

Young People's Attitudes Toward the Causes of Drug Abuse and Its Effects on the Family and Society: A Field Study on University of Sharjah Students

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify young people's attitudes toward the causes of drug use and its effects on the family and society. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 143 students at the University of Sharjah. The results showed that less than half of the participants (42.0%) believed that a weak religious conscience is a reason for drug use, while nearly half (41.3%) agreed that bad company is one of the individual factors leading to drug use. Additionally, 30.8% of the participants were uncertain whether traveling for recreation contributes to drug use. The quantitative analysis revealed that the majority of participants agreed that individual, familial, and social factors—such as staying up late, entertainment, financial resources, negative experiences, family violence, parental or relative addiction, parental neglect, favoritism among children, free time, and the presence of drug dealers—are the primary reasons that drive young people toward drug use. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between gender, age, and education, whereas no statistically significant effect was found for the other independent variables.

Keywords: Addiction, Drug abuse, Factors, Youth.

Introduction

The problem of drug abuse has become one of the most serious social issues, significantly impacting the progress of any society in both quantitative and qualitative terms. These issues drain the energies and capabilities of both individuals and society as a whole. The phenomenon of drug abuse is no longer confined to a specific segment of society defined by age or limited cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Additionally, drug abuse and addiction—especially among young people—are considered major obstacles to development and progress, as they contribute to social disorders, behavioral deviations, health crises, and political instability. Moreover, the dangers of drug abuse are not limited to a single country; rather, they extend across nations worldwide. Drug abuse is also an epidemiological phenomenon that threatens both individuals and societies, possessing the potential to undermine the foundations of an entire nation if it continues to spread, particularly among the young people's.

The rapid spread of drug use among both young people and adults, despite national efforts to combat it, remains alarming. According to the United Nations World Drug Report (2021), the number of drug addicts worldwide reached approximately 275 million people, while more than 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders. The latest global estimates indicate that around 5.5% of the population aged 15 to 64 used drugs at least once in the past year.

The severity of this issue is evident in the impact of drug users' behavior on the social and economic conditions of the society in which they live. Attitudes play a crucial role in shaping an individual's personality, as they are emotional responses derived from personal experiences, internal perceptions, acquired habits, and environmental influences. Attitudes are an integral part of an individual's personality, as reflected in their behavior. However, an individual is also influenced by the groups with which they interact, and their behavior may improve or deteriorate depending on their surrounding environment (Al-Rashoud, 2016, p. 3).

Alsaed (1995) suggests that the causes of drug abuse vary from one society to another, while certain similarities exist across different societies despite cultural differences in customs, traditions, and values. The findings of numerous studies confirm that individuals engage in drug abuse for multiple reasons, including economic, social, and familial factors, as well as media influence. Therefore, this research aims to explore the different attitudes of young people toward the phenomenon of drug abuse.

Like many other societies, the Emirati society is not immune to the drug problem. The severity and negative consequences of drug abuse are particularly alarming when they affect the youth, as they represent the backbone of society and are often the primary targets in hidden conflicts between nations. Youth are the cornerstone of a nation's future, and societal progress depends heavily on them. According to previous reports issued by the UAE Ministry of Interior, the age group most vulnerable to drug use falls between 18 and 30 years old.

study problem and questions

Statistics released by the General Department of Drug Control in the United Arab Emirates (2022) indicate a rise in cases related to drug use and psychoactive substances over recent years. The majority of drug users fall within the age group of 17-23 years, accounting for 32% of total cases. These figures highlight the widespread nature of drug abuse among young people, necessitating an in-depth investigation into the reasons and motivations behind their involvement in such risky behaviors.

Drug abuse is not merely an individual issue but rather a societal concern with severe health, social, economic, and security repercussions. The spread of this phenomenon affects family stability, weakens social relationships, and increases crime rates and behavioral deviations. Therefore, understanding and analyzing the root causes of drug abuse is a pressing priority for decision-makers, mental health professionals, educators, and sociologists. From this perspective, this study seeks to understand the factors that drive young people to use drugs by identifying the main categories of causes and analyzing the extent to which demographic and social variables influence these reasons. Accordingly, the research problem centers on answering the following questions:

- 1- What are young people's attitudes toward the causes of drug use from an individual, family, and social perspective ?
- 2- To what extent do demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, and marital status) predict the reasons for drug use?

Study goals

This study aims to achieve the following:

- Understand young people's attitudes toward the causes of drug use from individual, familial, and social perspectives.
- Examine the impact of the demographic and social characteristics of young respondents (such as gender, age, educational level, and marital status) on their attitudes toward the causes of drug use.

Study importance

This study derives its significance from the following points:

1. The scarcity of scientific research on the causes of young people's drug use in UAE society, whether in terms of its concept, motives, or consequences.
2. The use of advanced statistical analysis to study the causes of youth drug use, enhancing the understanding of the factors leading to this phenomenon and providing a scientific explanation.
3. The practical significance of the study in providing findings and recommendations that can benefit decision-makers, security agencies, youth organizations, and stakeholders concerned with drug-related issues, thus contributing to the development of more effective policies to address this phenomenon.

Literature review

The study of drug abuse has been a focal point in contemporary social studies and research, where scholars have examined various aspects such as motives, causes, and risk factors in young people's daily lives, including the influence of bad company. A review of previous studies on this subject indicates a growing academic interest in the issue.

Nathan (2001) conducted a study on the phenomenon of drug abuse among young people in Australian schools, comparing them to students at the University of Melbourne. The study's methodology involved distributing a questionnaire to 650 students, containing a series of questions related to drug abuse. The study concluded that drug abuse is a major security concern for every country, affecting its national character. The research focused on both school and university students, revealing a high mortality rate among young drug users.

Similarly, Betty (2010) focused on the link between drug abuse and the rising crime rate among young people. The study highlighted various preventive measures to curb drug use and analyzed government efforts in this regard. Notably, the study pointed out that the U.S. government equated the war on drugs to its war on terrorism. The findings revealed weak government control over drug trafficking and a lack of coordinated efforts among relevant agencies, which significantly contributed to the deterioration of the social fabric in American society.

Al-Khuzai (2010) conducted a study titled "Stopping Drug Addiction and Its Impact on Improving Quality of Life: An Applied Social Study." The study aimed to assess how quitting drug addiction affects an individual's quality of life. The research was conducted on a sample of 203 individuals undergoing treatment in Jordan. The study

found that drug addiction cessation rates were higher among males than females, with single individuals being the most affected group. The majority of addicts were aged 25-39 years, had an educational level below secondary school, and a significant percentage had higher income levels. Additionally, most of them were employed in the private sector or engaged in freelance work.

Matthew (2011) focused on the reasons that drive young people in the United States to abuse drugs and narcotic substances. The study concluded that boredom, frustration, and a lack of acceptance from peers or parents were among the primary reasons for drug use. Additionally, the study examined the types of drugs commonly abused by young people, such as marijuana, cocaine, hallucinogenic vitamins, stimulants, and inhalants. The researcher also outlined the negative effects of drug use, including rapid breathing, discouragement, frustration, increased heart rate, mood swings, and, in some cases, death.

Al-Khawaldeh and Al-Khayyat (2011) conducted a study aimed at identifying the primary reasons behind drug and narcotics abuse from the perspective of drug users in Jordanian society. The study identified several contributing factors, including family problems, seeking pleasure and enjoyment, escaping financial crises, peer influence, poor education, and using drugs as a means to forget worries and problems.

Tsvetkova & Antonova (2013) conducted a study titled "The Prevalence of Drug Dependence in Universities in Saint Petersburg." The study focused on drug abuse among university students at the University of San Francisco, aiming to provide a comprehensive framework for planning prevention programs. The findings revealed a low rate of drug abuse among students at the university, attributed to the institution's strong regulatory measures, which significantly limited fraudulent activities and drug-related offenses.

Raqiq Najma Hizieh (2017) conducted a study titled "The Basis of Drug Addiction in Adolescents." The study aimed to educate adolescents about the dangers of drug abuse and raise awareness among parents about the risks of neglect and its impact on juvenile delinquency. The study concluded that divorce and intimidation significantly contribute to adolescents' tendency to abuse drugs. Furthermore, adolescents often seek emotional warmth and family care outside their homes, which sometimes leads them toward drug use.

Al-Suwaidi (2017) conducted a study titled "The Phenomenon of Legitimate Addiction and the Characteristics of Drug Users Attending Treatment and Correctional Centers in the United Arab Emirates." The

study aimed to explore the dimensions of drug addiction, identify the factors leading to addiction, and examine its impact on families in the UAE. The research adopted the social survey method, utilizing a questionnaire to collect field data. The study employed a comprehensive survey method, selecting a sample of 180 individuals, including released drug users and participants in the "Let's Recover" rehabilitation program in the UAE.

In Al-Suwaidi's (2019) study, the research aimed to identify the relationship between parental treatment and adolescent substance abuse. The findings indicated that cruelty, neglect, overprotection, and certain psychosocial factors contribute to adolescent drug use.

In the United Arab Emirates, Muhammad Al-Hosani (2019) conducted a study titled "Social Class and Drug Abuse." The research examined the relationship between social class and drug abuse in the UAE. The study was conducted on a sample of 60 addicts at the National Rehabilitation Center in Abu Dhabi. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between drug use and objective social class indicators (such as educational level, occupation, household income, income adequacy, and debt levels). Additionally, a significant correlation was found between drug use and subjective social class perceptions (such as identifying as upper or middle class).

A review of previous research indicates a substantial body of scientific studies focusing on young people's attitudes toward drug abuse. These studies have identified various factors influencing youth behavior and attitudes toward drug prevalence, abuse, and addiction, providing essential theoretical frameworks for defining the research problem in this study. However, a noticeable research gap exists concerning drug abuse within UAE society, as previous studies and surveys have primarily addressed the issue on a broader national level, rather than focusing on specific local communities, particularly conservative ones.

Theoretical framework

Recent research highlights the growing phenomenon of drug abuse among young people and confirms the existence of a positive relationship between the rise of this phenomenon and factors such as increased unemployment, failure in life, migration, and the desire to boast or imitate others. Therefore, this study is based on several theoretical perspectives, including:

The psychological and cognitive orientation is a key factor in understanding the motives behind individual behavior. Psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping behavior—the stronger the psychological tendency, the greater its influence in directing and

shaping behavioral patterns. Among young people, these psychological tendencies are linked to religious beliefs, a sense of belonging, and various cultural and civilizational indicators.

Cognitive theory suggests that attitudes are acquired through education and development. According to this theory, individuals go through five essential stages in acquiring the necessary skills to process information and solve social problems: encoding, mental representation, response retrieval, response execution, and decision-making. Young people who are more prone to deviant behavior or substance abuse may exhibit vulnerability at any of these stages, depending on specific situations.

Social learning theory provides an explanation for the causes and underlying factors that shape attitudes towards drug abuse. According to this theory, insecure behaviors such as drug abuse are learned through observational learning and direct experience, where individuals regulate their behavior based on self-regulation mechanisms and reinforcement from their social environment.

Opportunity theory explains reckless behavior among young people by emphasizing the role of environmental factors. This theory argues that social contexts create opportunities for deviant behavior, making opportunity a prerequisite for violations to occur. In the context of drug abuse, these opportunities depend on time, setting, and the dynamics of daily life. Reckless behavior generates further opportunities for deviant behavior, as external temptations encourage impulsive actions and risky decision-making.

Study Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study and address its research questions, the survey method was employed to collect data from a sample of young people at the University of Sharjah.

1- The study sample

The researcher distributed 200 questionnaires to a randomly selected sample, of which 143 respondents completed and returned the survey, representing the study population. The sample consisted of both male and female students from the University of Sharjah.

2- Study tool

A structured questionnaire was used as a quantitative research tool to collect data from the selected sample of University of Sharjah students. The questionnaire comprised two main sections:

- Demographic and social characteristics, including variables such as gender, age, marital status, and educational level.

- Causes of drug abuse and youth attitudes toward these causes, categorized into individual, familial, and social factors contributing to drug use.

The questionnaire was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes of young people toward drug abuse. (See the attached questionnaire for further details.)

Method of analyzing the study data

Descriptive statistics, including percentages, mean, and standard deviation, were used to examine the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the study sample. Additionally, analytical statistics (multiple regression analysis) were employed to predict the influence of demographic and social factors on youth attitudes toward the causes of drug abuse.

Variables Measurement

1- Dependent variables

This study examines young people's attitudes toward the causes of drug use and its effects on the family and society. The study questionnaire consisted of three main sections: individual causes (6 items), family causes (4 items), and social causes (5 items). These dependent variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale as follows: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree .

2- Independent variables

Table No. (1) below presents a list of the independent variables included in the study and their corresponding measurement scales, as detailed in the table.

	Variables	Measure
1	Gender	Male , 2. female
		Female
2	Age group	15 – 19 years
		20 – 24 years
		25 – 29 years
		30 – 35 years
3	Educational level	Bachelor's Degree
		Master Degree
		PhD
4	Social status	Single
		Married
		Divorced
		Widow/widower

Table No. (1). It shows levels of measurement for the independent variables.

Study results and discussion

The results of the study were presented and discussed in accordance with the research questions posed in the study problem, and all questions were answered as follows:

The results of the study were presented and discussed according to the questions posed by the researcher in the study problem, and all questions were answered as follows:

Question 1: How the young people are distributed to the categories of the drug abuse causes?

n	phrase	strongly agree	agree	unsure	disagree	strongly disagree
1-	the weakness of religious	13.3%	42.0%	22.4%	16.8%	5.6%
2-	accompanying bad people	17.5%	41.3%	26.6%	9.8%	4.9%
3-	go abroad for fun	14.7%	19.6%	30.8%	25.9%	9.1%
4-	Staying up and frequenting	28.7%	27.3%	23.8%	11.2%	9.1%
5-	Money is abundant among youth	11.9%	27.3%	37.1%	15.4%	8.4%
6-	problems that the exposed to	18.9%	33.6%	26.6%	12.6%	8.4%

Table (2): Distribution of Respondents Based on Individual Causes of Drug Abuse

Table (2) . reveal the most of the sample's individual causes of drug abuse. To begin with, 41.3% of the total sample confirmed that they agree with the accompanying bad people as a cause of drug abuse , followed by the category that agree with the weakness of religious at 42.0% . Also 37.1% of youth are unsure that the money abundant young people lead them to drug abuse .

The results indicate that 28.7% of respondents strongly agree that staying up late and visiting suspicious places contribute to drug abuse, as such places often facilitate access to drugs and promote their circulation among individuals. This finding suggests that young people perceive staying up late, weak religious commitment, and traveling for leisure as potential factors that may lead to drug use. The majority of respondents share this belief, as Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of avoiding prohibited behaviors and environments that encourage such practices.

n	phrase	strongly agree	agree	unsure	disagree	strongly disagree
1-	Domestic violence	23.8%	36.4%	23.1%	10.5%	6.3%
2-	Discrimination between children	18.9%	39.2%	25.9%	9.8%	6.3%
3-	Addiction of the family member	28.7%	34.3%	24.5%	7.7%	4.9%
4-	Parents' not interest children's problems	24.5%	42.0%	17.5%	11.2%	4.9%

Table (3): Distribution of Respondents Based on Family Causes of Drug Abuse

Table(3). The results show that 36.4% of respondents agree that domestic violence is one of the causes of drug abuse, while 39.2% agree that discrimination among children can also contribute to drug use . Additionally, the findings indicate that 28.7% of respondents strongly agree that the addiction of a parent or a family member may serve as a contributing factor to drug abuse among other family members.

n	phrase	strongly agree	agree	unsure	disagree	strongly disagree
1-	Weakness supervisory shields	20.3%	32.9%	24.5%	12.6%	9.8%
2-	circulation of drugs and not setting deterrent	22.4%	46.2%	20.3%	7.0%	4.2%
3-	Being ostracized by others	21.0%	32.2%	28.0%	10.5%	8.4%
4-	Feeling social injustice	23.8%	28.0%	25.9%	15.4%	7.0%
	Leisure time	16.1%	29.4%	34.3%	16.8%	3.5%

Table (4): Distribution of Respondents Based on Social Causes of Drug Abuse

Table(4). The results indicate that 32.9% of respondents agree that poor supervision is one of the causes of drug abuse. Additionally, 46.2% agree that drug trafficking and circulation without deterrence contribute to drug abuse. Furthermore, 32.2% agree that social exclusion and the lack of recreational spaces are among the social factors leading to drug abuse.

Notably, the majority of young respondents support the notion that individual, familial, and social factors collectively contribute to drug abuse, reflecting their awareness of the multifaceted nature of the issue.

Question 2: To what extent do demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, and marital status) predict the reasons for drug use?

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
gender	-.041	.087	-.041	-.467	.641
age	-.007	.049	-.012	-.143	.886
education	-.059	.063	-.082	-.946	.346
Marital status	-.005	.046	-.010	-.120	.905
R2=.007 F= .253 P = .907					

Table (5): Regression Coefficients for Predicting Youth Attitudes Toward the Causes of Drug Abuse

The results in Table (5) indicate that the independent variables in this study explain only 0.7% of the variance in youth attitudes toward the causes of drug abuse. The regression analysis further reveals that gender, education level, marital status, and age do not have statistically significant relationships with individual causes of drug abuse.

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
gender	-.012	.099	-.010	-.117	.907
age	-.082	.056	-.124	-1.450	.149
education	-.033	.072	-.039	-.462	.645
Marital status	.091	.052	.147	1.735	.085
R2= .037 F= 1.318 P= .266					

Table (6) : Regression Coefficients for Predicting Youth Attitudes Toward the Causes of Drug Abuse

According to Table (6), results indicate that the independent variables in this study explain approximately 3.7% of the variance in youth attitudes toward the causes of drug abuse. The regression analysis further reveals that gender, education level, marital status, and age do not have statistically significant relationships with individual causes of drug abuse ($F = 1.318$, $P = 0.266$).

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig
gender	.094	.097	.083	.974	.332
age	-.053	.055	-.082	-.967	.335
education	-.142	.070	-.171	-2.027	.045
Marital status	.049	.051	.080	.960	.339
R2=.061 F=2.233 P=.069b					

Table(7). Regression Coefficients for Predicting Youth Attitudes Toward the Causes of Drug Abuse

According to Table (7), The results indicate that the independent variables in this study explain approximately 6.1% of the variance in youth attitudes toward the causes of drug abuse. The observed data reveal that education level has a statistically significant but very weak

negative effect on youth attitudes toward drug abuse ($t = -2.027$, $p = 0.045$, $B = -0.171$). However, gender, age, and marital status do not show statistically significant relationships with youth attitudes toward the causes of drug abuse.

Multicollinearity occurs when two or more independent variables are highly correlated (Vogt, 1999; Lewis-Beck, 1980). To assess this issue, the correlation matrix was examined for potential signs of multicollinearity. Table (8) indicates that gender and age have the strongest bivariate correlation among the independent variables ($r = -0.204$). Therefore, multicollinearity is not a significant concern in this study.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents agree that drug abuse stems from individual, familial, and social factors. Additionally, the findings suggest that awareness of the harmful effects of drugs within UAE society has contributed to an intellectual shift among young people regarding the reasons that drive individuals toward drug use.

Therefore, addressing this issue must be approached within a comprehensive social, individual, and familial context. Furthermore, this topic requires further social research, particularly through expanding case studies of young individuals who have previously experienced drug abuse. Such an approach would provide a more in-depth understanding of the underlying causes that were not fully explored in this study and could contribute to the development of more effective intervention strategies aimed at reducing youth addiction rates in society.

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Supplements

Variables		Frequency	%
Sex	1. Male	54	37.8
	2. Female	89	62.2
	Total	143	100%
Age	1. 15-19	26	18.2
	2. 20-24	66	46.2
	3. 25-29	39	27.3
	4. 30-35	12	8.4
	Total	143	100%
Educational level	1. Bachelors	94	65.7
	2. Master	35	24.5
	3. PhD	14	9.8
	Total	143	100%
Marital status	1. Single	76	53.1
	2. Married	43	30.1
	3. Divorced	14	9.8
	4. Widow	10	7.0
	Total	143	100%

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
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age	-.007	.049	-.012	-.143	.886
education	-.059	.063	-.082	-.946	.346
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Correlations

		gender	age	education	maritulstatus
gender	Pearson Correlation	1	-.204*	-.156	.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015	.062	.687
	N	143	143	143	143
age	Pearson Correlation	-.204*	1	.033	.089
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015		.692	.288
	N	143	143	143	143
education	Pearson Correlation	-.156	.033	1	-.145
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.062	.692		.084
	N	143	143	143	143
maritulstatus	Pearson Correlation	.034	.089	-.145	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.687	.288	.084	
	N	143	143	143	143

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

اتجاهات الشباب نحو أسباب تعاطي المخدرات وآثارها على الأسرة والمجتمع:
دراسة ميدانية على طلبة جامعة الشارقة

خوله العبيدلي

د. محمد عبدالكريم الحوراني

جامعة الشارقة - كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية والانسانية

ملخص الدراسة

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على اتجاهات الشباب نحو أسباب تعاطي المخدرات وآثارها على الأسرة والمجتمع. وقد تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيان تم توزيعه على عينة مكونة من 143 طالباً وطالبة في جامعة الشارقة. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن أقل من نصف المشاركين (42.0%) يعتقدون أن ضعف الوازع الديني سبب لتعاطي المخدرات، بينما وافق ما يقرب من نصف المشاركين (41.3%) على أن الصحة السيئة هي أحد العوامل الفردية المؤدية إلى تعاطي المخدرات. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، كان 30.8% من المشاركين غير متأكدين مما إذا كان السفر للاستجمام يساهم في تعاطي المخدرات.

وكشف التحليل الكمي أن غالبية المشاركين اتفقوا على أن العوامل الفردية والعائلية والاجتماعية - مثل السهر، والترفيه، والموارد المالية، والموارد المالية، والتجارب السلبية، والعنف الأسري، وإدمان الوالدين أو الأقارب، وإهمال الوالدين، والمحابة بين الأبناء، ووقت الفراغ، ووجود تجار المخدرات - هي الأسباب الرئيسية التي تدفع الشباب نحو تعاطي المخدرات.

وعلاوة على ذلك، أشار تحليل الانحدار المتعدد إلى وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الجنس والعمر والتعليم، في حين لم يتم العثور على أي تأثير ذي دلالة إحصائية للمتغيرات المستقلة الأخرى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعاطي المخدرات، العوامل، الشباب، الإدمان