



PRECURSOR FACTORS OF THE USE OF ALCOHOL AND PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES BY STUDENTS OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 23rd August 2017
Received in revised form
07th September, 2017
Accepted 29th October, 2017
Published online 12th November, 2017

Key Words:

Alcohol,
Drugs,
Behavior in Adolescence,
High school Students.

ABSTRACT

The use of psychoactive substances is a public health problem, considering the magnitude and diversity of aspects involved. Being in general adolescence the first contact, since it is the age group of greater vulnerability for experimentation and abusive use of these substances. Vulnerability, in general, is related to factors inherent to youth such as omnipotence, seeking new experiences, being accepted by the group, independence, family and social structure challenge, psychosocial and existential conflicts, and aspects related to the family. The present study investigated the precursor factors for the use of alcohol and other drugs by high school students of public school. The study was conducted with 139 high school students from a public school in the municipality of Imperatriz, state of Maranhão. The qualitative and quantitative approach were used. The data were collected through an adapted, self-applicable DUSI (Drug Use Screening Inventory) questionnaire already translated and validated in Brazil. The results showed that adolescents are consuming alcohol, drugs and psychoactive substances at an earlier age. However, they are still unaware of the real causes and consequences of the use of these substances for health.

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Citation: Aline S. Figueiredo, Leticia B. Silva and Adriana C. Freitas, 2017. "Precursor factors of the use of alcohol and psychoactive substances by students of a public school", *International Journal of Development Research*, 7, (11), 16525-16528.

INTRODUCTION

The consumption of psychoactive substances (PAS) is considered a serious public health problem, which has been generating intense concern in the current Brazilian scenario. The first contact usually occurs in adolescence and, at this stage, has been associated with school problems (absences, repetition, school dropout and learning difficulties), social (relationships with other users and involvement in illegal activities), personality traits (intolerance to frustration, disinhibition, aggressiveness and impulsivity), psychiatric disorders and family problems (Malbergier *et al.*, 2012). Adolescence is characterized by an intermediate stage of

human development, marked by physiological and psychological changes, where the child who becomes pubescent has to effect the mourning of the infant body, which now gives way to a sexualized body. It is a phase of psychic events marked by unavoidable suffering, coupled with the knowledge that he is walking inexorably toward adulthood (Oliveira and Machado, 2015). Because it is a phase in which the child becomes an adult, adolescence delimits the individual's potential for psychological growth. In addition to this change, a family frame also develops, characterizing a period of risk in which personality changes may occur (Garcia *et al.*, 2011). Because of the vulnerability of the adolescent, which is the result of numerous transformations of his development, he is exposed to many risks. In the study by Martins and Pillon (2008) where research on drug use and / or contact in adolescence reveals that it is during this stage of the

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life cycle that most consumers have their first contact with drugs. In this context, this group is considered a priority for research, as well as the elaboration of interventions aimed at prevention and promotion in health against drugs. The use of alcohol and other drugs has spread throughout all social classes, becoming a problem of great complexity and diversity for the fields of economics, politics, culture and health. The abusive consumption of these substances gives families, as the primary educational center, the challenge of providing guidance and combating the spread of this excessive consumption (Pereira *et al.*, 2016). Considering drug use by teenagers and how these can affect both emotional, psychic or social lives. The present study investigated the precursor factors for the use of alcohol and other drugs by high school students in the municipality of Imperatriz, Maranhão.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study outline

It is a cross-sectional descriptive research of applied nature, with quantitative character. The data collection was carried out at a state school in the city of Imperatriz, Midwest of Maranhão and distant 639 km from São Luís, capital of the State of Maranhão. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the municipality has a population of 234,546 inhabitants and a territorial area of 1,368,987 km and the Human Development Index (HDI) of the municipality is 0.731 (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2010). Regarding the ethical precepts, the participants of the research were clarified about the purposes of the study and gave their consent through the signing of the Term of Free and Clarified Assent (TFCA) of the parents or legal guardian and the Term of Free and Informed Commitment (TFIC), as recommended by Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council in Brazil.

Sample

A total of 139 adolescents, high school students from a state public school, from the municipality of Imperatriz, Maranhão, Brazil, participated in the study. The sample size was calculated according to the formula for cross-sectional studies with finite population based on the population mean estimate:

$$n = N \times \delta^2 \times \frac{(Z\alpha/2)^2}{(N-1)} \times E^2 + \delta^2 \times (Z\alpha/2)^2 \quad (1)$$

Where: n = sample size; $Z\alpha/2$ = critical value for the degree of confidence; δ = population standard deviation of the variable; E = standard error; N = finite population size. Were considered as parameters the confidence coefficient of 95% (1.96), the sample error of 10%.

The study execution followed the eligibility criteria: 1) to be a student regularly enrolled in the research institution; 2) be in high school; 3) have the age group between 14 and 19 years. Those who did not present the Term of Assent and the Term of Free and Informed Commitment and those with diagnosis of behavioral disorders were excluded from the study.

Data collect

The data were collected from January to December 2015, through an adapted DUSI (Drug Use Screening Inventory)

already translated and validated in Brazil (Micheli, 2000). The areas evaluated were: behavior; family system and relationship with friends in order to obtain the result proposed by the specific objectives. The instrument presents questions that seek to investigate the consumption of substances in the prior month to the interview and factors related to the use of these substances. The questionnaire assessed the frequency of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use (amphetamine, ecstasy, cocaine, crack, marijuana, hallucinogens, tranquilizers, anxiolytics, steroids, inhalants and solvents) in the prior thirty days to the interview. Some licit drugs were considered illicit (eg, amphetamines) when used illicitly (without a prescription or medical advice). The data were tabulated in Microsoft Excel 2016 software and in Avalio software. In what consisted of tabulation of all the questions and answers of adolescents, showing the results in tables.

RESULTS

The students who participated in the study were predominantly males (51.0%), were between 15 and 17 years old (84.1%), were in the first or second year of high school (74.0%). When questioned about behavioral characteristics, the behavior considered "normal" of an adolescent predominated, where 50% of the participants stated that they were stubborn, 80% said they were suspicious of other people. Among the students investigated, 36% said they had a difficult temperament and that they became easily irritated. Timidity was reported as a characteristic presented by 44% of the students. When asked how they spend their free time: alone or accompanied, 32% of those surveyed said they spend their free time alone. 24% of students usually isolate themselves from social interaction. Being 44% sensitive to criticism, where they have difficulties receiving criticism from friends and relatives. Table 1 shows the relationship of the family to the use of psychoactive substances, 20% of the first-year of morning shift adolescents answered yes, while the first-year of afternoon shift students had 5.3% of affirmative responses, and in the second year of morning shift percentage was 15.5% of affirmative answers, while in the second year of the afternoon shift it was 22.6%, starting in the third year in the morning shift the percentage was 20.8% of affirmative, while the third year in the afternoon shift showed a percentage of 25%. Still on the family relationship, when asked about the daily life of parents, 87.7% stated that parents spend most of their time away from home, it was also observed that 76% of these parents do not know what their children do outside home, tied to these results, 91.7% of these adolescents stated that their parents do not care or show no care for what the child does when they are away from home.

Table 1. Relationship of students' families with psychoactive substances

Variable		
Has anyone in your family used cocaine or marijuana in the past year?		
Morning shift		
	Yes (%)	No (%)
1st year	20,0	80,0
2nd year	15,5	84,5
3rd year	20,8	79,2
Afternoon shift		
	Yes (%)	No (%)
1st year	5,3	94,7
2nd year	22,6	77,4
3rd year	25,0	75,0

When questioned about the relationship with friends, it was identified that 56.5% have friends who use alcohol or other drugs regularly, with 21.7% selling or supplying drugs to other young people, and still 12.5% of these friends took alcohol or other drugs for parties in the last 12 months. It was also possible to identify that 16.7% of these friends had problems with the law in the last year (Table 2).

Table 2. Relationship of students' friends to drugs

Variable	Yes (%)	No (%)
Does a friend use alcohol or other drugs regularly?	56,5	43,5
Does a friend sell or supply drugs to other young people?	21,7	78,3
Have your friends taken drugs or alcohol for parties in the last 12 months?	12,5	87,2

DISCUSSION

Analyzing the results obtained, it can be seen that the population studied presented similar percentages to the studies already performed in this subject. In relation to age, the age group is compatible to the academic years they are attending, which is between the first and second year of high school. As for the behavioral characteristics, we can notice a standard style that is adopted by this public, without showing many changes for this age group. It is in this period that the individual identifies with the group of belonging, starting to adjust their behavior with the members of this group. If the members of this group are users, whether alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs, the greater the chances of experimenting with these substances leading to frequent use and abuse (Zeitoun *et al.*, 2012). These factors cannot be disregarded when discussing the use / abuse of psychoactive substances by adolescents, since they portray the context of social and family vulnerability in which these adolescents are, sometimes since children, and that ends up providing their involvement with the violence and the use of psychoactive substances (Moura *et al.*, 2016). On the other hand, it is observed that, in relation to the family context, more than half of these adolescents feel lack of parental care, a fact also that comes from the absence of these parents in the family. Faced with these results, one can emphasize the importance of the bond between parents and children, which in a way influence certain attitudes. When adolescents have a broken family base, they are more likely to become future drug users, which is due to family members' influence and lack of protection. In the study by Giacomozzi *et al.* (2012), the existence of a positive and significant connection between the use of alcohol and other drugs by family members and the use of alcohol and other drugs by adolescents was presented. Parents influence both the positive and negative use of alcohol and other drugs by adolescents. In turn, the teenager himself understands and recognizes the importance that the family has to prevent him / her from using / abusing alcohol and other drugs. Thus, it is understood the character of protection that the family can exert in the life of the subjects. The attitude and behavior of parents and siblings are paramount role models, including drug use. The family, by the role of inserting its members into the culture and being the institution of primary relations, influences the way in which the young people reacts to the wide range of drugs in society (Bernardy *et al.*, 2011).

Regarding relationships with friends, it is still the primary incentive to use drugs, since it is the public that adolescents

have more contacts, and also the environment in which these adolescents feel more "safe" to share their joys, fears, frustrations, etc. And also, most of the time, it is through these friends that the first contact with alcohol and tobacco occurs.

The use of some so-called licit drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco, is socially acceptable and legally permissible. However, the practice of using these drugs can facilitate the consumption of illicit drugs, such as marijuana and crack, and in these cases requires systematized attention, as it causes several undesirable interurrences, especially family crises, violence and hospitalizations. Moura *et al.* (2016) point out that the best way to approach the use of drugs by adolescents is to work on prevention. For it is necessary that health professionals enter the environments of adolescents' coexistence, with school being the main one. In relation to adolescence, it is done a reflection based on the results of this study that it is difficult for the adolescent to make a "controlled" use of any drug, whether it is licit or illicit, due to the very manifestations of age, which, because it is a phase of transition, of discoveries and the search for oneself, generates, in some, feelings like loneliness, anger, dissatisfaction, unhappiness, worry, anguish, anxiety, among others, besides the need to feel occupying a place in the world. Also, sometimes they feel misunderstood. All this makes it easier for the drug occupy a central place in the life of the subjects, causing their problems or feelings to be "silenced".

Conclusion

Among the different testimonies found, it was verified that the greatest alcohol and drug contact of the investigated adolescents happened largely within the family and mainly with the friends. The use of psychoactive substances by young people occurs earlier and earlier, and adolescents must be aware of the real consequences and the high chances of addiction that drugs can generate. In this context, it is necessary that the health professional, from the production of knowledge, seek to work in an interdisciplinary way and that is able to create strategies that can be effective in approaching this theme. Thus adolescents may be more prepared and knowledgeable about the subject, and even if third-party influence occurs, they will be able to say no to any kind of drug, whether licit or illicit.

Thanks

To the Foundation for Research Support and Scientific and Technological Development of Maranhão - FAPEMA for the financial support for the publication of this research and the Tutorial Education Program - PET for funding the scholarships to carry out the work.

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