

Risk Factors Related to Juvenile Drug Use

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the prevalence of drugs abuse in the juvenile prison taken from pre-trial detention and Penitentiary Institution of the Albanian Country and to examine some evidence between criminal behavior and use of drugs by juvenile offenders. This research is an exploratory one, and tries to determine a link between criminal behavior and drugs. The target population consists of 71 imprisoned juveniles aged from 14 to 18 in four prisons in pre-trial detention and prison institutions in Albania. For the entire population of males and females offenders interviews are used, due to their small numbers. Direct interviewing was managed by trained interviewers at a time and place convenient to the prison system and insuring the confidentiality of the offenders' responses. Analyses reported in the present study involve simple descriptive statistics from Univariate Analysis to describe the central tendency of mean, mode, median, range, variance, max, min, standard deviation and percentages. Juvenile offenders who experiment with drugs, report episodes of offending, especially physical assault, robbery and stealing either those who were in detention for the first time or recidivists in crimes. An important finding is related to the onset of first offense among the juveniles. The mean age of first offending suggests that young males under the age of 16 years are at increased risk of criminal offending. Almost all offenders reported having used marijuana or alcohol, a percent reported crack cocaine use at the age of 11-14 years old. It is important to establish that not all drug users are criminals, and not all criminal acts are committed by drug users. However, the study highlight certain issues that need attention of country policy-makers. Juveniles are heavy users of marijuana and according to the present research, typically began their marijuana use at around the age of fourteen.

Keywords: juvenile, drug use, pre-trial detention, sentenced.

1. Introduction

Substance abuse remains an issue which is quite difficult to deal with (Kenneth et al., 2018), during its withdrawn process (Kenneth & Botvin, 2011). Referring to the term “abuse of narcotic substances”, we consider the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other forms of synthetic drugs by the adolescent. It is either considered as an issue of mental health (Childs & Sullivan, 2013) and as such is addressed in a multidisciplinary team. Substance abuse does not

only affect the abusive individual (DeLisi et al., 2015), but also has an extension to the family, society, school and community (Brook et al., 2013) where the user lives. It seems that the most vulnerable category to fall a prey to drug abuse (Burnhams, 2016) remains the adolescence. Drug use in a teen age (Averdijk et al., 2016) has long and short-term consequences in the user's life. An element that is believed to link narcotic drug users is their involvement into illegal activities as a source of drug purchasing (Brook et al., 2006) or acting under their effects (Ramsoomar, 2015). Referring to studies on the risk factors for substance abuse, there could be included a series of factors that can interact alone or with one another. Socio-economic factors (Botvin et al., 1995) seem to play a major role in the drug use matters.

There is a connection between lower socio-economic status (Magidson et al., 2016) and drug use growth. Children grown in families living in a lower socio-economic status, especially whose parents, work for a minimum wage (Ennett, 2008) exhibit little care and supervision that can push their children to drug abuse problems. Communities with a lower social economic status are characterized by high unemployment (Kadalie & Thomas, 2013), drug use, easy drug finding and criminality.

But other factors can also make the situation threatening, such as physical and mental health disorders (Merrill et al., 1999), including self-mutilation and suicidal behaviors, poor education, adolescent friendships with problematic and violent family history of drug abuse and alcohol adults (Catalano et al., 2002). Another risk factor relates to school (Eggert et al., 2001) and its role in order that the adolescent be able to manage his aggressive behavior or be protected from peers abuse form or even from teachers in some cases.

Coping with academic failures and finding sustainable forms of improvement in academic achievement (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999) can help teenagers not to undertake the decision (Broadus et al., 2010) to leave school. It is suggested by the researchers that the school, the decision to expel a teenager from school due to behavioral problems (Choi et al., 2012) can be managed more carefully (Kenneth & Botvin, 2011). Researchers have suggested that adolescents drug users tend to be easily involved in criminal activity (Akers, Sellers & Jennings, 2016) and in a variety of other serious behaviors forms (Agnew, 2015).

But even the adolescent period is likely to develop transitional dynamics (Poundall, Bogdanovica & Langley, 2018) that increase the adolescent's uncertainty (Agnew, 2006) in relation to his status (Francis, 2014) both inside and outside the family. It seems that puberty with changes in physical development or social conditions related to the relocation of the family from one area to another, the divorce of the parents, during the period where the children begin to exhibit a higher vulnerability toward behavioral problems. The aim of the research is to give the opportunity of exploration of these factors based on how adolescents perceive them.

2. Method

Through an explorative study is aimed to define the links between criminal behavior and drug abuse in four institutions, 3 detention centers, concretely two in the city of Tirana and one in Durres, and the juvenile prison in Kavaja. Data were collected during the February-May 2017 period. The overall objective of the study was to determine the prevalence between the use of juvenile substances and the analysis of the link between criminal behavior and drug use as perceived by the adolescent. However, we would like to emphasize that it is not intended to determine the link between substance use and criminal behavior.

Relating the research sample, it consisted of 71 juveniles, of whom 4% were female and 94% males.

Table 1. Demographic data for gender

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Girls	3	4.22	4.22	4.22
	Boys	68	94.4	94.4	100.0
	Total	71	100.0	100.0	

3. Instrument

Data collection was developed through a pre-encoded interview that allowed us to collect information about the following dimensions:

- The socio-demographic data of the studied population;
- Their legal status;
- The use of drugs before imprisonment, the impact on imprisonment and the connection with violence before and during imprisonment;
- Changes in obtaining it while in jail;
- The link between crime and drug use, its classification.

The history of criminality for every convict who took part in the study

Interviews' data were transcribed using the Excel program and then imported into the SPSS.18 statistical program.

4. Data analysis

Types of performed analyzes included descriptive statistics, mean, median-range, variance, max, min, standard deviation and percentage statistics.

5. Results

Referring to the statistics of the General Pennintentiary Directorate, it appears that the number of juveniles involved in criminal offenses has increased from year to year. Referring to the demographic data on the settlement, it results that juveniles belonging to urban areas have the highest proportion of juvenile prisoners.

Table 2. Demographic data

Location		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rural Areas	29	45.8	45.8	45.8
	Urban Areas	42	54.2	54.2	100.0
	Total	71	100.0	100.0	

Referring to the statistics of the General Penitentiary Directorate it is revealed that the number of juveniles involved in criminal offenses related to the use and use of narcotic drugs has increased.

Table 3. Number of juveniles in penal I.E.V., May 2017

Institution	Detained	Sentenced
Kavaja	19	21
Tirana	18	-
Durres	13	-

Source: General Penitentiary Directorate

Referring to statistics at the national level, the largest number of criminal offenses involving juveniles are in the two main cities of Tirana and Durres. This evidence was provided by juveniles serving the sentence or are under trial at the Institution of Execution of Criminal Decisions in Kavaja, which is the only penitentiary institution for juveniles in the Republic of Albania.

Table 4. Type of crimes committed by juveniles, 2015-2017

Types of crime	2015	2016	2017
Unauthorized possession of weapons	18	18	25
Injury	8	20	14
Trafficking and Use of Narcotic Substances	17	21	25
Theft	51	31	65
Weapon theft	9	12	6
Violent theft	19	18	8
Attempted Theft	2	-	6
Theft in collaboration	56	75	36
Murderer	10	3	10
Attempted Homicide	3	1	4
Rape of the graves	-	-	-
Sexual/homosexual relations with minors	3	9	8
Laundry of criminal offense products	1	-	-
Threat for not denouncing crime	2	-	-
Light criminal offenses	-	-	7

Source: General Penitentiary Directorate

This evidence can be argued by the fact that after the 1990s' there has been a large population shift in these two cities in almost from all Albanian areas. Referring to the general data, the majority of the juvenile are involved in criminal acts against property and less against the person. It is noted that the offenses committed by juveniles are mostly thefts, according to the Criminal Code classifications. In addition, the growth of juveniles who commit the criminal offense of narcotics distribution or use is of a great concern, especially in recent years.

6. The history of criminal behaviors

If we look at the data, it is revealed out that the theft and theft in co-operation are the two types of criminal offenses we have and the largest number including the juvenile. Another interesting fact worth discussing is the fact that the biggest number of juveniles in the last year was found to be unauthorized weapons and trafficking and use of narcotic drugs.

The prevalence of using narcotic substances referring to self-report questionnaire.

Referring to the data on the use of narcotic substances by juveniles by the type and age when they started using drugs, it results that tobacco and marijuana are among the two narcotic substances that are used in the highest percentage of juveniles and that the age of commencement

of use starts early, around 11-13 years, it is also reported that both alcohol and Crack were used by youth of this age.

Table 5. Type of drug used by age when experimenting for the first time

Descriptive Statistics						
Age		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11-13	Marijuana	39	.86	2.43	3.6500	.48050
	Alcohol	39	1.00	3.57	2.9330	.70125
	Tabacco	39	1.60	3.80	4.9000	.61171
	Krack	39	1.30	3.60	2.6700	.54396
	Valid N (listwise)	39				
14-16	Marijuana	32	1.00	3.47	2.4530	.70225
	Alcohol	32	1.50	3.70	2.2300	.51171
	Tabacco	32	1.70	3.30	1.9040	.41171
	Krack	32	1.00	3.50	1.6740	.53396
	Valid N (listwise)	32				

Whilst in the other 14- to 16-year groupage, marijuana and alcohol are seen as forms that are often experimented with by teens. From the data collected through self-report surveys, it is seen that juveniles have their own perception of risk factors related to the use of narcotic substances. Teens (21.7%) think that drug injection and use are real-risk behaviors. But even though they see it as threatening, among 62.7% of them consider substance use necessary, feeling helpless to withdraw from.

About 37.3% of adolescents think that substance use has had a detrimental effect on their education, their relationships with others (inhere referring mostly to relationships with family members which have been affected as a result of their problems with the use of narcotic substances such as tobacco, alcohol, marijuana) and everyday life.

They report that their daily routine changed dramatically after the drug use began, some of them reported that they were like fuzzy and were not able to provide much information about what they remembered in these stages. Another interesting report referring to the perception of juveniles on the possible causes of criminal offenses were to obtain or buy drugs (47.4%).

Table 6. Self-reports of minors on their perception of risk factors related to drug use

Risk factors connected to drug use	N	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Behaviors that put the minor at real risk (drug injecting/use)	71	21	1.07	1.07	1.4
Considers the use of substances a necessity	71	62	19.3	19.3	6.2
Harmful effects on education / relationships / everyday life	71	37	9.3	9.3	39.0
Has committed criminal offenses to provide/buy drugs	71	47	12.4	12.4	67.4
Has traded/exchanged drugs	71	45	11.8	11.8	81.4
Other drug-related behaviors (criminal behavior, fraud)	71	54	18.2	18.2	100.0

Of the juveniles involved in the study, 45.8% of them reported being involved in drug trading and drug trafficking. And 54.2% of them revealed their involvement in drug-related behaviors such as robbery and fraud.

Referring to the data on the level of education, it results that 5% of them did not have any school class, 14% had only completed elementary education, 68% had completed the 9-years secondary education and only 13% had begun secondary education although not all had completed it. Referring to the reasons that teens revealed on the possible causes of the school termination, it is shown that 13% of them were excluded, 10% reported being forced to leave school as for family problems and 12% associate school dropouts with economic problems.

While 30% relate the issue to emigration and they said they left school because they wanted to leave the country, 21% of juveniles bring about learning difficulties, 2% refer to peer conflicts and 8% to conflicts with teachers. Distance of school from juvenile dwelling is reported by 2% of them and health issues from the 2% of teens.

7. Conclusions

It's not easy to be a teenager in our country. It seems that the political situation of the last few years makes it easier to deal with narcotic substances. On the other hand, the family and school institutions are not playing their role properly in terms of support and non-abstinence of the teenager adrift. Two of the cities that represent the highest levels of criminal behavior involving juveniles are Tirana and Durrës which are the two largest centers with the largest number of population in the country. The criminal offenses that see as protagonist teens are theft and theft in collaboration followed by illegal weapons possession and trafficking and the use of narcotic drugs. Concerning is the fact that juveniles report that involvement in risky criminal behavior is related to their need for income from drugs.

Most of juveniles involved in criminal behavior comes mainly from urban areas. Their education is interrupted and adolescents find that there are some reasons where, with the highest percentage of emigration, they decide to leave school to migrate from their country into a European country for better life, learning difficulties as well as the exclusion for the unreasoned absences and economic problems, such as the inability to purchase books and clothing which are also presented as reasons for school interruption.

Adolescents have been in contact with marijuana, alcohol, tobacco, and other types of drugs very early between the 11-13 years old, a fact of great concern to every actor in our society, whether they are individuals or institutions. Teens admit that they find it very difficult to withdraw from drug use even though they appear to show a sort of awareness about the problems drugs have caused at a personal and interpersonal plan. These evidences should give more attention to the police, family, school and community structures in order to help youth for a better future.

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