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# Drugs between adolescents and young adults: a study with teachers from a settlement in Central Brazil

**ABSTRACT** | Objective: to identify among the teaches of a settlement in Central Brazil the discussion on the topic of drugs among adolescents and young adults. Method: cross-sectional study carried out from February 2017 to May 2018 conducted with 21 teachers with more than six months of experience in school, from a Public Teaching Institution in an agrarian reform settlement. Results: Regarding the harm of drug use, the majority (76.2%) answered that they know. As for the acquisition of information about student users using drugs inside or near the school environment by teachers, it was reported by more than half of those investigated. Conclusion: It is believed that managers, driven by the research findings, in partnership with the educational and health institutions of the settlement, will be able to implement and develop discussions about the use and harm of drugs among teachers, students and family members residing in the settlement.

**Keywords:** Drugs; Teacher; Teenager.

**RESUMEN** | Objetivo: identificar entre los docentes de un asentamiento en el centro de Brasil la discusión sobre el tema de las drogas entre adolescentes y adultos jóvenes. Método: estudio transversal realizado entre febrero de 2017 y mayo de 2018 realizado con 21 docentes con más de seis meses de experiencia en la escuela, de una Institución de Enseñanza Pública en un acuerdo de reforma agraria. Resultados: Respecto al daño del uso de drogas, la mayoría (76.2%) respondió que lo saben. En cuanto a la adquisición de información sobre los usuarios estudiantes que usan drogas dentro o cerca del entorno escolar por parte de los maestros, más de la mitad de los investigados informaron de ello. Conclusión: Se cree que los gerentes, impulsados por los resultados de la investigación, en asociación con las instituciones educativas y de salud del asentamiento, podrán implementar y desarrollar discusiones sobre el uso y el daño de las drogas entre los maestros, estudiantes y familiares que residen en el asentamiento.

**Palavras claves:** Drogas; Profesor; Adolescente.

**RESUMO** | Objetivo: identificar entre os professores de um assentamento do Brasil Central a discussão sobre o tema drogas entre adolescentes e adultos jovens. Método: estudo de corte transversal realizado no período de fevereiro de 2017 a maio de 2018 realizado com 21 professores com mais de seis meses de atuação na escola, de uma Instituição Pública de Ensino de um assentamento da reforma agrária. Resultados: Sobre os malefícios do uso de drogas, a maioria (76,2%) responderam que conhecem. Quanto à aquisição de informação sobre alunos usuários fazendo uso de drogas dentro, ou nas proximidades, do ambiente escolar pelos docentes foi relatado por mais da metade dos investigados. Conclusão: Acredita-se que os gestores, impulsionados pelos achados da pesquisa, em parceria com as instituições de ensino e saúde do assentamento, consigam implementar e desenvolver discussões sobre uso e malefícios das drogas entre os professores, estudantes e familiares residentes no assentamento.

**Palavras-chaves:** Drogas; Professor; Adolescente.

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## INTRODUCTION

The consumption of legal and illegal drugs among the young population, since the 1960s, represents a major multifaceted public health problem worldwide, requiring frequent evaluations. It is estimated that 29 million of the world's population use drugs worldwide<sup>(1,2)</sup>. Among the young population, settlers can be especially vulnerable to the use and negative consequences of these substances due to greater socio-cultural neglect, housing infrastructure, precarious employment and limited access to intervention programs<sup>(3-5)</sup>, especially by social facilities, such as health and education units. The settlements, a group of agricultural units, were idealized, mainly, to shelter needy families from irregular and environmental preservation.

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A study carried out in the United States of America<sup>(3)</sup> showed that 30% of the young settlers had a history of excessive alcohol consumption. In Piauí, the prevalence of alcohol abuse was estimated at 11.67%, using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test scale (AUDIT)<sup>(6)</sup>. Regarding the investigation in a settlement in the Midwest region of Brazil<sup>(7)</sup> estimated at 27.6% (95% CI 20.0-36.9%) the use of illicit drugs, including marijuana, cocaine, crack, LSD and inhalants, was reported by 24.8% (95CI 17.5-33, 8%), 6.7% (95CI 3.3-13.1%), 2.9% (95CI 1.0-8.1%), 1.9% (95CI 0.5-6.7% ) and 1.0% (95CI 0.2-5.2%) of the participants, respectively.

Globally, there is already strong evidence that teaching institutions, and have always been, essential agents in preventing drug use among adolescents and young adults, since teachers are potential vehicles, both for training and for information capable of transforming risk behaviors and attitudes.<sup>(8,9)</sup> However, for decades, institutional programs have not been successful, most likely due to the inability of teachers to address such a theme full of stigma in an environment that is usually still traditional and repressive, as well as the precariousness of the educational system, lack of preventive projects, weakened family processes and active participation of parents and / or guardians by young people<sup>(10-12)</sup>.

Since 2006, Brazil legitimizes the need for teacher training and the implementation of pedagogical projects aimed at drug prevention<sup>(11)</sup>. Nowadays, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education are encouraging the discussion of the theme through the Health at School Program ("Programa Saúde na Escola" - PSE)<sup>(12)</sup>. In this context, there have been countless studies concerning the identification and evaluation of these policies, as already described by the National System of Public Policies on Drugs, where there is low PSE adherence<sup>(10)</sup>, but, so far, none with teachers from educational institutions located in the settlement. Thus, the present

investigation aimed to identify among the teachers of a settlement in Central Brazil the discussion on the topic of drugs among adolescents and young adults.



Globally, there is already strong evidence that teaching institutions, and have always been, essential agents in preventing drug use among adolescents and young adults, since teachers are potential vehicles, both for training and for information capable of transforming risk behaviors and attitudes.



## METHOD

This is a cross-sectional study carried out from February 2017 to May 2018, using the principles of social epidemiology. Twenty-one teachers from a Public Education Institution from an agrarian reform settlement located in Central Brazil participated in the research. Those with more than six months of experience in school were eligible and those on sick leave and vacation were excluded.

All those eligible were invited to participate in the study and were instructed on the nature, objectives, methodology, risks and benefits, and afterwards, the Free and Informed Consent Form ("Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido" - TCLE) was offered for reading and signing.

Data collection took place in a private location on the premises of the educational institution, using a structured script, composed of four groups of questions:

1) socio-demographic and labor characteristics; 2) Consumption of alcohol and drugs in adolescence 3) Discussion about drugs in school and in class 4) Vulnerability of the settlers to drugs. All variables described above were presented using boards. Also, aiming at the confidentiality and greater reliability of the information obtained, all research assistants received training.

The data obtained, after validation and typing on a microcomputer, were analyzed using the statistical program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 17.0. For continuous variables were calculated averages and standard deviations. This study was preceded by approval by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Federal University of Goiás, under registration number 365/11.

## RESULTS

The board 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics investigated, with the majority being female (71.43%), married (52.38%) and calling themselves Catholics (38.10%). A large portion of

**Board 1 - Sociodemographic characteristics of teachers of school adolescents from a settlement area in Central Brazil, 2017-2018**

Características	N	%
<b>Sexo</b>		
Masculino	6	28,57
Feminino	15	71,43
<b>Idade média 31,2 anos (DP ± 4,32)</b>		
24 - 33 anos	8	38,10
34 - 43 anos	8	38,10
44 - 52 anos	5	23,80
<b>Estado civil</b>		
Solteiro	7	33,34
Casado	11	52,38
Divorciado	3	14,28
<b>Religião</b>		
Católico	8	38,10
Evangélico	6	28,57
Espírita	5	23,80
Outros	2	9,53
<b>Renda familiar média 6,2 SM (DP ± 1,02)</b>		
2 - 4 SM	5	23,81
5 - 7 SM	6	28,57
8 - 10 SM	5	23,81
> 10 SM	5	23,81

MW: Minimum wage

**Board 2 - Pedagogical characteristics of teachers of school adolescents from a settlement area in Central Brazil, 2017-2018**

Características	N	%
<b>Área de formação</b>		
Pedagogia	11	52,38
Letras	2	9,53
Matemática	1	4,76
Biologia	2	9,53
Educação física	3	14,28
Artes	1	4,76
História	1	4,76
<b>Tempo de formação média 9,7 anos (DP ± 3,13)</b>		
2 – 8 anos	12	57,14
9 – 15 anos	7	33,33
> 16 Anos	2	9,53
<b>Pós-graduação</b>		

the interviewees were between 24 and 43 years old (76.18%). Regarding family income, the majority (52.38%) received between 2 and 7 minimum wages.

Board 2 shows the pedagogical characteristics of the teachers. Those who graduated in pedagogy (52.38%) and with up to eight years of training (57.14%) stood out, and (80.95%) declared to have postgraduate degrees. Concerning the workload, 12 (44.15%) teachers taught more than 40 hours / week of classes.

Board 3 shows the perception about the theme of alcohol and other drugs. Although everyone believes in the importance of student orientation regarding the theme, only 71.43% of them have already addressed or do so in their classes. For many (61.9%) the ideal age to discuss the topic between 10 and 13 years old and 76.2% perceive that students have knowledge about the harm of drug use. Of the interviewees, 52.38% reported having knowledge of a student being a drug user, 61.9% perceived that students exhibit risky behavior and 19.05% had already experienced students taking drugs on the school premises or surroundings.

Image 1 presents the perception of those investigated about the responsibility to address the issue in the settlement. The majority (90.48%) believe that the responsibility for guidance lies with the mother and 85.72% credit the responsibility for discussing alcohol and drugs with adolescents and young people to their parents. Only 14.28% of respondents said it was the responsibility of the school.

**DISCUSSION**

The settlement teachers showed some discrepant characteristics when comparing the School Census of the Ministry of Education <sup>(21)</sup>, because it was found to be a younger group, with less training time and with a higher proportion of men, which can infer that early-stage teachers look for places with a greater shortage of professionals until they

Sim	17	80,95
Não	4	19,05
<b>Disciplina que ministra</b>		
Várias	10	47,62
Inglês	1	4,76
Matemática	1	4,76
Biologia	2	9,53
Geografia	1	4,76
Libras	1	4,76
Educação física	3	14,29
Português	1	4,76
História	1	4,76
<b>Tempo de trabalho na Escola do assentamento</b>		
< 1 ano	8	38,10
1- 2 anos	7	33,33
3 – 4 anos	6	28,57
<b>Carga horária de trabalho semanal</b>		
< 40 h	9	42,85
40 – 60 h	9	42,85
70 – 90 h	3	14,30

H: hours

### Board 3: Perception about the theme alcohol and other drugs second teachers of adolescent students of Brazil Central nesting area 2017-2018.

Questões	N	%
<b>Considera importante orientação quanto às drogas e álcool na escola</b>		
Sim	21	100
Não	-	-
<b>Idade ideal para abordar a temáticas drogas e álcool na escola</b>		
7 - 9 anos	8	38,1
10 – 13 anos	13	61,9
<b>Já abordou ou aborda os temas drogas e álcool em sala de aula</b>		
Sim	15	71,43
Não	6	28,57
<b>Percebe conhecimento dos alunos quanto aos malefícios de uso de drogas</b>		
Sim	16	76,2
Não	5	23,8
<b>Tem conhecimento de algum aluno que seja usuário de drogas</b>		
Sim	11	52,38
Não	9	47,62

acquire experience. Almost all (80.95%) referred to post-graduation, a rate much higher than the 34% found in Goiás<sup>(13)</sup>. It is believed that this finding is reflected in the education indicators of the Region, in which professionals are seeking increasingly early qualification in search of better remuneration<sup>14</sup>.

Thus, it is believed that these professionals are encouraged by managers, co-workers and adolescent social network, have the power to incite discussion on the use of drugs, both at school and in the settlement, minimizing greatly the consequences of drug use, such as school dropout, failures, violence, interrupted family processes, stress, others..

As for family income, the majority received less than seven minimum wages and 47.62% taught various subjects. Studies indicate that remuneration is associated with the quality of life of the professional, which can influence the bond with students in the classroom and, consequently, in the opening for dialogue on conflicting themes experienced by young people<sup>(15-17)</sup>. Such findings deserve attention from the managers, since they greatly impair the identification of students' educational deficits, the pedagogical difficulties of the school and the social problems of the community, reducing the teacher's ability to design and execute drug prevention projects, proposing solutions and even acting in the resolution of the situation experienced in the intra and extra-school environment<sup>(18,10)</sup>.

All respondents believe in the importance of advising students on the use of alcohol and other drugs at school, however, only 71.43% have already done so, and in a superficial way in the classroom. Approaching drugs and alcohol only in the classroom is different from approaching at school, since in the classroom the teacher assumes responsibility alone, without the support of the institution or a support program that makes the institutional strategy and plausible for execution.<sup>(19)</sup>

**Alunos apresentam comportamento de risco para o uso de drogas e álcool**

Sim	13	61,90
Não	7	33,34
Não sabe	1	4,76

**Acha necessário abordar a temática de drogas na sala de aula**

Sim	19	90,48
Não	1	4,76
Não sabe	1	4,76

**Vivenciou alunos se drogando na escola**

Sim	4	19,05
Não	16	76,19
Não sabe	1	4,76

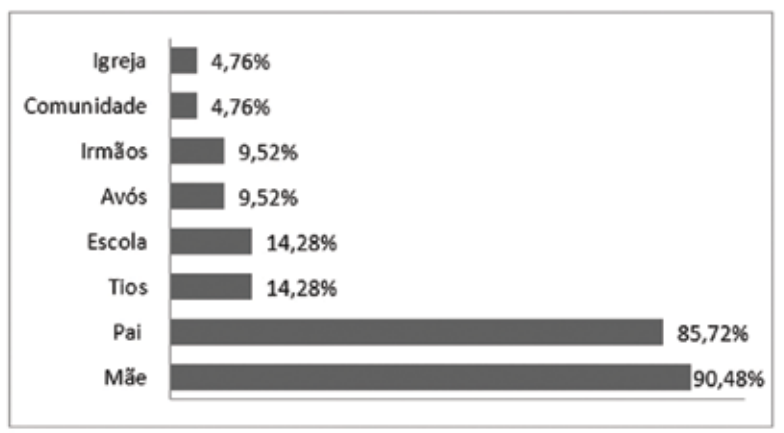
Source: Survey data

already been clarified by many authors (10). Bearing in mind that residing in settlements represents a social and health vulnerability, making it possible for the subject to be addressed in the school curriculum and in the PSE will contribute significantly so that adolescents and young people can have a healthy individual and social development, thus minimizing experienced social problems, such as violence and school dropout, Sexually Transmitted Infections, trafficking and chemical dependency. The most alarming; 19.05% of those surveyed have already experienced students using illicit drugs inside the educational institution. This finding highlights the immediate need to work on the theme of alcohol and other drugs in the school environment in a transversal way in all subjects.

Settlement regions, left to government abandonment due to historical, economic and socio-cultural issues, experience a deficit in infrastructure, education, health and violence, making evident the vulnerability of students in the territory under study to legal and illegal drugs (18, 4).

The settlement under study is not benefited by the PSE, so it is important to develop interventions articulating the entire social network of the adolescent, such as family, friends, teachers and parents, seeking youth protagonism and safeguarding the differences in the needs of the settlers, based on equity, integrality and humanization; free from preconceived ideas. The challenge for actions with this public is to think together about strategies that can effectively contribute to the prevention of the misuse of legal and illegal substances without interfering in the natural course of life and experiences typical of adolescence. Among the limitations of the present study include the nature of data collection, since it was based on verbal reporting, which may be under or overestimated. There are also the limitations of cross-sectional studies, since

**Image 1: Responsibility for guidance on the use of alcohol and other drugs according to teachers of school adolescents from a settlement area in Central Brazil, 2017-2018**



Of those investigated, 90.48% and 85.72% reported that education on the topic is the responsibility of the mother and father, respectively. This finding must be thoroughly explored in studies with a qualitative approach, since, quite possibly, it refers to a preconceived view that controversial issues are of female responsibility anchored in the machismo existing in our society. Still, only 14.28% credit the responsibility to school, especially the biology teacher. This perception, most likely, may be related to the teacher's unprepared-

ness, difficulty in creating bonds and active listening, due to the situation of violence, something affected by many institutions in our country, inefficiency of educational policies, intersectoral action between health and incipient education, lack of time and lack of encouragement for continuing education for teachers (18).

Investment in the training of teachers on drugs and alcohol is extremely necessary, allowing them to contribute effectively and consistently to the construction of the future adult, which has

they do not allow the establishment of cause and effect relationships.

## CONCLUSION

The profile of the investigated, diverging from the School Census of the Ministry of Education<sup>(21)</sup>, confirms the urgent need for investment in constant training and professional development to consider the peculiarities of the work environment, for only then the school will be considered an equipment capable of providing prevention and social development expected. Teachers have some formative, institutional, cultural and pedagogical difficulties that can hinder the approach of this theme as a transversal axis in the clas-

room. However, it is urgent to emphasize that the teacher's work will only be possible and assertive, if the entire social network of adolescents and young adults is engaged with the institutional policy and lifestyle of the settlement.

Still, it is worrying the percentage of teachers who experience students using drugs on school premises, which makes it urgent to develop a collective work organized in a generalized way with a simplistic, but resolute vision on the theme.

Currently, the pilot episode of the program Unplugged #Tamojunto for health promotion and drug prevention in Brazilian schools has been reported as one of the most important tools in drug prevention, as it enhances the

commitment of health professionals, education, social assistance, local leaders and other sectors to intersectoral actions, and join the aim of organizing a network of protection, participatory and community in the pursuit of overcoming the problem of drugs in adolescence and school environment

Finally, it is believed that the managers, driven by the research findings, in partnership with the education and health institutions of the settlement, are able to implement and carry out the PSE in the settlement school, in order to develop discussions about the use and harm of drugs in coordination among teachers, students and family members living in the settlement. 🐦

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