



“Dare to say no”: Participatory visual advocacy and the social construction of adolescent resilience against drug abuse

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ABSTRACT

The substance abuse epidemic among adolescents is a social problem that necessitates a proactive approach that engages adolescents in the process of prevention. The objective of this study is to investigate the participatory role of adolescents in designing visual advocacy campaign media to prevent drug abuse, while also examining how this process can strengthen their social resilience. Utilizing a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework, this study engaged adolescents aged 13–16 years in a series of workshops that fostered their involvement in the planning, production, and reflection on the campaign media. The results of the study indicate that the active involvement of adolescents in the process of creating advocacy media contributes to the strengthening of social values such as self-regulation, assertiveness, and the ability to build social support networks. In addition to producing relevant and contextual messages, this process also serves as a form of social education that empowers adolescents as agents of change. The present study lends further credence to the notion that participation-based campaign strategies and visual media have proven effective in the social education of adolescents, particularly with regard to the prevention of substance abuse.

Keywords: *social education, adolescents, visual advocacy, participation, resilience*

INTRODUCTION

Research on adolescent resilience against drug abuse has predominantly focused on individual-level protective factors, such as self-efficacy, refusal skills, emotional regulation, and coping strategies. Many studies conceptualize resilience as a psychological capacity developed through personal skills training or behavioral interventions aimed at strengthening adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure and risky behaviors. Within this perspective, resilience is often treated as an internal attribute that can be enhanced through structured prevention programs or educational instruction (BNN, 2020).

In addition to individual-oriented approaches, previous studies have also examined the role of family support, school environments, and peer relationships in shaping adolescents' resilience toward drug-related risks (Putri et al., 2016). School-based prevention programs, peer education models, and family-centered interventions have been widely explored as mechanisms for strengthening protective social environments. While these studies acknowledge the social dimensions of resilience, adolescents are frequently positioned as recipients of predefined interventions rather than as active contributors in the construction of prevention strategies (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016).



Drug abuse was selected as the focal issue of this research due to its persistent and multidimensional impact on adolescent development, encompassing physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and future life opportunities. In Indonesia, adolescents are increasingly exposed to drug-related risks through peer networks, digital media, and social environments that normalize experimentation. These conditions position drug abuse as not only a medical or legal concern, but also a critical social and educational issue that requires preventive strategies grounded in adolescents' lived realities.

From a communication perspective, adolescence represents a critical phase of meaning-making in which identity, social values, and risk perceptions are continuously negotiated through interpersonal interaction and peer-mediated communication. During this period, adolescents do not merely receive information but actively interpret, reinterpret, or resist messages based on shared experiences within their social groups (Putri et al., 2016). Evidence from public health communication indicates that prevention strategies relying solely on one-way, informational or fear-based messaging are often ineffective, as such messages fail to resonate with adolescents' symbolic language, emotional realities, and peer-based meaning systems (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). Consequently, resilience against drug abuse should be understood not only as an individual capacity but as a communicative process that emerges through participatory and experience-based educational practices, where adolescents are involved in constructing and circulating preventive meanings that are socially relevant to their lived contexts.

Furthermore, drug abuse represents a social problem in which adolescents are often positioned merely as targets of intervention rather than as active subjects capable of contributing to prevention efforts. This study deliberately reframes drug abuse prevention as a participatory educational process, where adolescents are empowered to interpret risks, articulate social meanings, and construct preventive narratives based on their own experiences. The selection of drug abuse as the research topic is therefore aligned with the study's broader objective to explore how participatory visual education can strengthen adolescents' social resilience in confronting real and immediate social threats.

The starting point of this research emerges from the growing body of participatory studies that emphasize the limitations of conventional, top-down prevention strategies in addressing complex social problems such as drug abuse among adolescents. Recent state-of-the-art research in Participatory Action Research (PAR) highlights its effectiveness in engaging young people as active contributors in addressing social and health-related risks, particularly in contexts where behavioral change is closely linked to peer influence, identity formation, and social environment. PAR has been increasingly applied in public health and youth studies as an approach that not only generates knowledge but also facilitates empowerment, reflection, and collective action among participants.

In the context of drug abuse prevention, PAR is especially relevant because substance use among adolescents is not merely an individual behavioral issue, but a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by peer norms, emotional vulnerability, and environmental pressures. By involving adolescents directly in the exploration of drug-related issues and in the creation of preventive messages, PAR allows prevention efforts to move beyond moral instruction toward experiential learning and social meaning-making. Therefore, the choice of PAR in this study is grounded in its capacity to address drug abuse as a social process while simultaneously strengthening adolescents' agency and resilience.

The strategies employed thus far in drug prevention campaigns have been characterized by a top-down approach, failing to fully incorporate the voices and perspectives of adolescents as active participants. A one-way communication approach subjects adolescents to information without providing them with the opportunity to contribute to the development of the message. Adolescents have the capacity to function as agents of social transformation, particularly when their involvement pertains to matters that directly impact their lives. Yonas et al. (2013) posit that a participatory approach to research enables adolescents to engage in the process of reflection, articulation of ideas, and development of campaign strategies that are more culturally relevant. This engagement has been shown to foster resilience in adolescents, enabling them to better withstand social pressures through collaborative and contextual learning experiences (Astari et al., 2024; Utaminingsih et al., 2025).

A relevant strategy for today's youth culture is visual media, which can serve as an effective medium for communicating social messages (Sutrisno et al., 2024; Koniah et al., 2025; Elwani & Kurniawan, 2020). As Rose (2016) has demonstrated, visual media possess a considerable emotional and symbolic appeal, thereby enabling them to engage adolescents more directly than textual messages alone. Furthermore, Rose states that audiences tend to respond to visual content more quickly because it aligns with their daily information consumption patterns. When visual media are designed in a participatory manner, they function not only as a communication tool but also as a means of individual and group reflection. The active involvement of adolescents in the creation of visual media enables them to articulate experiences and values that are pertinent to their social milieu (Lindquist-Grantz & Abraczinskas, 2020). This process engenders authentic advocacy materials and fosters profound and substantial social learning.

Recent studies on drug abuse prevention among adolescents increasingly emphasize the limitations of information-based and fear-driven campaigns that position young people as passive recipients of preventive messages. Contemporary research highlights a shift toward participatory and experience-based approaches, particularly those that engage adolescents in reflective and creative processes as a means of fostering resilience and agency (Yonas et al., 2013; Lindquist-Grantz & Abraczinskas, 2020; Leman et al., 2024). Within this body of work, Participatory Action Research (PAR) has emerged as a prominent framework for addressing complex social and health issues among youth by integrating inquiry, action, and reflection into a single process.

Parallel to this development, studies in visual communication and social education demonstrate that visual media plays a critical role in shaping adolescents' meaning-making processes, emotional engagement, and peer-to-peer communication (Rose, 2016; Sutrisno et al., 2024; Koniah et al., 2025). However, despite the growing recognition of both participatory research and visual advocacy as effective strategies, there remains a limited number of studies that explicitly integrate adolescents' participatory involvement in visual media production with the goal of strengthening social resilience against drug abuse. Existing research often treats visual campaigns as dissemination tools rather than as participatory educational processes. This gap positions the present study as a contribution that bridges participatory action research and visual advocacy, offering a contextual and youth-centered model of drug abuse prevention grounded in adolescents' lived experiences.

While Visual Advocacy (VA) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) are closely related in this study, they represent distinct but complementary strategies. Visual Advocacy refers primarily to the use of visual media—such as posters, illustrations, and visual narratives—as tools for communicating social messages and influencing awareness, attitudes, and meanings among specific audiences. Its primary orientation lies in message construction, symbolic representation, and audience engagement. In contrast, Participatory Action Research (PAR) functions as a methodological and epistemological framework that emphasizes collective inquiry, reflection, and action through the active involvement of participants in all stages of the research process.

In this study, PAR provides the structural foundation that enables adolescents to participate as co-researchers rather than passive subjects, while Visual Advocacy serves as the practical and expressive medium through which participation is enacted. Thus, VA operates within PAR as both a research instrument and an outcome of the participatory process. The distinction lies in their roles: PAR guides how knowledge is generated and social change is pursued, whereas VA determines how that knowledge and experience are translated into meaningful and culturally relevant visual messages. Their integration allows visual media production to function simultaneously as a research process, a learning experience, and a form of social intervention.

From this standpoint, social education is not merely a process of information transfer; rather, it is an experience that fosters critical awareness, a sense of responsibility, and empathy towards the social issues faced by adolescents. Yonas et al. (2013) posited in their research that active involvement in the creation of advocacy media allows adolescents to explore and internalize social values that are relevant to their reality. It is through this process that adolescents will learn to develop three dimensions of anti-drug resilience. These dimensions are as follows: first, the courage to express feelings, which is also known as assertiveness; second, the ability to manage emotions and behavior, which is also known as self-regulation; and third, sensitivity to the importance of social networks as a source of support, which is also known as reaching out. These three dimensions can be integrated with Social Emotional Learning (SEL), an educational process that develops social and emotional competencies to strengthen the personal and social resilience of adolescents (Khakimova, 2024). In this context, participation in visual campaigns is not merely a form of communication; it is also an integral component of a learning process that contributes to the development of character. This process assists adolescents in managing their emotions, cultivating healthy relationships, and making responsible

decisions regarding critical issues in drug abuse prevention (BNN, 2024). Consequently, the implementation of participatory social education has been demonstrated to exert a multifaceted impact on adolescents. Not only does it facilitate the enhancement of knowledge, but it also serves to fortify their character and enhance their social resilience.

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach constitutes the overarching framework of this study, as it facilitates active participant involvement in all phases of the research process. Stoecker & Falcón (2022) posit that the implementation of PAR facilitates dialogic interaction between researchers and participants, thereby cultivating egalitarian and collaborative relationships. This approach entails the transformation of adolescents from passive research subjects to active participants endowed with voices, experiences, and the capacity to contribute to the process of social change (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Lindquist-Grantz & Abraczinskas, 2020). The PAR model is not solely concerned with the generation of academic data; it is also focused on catalyzing social transformation through the active engagement of the researched community. Within the domain of visual education, the implementation of PAR facilitates an environment wherein adolescents can articulate their conceptual frameworks, life experiences, and values through authentic campaign media. Consequently, the media produced not only reflects creativity but also functions as a mirror of their social identity and collective aspirations.

A substantial body of research has demonstrated the efficacy of visual communication as a means to shape awareness and influence attitudes among adolescents regarding various social issues. The visual representation of messages holds particular appeal due to its capacity to engage with both the emotional and cognitive dimensions of young audiences (Rose, 2016). However, there is a paucity of studies that explicitly highlight how adolescents' direct involvement in the creative process of visual media production can be part of transformative social education. Moreover, there is a paucity of studies that link this participatory process with strengthening adolescents' resilience in facing the risk of drug abuse. This discrepancy underscores the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach that integrates visual communication, participatory education, and community-based prevention. Therefore, the objective of this study is to broaden the scope of drug prevention approaches through the implementation of contextual, participatory strategies that utilize visual expression as a meaningful medium for social education among adolescents.

The objective of this study is to examine how adolescent participation in the design of visual advocacy media functions as a communicative and educational process in the context of drug abuse prevention. Drawing on participatory communication theory and perspectives on social meaning-making, this study focuses on how participatory creative experiences shape shared interpretations of risk and contribute to the construction of adolescent social resilience. By exploring adolescents' creative processes, group interactions, and symbolic visual expressions, this research seeks to understand how social education emerges contextually through participatory communication practices. This approach positions adolescents not merely as recipients of prevention messages, but as active agents in the co-construction of preventive meanings within their peer environments. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to participatory and visual communication

scholarship by conceptualizing resilience as a socially constructed and communicative process, while also offering practical insights for the development of participatory education models aligned with contemporary adolescent culture.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative participatory approach using Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the primary methodological framework. PAR was selected because drug abuse prevention among adolescents involves complex social dynamics—such as peer influence, emotional vulnerability, and identity formation—that cannot be adequately addressed through extractive research methods. By positioning adolescents as co-researchers rather than passive subjects, PAR enables collective reflection, active learning, and empowerment while simultaneously strengthening social resilience through participatory action.

The research was conducted at the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) in Malang within a community-based adolescent drug prevention program. Participants consisted of ten adolescents aged 13–16 years, purposively selected based on active involvement in school organizations, interest in creative media, and openness to social discussion. All participants were junior high school students from an area identified as having a high risk of drug exposure. The research process was facilitated by BNN mentors and creative facilitators.

The PAR process was implemented through three interconnected phases. The first phase involved focus group discussions to explore adolescents' perceptions and experiences related to drug abuse and to identify relevant social values using visual prompts. The second phase focused on the collaborative design and production of visual advocacy media, including posters and digital illustrations, allowing participants to articulate preventive messages using symbols and narratives grounded in their lived experiences. The third phase consisted of presenting the visual outputs in school and community settings, followed by collective reflection and evaluation of both the participatory process and the social messages conveyed.

Data were collected through focus group discussions and projective interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning within adolescents' social contexts. Data credibility was ensured through member checking and triangulation across discussion data, interviews, and visual materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study produced three main findings that show how adolescent participation in designing visual advocacy media contributes to strengthening their social resilience. The three themes are as follows: The following three topics will be discussed: (1) the visualization of social values through adolescent imagination, (2) self-expression and emotional connection in advocacy media, and (3) the transformation of the role of adolescents as subjects of social education. The present study produced three main findings that show how adolescent participation in designing visual advocacy media contributes to strengthening their social resilience.

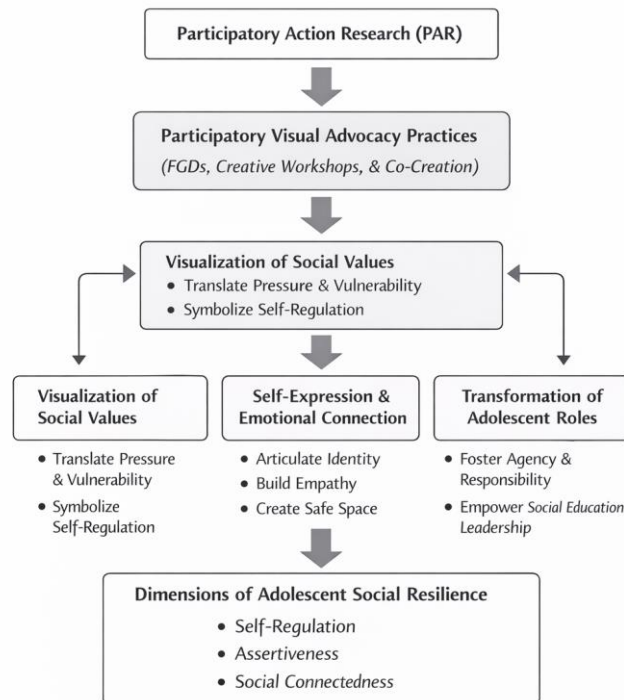


Figure 1. Conceptual Visualization of Participatory Visual Advocacy and Adolescent Social Resilience (Source: research data, 2025)

Figure 1 presents a conceptual visualization of the research findings, illustrating how Participatory Action Research (PAR) functions as a foundational approach that enables participatory visual advocacy practices among adolescents. Through focus group discussions, creative workshops, and co-creation processes, adolescents engage in the visualization of social values by translating experiences of peer pressure, vulnerability, and emotional struggle into meaningful visual symbols that reflect self-regulation and resilience. Simultaneously, these participatory activities provide a space for self-expression and emotional connection, allowing adolescents to articulate identity, build empathy, and develop a safe social environment. The process also facilitates a transformation in adolescents' roles, shifting them from passive recipients of prevention messages into active agents of social education who demonstrate agency, responsibility, and leadership. Collectively, these interconnected processes contribute to key dimensions of adolescent social resilience, including self-regulation, assertiveness, and social connectedness, thereby strengthening adolescents' capacity to resist drug-related risks through participatory and contextualized visual communication.

The Visualization of Social Values Through Adolescent Imagination

A series of participatory workshops were conducted, engaging adolescents in a creative process to produce visual media that reflected their experiences with drug-related issues. The resulting media manifested in the form of poster designs, narrative illustrations, and educational infographics. Each piece conveyed a social message that emerged from a combination of personal reflection and group discussion. This process encourages adolescents to convey the values they deem salient through visual expressions pertinent to their peer context. Consequently, the media that emerges is not merely informative; it is also a reflection of their social reality.

In the initial focus group discussion (FGD), participants were not only invited to discuss drug-related issues but were also asked to bring images, posters, or visual designs that they personally perceived as relevant and impactful for drug abuse prevention. When explaining their selections, adolescents articulated meanings grounded in their everyday experiences and peer environments. One participant stated, "I chose this poster because it looks like what we usually see on social media, not something from school posters that people ignore" (Participant 3). Another participant emphasized the importance of emotional resonance, noting that "images that show feelings, like being alone or pressured by friends, feel more real than just words saying 'don't do drugs'" (Participant 6).

Through these discussions, participants critically reflected on how visual elements—such as color, characters, and symbols—shape message interpretation. A participant explained that darker colors represented emotional pressure and confusion, while brighter tones symbolized support and hope, stating, "the dark part is when someone feels trapped, but the light color means there is still a way out if someone listens to you" (Participant 1). These interpretations demonstrate that adolescents do not engage with visual media passively; rather, they actively construct meaning by linking symbols to their lived social and emotional realities. This process illustrates how visual advocacy functions as a communicative space where social values related to self-regulation, peer support, and resistance to negative influence are negotiated collectively.

In consideration of the results of the aforementioned discussion, the participants formulated key messages that would become the identity of their visual campaign. Messages such as "Dare to Say No," "Friends Don't Mislead," "I'm Your Friend, I Hear You," and "Cool Without Drugs" were selected because they were regarded as exemplifying the ideal attitude they sought to inculcate. The selection of straightforward and impactful diction is indicative of the aspirations of adolescents to articulate their shared experiences within their peer group. These sentences not only contain preventive meanings but also emphasize the values of courage, choice, and peer attention. The campaign's utilization of straightforward yet impactful messages facilitate its acceptance and memorization by the target demographic.

The emergence of messages such as "Dare to Say No" and "Friends Don't Mislead" was directly grounded in adolescents' discussions during the focus group sessions, where peer pressure and the fear of social exclusion were repeatedly identified as central challenges. One participant explained, "Sometimes we actually know drugs are dangerous, but it's hard to say no because you don't want to be seen as weak or not part of the group" (Participant 4). Another participant emphasized that refusal

requires social courage rather than information alone, stating, "Saying no is not about knowing the rules, it's about being brave in front of friends" (Participant 7). These reflections illustrate why "Dare to Say No" emerged as a core message, symbolizing assertiveness as a socially negotiated skill rather than an individual trait.

Similarly, the theme "Friends Don't Mislead" originated from adolescents' collective reflection on the role of peer relationships in shaping behavior. During the discussion, participants differentiated between supportive peers and those who encourage risky behavior. As one adolescent noted, "Real friends won't force you to try things that can ruin your future" (Participant 2), while another added, "If your friend pushes you to do drugs, that's not friendship, that's pressure" (Participant 5). These statements reveal how adolescents conceptualize peer influence not merely as a risk factor, but as a communicative space where norms of care, loyalty, and responsibility are negotiated. Consequently, the message "Friends Don't Mislead" reflects adolescents' own criteria for healthy peer relationships and functions as a collective moral boundary constructed through participatory dialogue.

In the researcher's interviews, participants were asked to elucidate the meaning of the symbols and visual designs they created. A notable observation was the utilization of a dark background in the posters, which was employed to symbolize emotions such as fear, anxiety, and loneliness. The utilization of vibrant hues in the character's surroundings serves as a symbolic representation of hope, assistance, and the determination to resist enticement. The color transition in the visuals symbolizes the transition from a fragile state to strength and self-confidence. This interpretation suggests that each visual element selected is imbued with profound emotional significance for its creator.

Visual symbols, including broken ropes, open doors, and depictions of teenage characters hugging themselves, were frequently utilized by participants. The act of breaking a rope was interpreted as a success in one's efforts to liberate oneself from the constraints imposed by environmental pressures or detrimental habits. The act of opening doors was a metaphorical representation of opportunities to select healthier and safer courses of action. Concurrently, the adolescent character's embrace symbolizes self-acceptance, resilience, and optimism for the future. These symbols exemplify a profound comprehension of the notion of self-regulation, concurrently serving as a reflection of the values they aspire to promote.

This finding demonstrates the capacity of adolescents to translate abstract social concepts into meaningful and communicative visual forms. This participatory process encourages critical thinking, the connection of experiences with messages, and consideration of the visual impact on the audience. The resulting works function not only as advocacy tools but also as reflections of the participants' personal journeys. This lends further credence to the notion that visual communication can serve as an effective instrument for social education, particularly when it is derived from teenagers' firsthand experiences. Through the use of visualization, they not only learn to convey messages but also to interpret them.

Within the framework of visual representation theory, as articulated by Rose (2016), the interpretation of meaning is influenced not only by the creator of the message but also by their experiences and sociocultural context. The visual works produced by adolescents in this study demonstrate that social messages can be shaped through collective experiences communicated symbolically. The efficacy of

this representation is manifest in the manner in which narratives and symbols are selected and correlated with values such as courage, resilience, and solidarity. This finding underscores the notion that visual participation functions not only as a communication strategy but also as a process of social identity formation. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Lindquist-Grantz & Abraczinskas (2020), who posited that participatory action can serve as a transformative social education approach for adolescents.

Self-Expression And Emotional Connection in Advocacy Media

The visual design activities in this study are interpreted not only as a technical process of creating media, but also as a space for expression for adolescents to convey their personal experiences and deepest emotions. A number of participants acknowledged the absence of a medium through which to articulate their sentiments, concerns, apprehensions, and uncertainties that arose in their daily lives. This creative process engendered opportunities for them to express their emotions through symbols, characters, and visual narratives. This form of nonverbal communication has demonstrated efficacy in transcending the limitations of verbal expression when addressing sensitive or traumatic experiences. Consequently, visual design emerges as a potent alternative medium for articulating the identity and personal challenges of adolescents in navigating social pressures.

A salient finding emerged from a projective interview session in which the researcher presented a character drawing of an adolescent wearing a farmer's hat who had just finished harvesting rice. A number of participants provided spontaneous feedback indicating that the depicted character in the illustration did not align with their own personal identity. These adolescents indicated that such characters felt distant from their daily lives in an urban environment. The use of agricultural symbols or rural characters was deemed irrelevant to their social reality as urban adolescents, who were more familiar with urban symbols such as public spaces, vehicles, or school atmospheres. This finding indicates that visual representations employed in campaign media must take into account the cultural context and background experiences of teenagers to ensure their acceptance and personal interpretation. Therefore, the involvement of adolescents in the design process is imperative to guarantee that visual messages are not only aesthetically pleasing but also socioculturally pertinent.

Participation in this study also proved to boost teenagers' confidence in voicing their ideas and experiences. When presented with the opportunity to showcase their work, the participants exhibited a sense of pride and enthusiasm in elucidating the symbols, colors, and messages they had meticulously crafted. This presentation functioned not only as a form of communication but also as a validation of the experiences and perspectives of the subjects. The capacity to articulate their work in a public setting is indicative of the development of communication skills and the fortitude to articulate opinions. This is of particular significance in the development of a robust and well-balanced social identity among adolescents.

The group discussions that accompanied the presentation process also engendered positive social dynamics among the participants. It is evident that they recognize the prevalence of shared experiences, including pressures, feelings of unheardness, and a perceived lack of consideration. Empathy, defined as the ability to understand and share another person's experience through their perspective, is cultivated through the act of listening to each other's experiences without the presence of judgment. This process fosters a supportive and inclusive atmosphere, wherein differences in background enrich collective understanding. The acknowledgement of others' personal experiences constitutes a pivotal aspect of social learning, predicated on principles of equality and trust. These interactions demonstrate that visual campaigns exert an external influence in addition to reinforcing connections among participants from within.

This phenomenon underscores the multifaceted nature of the research, which yielded not only visual campaign media but also the establishment of a crucial safe space that is in high demand among adolescents. This safe space functioned as a meeting point for peers who shared a common vision and set of goals, fostering an environment of acceptance, value, and autonomy in expression. This space's genesis was not attributable to formal intervention; rather, it emerged through natural interactions fostered in an atmosphere characterized by participation and egalitarianism. Such an environment is not frequently encountered in formal education systems, which often prioritize control and standards. It is precisely through these participatory and free-expression activities that adolescents discover the authenticity of social relationships. This establishes a robust foundation for enhancing their social resilience in the face of various pressures they encounter.

From a sociocultural standpoint, the process can be conceptualized as a tangible embodiment of social-emotional learning (SEL). The concept of SEL encompasses the development of self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and the cultivation of communication skills, self-awareness, and healthy emotional regulation for adolescents (Khakimova, 2024). These aspects are reflected in the adolescents' experiences during their participation in the participatory visual design research. It has been demonstrated that individuals who engage in this practice develop the capacity to recognize and express their personal emotions. Furthermore, they cultivate the ability to respond to the experiences of others with empathy and understanding. Consequently, this process is not only educational in nature, but also emotional and social. The integration of SEL into participatory visual activities has been demonstrated to be an effective approach in fostering the social resilience of adolescents in a sustainable manner.

The Transformation of the Role of Adolescents as Subjects of Social Education

During the research process, a significant shift was observed in the role of adolescents from passive recipients of messages to active actors shaping the narrative of drug prevention. The prevailing paradigm shift in the discourse on drug risks has transcended the confines of mere moral or medical concerns, thereby signifying a paradigm shift in the way these risks are perceived. The contemporary understanding of these risks as a social reality, one that can be addressed collectively, has emerged as a pivotal paradigm shift in the collective consciousness. This awareness is cultivated

through shared experiences, discussions, and the creation of visual media rooted in personal and group experiences. Consequently, the resulting campaigns are not only educational but also authentic in their representation of the voices of adolescents. Their involvement renders drug prevention a relevant and meaningful effort.

This phenomenon is indicative of the emergence of agency among adolescents, defined as their capacity to act in accordance with their awareness, values, and personal objectives (Crone et al., 2024). Contrary to the past, adolescents no longer passively await external directives; instead, they proactively generate ideas, select narratives, and specify the visual forms they wish to utilize to convey their messages. One participant even stated that after participating in this research, they felt more confident in refusing negative peer pressure. Additionally, he has expressed a desire to extend invitations to his acquaintances to engage in discourse on the subject of drugs in unconventional ways, such as the creation of posters or brief video recordings. In his capacity as a member of the student council, he will incorporate drug prevention messages into all school activities. This finding suggests that active involvement facilitates the development of values in adolescents, including courage, reflection, and social responsibility.

Participation in the PAR process is not merely a technical experience; rather, it is a reflective journey that enables adolescents to connect their personal experiences with the social dynamics around them. When individuals are granted autonomy in determining the form of messages, symbols, and communication strategies, they are also afforded the opportunity to evaluate their own values and beliefs. In an environment characterized by support and dialogue, adolescents feel empowered to engage in experimentation, face setbacks, and learn from their experiences. This finding serves to reinforce the principle that meaningful learning arises from direct involvement and experience. Consequently, participatory approaches such as PAR have the potential to foster not only campaign media but also social leadership capacity within adolescents.

The transformation that occurs within participants demonstrates that social education does not have to be top-down or purely instructional. Conversely, when adolescents are meaningfully engaged, they demonstrate considerable potential as agents of change within their communities. These individuals are not merely subjects of prevention efforts but also producers of knowledge based on real-life experiences. The development of values such as empathy, cooperation, courage to speak out, and decision-making occurs organically during this process. The findings of this research indicate that adolescents should not be regarded as problematic individuals to be addressed; rather, they should be regarded as a crucial component of the solution, necessitating their empowerment.

In this context, PAR functions as a catalyst for reflective and transformative social education. The PAR model does not merely yield data or visual products; it also initiates a learning process that is dialogical, collaborative, and firmly embedded in the subject's experience. According to Chevalier & Buckles (2013), this process is referred to as critical practice. The practice enables participants to redefine their identity and their relationship with the social world. The use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in educational settings enables adolescents to develop a comprehensive understanding of the risks associated with drug use. In addition to this, PAR facilitates the development of an awareness of their role as agents of change



within their respective communities. This study's findings affirm that integrating adolescents into participatory visual education programs can yield long-term benefits, including enhancing their social resilience and critical thinking skills as emerging citizens.

The findings of this study are consistent with, yet extend beyond, existing research on participatory and creative approaches in adolescent health and social education. Previous studies have shown that youth participation in community-based and creative interventions enhances engagement, critical reflection, and perceived relevance of prevention messages (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2020; Anyon et al., 2020). Similar to these findings, adolescents in the present study demonstrated increased self-expression, emotional engagement, and ownership of anti-drug messages when actively involved in the production of visual advocacy media.

However, this study contributes novel insights by positioning visual advocacy not merely as a communication output but as a central pedagogical and research process. While prior research often treats visual materials as supportive tools for message dissemination, recent qualitative studies suggest that participatory visual practices—such as drawing, poster-making, and visual storytelling—can function as mechanisms for identity negotiation and social meaning-making among adolescents (Mitchell, De Lange, & Moletsane, 2019; Literat, 2021). The present findings support and extend this perspective by demonstrating that adolescents translate abstract social values, such as resilience and resistance to peer pressure, into symbolic visual forms grounded in their everyday experiences.

From a theoretical standpoint, the results align with participatory learning theory, which emphasizes knowledge construction through dialogue, collaboration, and shared experience (Biesta, 2020). The shift observed in this study—from adolescents as recipients of prevention messages to active producers of social narratives—reflects a move toward emancipatory education, where learning is embedded in action and reflection. Furthermore, the findings resonate with contemporary resilience theory, which conceptualizes adolescent resilience not as an individual trait but as a dynamic social process shaped by relationships, cultural resources, and opportunities for meaningful participation (Ungar, 2021). The participatory visual activities enabled adolescents to access these resources collectively, reinforcing resilience through peer interaction and shared symbolic expression.

Conceptually, this research also aligns with recent developments in visual and digital pedagogy, which argue that young people increasingly construct meaning through visual and multimodal forms of communication (Kress, 2020; Burnett, 2022). By integrating participatory action research with visual advocacy, this study demonstrates how visual practices can operationalize participatory and resilience-oriented frameworks in a manner that is culturally relevant to adolescents' communicative habits. Thus, the findings not only corroborate existing theories but also illustrate how these frameworks intersect in practice through participatory visual education.

Theoretically, this study contributes to participatory communication scholarship by demonstrating that visual advocacy functions not merely as a dissemination tool, but as a communicative practice through which social meanings and values are collectively constructed. The findings extend participatory communication theory by



empirically illustrating how dialogue, co-creation, and symbolic representation enable adolescents to negotiate shared understandings of risk, responsibility, and resistance within peer contexts. In this sense, communication is shown to be constitutive rather than instrumental in the development of adolescent resilience. Furthermore, this study advances the conceptualization of resilience by framing it as a socially constructed and communicative process rather than an individual psychological trait. Through participatory visual practices, resilience emerges from adolescents' ability to articulate emotions, establish moral boundaries with peers, and co-create alternative narratives to dominant risk discourses. This perspective bridges visual communication theory and social education by positioning meaning-making as the central mechanism through which resilience is developed. Consequently, the study offers a theoretical pathway for integrating participatory action research, visual communication, and resilience frameworks in future communication-based prevention research.

Practically, the findings suggest that drug abuse prevention programs should reconsider reliance on standardized, top-down campaign models. Instead, institutions such as schools, community organizations, and drug prevention agencies are encouraged to adopt participatory visual approaches that position adolescents as co-creators of prevention narratives. Such approaches not only enhance the relevance and emotional resonance of campaign messages but also foster adolescents' confidence, communication skills, and capacity to act as peer advocates. By embedding visual advocacy within participatory educational frameworks, prevention initiatives can achieve both immediate communicative impact and longer-term developmental outcomes related to social resilience and youth empowerment.

These findings carry significant implications for the development of more effective and sustainable drug prevention campaign strategies. Research has demonstrated that visual media created by adolescents is characterized by its contextual nature, its alignment with their symbolic language, and its capacity to elicit profound emotional responses among their peers. Furthermore, a participatory approach serves to reinforce the role of social education as a means of shaping adolescents' identity and resilience in facing social risks. When adolescents are entrusted with the responsibility of creating narratives, they not only acquire knowledge about drugs but also learn about themselves, others, and the social roles they can assume.

In the initial phases of the focus group discussion (FGD), the adolescents exhibited a tendency towards passive expression of their perspectives and concepts. The subjects reported feelings of shyness or uncertainty regarding the relevance of their opinions to the subject under discussion. This initial stiffness was indicative of their diminished self-assurance, stemming from their inexperience in open discussion forums. As the activity progressed with a supportive facilitation approach, the atmosphere became more relaxed and inclusive. In subsequent sessions, participants began to actively share their opinions, share personal experiences, and show enthusiasm in developing visual ideas openly. This process is widely regarded as a significant starting point in fostering active and equal youth participation in participatory campaign activities (Valdez et al. 2020).

During the subsequent reflection session, the participants indicated that this process had afforded them an opportunity to engage in critical and creative thinking,



to articulate their opinions, and to heed the experiences of others in a setting characterized by openness. A number of participants acknowledged that this was the first occasion on which they had felt appreciated for sharing their ideas openly with their peers (Ritterbusch, 2016). Their experience of attending school in an environment conducive to drug abuse meant that students who engaged in positive activities were often ostracized by peers influenced by the negative environment. This phenomenon is indicative of the social pressures that adolescents encounter, which can impede their ability to maintain healthy lifestyle choices when confronted with the norms of deviant groups. It has been posited by several other participants that this activity constitutes a significant moment in the cultivation of the courage to articulate one's thoughts in a creative manner. Initially stifled, self-expression underwent a gradual metamorphosis into authentic forms of communication. This finding suggests that participatory processes can function as a medium for emotional and intellectual empowerment among adolescents, particularly in the context of intricate social issues such as substance abuse (Turuba et al. 2022).

From the perspectives of both observers and facilitators, a noticeable change in behavior and increased social engagement among participants has been identified. Students who had previously adopted a passive stance during discussions have begun to demonstrate increased interest, pose questions, and contribute more actively in each session. A number of participants have expressed their willingness to engage in volunteer activities related to similar initiatives within their academic institutions or local communities. These changes are indicative of the short-term impact of a participatory social education process (Smith et al. 2024). When adolescents are entrusted with responsibility, they exhibit the potential to evolve into catalysts of transformation within their immediate environment. This finding lends further credence to the notion that a dialogical and experience-based approach is imperative in shaping the social character of adolescents (Ozer et al. 2024).

This finding lends further support to the notion that participatory social education functions not only as a medium for imparting knowledge, but also as a catalyst for social transformation (Yonas et al., 2013). This assertion aligns with the findings of Leman et al. (2024), which suggests that when adolescents are granted opportunities to articulate their thoughts, to be heard, and to feel valued, the learning process becomes more significant. The subjects demonstrate an aptitude for comprehending the content of the campaign message, while concurrently experiencing and shaping its meaning. Within the PAR framework, this process represents a form of youth participation that fosters critical awareness of social reality while motivating them to act as agents of change (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). This involvement facilitates the translation of cognitive learning into tangible and contextual behavioral change. Consequently, adolescent participation is not merely a technical strategy but also a transformative strategy in social education. Consequently, participatory social education is not only pertinent but also efficacious in fostering adolescents' resilience in the context of drug abuse prevention.

From a reflexive standpoint, this study reveals that adolescent resilience against drug abuse does not emerge as a fixed personal attribute, but as a relational and communicative outcome shaped through participation, dialogue, and symbolic expression. Throughout the participatory process, the researcher observed a shift in adolescents' engagement—from initial hesitation and limited verbal expression to

more confident articulation of ideas through visual and group-based interaction. This transformation suggests that providing adolescents with creative and participatory spaces alters not only the form of communication, but also the power relations within educational settings, positioning adolescents as legitimate meaning-makers rather than passive recipients of prevention messages.

The researcher's role in this process was not as an external evaluator, but as a facilitator of dialogue and reflection. This positioning required continuous reflexivity to ensure that adolescents' voices, symbols, and interpretations remained central to the analysis. Rather than imposing predefined categories of resilience, meanings such as assertiveness, peer support, and resistance emerged inductively from participants' narratives and visual expressions. This reflexive process underscores the importance of epistemological humility in participatory qualitative research, where knowledge is co-produced through interaction rather than extracted from participants.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses the problem of how drug abuse prevention among adolescents can be conducted in a manner that is socially relevant, empowering, and resilient-oriented. The findings demonstrate that participatory visual advocacy within a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework enables adolescents to actively construct prevention messages grounded in their lived experiences. Through visualizing social values, expressing emotions, and assuming active roles in social education, adolescents develop key dimensions of social resilience, including self-regulation, assertiveness, and social connectedness. These results confirm that adolescents are not merely targets of prevention efforts but capable contributors to meaningful social change when provided with participatory and creative spaces.

The present study is not without its limitations. First, the scope of participants was limited to five schools with a small number of participants (10 junior high school adolescents). Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire adolescent population. Secondly, given the emphasis on the process, this study did not employ quantitative methods to measure changes in attitude or behavior before and after the intervention. Thirdly, the relatively brief duration of the activity—one month—may not be sufficient to capture long-term changes in adolescents' social resilience. Nevertheless, the findings continue to make a significant contribution by demonstrating the potential of visual participatory approaches as a relevant and transformative social education strategy.

Regarding the future of PAR, this study highlights its strong potential as a sustainable approach for adolescent-focused research and social intervention, particularly in areas involving sensitive social issues such as drug abuse, mental health, and peer violence. Future research may expand PAR by integrating digital visual platforms, longitudinal engagement, or cross-community collaboration to examine long-term impacts on youth resilience and civic agency. By positioning adolescents as co-researchers rather than passive subjects, PAR offers a transformative pathway for developing context-sensitive, inclusive, and impactful prevention strategies.

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