

Attitudes & Knowledge on Substance Use in Displaced Communities in Lebanon

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Skoun, who we are

Who are we?

Skoun is a Lebanese, non-profit, non-governmental organization and one of the first outpatient facilities in Lebanon offering prevention, treatment and support to people who use drugs.



Policy Reform &
Advocacy



Treatment



Prevention



Community Outreach

What do we do?

Skoun is a substance-use treatment and harm-reduction center open to everyone. Our services are free, confidential and anonymous.

Treatment

Our program:

Our program includes psychiatric and psychotherapeutic support for people with substance use disorders. It uses a comprehensive-interdisciplinary approach to treatment, tailored to every individual's needs

We are also an accredited prescriber of Opiates Agonist Treatment (OAT) legalized in 2012 using Buprenorphine/Naloxone as Methadone is not available in Lebanon..



We provide support for various types of and addictive behaviors:

- Alcohol
- Opiates (Heroin, Morphine, Codeine)
- Cannabis (Hash, Marijuana)
- Cocaine (Coke, Freebase or Crack)
- Amphetamines (Speed, Crystal Meth, MDMA, Captagon)
- Hallucinogens (LSD, Psilocybin, Salvia)
- Dissociative drugs (Ketamine, Phencyclidine)
- Sedatives-Anxiolytics-Hypnotics (Benzodiazepines, Hypnotics, GHB, Pregabalin, Gabapentin)
- Gambling ...

Substance use and treatment in Lebanon: An overview

- Lebanon's health-care system is highly fragmented, with a strong dominating private sector, an active Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) sector, and a public sector that was gradually regaining its leadership and role (Ammar, 2009) before October 19 crisis.
- The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) established the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in May 2014 (MOPH, 2015a).
- A five-year strategy to reform the mental health system in Lebanon was launched by the Programme in May 2015, with a clear focus on developing a Substance Use Strategy (MOPH, 2015a).

Substance use and treatment in Lebanon: An overview

- Substance use treatment in Lebanon is provided by 15 facilities, 80% of which located in Mount Lebanon and Beirut (MOPH, 2017).
- Most of these facilities are detoxification units
- With the ongoing crises, there has been a rise in substance use, particularly with risk factors being higher for refugees (Z. Abbas et al., 2021)
- SU remains under-reported among displaced communities due to stigmatization, making accessible services scarce.

Methodology

In joint efforts with The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), we were able to conduct a series of trainings to build capacities of key stakeholders and frontliners on the thematic of Substance Use

1. We carried a focus group discussion with key representatives (nurses, front liners, case managers, and psychologists)
2. We carried out a training of trainers (3 TOTs) to build the capacities of specialized and non specialized workers on suitable response for substance use disorders cases



Methodology

Throughout the trainings, we evaluated knowledge on the following themes through pre and post tests to which participants had to answer by : Agree – Don't Agree – No answer

1. Knowledge on substances
2. Attitudes on effective prevention methods and/or interventions
3. Attitudes and belief systems regarding people who use drugs
4. Attitudes on suitable approaches for taking action when suspecting SU
5. Knowledge on treatment modalities for addiction or Substance Use Disorder (SUD)



Methodology

Sample of pre-post test questions administered:

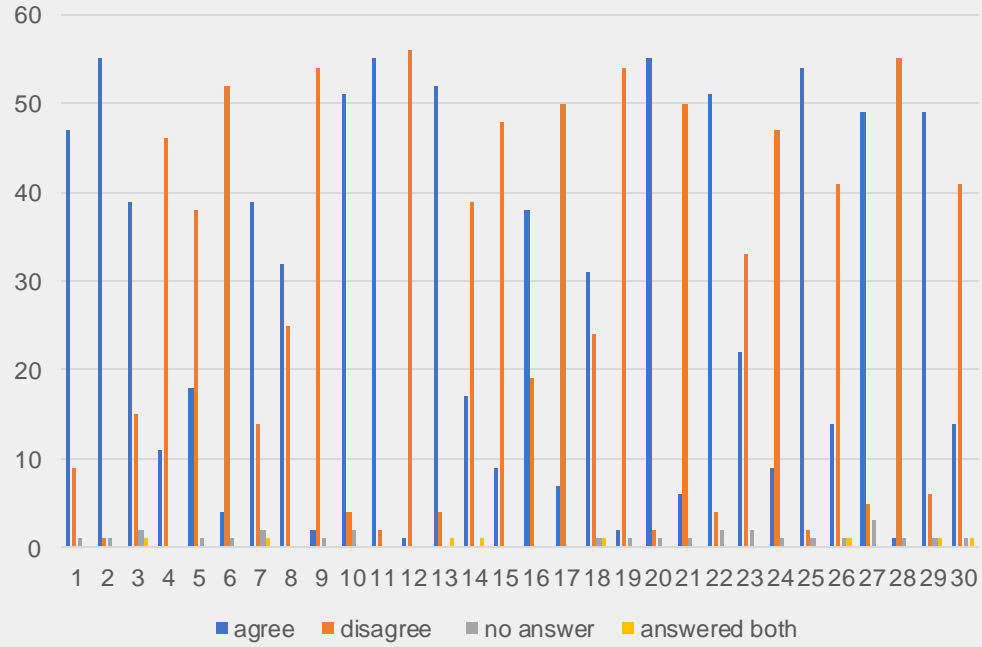
- Drugs are illegal substances
- The best prevention method are strict rules and severe punishment
- All drugs impact the body the same way
- Not all drugs are illegal
- The greater risks in using drugs are prison and death
- Only people with no moral system of beliefs use drugs
- There are specific ways of administration of the substance into the body based on the substance
- There are many factors that can lead to substance use and dependance
- There is no treatment for addiction
- Addiction treatment is removing the drug from the body system
- The more people know, the better they are prepared not to fall into addiction

Results

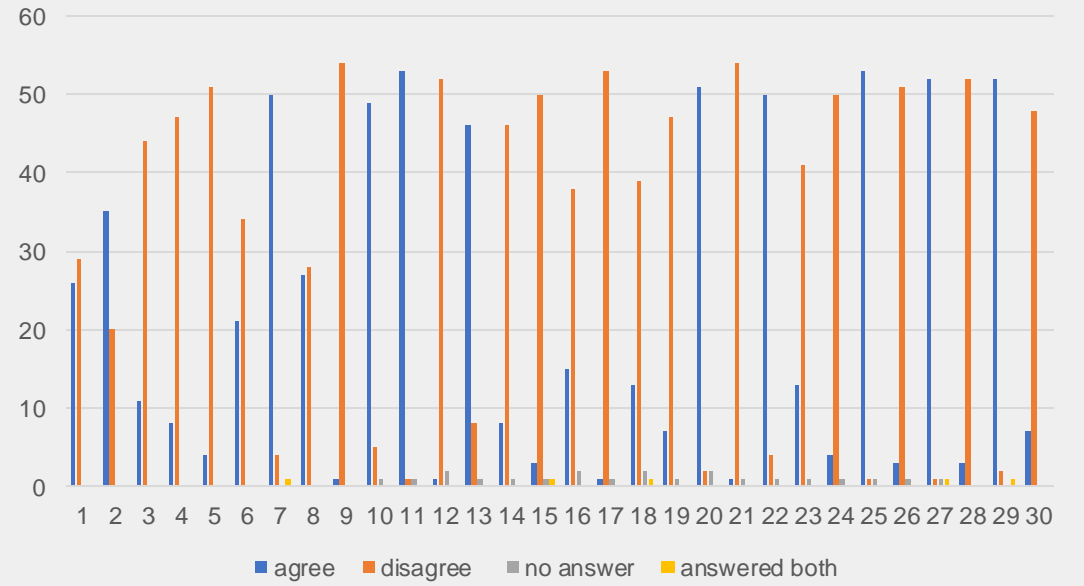
- The results showed that most participants had a general understanding of substance use:
 1. 96.4% stating that substance misuse has a complex origine linked to many factors
 2. 94.74% stating that peer pressure is not the only main reason for use
- However, there was a significant improvement in their perception of Substance Use:
 1. 70% decrease in the conception that USING is similar to DEPENDENCE
 2. 60.53% decrease in the perception that addiction treatment is purely detoxification
 3. 92.73% (versus 69%) now understand that strict rules and severe punishment are not a good preventive tool.

Results

Pre-test final



Post test final



Our Recommendations

- The findings suggest that it is necessary to
 - Debunk myths about people who use and signs of SU
 - Consolidate information on protective factors and risk factors for diverse populations
 - Train healthcare providers in managing substance use cases

Thank you

This was presented by **Dala Fakhreddine**



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