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ENTERTAINMENT, SPIRITUALITY, FAMILY IN RELATION WITH INFLUENCE OF PEERS THE CONSUMPTION

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ABSTRACT: This study is an exploratory quantitative research examines the relationship between drug use in university students from one university in Bogota, Colombia and the influence of the peer group, around moderating effect of socio-cultural factors such as family relationships, entertainment and spirituality in consumption. The non-probabilistic sample was composed of 350 students. The 89.4% of the surveyed youth reported they used illicit drugs and 82.2% recognized the influence of the peers in this type of behavior. Higher intakes are presented in alcohol (91.1%) and tobacco (37.4%), the lowest rates of drugs consumption are for cocaine and amphetamines. Drug use among university students presents high rates, and the influence of groups among young people is critical for many of their behaviors. **DESCRIPTORS**: Family. Spirituality. Narcotics. Students .

ENTRETENIMIENTO, ESPIRITUALIDAD, FAMILIA Y SU RELACIÓN CON LA INFLUENCIA DE PARES EN EL CONSUMO

RESUMEN: El presente estudio fue una investigación de tipo exploratorio quantitativa. Examina la relación entre el uso de drogas en estudiantes universitarios de una universidad en Bogotá, Colombia y la influencia del grupo de pares, en torno al efecto moderador de factores socio-culturales como las relaciones familiares, el entretenimiento y la espiritualidad en dicho consumo. La muestra non probabilistica fue conformada por 350 estudiantes. El 89,4% de los jóvenes encuestados reportaran que consumen drogas ilícitas y el 82,2% aceptaran la influencia que los pares en este tipo de conductas. Los más altos consumos se presentan en alcohol con un 91,1% y tabaco con un 37,4%, las drogas de más bajo consumo son la cocaína y las anfetaminas. El consumo de drogas en estudiantes presenta índices elevados, y la influencia de los grupos entre los jóvenes es determinante de muchos de sus comportamientos.

DESCRIPTORES: Familia. Espiritualidad. Narcóticos. Estudiantes.

DIVERSÃO, ESPIRITUALIDADE, FAMÍLIA E SUA RELAÇÃO COM A INFLUÊNCIA DE AMIGOS E O CONSUMO

RESUMO: O presente estudo foi uma investigação do tipo exploratório quantitativo que examinou a relação entre o uso de drogas em estudantes universitários de uma universidade de Bogotá, Colômbia e a influência de grupo de amigos, em torno de fatores moderadores socioculturais como as relações familiares, a diversão e a espiritualidade no consumo de drogas. A amostra foi composta por 350 estudantes. Os 89,4% dos estudantes entrevistados relataram ter consumido drogas ilícitas e 82,2% reconheceram a influência do grupo de pares neste tipo de conduta. Os maiores índices de consumo apresentaram-se para o álcool (91,1%) e para o tabaco (37,4%) e as drogas menos consumidas foram a cocaína e as anfetaminas. O consumo de drogas em estudantes universitários apresentou índices elevados e a influência dos grupos de amigos foi um determinante dos comportamentos.

DESCRITORES: Familiares. Espiritualidade. Entorpecentes. Estudantes.

INTRODUCTION

The UNODC has stated that the illicit drug global market is worth 300 billion dollars. This institution has also suggested that if the illicit drug industry were a country, it would be in 21st place in terms of GDP, just behind Sweden.[1] This seems to exist in a context of growing social problems such as juvenile delinquency, family break-up, and domestic violence, among other social evils that, directly or indirectly, affect a country's youth. Powerful arguments can be put forward for the conceptualization of drug use, as part of a set of risky behaviors for health, including academic issues, which aggravate regional health conditions, as well as social, economic, and political welfare issues. Therefore, it seems clear that no one is immune to this social weakening, and concern about drug use behaviors among university students is rather clear, since it is believed that this group has the greatest productive potential for many developing countries.

CICAD's strategy, approved in 2010, adopted a series of initiatives or guidelines to address the region's challenges with regard to the drug scourge. Such strategy focuses on institutional strengthening, decrease in supply and demand, control measures, and international cooperation.[2]

As for the decrease in supply, it is suggested that member states address this issue as a priority, consequently ensuring a comprehensive and balanced approach to this global problem. This is based on the idea that drug abuse is a social problem that requires a multi-sectoral and multi--disciplinary approach.

This document also suggests that policies for the reduction of supply include essential, universal, and selective elements; prevention strategies; early intervention; treatment; rehabilitation and services of support; and recovery, which must be driven by the objective of health and welfare promotion for individuals, families, and communities as a means of reducing the negative effects of drug abuse as a whole.

The use of drugs among young people can be identified through a set of behaviors that include learning processes as well as cultural and socialization agents.[3] These agents, such as family, peers, spirituality, and the entertainment industry are some of the social institutions to which young people are exposed on a daily basis and which result in a cognitive influence of actual importance in the decision-making process.[4]

Cultural agents therefore have the potential to affect the traditional consumption process of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, similarly to social rules or practices that require the use of certain substances within a culture.[5]

A previous study on the influence of peers and the use of drugs was conducted in 2007 by an interdisciplinary group entitled "International Research and Capacity-Building of the Health Professionals Program Related to the Study of the Drug Issue in Latin America and the Caribbean."[6]

This study proposed the following research question: What are the moderating effects of family relations, spirituality, and entertainment on the relationship between the influence of peers and the use of drugs among university students?

METHOD

This is an empirical-analytical study based on experience with a quantitative analysis that aims to draw inferences about the essential relationships between the variables under study. Empirical data were collected from a survey carried out with a sample of population. It is classified as a correlational descriptive design, so in addition to characterizing each study and demographic variable of the sample, it looks for relationships between them; moreover, it is considered cross-sectional because it gathers data at a given point in time.

The sample of this study consisted of university students aged between 18 and 24 years old who attended a university in Bogotá, Colombia. A quota sample was used, with a sample size of 350 students selected from the human/social sciences and life sciences faculties. The sample of 350 students provided a coefficient greater than 0.8 for bivariate analyses. Because we had a sample of 350 individuals, we only used multivariate models (logistic regression of drug use, for instance) with fewer than 12 predictors to ensure n>20 per predictor. Indeed, the study obtained a sufficient significance (>0.8) to detect minor and medium effects in terms of correlation and regression coefficients. Predictive models obtained were: the influence of peer groups and spirituality, entertainment, and family ties as moderators; the interactions between peer pressure and moderators; as well as control variables (age, gender, faculty, and employment situation, for instance).

For data collection, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to participants aged between 18 and 24 years old, which took 20 to 30

minutes to complete. The questionnaire contained six sections and 86 questions. The different fields included questions about sociodemographic information (10 questions), influence of peers (six questions), family ties (25 questions), entertainment (nine questions), spirituality (26 questions) and the use of drugs (10 questions).

The scale of influence of the peer group used in this study consisted of six elements and inquired to what extent participants agree or disagree with statements about the influence of peers.[7]

The Family Relations Rate (FRR) is a scale composed of 25 items designed to measure the extent, seriousness, or magnitude of problems faced by family members in their relationship with other relatives. The Spiritual Involvement and Beliefs Scale (SIBS) is a questionnaire that contains 26 questions to assess one's involvement with spirituality.[8]

In order to assess students' frequency of seeking entertainment based on the number of parties attended, participants were asked an open question: how many parties did you attend in the last three months in which alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and amphetamines may have been present? A summative development scale was used to measure the two constructions of entertainment based on technological interaction. This scale was designed to assess the use of the Internet. Finally, a change was made in Questions 1 and 2 of the study.9 These questions were formulated by the World Health Organization in 2011. Only questions related to alcohol, tobacco, cocaine, marijuana, and amphetamines were selected.

An electronic database was created using SPSS software version 19.0. Sociodemographic information and data obtained with questionnaires were entered into a database and processed so as to delete inconsistent or incomplete information and avoid bias in further analysis.

A descriptive analysis of the population distribution was carried out by means of frequency distribution tables and participants' responses to the questionnaires based on central tendency and dispersion measures. The level of association between qualitative variables was analyzed by means of a chi-square test, and quantitative variables were analyzed by means of Spearman's rho according to the sample distribution (parametric or nonparametric), considering them as significant where $p>0.05$, for a confidence level of 95%. Then a logistic regression allowed us to find the variables that may predict the use of licit and illicit drugs.

The protocol was submitted for approval to the Research Ethics Board of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and to the Ethics Committee of the Social Sciences and Life/Health Sciences faculties in Bogotá, Colombia, 2012.

RESULTS

The sample included 350 students at a university in Bogotá, Colombia. They were aged between 18 and 24 years old, with a mean age of 19.76 years and a standard deviation of 1.67, which shows a low dispersion of data.

The highest percentage of participants was female, with 79.1% against 20.9% of men. As for where they lived, it was possible to observe that most participants (90.3%) live with their parents, as opposed to a minority who lives in dormitories. Sixty-seven point four percent of participants were single and 28.6% had a partner; very low percentages were found for divorce, common-law marriage, or marriage.

Considering the high percentage of single individuals compared to those who were in some kind of relationship, the percentage of students with children was low: 5.7% reporting having one or two children. As for variables that relate to the academic situation, participants who were following a life sciences course accounted for 90.9%, while students from the social/human sciences were at 9.1%; 95.1% of participants were studying full time at the university. In addition, most students who participated in the study were in the second year (third or fourth semester) of the course, whereas other semesters accounted for 10% to 15% of students respectively. With regard to the employment situation, only 9.4% of participants reported being actively employed.

The most used drugs in the last 12 months were alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis, with respective prevalence of 91.1%, 37.4%, and 12%. The most used drugs in the last three months were also alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis, in that order. The least used drugs in both the last 12 and three months were amphetamines, with a prevalence of 1.7% and 0.6% respectively. A cumulative percentage of 10.6% was found for individuals who reported having one or no friends who use psychoactive drugs, against a cumulative percentage of 89.4% for few and many friends who use psychoactive drugs.

Both the main variables (influence of peers

and use of licit or illicit drugs) and the moderating variables of behavior, family ties, entertainment and spirituality were assessed by means of a questionnaire that allowed for the further application of quantitative statistics and that presented qualitative responses of participants, as shown further on.

Students who participated in the study stated that they prefer a spiritual life, showing high levels in the report of values such as concern for others, participation in spiritual activities, having a purpose in life, seeking support in spirituality, and being thankful for what they have. However, for some items participants preferred not to choose a specific answer and chose a neutral term instead. With regard to family ties, a high percentage was found for participants who reported relying on their family, feeling supported, happy, and having no conflicts.

Entertainment activities that include the Internet are the most frequent, and among them we can highlight: check e-mails; watch music videos; and participate on social networks. Lower percentages were found for pornography or purchases.

Eighty-two point two percent of participants reported that their friends help them avoid problems, which indicates a high degree of influence of peers. Regarding the use of drugs in the last 12 months, the highest percentage was found for alcohol (91.1%) and tobacco (37.4%), whereas the least used drugs were cocaine and amphetamines. With regard to reports from the last three months, the pattern was the same, that is, alcohol and tobacco had the highest percentages.

Considering that variables were also assessed with numerical data, measures of central tendency that show the statistical patterns of these variables are presented below. Moreover, in order to establish a statistical relationship between them, the type of data distribution was assessed so as to decide which statistical data were to be used.

Descriptive data and the Kolmogorov–Smirnov hypothesis test allow us to conclude that the spirituality variable had a normal distribution, as opposed to the other variables, which were non-normal. Therefore, for the spirituality variable, parametric data were used, and nonparametric data were used for the remainder variables. However, taking into account that the correlation between all variables is presented below and that there was a non-normal variable, Spearman's rho was used.

On the other hand, Spearman's nonparametric correlation coefficient did not show high or significant correlations; therefore a comparison between means was conducted regarding the dependent variable of drug use, using the Mann–Whitney U test for nonparametric variables, and Student's t-test for spirituality (see Table 1).

Based on Table 1, where $\alpha=0.05$, we can conclude that, with a 95% confidence level, there were no significant differences between: the use of licit drugs in the last 12 months and non-interactive entertainment; the use of licit drugs in the last three and 12 months and the influence of peers; the use of illicit drugs in the last three and 12 months and family ties. Where $\alpha=0.05$, we can conclude that, with a 95% confidence level, there were significant differences between: the use of licit and illicit drugs in the last three and 12 months and spirituality; the use of licit and illicit drugs in the last three and 12 months and the number of parties attended in which drugs were used; the use of licit and illicit drugs in the last three and 12 months and interactive entertainment; the use of licit drugs in the last three months, illicit drugs in the last 12 months, and non-interactive entertainment; and the use of illicit drugs in the last three and 12 months and the influence of peers (see Table 1).

Table 1 - Pruebas de hipótesis de diferencia de medias. Bogotá-Colombia, 2012

Variable	Statistic	Family ties	Parties with consumption	Interactive entertainment	Non-interactive entertainment	Influence of peers	Statistic	Spirituality
Use of illicit drugs*	U Mann Whitney	3498	1570,5	3712	4063,5	4001	Mean comparison test	3,799
	Sig. Asintótica bilat.	0,01	-	0,02	0,097	0,075	Asymptotic sig. bilat.	-
Use of illicit drugs*	U Mann Whitney	5699	3687,5	5399	5320	5791	Mean comparison test	2,484
	Sig. asintótica bilat.	0,066	-	0,007	0,005	0,037	Asymptotic sig. bilat.	0,013
Use of licit drugs†	U Mann Whitney	4004	1284,5	2857	3402,5	4720,5	Mean comparison test	2,653
	Sig. asintótica bilat.	0,081	-	-	0,002	0,568	Asymptotic sig. bilat.	0,008
Use of illicit drugs†	U Mann Whitney	4322,5	2580,5	4009	4048	4157,5	Mean comparison test	3,124
		0,143	-	0,015	0,018	0,03	Asymptotic sig. bilat.	0,002

* In the last 12 months; † in the last three months

To answer whether there is a relationship between the influence of peers and the use of drugs, a chi-square test was performed for the four conditions. Thus, in Table 2, it is possible to observe a significant difference between the presence and absence of use of illicit drugs in both the last three and 12 months in relation to the influence of peers, which is assessed through the item "My friends help me avoid problems." At a significance level of 0.05, we conclude that there are significant differences between the use of illicit drugs (in the last three and 12 months) and the influence of peers. On the other hand, there were no significant differences between the use of licit drugs (in the last three and 12 months) and the influence of peers (see Table 2).

Table 2 - Chi-square test between the influence of peers and the use of drugs. Bogotá, Colombia, 2012

	Pearson's chi square	Degree of freedom	Asymptotic sig. bilat.
Use of licit drugs in the last 12 months/ Influence of peerss	3,899a	3	0,273
Use of illicit drugs in the last 12 months/ Influence of peers	13,567a	3	0,004
Use of licit drugs in the last 3 months/Influence of peers Influencia de pares	8,093a	6	0,231
Use of illicit drugs in the last 3 months/ Influence of peers	17,453a	6	0,008

The binary logistic regression expresses the probability of consumption or non-consumption of licit or illicit drugs during two periods of time (12 months and three months), based on certain sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, number of children, faculty and current semester, and employment situation; in addition to variables of the study such as the influence of peer group, family ties, spirituality, and entertainment, which are presumed to be relevant or influential (see Table 3).

It is possible to conclude with 95% confidence that: the variables that are significant for predicting the use of licit drugs in the last 12 months are gender, the number of friends who use drugs, and the degree of spirituality; the only significant variable for predicting the use of illicit drugs in the last 12 months is the number of friends who use drugs. There was insufficient evidence to accept the working hypothesis, that is, that the interaction between the variables of peers and the influence of entertainment based on

technological interaction predicts the use of illicit drugs.

As with the previous prediction, Table 3 shows us that the interaction between the same variables is not sufficiently significant to predict the use of illicit drugs in the last three months (see Table 3).

Table 3 - Interaction between peer group and the influence of entertainment based on technological interaction for predicting the use of illicit drugs in the last 12 months. Bogotá, Colombia, 2012

Variables in the equation	B	E.T.	Wald	Gl	Sig.	Exp(B)
Peers and the influence of entertainment based on technological interaction	-,041	,024	2,775	1	,096	,960
Constant	-1,579	,498	10,043	1	,002	,206

Table 4 allows us to conclude with a 95% confidence level that the number of friends who use drugs, entertainment based on technological interaction, and the degree of spirituality are significant variables for predicting the use of illicit drugs in the last three months.

Table 4 - Interaction between peer group and the influence of entertainment based on technological interaction for predicting the use of illicit drugs in the last three months. Bogotá, Colombia, 2012

Variables in the equation	B	E.T.	Wald	gl	Sig.	Exp(B)
Peers and the influence of entertainment based on technological interaction	-,032	,025	1,630	1	,202	,969
Constant	-1,704	,516	10,915	1	,001	,182

It is possible to conclude with a 95% confidence level that the relationship between the peer group and the influence of entertainment based on the number of parties attended may predict significantly the use of illicit drugs in the last 12 months, as shown in table 5.

Table 5 - Interaction between peer group and the influence of entertainment based on the number of parties attended for predicting the use of illicit drugs in the last 12 months. Bogotá, Colombia, 2012

Variables in the equation	B	E.T.	Wald	Gl	Sig.	Exp(B)
Peers and the influence of entertainment based on parties	,019	,004	17,308	1	,000	1,019
Constant	-1,579	,498	10,043	1	,002	,206

DISCUSIÓN

The use of drugs among our university students seems to be on the rise in recent years, as demonstrated by an article in the newspaper El País published on February 6th 2013, and confirmed by the Second Andean Epidemiological Study on Drug Consumption in the University Population of Colombia, which indicated that the use of LSD and inhalants has increased in recent years among this population.

It seems that the problem is increasingly serious and the resources to tackle it are dwindling. Universities, in the way they are conceived, must be places of cognitive experimentation, personal qualification, and professional growth. However, they have also become a place of new personal experiences, where students are influenced by friends, with new trends that imply "trying everything", "doing everything," and situations that parents, professors, and university staff cannot control.

Attendance at university means a social change for both students and parents. We believe that it is a place where students "are grown-ups" and they are treated as such. Maybe there is not a supervision that helps them understand what this new process implies, and very often this results in bewilderment, anxiety, and even depression. In some cases, it is when the figure of the "friend" shows up and offers the least painful and most satisfactory solution that students opt for quick solutions that do not imply thinking and effort. These are the moments when the use of certain substances occurs for the first time, and once they are in place, it is very difficult to get rid of them.

Broadly speaking, the sample composed of 350 university students was distributed uniformly in regard to age, with individuals aged between 18 and 24 years old, which is the most common age group that enters higher education in Colombia. As for gender, the highest percentage of participants was female, which can be explained by the high number of female students in the human/social sciences faculty, in addition to the recent phenomenon that has been taking place in Colombia, which sees a large number of women entering university. A significant percentage of participating students live with their families, which is somehow reflected in the assessment of this predictive variable for non-use of drugs.

Regarding data found by recent studies carried out by the Government of Colombia, the ICBF, DNE, UNODC, and CICAD-OEA, it is possible to observe in this study that licit drugs such as cigarettes and alcohol are being widely used by young adults in places like the university. However, regarding illicit drugs, which are increasingly being used in Colombia mostly by men, the percentage of users in this study was not high enough to confirm results found in the past.10

As opposed to what was found in a previous study carried out in Colombia, in which there was a more significant relationship between the influence of peers on the use rather than on the non-use of illicit drugs, this study shows that the use of illicit drugs is explained to a lesser extent by the influence of peers, and conversely, this relationship exists when the use of licit drugs is concerned.11

The use of drugs by young people increases when there are no strong family ties, higher degrees of spirituality, or engagement in entertainment, which is reflected in the high number of participants who reported preferring a more spiritual life, with high levels in the report of values such as concern for others, participation in spiritual activities, having a purpose in life, seeking support in spirituality and being thankful for what they have, relying on their family, feeling supported, happy, and with no conflicts. In addition to this, there is a very significant correlation between the non-use of licit or illicit drugs and the degree of spirituality, thus serving as a strong predictive factor for use.[12-13]

CONCLUSIONS

EOf the young people surveyed, 89.4% reported having a few or many friends who use illicit drugs and 82.2% accepted the influence exerted by peers for this type of behavior. We observed a preference for a spiritual life, with high levels in the report of values such as concern for others, participation in spiritual activities, having a purpose in life, seeking support in spirituality and being thankful for what they have. A high percentage was found for participants who reported relying on their families, and feeling supported, happy, and with no conflicts. Regarding the use of drugs, the highest percentage was found for alcohol (91.1%) and tobacco (37.4%), whereas the least used drugs were cocaine and amphetamines. After a comparison between means, no significant differences were found between the use of licit drugs in the last 12 months and non-interactive entertainment; the use of licit drugs in the last three and 12 months and influence of peers; or the use of illicit drugs in the last three and 12 months and family ties.

From the comparison of means, significant differences were found between the use of licit or illicit drugs in the last three and 12 months and spirituality, the number of parties attended in which drugs were used, interactive entertainment, non-interactive entertainment, and influence of peers. The prevalence of use of licit drugs is higher than that of illicit drugs in this population, and the use of the latter is not perceived as a result of the influence of peers. Gender, entertainment based on technological interaction, the number of friends who use drugs, and the degree of spirituality may predict the use of licit drugs, whereas the number of friends who use drugs and the degree of spirituality, as well as the relationship with peer group, and the influence of entertainment based on parties can be the most reliable predictors of illicit drug use.

On the other hand, this study managed to illustrate the relationship between social and cultural agents and the use of licit and illicit drugs. The family is the individual's first social group, where there may be a modeling of compulsive behavior that may lead the individual to other social groups that host these behaviors, such as school or peers, and trigger consumption behavior. Such behavior is supported and maintained by other agents such as entertainment and the exacerbated stimulation of freedom and independent decision-making, for which young people are not always prepared.

Limitations

The sampling technique is a limitation, because it does not allow for generalization of results to the whole university nor to the general population.

Recommendations

Based on this study, it is necessary to implement licit drug prevention programs, which should be conducted by means of workshops, conferences, and seminars, and also be included in the curricular content. Campaigns need to be carried out in order to disseminate information about the effects and diseases caused by these substances, at both the physical and emotional levels, because the fact that some drugs are licit has caused students to believe that they are harmless.

Universities should include educational policies in regard to the use of drugs, by means of activities, conferences, and other actions that reduce consumption and create health services. Work done between students is essential regarding the influence they have on each other, which can be either a protective or a risk factor. The participating university should carry on with this kind of study, more particularly with one that assesses risk factors other than the influence of peers on the use of illicit drugs. Strengthening emotional ties at a family level is important, because they are the foundation of an adequate psychic structuring of the individual. Family ties are a protective factor against the use of drugs; it is important to reinforce these ties so as to prevent students from using drugs.

Finally, it is important to search for national and local support for activities related to research; if more academic and political players are included, there can be a greater impact on the reduction of drug use. This must be understood as a social problem that results in public spending and deterioration in all fields; therefore, this issue must be addressed by everyone.

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Las Universidades deben incluir políticas educativas en relación al consumo de sustancias, generando actividades, conferencias y demás acciones que disminuyan el consumo y generen espacios de salud. Es fundamental el trabajo entre los estudiantes en relación a la influencia que cada uno de ellos ejercen en el otro, pues se observa que pueden ser un factor de protección o de riesgo. A la universidad participante del estudio, continuar con este tipo de investigaciones, específicamente una en la cual se evalué factores de riesgo diferentes a la influencia de pares en el uso de drogas ilícitas. Fortalecer los vínculos afectivos a nivel familiar, ya que estos son el cimiento para la adecuada estructuración psíquica del sujeto. Al observar que las relaciones familiares son un factor protector frente al uso de drogas, es importante reforzar dichos vínculos para que se impida que el estudiante caiga en el consumo de sustancias.

Buscar el apoyo nacional y distrital en actividades relacionadas con la investigación, ya que en la medida en que más actores académicos y políticos se incluyan, podemos lograr generar un mayor impacto en la disminución del consumo de drogas. Se debe entender que este es un problema social, que genera un gasto público y un deterioro en todas las áreas, lo cual debe ser abordado por todos.

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