

BTU MUN '26
UNODC STUDY GUIDE

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Committee: UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

Agenda Item: Preventing Drug Abuse Among Youth through Education and Awareness

President Chair: Barça Akdeniz

Co-Chair: Layla Osmanovic

1. Letter from the Chairboard

Dear Delegates,

We are Layla and Barça, your chair board for this committee. Some of you may already know us, while others may not. What matters most is that we are all here for the same reason: to meet new people, make meaningful connections, to enhance our diversity, and work together to solve a big problem in the world. During this committee, you will not only grow as delegates, but you will also improve your ability to think critically and solve problems. These skills go way beyond Model United Nations and can be used in many real-life situations.

Even though the experience may be hard at times, please remember that you don't have to feel overwhelmed. We're here to help you and make sure that this committee is both useful and fun for everyone. We strongly suggest that all delegates read the study guide carefully because it has all the important information you need to get ready. You should also be ready to do more research and write your opening speech, GSLs, motions, and position papers based on what you find.

If you have any questions or need help, please don't hesitate to get in touch with either of us. You can get in touch with us through any means or platform.

We can't wait to meet all of you and work together on a successful and interesting committee.

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2. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is a United Nations office that tackles problems such as crime, illegal drugs, human trafficking, and terrorism. It was created in 1997, and its main headquarters is in Vienna. This office helps countries around the world work on problems and create larger and stronger systems that help tackle problems outside their borders. UNODC fights drug trafficking and abuse, and to do so, they work to reduce the production, use, and sale of illegal drugs. To those who need help after using illegal drugs, UNODC partners up with countries to create programs such as prevention programs and treatments for addiction. UNODC combats organized crime, such as human trafficking, smuggling, cybercrime, and money laundering. The UNODC office supports international cooperation between countries' police offices and governments to work as one when facing conflicts like these. Preventing corruption is a hard-worked-on topic in the UNODC office, as promoting transparency in every country is a hard thing to do. Citizens have a right to not have anything kept from them, but corrupt economies and governments cause these problems. A fair and effective found solution in the office is to get countries to apply to agreements that are strictly against corruption. Along with that, the office works long and hard when it comes to terrorism. UNODC cooperates with countries around the world to strengthen their laws and institutions to prevent any type of terrorism and provide private training for law enforcement and justice systems. Supporting justice systems and providing private training is a main factor, which, as a result, promotes fair, effective, and humane justice systems. The office works on prison reforms and human

rights protection. All of you can think of UNODC as an office that doesn't arrest criminals but helps countries make better laws, train police and judges, and ensure cooperation around the world.

3. Definitions of Key Words

Drug Prevention: helping people (often with a focus on young people) avoid drug use

Substance abuse: overindulgence in or dependence on an addictive substance, especially alcohol or drugs

Awareness campaigns: powerful tools used by organizations and businesses to inform, educate, and inspire action among target audiences

Youth Empowerment: a process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives

Early Intervention: A support and educational system for very young children who have been abuse victims, are at risk, or have developmental delays or disabilities

Life Skills Training: a way of teaching that helps people build personal and social skills so they can handle everyday challenges effectively

Peer Pressure: a group trying to convince a person to do something they are unwilling to do.

Mental Health Support: Services that help young people manage stress, emotions, and psychological challenges.

Community Support: Efforts to educate and support people in local communities about drug prevention.

Rehabilitation Programs: Treatment programs that help people recover from drug addiction and return to normal life.

Vulnerable Groups: People who are at higher risk of drug abuse due to factors like poverty, stress, or lack of support.

Research Based Prevention: Strategies that are proven to work through research and data.

4. Introduction to the Topic

Starting to use illegal substances at a young age can seriously affect young people's lives in many ways. During the teenage years, the brain is still developing, which makes it harder for teenagers to make good decisions and control their impulses. This also increases the risk of addiction. Many young people do not fully understand the dangers of drug use, and this lack of awareness can make them more vulnerable. Drug use can also harm their education and future by lowering concentration, causing memory problems, and reducing motivation. In addition, these problems can spread easily within friend groups, leading more young people to start using drugs.

The percentage of drug use among youth has increased rapidly in recent years. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime aims to address and control this growing issue, which may affect a larger proportion of the population in the coming years.

Our committee can clearly state that social media is one of the major causes of this problem. The rapid growth of social media platforms and influencers plays a significant role in shaping youth behavior. The personal lives of influencers and celebrities may negatively affect young people by normalizing drug use in everyday life. Furthermore, mental health problems create vulnerability to substance abuse. A lack of knowledge and the absence of proper guidance or mentorship can quickly lead young individuals toward illegal substances. Another major factor is the family environment. Having a family member with a drug addiction can strongly influence younger members, increasing the likelihood of drug use during adolescence. Finally, socioeconomic issues such as poverty, unsafe neighborhoods, and lack of opportunities can push young people toward drugs.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) can play a crucial role in preventing youth drug use through education and awareness by promoting evidence-based, long-term strategies rather than simple awareness campaigns. By supporting international prevention standards, UNODC encourages schools to implement life-skills education that helps young people develop critical thinking, emotional control, and resistance to peer pressure. It can also train teachers to deliver effective prevention programs and involve families through parenting

workshops that strengthen communication and supervision. In addition, UNODC can use modern social media platforms to spread credible, youth-friendly information and counter misinformation about drugs. Community-based initiatives, such as youth clubs and mentorship programs, further create supportive environments that reduce risk factors. At the policy level, UNODC works with governments to integrate prevention into national education systems and ensure equal access to resources, while also promoting early intervention systems in schools and encouraging youth participation in designing these initiatives. Overall, its approach focuses on building resilience, providing accurate information, and creating supportive social structures to effectively reduce drug use among young people.

5. Past Actions

Preventing drug abuse among youth through education and awareness has become an important topic in recent years, but the problem itself is not new. In the past, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, many young people started using drugs like cannabis and LSD. This made governments very worried, because the younger generation was getting affected more and more.

At first, countries mostly tried to stop drugs by making strict laws and punishments. They believe if drugs are controlled, young people will not use it. There were some international agreements like the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971). However, these actions were not very successful for youth, because many young people still continued to use drugs.

After some time, people started to understand that only laws are not enough. Young people were using drugs because of reasons like curiosity, peer pressure, and lack of awareness. Because of this, education started to become more important. Schools and communities began to teach students about the dangers of drugs and how they can affect their lives.

With the creation of UNODC in 1997, more focus was given to prevention. Today, education and awareness programs are one of the main ways to prevent drug abuse

among youth, but still this problem continues in many countries and needs more attention.

6. Current Situation

Drug abuse among youth is a serious and ongoing problem around our world today. The most vulnerable age group that deals with drug abuse is around 15-24 years old. Teenagers and young adults are more likely to experience drugs due to curiosity, peer pressure, mental health changes, social media influence, and limited access to the right information about the use of substances. In many countries awareness campaigns do exist, but they are often inconsistent, underfunded, or not effectively implemented in areas that contain the most vulnerable age groups, which overall reduces the impact of these programs. Due to this, most of the younger generation lacks proper education about the dangers of drugs, and this affects their long-term mental health, economic consequences such as addiction, and health damage and also causes tons of school dropouts.

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) plays a major role when it comes to the topic of drug abuse among youth, as it is the main global organization that's responsible for addressing drug-related problems. This office plays a central role in preventing drug abuse by developing and promoting evidence-based education and awareness programs that focus on youth, especially through school-based initiatives and community outreach. These programs also provide training and resources for governments to strengthen their drug prevention strategies. It also encourages countries to focus less on punishment and more on preventing the problem that can be done through educating those in need.

In addition, UNODC conducts global research that tracks drug trends, which helps countries understand emerging risks and help them come up with more effective programs. The office also collaborates with organizations such as the WHO (World Health Organization) along with governments and civil society to ensure global effort. Overall, UNODC prioritizes education, awareness, early intervention, and youth empowerment as long-term solutions for reducing drug abuse and protecting future generations.

7. Major Countries

United States of America: The USA plays a significant role in preventing youth drug use through education and awareness by combining domestic programs with international cooperation. The government funds big prevention programs through the "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration" (SAMHSA). The education system promotes drug awareness through counseling services and early intervention programs authorized by the United States Department of Education. Local programs are funded in order to create a healthier environment and safer future for the youth generation.

The People's Republic of China: The government takes this issue seriously by ensuring that students receive mandatory lessons on the danger of drug use at early ages. The Chinese government runs nationwide campaigns during specific days like "International Day Against Drug Abuse" and uses media, posters, and school events to create awareness among youth. China uses online platforms and controlled media channels to spread anti-drug messages while monitoring social media platforms in order to reduce exposure to drug-related information.

Russian Federation: Russia actively monitors and restricts online content related to drug promotion, aiming to reduce youth exposure to harmful information on the internet. The government supports youth organizations and patriotic movements that promote healthy lifestyles, sports, and social responsibility as alternatives to drug use. Authorities track drug trends and youth behavior patterns to adjust national prevention strategies and target high-risk regions.

Mexico: Mexico collaborates with non-government organizations that aim to prevent drug abuse among youth. Mexico invests in local "peacebuilding" strategies, community workshops, conflict resolution training, and rebuilding trust in neighborhoods affected by the violence. This goes beyond typical awareness campaigns. Mexico acknowledged that corruption enables drug markets. So part of prevention includes the following: Strengthening institution, reducing police corruption, improving justice systems.

France: France tightly connects schools with healthcare through organizations like Santé Publique France. School nurses and psychologists play an active role. Students can access early counseling easily. Prevention is treated as a health issue, not just discipline. Unlike stricter countries, France openly applies harm reduction policies. Instead of only saying "don't use drugs," it focuses on minimizing damage through safe-use education and health-focused messaging.

Germany: Germany is known for prioritizing prevention over punishment. Instead of relying heavily on strict penalties for young users. Germany allows its federal states to design local prevention programs. This means strategies are adapted to local youth cultures and risks, making them more effective. The government heavily funds NGOs that specialize in youth outreach, street work, and addiction prevention. These groups reach young people outside school systems.

8. Conclusion

The use of drugs by young people is an extremely complicated problem that cannot be solved easily. Before, when it came to drugs, all attention was on punishments people deserved for using them or, for example, selling them, but now attention is being turned towards education initiatives and what role they play in this topic. Society, mental health, and environment are the three key factors when it comes to affecting younger people's doing drugs. This in fact is caused by them lacking enough knowledge or getting enough help for this. The work done by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is extremely important in helping nations come up with strategies that will help them sustain a long-term approach through life skills training, community involvement, and youth empowerment.

Unfortunately, even with the progress made, there are still areas that require improvement to make sure these efforts reach the most vulnerable communities (for example, people who live in poverty or lack many opportunities). The rising role of social media, playing along with the changing trends of drug abuse, makes the need for programs in areas higher to help with early intervention. In other words, international cooperation, extra resources in the prevention sector, and

involvement of family, educational institutions, and community are very important factors that need to be taken into consideration when working towards solving this problem. With proper education and an inclusive and educational environment, society is capable of protecting its young people from engaging in drug use.

9. Guiding Questions

1. How can education systems be improved to effectively prevent drug abuse among youth at an early age?
2. What should a government's role be when funding and implementing awareness campaigns in disadvantaged societies?
3. How can social media platforms be used to spread accurate information and reduce the normalization of drug use?
4. In what ways can mental health support systems help reduce the risk of drug abuse among young people?
5. How can families and communities be more actively involved in preventing drug abuse among young people?
6. What strategies can ensure that prevention programs reach poor or at-risk groups?
7. How can countries not use punishment and prevention to deal with drug abuse in a fair way?
8. What roles does UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) take upon when it comes to strengthening international cooperation on this issue?
9. How can education systems include life skill lessons to help students resist peer pressure?
10. What are the most effective ways to ensure drug prevention programs are working well?
11. How can early intervention systems be created to find and help young people at risk?
12. What policies can governments use to reduce the main causes of drug abuse? (for example lack of opportunities, poverty, etc.)

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