

DETERMINANTS OF PEER SUPPORT ON THE POTENTIAL FOR DRUG ABUSE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Drug abuse among adolescents is a serious problem that has widespread negative impacts, including on physical and mental health, social relationships, and academic achievement. Factors contributing to drug abuse among adolescents include internal factors and environmental factors. An environment that has the potential to make it easy to fall prey to the influence of peers or family environment. The objective is to analyze the determinants of peer influence on the risk of drug abuse among adolescents. The population of high school and Islamic high school students, with a sample of 1,184 students from the population of high school and Islamic high school students in South Kalimantan. Modified instruments sourced from the National Narcotics Agency were collected using Google Forms through school principals and distributed simultaneously. The data was analyzed using Spearman's rho test. The Spearman Correlation Test results show that there is a relationship between the peer factor variable and the drug abuse variable, with a correlation coefficient of $r_s = -0.107$ and a significance level of $p=0.000$; α . The solution from this research finding needs to strengthen positive peer groups that are close to religious youth groups or close to sports and arts clubs.

Background

Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood. Changes and developments in physical, cognitive, and psychosocial aspects in adolescents are very rapid (WHO, 2024). Adolescents who are not ready for physical, cognitive, or psychosocial changes are very vulnerable to conditions that are detrimental to their health. One condition that is not conducive to health is the abuse of narcotics and illegal drugs. The WHO states that during adolescence, individuals begin to form behavioral patterns such as eating habits, physical activity, sexual activity, and even drug use (WHO, 2024). The World Drug Report 2018 from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found that 5.6 percent of the world's population (275 million people) aged 15-64 had used drugs at least once (CNN, 2019). A survey by the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) found that 2.3 million school and university students in Indonesia have used narcotics (CNN, 2019). This figure is equivalent to 3.2% of the population in these groups. Various factors can contribute to drug abuse, such as individual factors, substance factors, and environmental factors (Sumiati, et al., 2009). Peers are a very meaningful and influential environment in the behavior and lives

of adolescents. Peers have a significant influence in shaping adolescent behavior, including decisions related to drug use (Umam K, Prasetyo A., 2020). The results of research by Syarniah, et al. (2023) found that there are individual factors correlated with the risk of abuse of narcotics, psychotropic drugs, and addictive substances, where 4 (50%) of the 8 respondents in the high risk category for drug abuse stated that they used drugs because they wanted to be accepted by their peers. This fact shows that the potential of peers to influence adolescents at risk of falling into drug abuse is very important. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a specific in-depth study to analyze the determinants of peer factors on the risk of drug abuse among adolescents.

Methods

The research method was quantitative with an analytical survey design. The purpose of the study was to determine the determinants of peer influence on the risk of drug abuse among high school and Islamic high school students in South Kalimantan Province. The study involved adolescents aged 14 to 20 years in senior high schools and Islamic high schools in the province of South Kalimantan. The sample size was 1184. The sampling technique used was snowball sampling. The instrument was sourced from the National Narcotics Agency and modified by the researchers, then created on the *Google Forms platform*. Data collection was coordinated with the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of South Kalimantan Province and the Office of Education and Culture of South Kalimantan Province. The research data were analyzed using Spearman's rho test. This study has been declared ethically sound by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Banjarmasin Ministry of Health Polytechnic, number 205/KEPK-PKB/2025, dated April 16, 2025.

Result and Discussion

The results of the study include respondent characteristics, frequency distributions of each research variable, and analysis of peer determinants of drug abuse risk among adolescents.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics based on Gender

No	Sex	Frequensi (respondent)	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	524	44
2.	Female	660	56
	Total	1184	100

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics by Age

No	Age (years)	Frequensi (respondent)	Percentage (%)
1.	14	10	0,8
2.	15	312	2,64
3.	16	435	36,7
4.	17	364	30,7
5.	18	51	4,3
6.	19	11	0,9
7.	20	1	0,1
	Total	1184	100

Table 3. Peer Factor Analysis

No	Peer Factors	Frekuensi (respondent)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low	1007	85,05
2.	Middle	146	12,33
3.	Hight	31	2,62
Total		1184	100

Table 4. Analysis of the Risk of Drug Abuse among Adolescents

No	Risk of Drug Abuse	Frekuensi (respondent)	Percentage (%)
1.	No users	1180	99,66
2.	Drug Users	2	0,17
3.	Drug Dependency	2	0,17
Total		1184	100

Table 5. Analysis of Peer Determinants of the Risk of Drug Abuse in Adolescents

NO	Peer Factors	Risk of Drug Abuse					
		No users		Drug Users		Drug Dependency	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Low	1006	99,9	0	0	1	0,1
2.	Middle	145	99,3	1	0,7	0	0
3.	Hight	29	93,6	1	3,2	1	3,2
Uji Spearman rho $\rho = 0,000$; α , koefisien korelasi $r_s = 0,107$							

The results of the Spearman's rho correlation test show that there is a very weak relationship between peer factors and the risk of drug abuse among adolescents. The correlation coefficient value $r_s = 0.107$ and significance $\rho = 0.000$ indicate that the better the peers, the more likely there will be a decrease in the risk of drug abuse. Conversely, the more negative the peer environment, the more likely adolescents are to engage in drug abuse behavior. The strength of the relationship between these two variables is very weak, but because the value of $\rho < \alpha (0.05)$, this relationship is considered statistically significant.

Early adolescents are more likely to conform to the standards of their peers who reach the peak of antisocial standards. Adolescents tend to engage in negative behavior, which occurs in adolescents who are unsure of their social identity and tend to conform more to peers who appear during transitions at school and at home. The ability to critically analyze information and use it to control health determinants from social, economic, and environmental aspects, adolescents who are not involved in drug abuse overall have a positive relationship with parents, family members, and peers compared to drug abusers.

Good school access during adolescence can help strengthen social relationships at school by reinforcing self-identity with peers, relationships with family, and changes in the school situation that impact academic achievement.

Healthy relationships in social behavior correlate with success in school, whereas violent behavior and drug abuse will disrupt school performance, academic achievement, and hinder

the potential for success in life and the formation of a healthy character in students. Resilience to risky behavior is formed through the care of parents, family, peers, and teachers with healthy psychosocial support at school, which will encourage independence and competence through effective school involvement, thereby preventing maladaptive coping mechanisms such as drug abuse. Attachment theory as a social bond has been used to explain this relationship. Students' sense of secure emotional connection as the basis for psychological and social development, family, school, peer, and community connections, combined with positive socialization experiences, are sources of protection against drug abuse and antisocial behavior.

Imaine S, Alain J (2020) in a study conducted in France among children aged 15-18 years enrolled in school, stated that cigarette or marijuana consumption is influenced by relationships with peers and meetings with friends, especially on weekends, as well as in a protective school environment. The relationship between adolescent drug use and parental attitudes is two-way; drug use can be considered a stimulus that causes conflict and is also a consequence if adolescents associate with peers who support drug use. Research by Lara L. Watts¹ et al (2023) found that adolescents whose peers were more or less involved in illicit substance use tended to change their own illicit substance use over time. These findings support the literature that identifies peer influence processes as a factor contributing to adolescents' decisions to engage in illicit substance use. Significant heterogeneity was found between effect sizes across levels, suggesting that unstudied contextual, individual, and methodological factors may modify the effects of peer influence. Moderator analyses revealed significant differences between various illicit substance use behaviors and between studies using actual versus perceived peer measures; however, when assessed together, no moderators emerged as significant. This suggests that peer influence operates through complex processes across substance use behaviors, and that efforts to measure the overall magnitude of influence, the findings of this meta-analysis reveal a significant and strong positive effect for peer influence on adolescent substance use. Establishing definitively the impact of peer influence across substance use behaviors and measures of peer influence on substance use has significant implications for the prevention of substance use in adolescents.

It is difficult to separate the processes of peer selection and peer socialization. Peer selection is consistent with individuals choosing friends who are highly compatible with their own attitudes and behaviors (Trucco, 2020). The process of peer selection is also touched upon by social identity theory, which states that a fundamental aspect of psychosocial identity development is making judgments about the groups to which one belongs. In contrast, peer socialization describes an individual's decision to change their attitudes and behaviors to conform to social norms.

The differences in this study pose a challenge in research on peer influence, because the different processes of peer selection, namely adolescent substance use behavior encouraging the selection of peers who use illegal substances, and peer socialization, namely substance use behavior within peer groups contributing to substance use by adolescents, appear to be the same in cross-sectional designs. The results of the study reveal a significant positive effect related to the influence of peers on substance use among adolescents, showing that adolescents will change their substance use behavior to be similar to that of their peers. It is important to note that these findings also imply that target adolescents with peers who use illicit substances at low levels tend to reduce their illicit substance use behavior over time (Allen et al., 2022).

Identifying risk factors and protections against substance use during adolescence is critical to promoting prevention and intervention. Peer relationships with substance users are known to

be one of the stronger risk factors for adolescent substance use. A recent meta-analysis found that peer connectedness is a strong predictor of adolescent substance use (Cole et al., 2024).

Several other research institutions have shown that peer substance use is a strong predictor of individual substance use among adolescents (Henneberger et al., 2021; Torrejón-Guirado et al., 2023). Identifying factors that protect adolescents from substance use when their peers do so is imperative. A meta-analysis of 27 studies concluded that the effect of peer influence on individual substance use varies significantly depending on the type of substance and the extent of peer substance use actual use or perceived use (Watts et al., 2024).

Peer substance use is known to be one of the biggest risk factors for adolescent substance use (Giletta et al., 2021). A deep understanding of the factors that moderate the relationship between peer and individual substance use during adolescence is necessary to develop prevention and intervention strategies. Not only the influence of peers but also gender differences in patterns of substance use need to be discussed. Historically, substance use has been more prevalent among adolescent males, as it is considered masculine behavior and can be socially punished for girls (Cosma et al., 2022). However, recent findings show that this is shifting and, in some cases, substance use is more common among girls (Rodríguez-Ruiz et al., 2023a). The importance of building affective bonds and monitoring drug use with parental support reduces the effect of peers on regular alcohol use (Bo et al., 2023).

According to Santrock (2012), there are five types of peer status: 1) Popular children are teenagers who are often chosen as friends and are rarely disliked by their peers. 2) Average children are teenagers who receive average scores for being chosen positively or negatively by their peers. 3) Neglected children are rarely chosen as friends, but not because they are disliked by their peers. 4) Rejected children are rarely chosen as friends by anyone and are actively disliked by their peers. 5) Controversial children are often chosen as someone's best friend but are generally disliked by their peers. Popular teenagers have social skills that make them well-liked, with a tendency to provide reinforcement, listen, communicate openly, be enthusiastic, control negative emotions, care for others, and have self-confidence. On the other hand, students who are often rejected will experience serious adjustment disorders, with indicators such as aggression towards peers and lack of involvement in class participation. If students are more accepted, they will tend to participate more.

When adolescents are troubled by internal issues, family problems, and school problems, adolescents who think simplistically and short-term will be carried away by neglected children or rejected children, which will lead them to become controversial adolescents (controversial children) who are prone to abusing drugs as a short-term solution to their problems. Given this situation, it is necessary to strengthen positive peer groups that are close to religious youth groups or sports enthusiasts.

The results of this study further reinforce the findings of Syarniah, Nasrullah W., and Hammad (2023) that adolescents are at risk of drug abuse because they want to be accepted by their peers and when they have conflicts with their peers. The results of this study, which show a relationship between peers and the potential for drug abuse among adolescents, are in line with the theory proposed by Graham Blaine (in Suhertina, 2019) that one of the causes of drug use among adolescents is to follow the wishes of their friends in order to foster solidarity.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study found a relationship between peer determinants and the risk of drug abuse among adolescents. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that efforts be made to establish healthy youth groups that engage in positive, creative, innovative, and productive activities.

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