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Teacher's Age and Experience as a Modifying Factor in the Readiness For and Method of Intervention with a Student at Risk of Psychoactive Drugs

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Abstract

This article deals with teacher interventions in crisis situations regarding a direct threat of students using psychoactive drugs on school premises, particularly in the difficult period of adolescence: 12–16 years of age. The focus of the research was on teacher interventions in situations where students are threatened by psychoactive substances. The research problem was whether the age and experience of the teacher were determinants of such an intervention. It investigated the relevance that a teacher's age and experience have on their attitude and manner of intervening on behalf of a student when there is an imminent threat from psychoactive substances. The research investigated the importance of a teacher's age and work experience in their attitude and the manner in which they intervene. It was carried out from 2017 to 2019 among teachers at middle schools in Bielsko-Biala, using the diagnostic survey method and a questionnaire. Statistical analysis of the results showed no statistically significant difference in teachers' declarations of readiness for intervention. Regardless of age and tenure, the respondents declared a high readiness to intervene. On the other hand,

there were statistically significant differences according to the teachers' age and seniority in how the intervention was carried out. Teachers from different age and seniority groups (defined by a specific length of service) more often or less often took some of the actions envisaged in the intervention procedure. Thus, it is feasible to speak of a readiness, or lack thereof, to take certain intervention actions.

Keywords: teacher intervention, psychoactive drugs, teacher seniority, teachers' age, school intervention procedures, readiness for intervention

Introduction

Adolescence is a time of intense development on many levels. During this time, a young person is very open cognitively, but does not yet have the critical judgment that one attains with maturity. This open-mindedness – and at times naivety – results in adolescents readily exposing themselves to difficulties and sometimes dangers. Experimenting with psychoactive drugs¹ is one of the most serious dangers.

The psychic sphere, the world of emotions, new cognitive sensations and altered states of consciousness are of particular interest to young people during adolescence. Psychoactive substances generate interest to explore these areas, phenomena and experiences. In addition, some of them are advertised as aids to learning, others as sources of unusual sensations or relief from the difficulties they experience. Young people turn to drugs, 'legal highs' and intoxicating drugs in clubs, at home and sometimes at school.

One of the most important issues in the protection and support of students facing the threat posed by psychoactive substances is the attitude

¹ Drug, intoxicant and legal high are terms used in everyday speech; in medicine and psychology the term psychoactive substances is used. These are agents that affect the central nervous system, mental and cognitive processes, self-esteem, mood and emotions and cause changes in the perception and evaluation of external stimuli. They change one's state of consciousness and, consequently, also affect behaviours (Woronowicz, 2003, p. 7; Szukalski, 2005, p. 3).

and conduct of teachers. Central to this is their handling of the crisis situation wherein a student is under the influence or in possession of psychoactive substances (Morbitzer, 2020). Teachers know how difficult this problem is. The suspicion that a student has or is under the influence of psychoactive substances is a subjective assessment and it becomes the basis for a teacher's decision to intervene. The intervening teacher comes into conflict with the student themselves, often also with their parents and guardians and sometimes with the school authorities. Headmasters are not always willing to go to the police, although they are obliged to inform them when drugs are found on school grounds. Schools are required to develop their own educational and preventive programmes and intervention procedures (Barabas, 2022, pp. 134–135; Macander, 2016). The procedures are legitimised by existing legal regulations.²

The interventions of teachers following the threat of students being exposed to psychoactive drugs were examined during a research project carried out in the middle schools of Bielsko-Biala between 2017 and 2019, as part of a doctoral thesis.³ The subject of the research was the intervention behaviour of teachers in such situations. The first phase of the research used a quantitative strategy with a diagnostic survey method.

The research group consisted of lower secondary school teachers. The aim was to target teachers of adolescents, who are particularly prone to engaging in high-risk behaviour. During the design and first stage of the research, this group included middle school students, i.e. adolescents, aged 12–16 years, in the so-called dynamic phase of adolescence (Obuchowska, 2000, p. 169). Although the education system in Poland has

² The Regulation of the Ministry of Education of January 22, 2018. on the scope and forms of educational, educational, informational, and preventive activities in schools and institutions of the educational system to counteract drug addiction (Journal of Laws of 20188, item 214); Macander, 2021.

³ The article was based on research material collected for the doctoral thesis of Roman Waluś – 'Postępowanie nauczyciele w sytuacji zagrożenia uczniów środkami psychoaktywnymi na terenie szkoły - na podstawie badań szkół gimnazjalnych w Bielsku-Białej' (Jesuit University Ignatianum, Krakow, 2022) – written under the direction of Dr hab. Renata Jasnos and Dr Krzysztof Biel (associate supervisor). This paper includes an in-depth analysis of selected parts of the research.

been reformed and middle schools have been gradually abolished, with the eight-year primary school being reinstated (Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe, 2016), the research is still valid, as it focussed on the intervention actions of teachers towards students of a certain age. The conclusions and postulates of the research can be applied to the older grades of primary schools and partially to high schools. The study included teachers of all 22 middle schools operating in Bielsko-Biała (as of May 2016). It was assumed that the respondents should be employed full-time and should have at least two years of seniority in the profession. Nearly 400 surveys were forwarded to all the teachers who met these criteria. Out of those returned and completed, 202 complete questionnaires were selected.

The research addressed what measures are taken by middle school teachers when there is a risk of students being exposed to psychoactive drugs. This included both prevention and the intervention itself when a student is in a situation of immediate danger.⁴ The extensive research material uncovered a whole range of problems and difficulties, as well as the determinants of effective intervention. The Chi-square test and Fisher's exact test were used in selected cases during the statistical analysis.

An important factor that was studied was the seniority and age of the teachers. As a part of the research objectives, two hypotheses were set for verification. The first hypothesis was that there is a relationship between a teacher's age and their willingness to intervene in a student's risky behaviour. The second hypothesis assumed that an analogous relationship applies to seniority in school.

The respondents were divided into age groups: up to 40, 41–50 and over 50 years old. They were also divided into groups based on their length of service: up to 7, 8–15, 16–25 and over 25 years of service. The hypotheses were partially confirmed. As the study showed, there were no statistically significant differences regarding the teachers' self-reported readiness

⁴ The assessment that there is an imminent threat to a student from psychoactive drugs is based on a reasonable suspicion that the student is either under the influence or in possession of them. The study looked at students with drugs and 'legal highs', medications and other chemical substances taken for intoxication, while psychoactive drugs such as alcohol and nicotine were not considered.

to intervene related to age or seniority. A willingness to intervene was declared by 90.1% of all respondents. While there were differences among age groups, they were not statistically significant. In situations requiring intervention, teachers from the 50+ age group were slightly less determined (determined – 83.8%, indecisive – 16.3%). Meanwhile, teachers in the 41–50 age range were more determined (determined – 95%, indecisive – 5%). As noted, however, these differences were not statistically significant.

Few respondents – only one in four teachers – had intervened with a student in possession or under the influence of psychoactive substances. Also, having such experience was not dependent on age or seniority. However, the hypotheses were partially confirmed. It appeared that the experience of the intervening teachers revealed differences in the type and scope of their actions within the intervention. These differences were dependent on age and seniority. This study addressed the relevance that a teacher's age and work experience have on their attitude and manner of intervening regarding psychoactive drugs. The detailed research material makes it possible to identify differences in how teachers intervene depending on their age and experience (seniority). Some differences were statistically significant, while others remain in the realm of hypotheses requiring further verification.

Intervention actions of teachers of different ages and seniority

In the event of a crisis on school grounds, teachers are obliged to follow relevant procedures. Such procedures are developed by the school as part of the strategy of educational, preventive and intervention activities. The intervention of a teacher when a student is in contact with psychoactive drugs requires a series of actions.

1. Intervention with a student suspected of possessing psychoactive substances

The procedure for intervention against a student suspected of possessing a psychoactive substance on school premises involves a series of

actions: isolating (or attempting to isolate) the student, requesting that they hand over the suspected substance, requesting that they show the contents of their pocket/backpack, securing the substance, notifying the school authorities, handing over the suspected substance to the school authorities, determining (or attempting to determine) how and from whom the student acquired/received the substance, calling the police and documenting the incident (preparing a report). As part of the study, questions were asked about these actions, whether they were taken and how effective they were.

1a. Differences in intervention actions related to the age of teachers

The experience of intervening with a student suspected of possessing psychoactive substances (on school grounds) is an individual issue. As the research showed, there are certain differences in the way of intervening, although the actions should be carried out following an outlined procedure which calls for a series of specific actions.

In relation to the specific age groups of the respondents (up to 40, 41–50 and over 50 years of age), there were statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) concerning several activities. Younger teachers, up to 40 years of age, notified the authorities less often (only 62.5% of the interveners in this group; in the other groups it was 100% and 87.5%). In addition, the respondents often refrained from notifying the student's parents or guardians. Only one in four interveners chose to do so (in the other age groups it was 68.8% and 62.5%). These differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Teachers aged 41–50 were more likely to act. Significantly, they did not have the negative experience of a student refusing when trying to isolate them, when demanding the substance or when determining how the student came into possession of it. While there are statistically insignificant differences here, these differences consistently recur. They relate to successfully demanding the substance be handed over, successfully demanding to see the contents of the backpack and pockets, handing over the substance to the school authorities and calling the police.

One in four teachers in the oldest age group were ineffective in isolating the student ('I tried to isolate the student, the student refused to go to another room' – 25% of interveners over 50). The other age groups did not report an ineffective attempt to isolate a student. Older teachers also made ineffective attempts to determine how and from whom the student received the substance, with almost one in three interveners in this group having this experience. These differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 1. Selected actions taken as part of an intervention with a student in possession of a psychoactive substance, by age group

Intervention action		Teacher's age			Test result
		up to 40 years	41–50 years	Over 50 years	
I isolated the student.	N	11	12	10	$\chi^2 = 0.582$ $df = 2$ $p = 0.748$
	%	68.8%	75.0%	62.5%	
I tried to isolate the student; the student refused to go to another room.	N	0	0	4	$p = 0.028^*$
	%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	
I requested the substance be handed over; the student handed over the substance.	N	5	7	4	$\chi^2 = 1.313$ $df = 2$ $p = 0.519$
	%	31.3%	43.8%	25.0%	
I demanded the substance be handed over; the student showed the contents of their backpack/pocket; the substance was not found.	N	2	5	2	$p = 0.458$
	%	12.5%	31.3%	12.5%	
I notified the school authorities.	N	10	16	14	$p = 0.018^*$
	%	62.5%	100.0%	87.5%	
I handed over the suspicious substance to the school authorities.	N	6	8	5	$\chi^2 = 1.220$ $df = 2$ $p = 0.543$
	%	37.5%	50.0%	31.3%	
I determined how and from whom the student acquired/obtained the substance.	N	2	5	4	$p = 0.572$
	%	12.5%	31.3%	25.0%	
I tried to determine how and from whom the student acquired/obtained the substance; the student refused to provide the information.	N	1	0	5	$p = 0.036^*$
	%	6.3%	0.0%	31.3%	

I called the police.	N	2	5	2	$p = 0.458$
	%	12.5%	31.3%	12.5%	
I notified the student's parents/legal guardians.	N	4	11	10	$\chi^2 = 7.179$ $df = 2$ $p = 0.028^*$
	%	25.0%	68.8%	62.5%	
I documented the incident (prepared and handed in a report).	N	7	4	10	$\chi^2 = 4.571$ $df = 2$ $p = 0.102$
	%	43.8%	25.0%	62.5%	

p – significance; χ^2 – test statistics; df – degrees of freedom; * $p < 0.05$.

1b. Differences in intervention actions related to the seniority of teachers

Several differences were found between teachers' seniority and particular activities within the intervention procedure. The participants were divided into four seniority groups (up to 7, 8–15, 16–25 and more than 25 years of service). The teachers with the shortest tenure were less likely to take the action of isolating a student. Only 40% of interveners in this seniority group declared effectively taking this action (73.3%, 66.7% and 80% in the other groups).

The teachers working in the profession for 8 to 15 years did not significantly distinguish themselves from the other seniority groups in terms of intervening on behalf of a student in possession of psychoactive substances. More experienced teachers, having worked in schools for 16 to 25 years, when aiming to take away a dangerous substance from a student more often demanded that the student show their personal belongings, with the student complying (40%, a statistically significant difference). In addition, in the same group, the action of taking the substance was more often effective ('I demanded the substance; the student handed over the substance' – 46.7%), although in this case, the difference was not statistically significant. Moreover, teachers in this group more often documented the incident (60% equally with the group of the most experienced teachers – a statistically significant difference).

Teachers with the longest tenure in the profession, exceeding 25 years, as well as those in the oldest age group, were distinguished by their low

effectiveness in intervening with a student in possession of psychoactive substances. Most often, they made an ineffective attempt to isolate the student (40%, a statistically significant difference). In addition, they were the least successful in getting students to hand over the substance (12.5%), and were more often unsuccessful at finding out where the student had obtained the substance (31.3%, although the differences were not statistically significant). Furthermore, no-one in this group informed the police (a statistically significant difference), as required by protocol (in the other seniority groups, this action was taken by 40%, 20% and 26.7%, respectively). In contrast, 60% of the respondents with the longest seniority documented the incidents by making and handing in a report (the difference between the two younger seniority groups was statistically significant).

Table 2. Selected actions taken as part of an intervention against a student in possession of a psychoactive agent, by seniority

Intervention action		Seniority of the teacher				Test result
		up to 7 years	8–15 years	16–25 years	over 25 years	
I isolated the student.	N	6	11	10	12	$\chi^2 = 6.081$ $df = 3$ $p = 0.108$
	%	40.0%	73.3%	66.7%	80.0%	
I tried to isolate the student; the student refused to go to another room.	N	0	0	0	6	$p < 0.001^{***}$
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	
I requested that they hand over the substance; the student handed over the substance.	N	6	4	7	2	$p = 0.162$
	%	40.0%	26.7%	46.7%	12.5%	
I demanded the substance be handed over; the student showed me the contents of their backpack and pocket; the substance was not found.	N	0	1	6	2	$p = 0.016^*$
	%	0.0%	6.7%	40.0%	12.5%	
I secured the substance.	N	9	5	8	12	$\chi^2 = 6.787$ $df = 3$ $p = 0.079$
	%	60.0%	33.3%	53.3%	80.0%	
I notified the school authorities.	N	12	11	13	14	$p = 0.760$
	%	80.0%	73.3%	86.7%	87.5%	

I handed over the suspicious substance to school authorities.	N	6	5	7	5	$\chi^2 = 0.952$ $df = 3$ $p = 0.813$
	%	40.0%	33.3%	46.7%	31.3%	
I determined how and from whom the student acquired/obtained the substance.	N	3	3	5	3	$p = 0.867$
	%	20.0%	20.0%	33.3%	20.0%	
I tried to determine how and from whom the student acquired/obtained the substance; the student refused to provide the information.	N	0	1	2	5	$p = 0.064$
	%	0.0%	6.7%	13.3%	31.3%	
I called the police.	N	6	3	4	0	$p = 0.043^*$
	%	40.0%	20.0%	26.7%	0.0%	
I notified the student's parent/legal guardians.	N	6	4	10	9	$\chi^2 = 6.073$ $df = 3$ $p = 0.108$
	%	40.0%	26.7%	66.7%	60.0%	
I documented the incident (prepared and handed in a report).	N	0	5	9	9	$\chi^2 = 15.441$ $df = 3$ $p = 0.001^{***}$
	%	0.0%	33.3%	60.0%	60.0%	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

2. Intervention against a student under the influence of psychoactive substances

The procedure for intervening when a student shows symptoms of having taken a psychoactive substance on school premises is more difficult because of the danger to the student's health and their unpredictable behaviour under the influence of the drug. The intervention procedure calls for a series of analogous actions, extended by medical measures. It consists of isolating the student (attempting to isolate), administering first aid, calling an ambulance, determining (attempting to determine) what substance the student took, when and in what quantity, determining (attempting to determine) how and from whom the student acquired the substance, notifying the school authorities, calling the police, notifying parents/guardians and documenting the incident (preparing a report and handing it in to the authorities). The survey asked about these actions, whether they were taken and their effectiveness.

2a. Differences in intervention actions related to the age of teachers

Younger teachers, up to 40 years old, were the least likely to isolate a student (38.5%), provide first aid (0%) and inform the school authorities (53.8%) or the student's parents/guardians (38.5%). These differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, several other differences were observed, which, although not statistically significant, are consistent with these measures: they did not determine where the student had received the substance from (0%) and they called the police less often (15.4% vs 53.8% and 46.2% in the other age groups). Positive differences in the actions of the younger teachers concerned calling an ambulance (53.8% vs 30.8% and 23.1%) and determining what the student had taken and in what amount (30.8%). However, these differences were not statistically significant.

Teachers between the ages of 41 and 50 more often isolated the student (92.3% vs 38.5% and 53.8%) and notified the school authorities (100%). Moreover, similarly to the oldest age group, they were more likely to notify the parents/guardians (84.6%). Among the statistically insignificant differences in this age group, the teachers were least likely to successfully determine what the student had consumed and in what amount (7.7%) and were most likely to make an ineffective attempt to do so (38.5%). However, they were more successful (than other groups) in determining how the student had acquired the substance (30.8%). They called the police most frequently (53.8%).

Teachers in the oldest age group, those over 50, were distinguished by the greatest empathy. In fact, they were the most likely to take first-aid measures (38.5% vs 0% and 15.4%). Similarly, they were more likely to notify the student's parents/guardians (84.6%), similarly to the average age group. These differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Selected actions taken in an intervention against a student under the influence of a psychoactive drug, by age group

Intervention action		Teacher's age			Test result
		up to 40 years	41–50 years	Over 50 years	
I isolated the student.	N	5	12	7	$\chi^2 = 8.450$ $df = 2$ $p = 0.015^*$
	%	38.5%	92.3%	53.8%	
I gave first aid.	N	0	2	5	$p = 0.048^*$
	%	0.0%	15.4%	38.5%	
I called an ambulance.	N	7	4	3	$p = 0.339$
	%	53.8%	30.8%	23.1%	
I determined what substance the student had taken, when and in what quantity.	N	4	1	3	$p = 0.477$
	%	30.8%	7.7%	23.1%	
I tried to determine what substance the student had taken, when and in what quantity; the student refused to provide information.	N	1	5	4	$p = 0.265$
	%	7.7%	38.5%	30.8%	
I determined how and from whom the student acquired the substance.	N	0	4	1	$p = 0.104$
	%	0.0%	30.8%	7.7%	
I notified the school authorities.	N	7	13	10	$p = 0.022^*$
	%	53.8%	100.0%	76.9%	
I called the police.	N	2	7	6	$\chi^2 = 4.550$ $df = 2$ $p = 0.103$
	%	15.4%	53.8%	46.2%	
I notified the student's parents/guardians.	N	5	11	11	$p = 0.022^*$
	%	38.5%	84.6%	84.6%	
I documented the event (prepared and handed in a report).	N	7	8	9	$\chi^2 = 0.650$ $df = 2$ $p = 0.723$
	%	53.8%	61.5%	69.2%	

* $p < 0.05$.

2b. Differences in intervention actions related to teachers' seniority

Teachers with the shortest seniority, as with the seniority group of between 8 and 15 years, did not provide first aid (0%) and were less likely to call an ambulance, with only 16.7% having done so. Moreover, taking two actions together, that is, determining what substance the student had taken and in what amount (16.7%) or failing to determine this (0%), the youngest seniority group showed a significant negative difference. In contrast, everyone in this seniority group notified the student's parents/guardians of the situation.

Teachers with 8–15 years of seniority, like the group with shorter seniority, did not provide first aid, but 75% of them called an ambulance. These differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This group was the least likely to call the police (15.4% vs 58.3%, 59% and 41.7%) and the least likely to notify parents/guardians (25% vs 100%, 58.3% and 100%).

The teachers with work experience of 16–25 years were more effective in determining what the student had taken, but the difference was not statistically significant. Moreover, as with the youngest seniority group, they rarely called for an ambulance (16.7%), but one in four of them did provide first aid.

The most experienced teachers, with a seniority of more than 25 years, most often provided first aid to the student (41.7%). They were also most likely to try, albeit unsuccessfully, to determine what substance the student had taken (41.7%). These differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). They also most often determined what the student had taken (33.3%). Although this difference was not statistically significant, it is related to the previous one. They also notified the parents/guardians about the situation (100%).

Table 4. Selected actions taken as part of an intervention against a student under the influence of a psychoactive drug, by seniority

Intervention activities		Seniority of the teacher				Test result
		up to 7 years	8–15 years	16–25 years	over 25 years	
I isolated the student.	N	5	8	7	8	$\chi^2 = 1.728$ $df = 3$ $p = 0.631$
	%	41.7%	61.5%	58.3%	66.7%	
I provided first aid.	N	0	0	3	5	$p = 0.012^*$
	%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	41.7%	
I called an ambulance.	N	2	9	2	4	$p = 0.011^*$
	%	16.7%	75.0%	16.7%	33.3%	
I determined what substance the student had taken, when and in what quantity.	N	2	3	1	4	$p = 0.641$
	%	16.7%	25.0%	8.3%	33.3%	
I tried to determine what substance the student had taken, when and in what quantity; the student refused to provide information.	N	0	2	4	5	$p = 0.047^*$
	%	0.0%	15.4%	33.3%	41.7%	
I determined how and from whom the student acquired the substance.	N	0	0	3	1	$p = 0.173$
	%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	8.3%	
I tried to determine how and from whom the student acquired the substance; the student refused to provide information.	N	2	0	2	1	$p = 0.734$
	%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	8.3%	
I notified the school authorities.	N	10	9	9	10	$p = 1.000$
	%	83.3%	75.0%	75.0%	83.3%	
I called the police.	N	7	2	6	5	$p = 0.144$
	%	58.3%	15.4%	50.0%	41.7%	
I notified the student's parents/guardians.	N	12	3	7	12	$p < 0.001^{***}$
	%	100.0%	25.0%	58.3%	100.0%	
I documented the event (prepared and handed in a report).	N	10	6	6	10	$p = 0.113$
	%	83.3%	50.0%	50.0%	83.3%	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Summary

Age and seniority are significant in the attitude and actions of a teacher who learns that a student possesses a psychoactive substance or recognises the symptoms of drug use in them. Younger teachers, aged up to 40, were distinguished by their reluctance to report the situation and to notify both the school authorities and the student's parents/guardians. This may have been due to greater openness and tolerance towards students and their behaviour. They were more likely to carry out the intervention without many of the required procedural steps – isolating the student or providing first aid – but more likely to call for an ambulance. We can assume that they were willing to help the student, although they did not get directly involved. Moreover, the respondents in this group found out what the student had taken, but did not determine where they had got it from. There are inconsistencies in these actions.

It can be assumed that the age group of up to 40 years overlaps to some extent with the two seniority groups: up to 7 and 8–15 years. Teachers with the shortest seniority were noticeably less likely to isolate a student, administer first aid, call an ambulance and attempt to determine what the student had taken. A statistically significant difference was that they all informed the parents/guardians. Besides that, they were not distinguished in other activities. This group displayed greater involvement and independence. Teachers with 8–15 years of seniority did not differ from the other seniority groups when intervening against a student in possession of a suspicious substance. When intervening against a student under the influence of a psychoactive substance, like the youngest seniority group, they did not provide first aid, but were more likely to call emergency services. Less often than the other groups, they notified parents/guardians and called the police.

The teachers aged 41–50 were the most effective in action and the most loyal to the school authorities, especially in the case of an 'easier' intervention, against students in possession of psychoactive substances. They were better able to effectively isolate the student, demand the release of the substance and determine how the student came into possession

of it. They always notified the school authorities and more often notified parents and the police. However, they had trouble determining what the students had taken.

The most experienced teachers, with a seniority of 16–25 years, overlapped to some extent with the 41–50 age group. This group was more determined, consistent and effective in its actions. They were more likely to demand to see the contents of the student's personal belongings, to have the substance handed over, to determine what the student had taken and to document the incident. One can see the experience and effectiveness aimed at neutralising the threat. Furthermore, they called an ambulance less often, but some provided first aid. Perhaps routine and their assessment of whether the student was at risk weighed in.

The oldest teachers, aged over 50, were distinguished by their inefficiency in action. They had trouble isolating the students and discovering where the psychoactive substances had come from. On the other hand, they were the most personally involved and were most likely to take first aid measures themselves. Moreover, like the middle-aged group, they were more likely to notify the student's guardians.

The teachers with the longest tenure, over 25 years, were also the oldest teachers. To the characteristics of the over-50 age group, we can add two actions which distinguished the respondents in this seniority group: they did not inform the police, but were more likely to submit a documented report to the school authorities.

Conclusion

This study has shown that teachers at different stages of life and with different amounts of professional experience intervene with students in slightly different ways. It can be concluded that age and professional seniority influence the readiness to undertake certain intervention actions, and therefore the way it is implemented. It is possible to characterise the actions and motives of the different age and seniority groups. Unfortunately, neither the Polish nor foreign literature contain similar studies on

the activities of a teacher when intervening with a student under the influence or in possession of psychoactive drugs. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the results with other studies.

The younger and less experienced are more open-minded and more tolerant towards young people. It seems that they are also less confident in their skills, which they do not test 'unnecessarily'. When they consider it important, they can be creative and effective, such as determining what a student has taken.

The teachers with some work experience (8–15 years) were not distinguished by their actions, either positively or negatively. Teachers in the 41–50 age group and with a seniority of 16–25 years were effective in their actions and loyal to their superiors. It is difficult to say whether this goes hand in hand with having an in-depth relationship with the student as a basis for educational influence (Porzak, 2004). It might be surprising that they are very effective when intervening with a student in possession of a psychoactive substance; meanwhile, when intervening with a student under the influence, they have trouble determining what the student has taken. On the other hand, they excel at informing the school authorities, parents/guardians and police about the situation.

The oldest teachers, with the longest seniority, were not very effective at such intervention actions as isolating the student and demanding the substance be handed over. On the other hand, they were the most caring and empathetic. Not only did they provide first aid to the students, but they most often took it upon themselves to determine what the students had taken. Their intention is likely to assess the harmfulness of the ingested drug and to direct assistance.

Although all the respondents generally declared a readiness to intervene when students face certain dangers, the differences shown in following procedures show that they do not readily carry out every action in the protocol.

The research provides a basis for distinguishing one group of teachers in relation to intervention: teachers who are more effective and loyal to their superiors. From the perspective of school authorities, this is probably the most desirable group. However, does effectively isolating students and

removing banned substances equate to effective interventions from the point of view of the educational process? The extremely difficult activity of intervention must go hand in hand with supporting a student who finds themselves in a critical situation. Meanwhile, in many schools, existing educational and preventive programmes and intervention procedures are not sufficiently integrated. Intervention is often only a temporary solution to the crisis, one that comes with a deterioration of the relationship with the intervening teacher.

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