking, there is the need to maintain and improve this cooperation since this policy would improve amalgamating resources together through joint planning and joint education programs to combat illicit use and trafficking through the preventive education programs.

The study also concludes that without the interventions from Non-governmental Organisations and International partners such UNODC, United States, and the United Kingdom, in resourcing the activities of the Education Department in implementing its preventive programs, most of this preventive programs will not have been implemented since the government budgetary allocations are insufficient. This demonstrate that these partners are still important in the modern international system as the aid in tackling international drug use and trafficking.

It is also concluded that there is a need for an inclusive partnership with mental health experts, educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations to unite in addressing their common challenges and resources. Such operations should encompass analogous sensitization programs, an integrated data bank, and comparable training initiatives for the operational workforce to ensure broad alignment of paradigms.

It is finally concluded that NACOC should augment feedback systems to better their preventive activities. Given that feedback is essential for the enhancement and efficacy of preventive programs addressing illicit drug abuse, employing anonymous feedback mechanisms such as questionnaires, suggestion boxes, or hotlines whether online or in paper form will enable affected individuals to share their experiences and provide feedback without the fear of stigma.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Suggestions established from respondents during interviews and results from the findings, the following recommendation were made. It is recommended that, the government of Ghana must show great assurance to the fight against the drug menace by increasing budgetary allocations to Narcotics Control Commission, providing them with logistics and equipment, and improving conditions of service of officers to increase morale to effectively deliver on their mandate by expanding and improving its preventive programs.

It is further recommended that the government of Ghana must continue to collaborate with its international partners such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom and international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), and at the same time try other actors to have a holistic approach to the fight against drug abuse drug trafficking.

It is also recommended that the Education Department broaden its discussions among diverse groups, since such engagements enhance opportunities to involve key stakeholders, including leaders, educators, and adolescents, in the program.

It is further recommended that an inclusive partnership with mental health experts, educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations can lead to information exchange, coordination, and collaboration on various scales to address challenges related to drug problems. Consequently, enhancing multilateral contacts and collaboration might augment the efficacy of drug misuse prevention, treatment, and control measures through the shared accountability these partnerships provide.

It is also recommended that NACOC, utilises its feedback metrics. Since this is highly beneficial for program creators to identify successful elements and areas needing improvement. Improvement in this area ensures that participant satisfaction, usability surveys, and focus group sessions confirm that the programs are relevant, culturally acceptable, and responsive to the needs of the communities served.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Interviewer Guide**

I am a student from the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC), pursuing Development Communication. As part of the requirements for the award of a Master of Arts. I am currently conducting research on Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission Drug Prevention Education Programmes. Please, I wish to state that your participation is very crucial to this research. I will be glad if you consent to participate in this research. However, you can opt out of the survey at any time you want to. Also, kindly note that if at any point of the interview you need clarification, I would be ready to answer your questions and assist in providing any additional information. Kindly note that in case you consent to participate, you can leave any question unanswered if you find it/them uncomfortable to answer. The survey will ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of your answers.

I wish to confirm that the information obtained will be used for academic purposes only and will not be passed on to a third party.

Thank you for your participation.

#### **Demographic Information**

1. Please can you provide your name (optional), position, and years of experience with the Narcotics Control Commission.
2. Which department or unit are you associated with in the Commission?

#### **Research Question 1: Implementation of Prevention Programs**

3. Can you describe the type of preventative programs developed by the Narcotics Control Commission to combat drug abuse in Ghana?
4. Which groups or demographics are predominantly targeted by these programs (e.g., adolescents, educational institutions, communities, workplaces)?
5. What are the primary aims of these preventative programs?
6. Could you share examples of successful prevention programs implemented by the Commission?

7. What challenges have been encountered in developing or implementing these preventive programs

**Research Question 2: Employed Strategies**

8. What tactics does the Commission employ to execute drug prevention education programs?
9. In what manner does the Commission interact with stakeholders, such educational institutions, communities, religious organizations, or governmental entities, in its preventive initiatives?
10. What obstacles have you encountered in executing these strategies? In what manner have they been addressed?

**Unrestricted Feedback**

11. In your view, which elements of the Commission's preventative programs and policies most addresses drug abuse among the youth?
12. What suggestions would you propose to enhance the Commission's future preventative initiatives and strategies?