

The Role of Family Towards Current Adolescence Challenges: Drug Prevention and Living Without Drugs

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Abstract: Current trends and lifestyles of young adolescents have become a great challenge to the family institution to form an excellent adolescents and free from the influence of drugs. Thus, the main objective of this study was therefore to determine the level of the family relationships with an adolescences who have been involved in drugs. This research used quantitative method particularly cross sectional survey. A representative sample of 200 male adolescents, age between 13-21 years from Henry Gurney School was selected as respondents by using stratified random sampling. The results of the survey indicated 195 (97.5%) respondents participated in this study showed a moderate to a higher level of family relationship. Whereas, 5 (2.8%) respondents indicated lower relationships with their families. The findings has contributed a new empirical data compared with previous research that frequently tended to relate the poor relationship, lack of parental support, weak monitoring and conflict with adolescents involvement in negative activities which contributed to the collapse of morality, values and identity of younger generation. Findings suggest that family institutions should stressed the needs of the young generation today's to ensure that they are always on the right track to become a successful and free from drugs.

Key words: Family roles, human capital development, identity, adolescents, drugs, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Drug use among adolescents and young people has in recent decades become an increasing and global phenomenon. As in Malaysia and other countries in the world, young adolescents are often expected to become a leader in the nation's leadership of the future. These young people are often given attention by the government to be preserved and taught to become an excellent human capital to spearhead the country's leadership and development (Fauziah *et al.*, 2010).

At present, however, in the era of globalization and the borderless world too many challenges are faced by family institution in order to educate their adolescents. Involvement of young people with activities and unhealthy social ills such as crime to rob, murder, armed robbery and drug abuse is worrying many parties, particularly parents and families. In Malaysia, statistics reported by the National Anti-Drugs Agency indicated that the number of drug addicts among adolescents between aged of 13-24 years has increased. Comparison of 2 years data released in January 2009 and 2010 found that the rate of adolescent drug addicts has increased

dramatically. A total number of 2,822 young adolescent drug addicts were detected in January 2010 compared with 555 people involved in drugs recorded in January, 2009 (Drug Agency Report, 2010). These statistics provide strong evidence that these problems should be addressed immediately. A sharp rise in adolescents drug use activities has given a great challenge to the government in realizing the country's to form a Malaysia drug-free society by the year 2015 (Fauziah *et al.*, 2010). Adolescence is a period of considerable physical, cognitive and emotional development (Krishna and Jonathan, 2011).

According to Parke (2003), adolescence is a period often associated with a life full of challenges, especially when they faced with a conflict, crisis and stress in their family. Muuss (1996) in developmental theories view adolescence as a period of growth in which identity formation is addressed. According to Jessor and Jessor (1977), Problem-Behaviour Theory externalizing problems such as drug use are predicted by the interaction between protective and risk factors in the family system. Based on this theory, strong family attachment with good parent-child communication may attenuate the adverse

effect of non-intact family structure. Previous studies stating that there are various factors that commonly associated with drug activity among the younger generation. Eitle (2005) have identified that family as one of the most significant elements in understanding adolescent substance use. When families fail to fulfill the responsibility to their children everyone in the family will suffers. According to previous studies conducted by Brook and Gordon (2000) and Turner (1991), a higher levels of attachment, greater perceived support (Wills *et al.*, 2004; Harakeh *et al.*, 2005) more time spent with the family (Adlaf *et al.*, 1998) more frequent family celebrations (Stephenson *et al.*, 1996) and greater warmth (Aquilino and Supple, 2001) can protect against drug use among adolescents.

While existing research regarding substance use indicates that negative relationships such as high levels of family crisis and conflict are able to predict greater use (Aquilino and Supple, 2001; Hawkins *et al.*, 1992; Brook and Gordon, 2000). A study conducted by Mackay (2003) and Wills *et al.* (2004) found that those who have a strong, closer and more meaningful family ties escape from engaging in negative acts of social problems. Previous research has largely demonstrated that parental influences have also been found to be significant predictors of adolescents drug use (Svensson, 2000; Minke and Anderson, 2005) including the nature of parental supervision and monitoring that was influences many adolescents outcome (Stattin and Kerr, 2000; Stephen *et al.*, 2005; Dishion *et al.*, 1995; Forehand *et al.*, 1997), the quality of parental and child attachment (Farrell and White, 1998; Hawkins *et al.*, 1992) and the history of parental substance use (Conway *et al.*, 2003; Heath *et al.*, 1997; Windle, 2000). Strengthening the structure of families could significantly reduce the increased trend in adolescent drug use and other problem behaviours (Achenbach and Howell, 1993). Since, the importance of the family's role in shaping young adolescents who have an excellent in terms of their moral and identity, therefore this research was conducted to identify the relationship between families and adolescents that have been identified involved in drug use activities. The results of the studies is expected to be a new findings in the development of knowledge in the field of humanities and social sciences that has always deal with the challenges to develop the human capital towards excellence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research was conducted using cross-sectional survey and analyzed using descriptive analysis.

Table 1: Table interpretation of the mean score on the level of family relationships with the adolescent involved in drug use activities

Mean scores	Mean score interpretation
<0.20	Low level
2.01-3.00	Moderate level
3.01-4.00	High level

Descriptive analysis according to Piaw (2006) is a statistic used to describe the characteristics of the variables. The primary data was obtained through a survey using self-administered questionnaire. Family relationship scale (developed by the researchers) was used to measure family relationship with an adolescents. The scale contains a total of 10 items (both positive and negative items combined). The respondents were asked to respond on a four scale of measurement: Strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. From the analysis, it was identified that the Cronbach alpha of all constructs showed a high reliability for the set of questionnaires (0.82). Thus, the instrument used in this study showed a good level in terms of reliability. The level of family relationship with adolescents were measured based on the minimum score interpretation as shown in Table 1.

To accomplish this study, a total number of 200 respondents were chosen using stratified random sampling. Questionnaires were personally distributed to the adolescents aged between 13-21 years who were undergoing treatment in Henry Gurney School and later collected by counselors from the respective centers. This procedure has achieved a high response rate (100%) for this study. This is due to the high degree of cooperation between the respondents and the centers' counselors. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistic through SPSS Version 15.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Building a positive relationship between parent and adolescent is one that requires work and effort to make it strong and successful. Parenting is a tough job and maintaining close relationships and open communications helps to ensure parents and their children stay connected through all ages of their upbringing. Table 2 and 3 shows the result of the study indicates the level of family relationships and adolescents who are undergoing a rehabilitation program under the supervision of the prison. The results of the survey indicated that 134 (67%) respondents participated in this study showed a moderate to a higher level of family relationship, 61 (30.5%). Whereas, only five respondents (2.8%) indicated lower relationships with their families. These findings give the impression that adolescents who are involved in this study had a moderate relationship with their parents.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis results regarding family relationships with an adolescents involved in drug use activities

Items	Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
	-f (%)				
My family gave me a moral support to quit from drug addiction	7.5	9.5	44.0	39.0	3.14
My family is the cause of my problems of drug addiction	25.5	38.5	25.0	11.0	2.22
My family can hear and resolve my problem	2.0	20.5	53.5	24.0	3.00
My family members often visited me while in the detention center	13.5	20.0	39.5	27.0	2.80
I am highly dependent on my family for emotional support/spirit to quit from drug addiction	3.0	12.0	47.5	37.5	3.20
My family is my place to tell any problem when I feel sad	4.0	21.0	42.0	33.0	3.04
My family has different views of my needs	2.5	33.5	46.5	17.5	2.79
My family always reminded me that drugs are dangerous and should avoid being trapped	4.0	9.5	42.5	45.0	3.28
My parents are often busy does not care and frequently do not have time with me	21.0	42.5	25.0	11.5	2.27
I have a very close relationship with my family	5.0	12.5	38.0	44.5	3.22

Table 3: The level of family relationships with an adolescents involved in drug use activities

Level of family relationship	n = 200	Percentage	Mean±SD
Low (<2.00)	5	2.8	2.39±0.52
Moderate (2.01-3.00)	134	67.0	-
High (3.01-4.00)	61	30.5	-

These current findings give the impression that family issues are not the main factor to younger generation to involved in unhealthy activities such as drug use. This can be interpreted by the results of the survey findings which found 64% of adolescents agree and strongly agree that the family problem is not the underlying causes to encourage them to engage with drug use activities (item 2) (Table 4).

Although, the study showed that the majority (64%) of adolescents admitted that they have different views with their family about their needs and desires (item 7), however the overall findings showed that families have demonstrated a high level of moral support to an adolescents to quit from drug addiction activities (item 1). This can be illustrated by the results of the study that found 84.5% of adolescents agreed and strongly agreed that they were highly dependent on their families for spirit and emotional support (item 5). Further more, 75% acknowledged that the family is a place for them to describe their problem when they are in difficulties and sadness (item 6). Current findings also states that they are mostly family members (66.5%) used to visit them during the rehabilitation program under the supervision of the prison (item 4).

Dependence between the youth and family was also due to the establishment of good relations and collaboration between them. The study conducted found that nearly majority (82.5%) of adolescents admitted that they have very close relations with their family members (item 10). Present studies shows that most of them (63.5%) also rejected and do not agree with the statement saying that parents are often busy and do not have much time to spend with them (item 9). These findings refute the allegations and viewed against the results other previous studies which often associate loose family ties, dealing with conflict and crisis as one of the factors leading to

vulnerability and engagement of children with unhealthy social ills which include drug use (Lerner and Galambos, 1998; Mackay, 2003; Hawkins *et al.*, 1992; Hoffman and Johnson, 1998; Brook and Gordon, 2000).

The current findings of this study were to provide an early warning to family institution. This means that with better living conditions good relationship with the children away from the strain and marital conflict will not be escape from receiving the certainty that their children will be involved with activities that can be distorted in terms of values and morals in the organization of life due to involvement with unhealthy activities such as drug use. This study contradicts previous findings stating that a higher levels of attachment between parents and their children, greater perceived support (Wills *et al.*, 2004; Harakeh *et al.*, 2005) more time spent with the family (Adlaf *et al.*, 1998) more frequent family celebrations (Stephenson *et al.*, 1996) and greater warmth (Aquilino and Supple, 2001) can protect against drug use among adolescents.

Thus, in the modern world constantly expose to the challenges of life, parents should play a crucial role to ensure that the younger generation have a high moral standards and can live freely without drugs. Drug prevention programs is needed to strengthen protective factors among adolescents by teaching parents better family communication skills, developmentally appropriate discipline styles and other family management skills. Family, especially parents can be taught on how to increase their emotional, social, cognitive and material support.

For example, these supports can include their children's financial, health care and homework needs. Parents who participate into active role in their children's lives by talking to them about the dangers of drugs, monitoring their activities, getting to know their friends, understanding their problems and concerns, providing consistent rules and discipline and being involved in their learning and education may help in avoiding their children from engaging in unhealthy activities which can damage their future.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the majority of adolescents involved in drugs use activities showed a moderate degree of relationship to a higher level with their family. The findings has contributed new data regarding the topic studied compared with many previous research that often tended to relate that lack of parental support and poor relationship with adolescents involvement in negative activities which contributed to the collapse of morality, values, identity and moral of younger generation. Therefore to strengthen the values and identity of adolescents, the role of the family institution should always be concerned. The results of this study provide a significant implications to the family institution and suggest that they should not take for granted of the needs of young generation today's to ensure that they are always on the right track to become a successful and excellent in their life and living free from drugs.

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