

The Peer Group Effect on Drug Abuse and Academic Performance Among University Student

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Abstract

The drug problem is one of the most complex problems in the world, and hardly any society is devoid of it, whether in developed or developing countries. It threatens students' social, economic, and educational life at all levels. Saudi Arabia like the other countries faces drug spread among the youth. This study aims to assess the role of peer group effect on drug abuse and academic performance among university students in the Hawtat Bani Tamim. The study adopts the questionnaire as a tool for collecting data. The sample size of the study was 121 participants from university students. The study adopted descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The results of the study found that the prevalence of drug abuse among university students was 8.3. There is a significant relationship between drug abuse and several factors under investigation. Notably, there were notable connections identified between drug abuse and age, the availability of drugs, and parental influence status. Also, the result showed that drug abuse delays graduation and absence from university. Peer group pressure influences drug abuse among students and plays a crucial role in drug abuse among university students. The study recommends providing programs that encourage students to quit drug abuse

Keywords: *Factors, Effect, Peer Group, Drug, Abuse.*

Introduction

Background

Drug abuse is a global problem that poses a great danger to the lives of individuals, society, politics, and security in many. The use of illicit drugs has increased throughout the world, and the world trend is the increasing availability of many kinds of drugs among an ever-widening spectrum of consumer countries (UNODC, 2008).

A drug is referred to as a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions. (Chebukaka, 2014). It is also considered a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behavior, and general body functions (Shyngle, 2016). This could thus be considered as chemical modifiers of the living tissues that could bring about psychological and behavioral changes (Nnachi, 2017).

The use of abusive or prohibited substances remains a growing problem among young individuals and students, which contributes to socio-economic and humanistic burdens worldwide (NIdH, 2021). According to the United Nations World Drug Report, in 2021 globally around 275 million individuals used prohibited substances, and 13% of abusers suffered from drug use disorders. The global prevalence of prohibited substances in 2019 was 5.5%. The global statistics report in 2021 stated, that over 11 million populations, are estimated to use injectable drugs, and most of them are suffering from hepatitis (Peacock, et al., 2018).

Drug abuse can have a negative influence on students' academic performance. According to a study conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse(NIDA), drug use can lead to decreased motivation, impaired cognitive function, and difficulty concentrating, all of which can hurt academic performance (NIDA, 2021). One study found that students who reported using drugs had lower GPAs than those who did not use drugs. The study also found that drug abuse was associated with increased absenteeism and

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decreased motivation to succeed academically (NIDA,2018). The study conducted by (Kanga, 2015) revealed that abusing drugs among students affected their mental functioning which led them to miss the lectures. This leads to poor academic performance. The study pointed out that abuse of drugs negatively affected the student's academic performance and dropout rate from school (Edwe & Joshua, 2017). It has been reported drug abuse has led to poor performance, absenteeism, and short attention in class among students (Zemba, 2022). Abused drugs have a negative affection on the body, and behave abnormally. All these problems affected to students' academic performance (Adeniyi, 2022). The study concluded that drug and substance abuse among the students led to school dropouts, strained bonds with other students, lack of interest in studying, truancy, low concentration span, and health matters such as anxiety, headaches, feeling sleepy, and confusion leading to decreasing academic performance (Okari & Masese, 2018). A recent study disclosed that the causes of drug abuse among students are psychological, social, and biological (Abikiw & Okafor, 2022). A study found that the most noticeable motives for drug abuse are family issues, financial problems, public, and lack of knowledge of the drug's effects and found that these factors significantly led to poor academic performance (Manish, Deepali, & Neetu, 2020). (AKANBI, Augustina, Theophilu, Muritala, & Ajiboye, 2015) found that there is a significant association between academic performance and drug abuse, in addition, there is a significant gender difference among adolescent substance abusers based on academic performance. Previous studies disclosed that Drug abuse can have negative consequences on a student's academic performance. It can lead to poor concentration, memory problems, and difficulty in completing assignments. Additionally, drug abuse can cause absenteeism, which can result in missed classes and falling behind in coursework. In extreme cases, drug abuse can lead to dropping out of school entirely (Ibrahim, Bakori, Abdul-Kadir, & Jabo, 2019; Magaji & Nasiru, 2019; Kavutha, 2015; Odhiambo, 2021; Ebelechukwu, Caroline, Josephine, & Obakpo, 2020).

(Likeing & Adaka, 2021) revealed that reasons accountable for marijuana intake include peer pressure, lack of parental guidance, emotional stress, poor performance in exams, loss of memory and sleeping during lectures, and late coming.

A study conducted by (Khader, et al., 2019) revealed that the overall drug abuse in Riyadh city was 18.94% among high school students, 1.3875 were females, and 10.28 % were males. The result found there is a relationship between abuse and being a male student in college, and the most widely abused substance was Alcohol (44.5%) followed by Hashish (40.19%). These were used for different reasons the most common was for fun followed by escaping from problems.

The most used prohibited substance among teenage students was found to be cannabis (17%) followed by nicotine (17%) (Dumas, Ellis, & Litt, 2020). The highest prevalence of using prohibited substances was found in North America including the United States (USA) and Canada (Sussman, Lisha, & Griffiths, 2010). Earlier studies report that the use of natural stimulants and other prohibited substances is on the rise in Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia (Tulu & Keskis, 2002; Bassiony, 2013) . However previous studies found the use of illicit drugs such as marijuana, prescription stimulants, opioids, cocaine, and ecstasy by pharmacy students (Al-Shatnawi, Perri, Young, & Norton, 2016; Kenna & Wood, 2004; Baldwin, et al., 2006; SUNGU, 2015) . Although previous studies showed that amphetamine (4–70.7%), heroin (6.6–83.6%), alcohol (9–70.3%), and cannabis (1–60%) were the most widely used prohibited drugs among Saudi adults (Alzahrani, Barton, & Brijnath, 2015; Saquib, Rajab, Saquib, & AlMazrou, 2020) .

Previous reports found that amphetamine was the most widely used prohibited drug among Saudi adults (NIH, The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress A Report of the Surgeon General, 2014; Bassiony, 2013; Youssef, Fahmy, Haggag, Mohamed, & Baalash, 2016). Another report stated that in Saudi Arabia, the use of cannabis and amphetamines was on the rise whereas the use of heroin and volatile substances was found to be decreasing. Drug injection abuse was linked to anxiety, depression, and hepatitis as co-morbid conditions in Saudi Arabia (Alzahrani, Barton, & Brijnath, 2015).

Research Problem

The drug problem is one of the most complex problems facing the world, and almost no society is devoid of it, whether in developed or developing countries. It threatens students' social, economic, and educational

lives at all levels. The seriousness of the drug problem lies in the fact that it targets young people because they are the foundation and strength of society. They are the most targeted group in hidden wars between countries. Bad friends are the ones who work to tempt young people to take narcotic substances, which are considered a devastating scourge for the lives of all families, which doubles the role of parents in educating their children to stay away from any bad companion. And friends or comrades have a great influence on each other.

The problem of the study is that peers tempt each other to take drugs, which makes them vulnerable to addiction to it, which affects their health and academic achievement. Hence, the need to protect these students from falling into the drug trap and addiction becomes clear. This requires the integration of efforts between civil society organizations and government agencies that are responsible for combating drugs.

Research Objectives

The study attempts to

- Identify the role of peer groups on drug abuse and academic performance among university students in the Hawtat Bani Tamim.
- Determine the important factors associated with the abuse of drugs among university students.
- Examine the relationship between the effect of peer groups and the academic performance of the students.
- Illustrate the effect of peer groups on drug abuse.

Research Significance

The study of drugs and what is associated with them is of great importance, as it sheds light on the problem and explains its causes, which provides a solid base for decision-makers to develop appropriate policies that enable them to combat drugs and reduce their harm to the individual and society.

The study acquires the importance of discussing the role of peers in drug abuse and the academic achievement of university students in Hotat Bani Tamim Governorate. Drug abuse dissemination among youth needs collaboration between stakeholders such as academicians, education administration, government institutions related to drug enforcement, and social societies in the community to fight this phenomenon and stop it.

Research Methodology

Source of Data

The study depends on primary data from the questionnaire collected from the study population through the sample chosen to conduct the study.

Research Tools

The study utilized a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data related to the research, along with secondary data from authorities involved in drug and drug control. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale.

Study Population and Sample

The study population consists of University students in Hotat Bani Tamim Governorate, while the participants of the sample were selected based on statistical sampling methods. the sample size was (121) participants, who are currently enrolled in the academic system.

Statistical Procedures

The analysis of the data focuses on descriptive statistics, as well as inferential statistics, which are suitable to the data of the study.

Results

In this session, the focus first was on descriptive statistics to describe the main characteristics of the sampling members. The average age of the respondents was 21 years with a standard deviation of 1.78. The prevalence of drug abuse among university students was 8.3. The frequency distribution of respondents according to the type of drug showed that Tranquilizers 19(9.1%), hashish5(4.1%), Captagon 5(4.1%), Heroin 4(3.3%), and other type 96(79.3%). The places where students bring drugs were secret promoters 40 (33.1%), markets 18(14.9%), peers and friends 14(11.6%), boundaries markets 12(9.9%), and 37(31.6%). The frequency distribution showed that 8(6.6%) agree there was an increase in drug abuse among students in the universities.

Respondents reported that 31(25.6%) of students use drugs before exams, and 20 (16.5%) for events and parties.

Table (1): Characteristics of The Variables

Variables	Categories	N	percentage
Drug abuse	Yes	10	8.3
	No	111	91.7
Type of Drug	Hashish	5	4.1
	Captagon	5	4.1
	Tranquilizers	19	9.1
	Heroin	4	3.3
	Other	96	79.3
Place of Drug	Peers and friends	14	11.6
	secret promoters	40	33.1
	Markets	18	14.9
	boundaries markets	12	9.9
	Other	37	31.6
Increase of use	Yes	8	6.6
	No	113	93.4
When using	Before exams	31	25.6
	events and parties	32	26
	other	58	47.9

Reasons for Drug Abuse

Table (2) shows the association between the variable drug abuse and some selected variables. The main purpose of this session is to identify the reasons for drug abuse among students. The results explain that there was a significant association between drug abuse and the variables age, easy access to drugs, and influence of parents' status. Whereas there was an insignificant association between drug abuse and variables such as peer pressure, academic failure, leisure, and feeling frustrated.

Table (2): Association of Some Selected Variables and Drug Abuse Among Students

Variable	categories	Drug abuse		Chi-square	p-value
		Yes	No		
Age	Less than20	2	80	16.56	0.0001
	and more 20	8	31		
Peers pressure	Disagree	5	48	0.170	0.68
	Agree	5	63		
easy access	Disagree	3	70	4.190	0.041
	Agree	7	41		
Leisure	Disagree	3	61	2.29	0.130
	Agree	7	50		
Academic failure	Disagree	4	67	1.59	0.210
	Agree	6	44		
influence of parents status	Disagree	2	8	14.78	0.001
	Agree	48	61		
feeling frustrated	Disagree	2	51	2.51	0.113
	Agree	8	60		

Causes Of Drug Abuse Among Students

The data in Table 4 collected according to the Likert scale four, strongly agree and agree are merged to form agreement categories while strongly disagree and disagree are merged to form disagreement categories to form a concise presentation. The frequency distribution showed that 60(49.5%) students agree that long sitting with peers leads to drug abuse while 61(50%) disagree. The finding explains the role of peers and friends. There are more than half of the respondents 80(68%) agree that friends tempt their colleagues to participate in drug use, while 41(32%) disagree. This case commonly happens in Gulf communities. Also, the results revealed that 80(68%) of the participants have a positive agreement that imitating the behavior and customs of the peer group leads to drug abuse, and 41(32%) disagree. Peer pressure plays a crucial role in drug abuse among university students. The result revealed that 75(62%) of respondents agree that peer pressure influences drug abuse among students, and 46(38%) disagree.

Table (3): Respondents Rating of Causes of Drug Abuse Among Students

Reasons	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Long sitting with peers	18(15%)	42(35%)	36(30%)	25(21%)
Friends tempt their colleagues	20(16.5%)	60(49.5%)	19(16%)	22(18%)
Imitating the behavior and customs	18(15%)	62(51%)	17(14%)	24(20%)
peer pressure	17(14%)	58(48%)	24(20%)	21(17%)

The Effect of Drug Abuse on Academic Performance

To investigate the relationship between the peer pressure variables and drug abuse among students. The results in the table below illustrate the averages, standard deviation, and ranking of the statements. The higher averages showed the importance of the statement in drug abuse among students according to sample members' viewpoints. The results revealed that the first important effect of drug abuse was "Delaying graduation from university" It came in the first rank with an average of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.88. in the second rank came the phrase " It leads to absence from university" with an average of 3.95 and SD of 0.92. The third rank belongs to the phrase "Lack of concentration in the classroom" with an average of 3.94 with 0.91. In the fourth rank came the phrase "It leads to poor academic performance" with an average of 3.93 and SD of 0.89. the statement " Failure to perform or neglect of duties" took the fifth rank with an average of 3.92 and an SD of 0.84. In the last rank came the phrase " Students use drugs because

of their association with peers who use drugs" with an average of 3.32 and SD of 1.17. These results indicated the important effect of peers on drug abuse among university students.

Table (3): The Effect of Drug Abuse on Academic Performance

Phrase	average	SD	Rank
Students use drugs because of their association with peers who use drugs	3.32	1.17	11
It leads to poor academic performance	3.93	0.89	4
It leads to absence from school	3.95	0.92	2
Lack of concentration in the classroom	3.94	0.91	3
Withdrawal from the university	3.87	0.89	7
Delaying graduation from university	3.96	0.88	1
Failure to perform or neglect of duties	3.92	0.84	5
It leads to cheating on tests	3.66	1.05	10
Health problems (frequent headaches, drowsiness, anxiety and confusion)	3.83	0.95	9
It leads to poor memory	3.86	0.94	8
Weak desire to participate in curricular activities	3.91	0.82	6

Discussion

Drug abuse is an extremely dangerous and deadly phenomenon that affects young people in particular. It is the result of several reasons, including weak religion and association with bad companions. It is also the result of parents neglecting their children, emptiness, and family disintegration. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not an exception to this, as drugs have spread there in recent decades, although Saudi efforts to limit the spread of drugs have worked to raise the performance level of workers through training programs inside and outside the Kingdom. Thwarting smuggling operations, tracking down their gangs internally and externally, and monitoring the legitimate trade in dangerous materials (pharmaceuticals and scientific purposes) in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, preventing any of them from leaking into the illicit trade market, and focusing on the Kingdom's ports (land, sea, and air).

Drug usage has become widespread among Saudi university students, prompting this study to investigate its impact on academic performance and to explore the role of peer influence in drug use. The study revealed a drug abuse prevalence of 8.3% among university students, highlighting a critical situation among this demographic, with the potential for further escalation in the future. This result varies from the finding by (Khader, et al., 2019) who revealed that the overall drug abuse in Riyadh city was 18.94% among high school students. This is due to the difference in the sample size of the two studies.

The study findings indicated a consensus among the respondents regarding the escalating prevalence of drug abuse among university students. This trend aligns with previous research, which also reported an increasing usage of natural stimulants and other illicit substances in Middle Eastern nations like Saudi Arabia (Tulu & Keski, 2002; Bassiony, 2013).

The study findings revealed a correlation between drug abuse and several factors under scrutiny. Notably, significant links were found between drug abuse and age, accessibility to drugs, and parental influence status. Conversely, there was no significant correlation observed between drug abuse and factors like peer pressure, academic performance, leisure activities, and feelings of frustration. This result agrees with the findings mentioned by (Edwe & Joshua, 2017; Zemba, 2022; Adeniyi, 2022; AKANBI, Augustina, Theophilu, Muritala, & Ajiboye, 2015)

The study findings indicated a consensus among participants regarding various factors contributing to drug abuse within peer groups. These included prolonged socializing with peers fostering drug use, friends actively encouraging their peers to partake in drug-related activities, imitation of peer behavior and norms

leading to substance abuse, and the significant influence of peer pressure in facilitating drug misuse. This underscores the pivotal role of peers and social circles in the dynamics of substance abuse. This study underscores the significant impact of drug abuse on academic pursuits, particularly within the university setting. The finding that drug abuse delays graduation highlights the tangible consequences that substance misuse can have on educational attainment. When students are grappling with addiction or substance abuse issues, it can impede their ability to focus on their studies, maintain consistent attendance, and ultimately progress toward graduation.

Moreover, the correlation between drug abuse and absence from university underscores a concerning trend. Substance abuse can lead to physical and mental health issues, which may result in students missing classes or even dropping out altogether. This not only affects their academic performance but also their overall well-being and prospects.

Understanding these effects is crucial for universities and educational institutions to implement effective support systems and interventions for students struggling with substance abuse. Providing access to counseling, rehabilitation programs, and resources for addiction recovery can help mitigate the negative impact of drug abuse on academic success and student retention. Additionally, raising awareness about the risks and consequences of substance abuse within the university community can encourage early intervention and support for those in need.

The result revealed that more than half of respondents explain that peer pressure influences drug abuse among students. Peer pressure plays a crucial role in drug abuse among university students.

Conclusion

The study aimed to identify the role of peer groups on drug abuse and academic performance among university students. The research found a relationship between drug abuse and several factors under investigation. Notably, there were notable connections identified between drug abuse and age, the availability of drugs, and parental influence status. The study revealed a drug abuse prevalence of 8.3% among university students. The effect of drug abuse on university students is that drug abuse delays graduation and absence from university. Peer group pressure influences drug abuse among students and plays a crucial role in drug abuse among university students.

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