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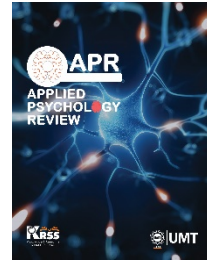
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Self-Esteem and Peer Pressure in Adolescent Males with Drug Abuse

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and peer pressure in drug abusing male adolescents. In the light of earlier literature, it was hypothesized that there will be high prevalence of peer pressure and low self-esteem in adolescent males with drug abuse and there will be a negative relation between self-esteem and peer pressure in drug abusing male adolescents. For this study, 155 male adolescents (10 to 19 years) were chosen through convenient sampling from different drug rehabilitation centers in Karachi. The participants belonged from madrasa and school. Proper ethical considerations were maintained and permissions were taken from different rehabilitations centers for data collection. Adolescent Self Esteem Questionnaire and Peer Pressure Scale were used for this study. Findings indicated high prevalence of low self-esteem (44%) and consecutively high incidence of peer pressure (73.5%) in adolescent males with drug abuse. Moreover, the study proved that a significant negative relationship exists between self-esteem and peer pressure among adolescent males with drug abuse ($r = -0.75$, $p = 0.05$). The study has implications for psychologists, counselors, educationist and government for managing self-esteem and peer pressure in students.

Keywords: adolescents, drug abuse, self-esteem, peer pressure, educational institution

Introduction

In many regions of the world, drug use and misuse is still a serious problem; however the scope of the problem varies widely depending on culture, access, and legislation (Spooner & Hetherington, 2005). In 2018, it was projected that around 270 million people used illegal drugs around the world (UNODC, 2021). Furthermore, 35.6 million of these users may be classified as "problem drug users" or having a drug use disorder.

Misuse, abuse, and addiction of drugs are extremely severe public-health issues. Because they all deal with the use of illegal substances as well

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as the misuse of legal drugs (such as tobacco, alcohol, and prescription medication), many individuals use these terms interchangeably (McLellan, 2017). There are numerous risk factors that can contribute to the development of substance abuse during adolescence. The risk factors for adolescent substance abuse are divided into three main categories: familial, societal, and individual (Whitesell et al., 2013). Peer pressure is one of the most prominent causes of addiction in adolescents.

Peer pressure refers to the powerful influence of changing in thoughts, behaviors, emotions and attitude of an individual by peers (Kirchler et al., 1993). According to many authors, peer pressure is identified to be the root cause for different incidents in youth like low self-esteem leading to drug use.

Self-esteem issues are often linked with peer pressure from external environment. In case of adolescents, the pressure generally comes from peers. Self-esteem also plays a major role in one's life as it may also lead to drug abuse as an easy way to escape.

According to the Rosenberg, self-esteem refers to a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards self (Rosenberg, 1965). High self-esteem is related to the pride in one's self where as low self-esteem is related to the low worth, low self-concept and shame.

Low self-esteem and peer pressure are the two variables of this research. Low self-esteem encompasses of negative self-evaluation and comparison with peers. Negative self-evaluation has been linked with the negative thoughts about self, disturb emotions and inappropriate behavior. When an individual has low self-esteem, they usually evaluate themselves negatively and start comparing themselves with others as they are negatively assessed by their peers for their objectives and abilities, they begin to rely on other people opinions for approval. They think they are not capable enough to stand with the rest of the people around them, or they are misfit in this society so eventually they start conforming in order to get appreciation and acceptance. This affects their thoughts, emotions and behaviors in a negative way. When they are critically evaluating and comparing themselves with their peers, their thought process becomes narrow. Moreover, they don't look up to a broader aspect and positivity. Instead, they are just focusing on the negativity around them. This results in disturbed emotions. They become upset, depressed and start feeling lonely.

So, they start finding people who suffer through similar situations so they don't feel alone anymore (Mohammadzadeh et al., [2018](#)).

At this stage, while they see their peers using drugs as an easy escape, they easily get easily attracted to it because it seems relatable to them. Once they find it fascinating, peers encourage them by telling their stories on how drug made their life easier and help them to get out of that stressful phase. Besides, when the peers start providing them with drugs, and as soon as the individual gets praise/acceptance from peers also the pleasure from drugs, it becomes easy for them to conform under the peer pressure (Nawi et al., [2021](#)).

Drug abuse is increasing in population rapidly. About 7.6 million people are taking drugs in Pakistan out of which 78% is youth. There are various causes behind it among which we are studying the impact of peer pressure and low self-esteem (Fatima, [2021](#)). The study is conducted to find out how peer pressure can get an individual involve in taking drugs and is the self-esteem of these individuals is low? The findings will provide information to the society about the influence of peer pressure and low self-esteem in individuals and how they can address this cause to control the increasing rate of drugs in the population.

The purpose of this research was to find the relationship of peer pressure with self-esteem in drug-abusing individuals. So, the findings will help society see how peer pressure affects the self-esteem of drug-abusing individuals, this study also shows why individuals who are going through low self-esteem look towards their peers and get involved in these types of activities easily instead of reaching out for appropriate help (Bartsch et al., [2017](#)). This research will provide information to society regarding the individuals who become the victim of terrible peer influence who led them towards drugs abuse. This research can be beneficial for people who want to study the same variables in future. This research will also be useful for government and non-government institutes and organizations as it reveals the current status of psychosocial influence of peer pressure and self-esteem which is leading our generation towards drug abuse. They can develop programs and strategies how to cope up with this alarming condition.

Objectives

RO1: To explore the prevalence of peer pressure in adolescent males using drugs.

RO2: To explore the prevalence of low self-esteem in adolescent males using drugs.

RO3: To find the negative relationship between self-esteem and peer pressure in adolescent males using drugs.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a prevalence of peer pressure in adolescent males using drugs.

H2: There will be a prevalence of low self-esteem in adolescent males using drugs.

H3: There will be a negative relationship between self-esteem and peer pressure in adolescent males using drugs.

Method

Research Design

The study follows quantitative correlation survey based research design.

Participants

The target population selected for this study through convenience sampling technique were male adolescents aged from 10 to 19 years ($N = 155$). The data was collected through different drug addiction and rehabilitation centers based in Karachi. Participants belonged to different educational backgrounds which included school and madrasa. The participants with low self-esteem and high peer pressure were included and the participants with high self-esteem and low peer pressure were excluded from the research.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Main Demographics Variables (N= 155)

Demographics Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	155	100
Marital Status		
Single	155	100
Educational Background		
School	114	73.5
Madrasa	37	23.87

Demographics Variables	<i>f</i>	%
No education	4	2.5

This Table shows the demographics of the participants. 155 participants were male adolescents and were single. The table also shows the frequency and percentage of the participants on the basis of their education. Majority lied under 73.5% which were school students, while 23.87% were madrasa students and 2.5% were uneducated.

Measures

Peer Pressure Scale (Essen, 2002)

“Peer Pressure Scale” is used to measure the variable peer pressure in this research. Developed by Kiran-Esen ([2012](#)), the Peer Pressure Scale consists of 34 items. It is a five-point Likert scale and it’s used with the ratings of “*never*” (which is 1 point), “*infrequently*” (which is 2 points), “*sometimes*” (which is 3 points), “*frequently*” (which is 4 points), and “*always*” (which is 5 points). The bottommost possible score of this scale can be 34 and the highest possible score can be 170. The lower scores indicate the low levels of peer pressure whereas, the higher scores indicate the high levels of peer pressure. To view structure validity of scale, factor analysis was applied. Though factor analysis, it was found that 19/34 items were combined in the first factor and 15/34 items were combined in the second factor (Kiran-Esen, 2002). 40.527% was the total variance which was explained with the help of two factors. The consistency correlation coefficient for all the 34 items was 0.90. Through test-retest method, the stability coefficient for the whole scale was found which came 0.82. The internal consistency coefficient of this scale was 0.93.

Adolescent Self Esteem Questionnaire (Rosenberg, 1965)

To measure the variable of self-esteem, “Adolescent Self Esteem Questionnaire” is used. Developed by Morris Rosenberg ([1965](#)), it’s a 13-item measure of global self-esteem. The Adolescent Self-Esteem Questionnaire includes negative and positive worded items. These items are based on a 5-point Likert scale. Item scores were summed, with positive worded items reverse coded, to determine an individual’s self-esteem score. A higher score imitates higher levels of self-esteem. The internal consistency coefficient of this questionnaire is 0.91. Moreover, the reliability is 0.86.

Procedure and Ethical Considerations

According to American Psychological Association (APA) code of conduct, the authors' permission to use the scales was obtained through email. However, permission from the administrations of rehabilitations was also taken through a letter. The assurance was given to the subjects that the information provided by them will remain confidential. At the beginning consent was attained from every participant by means of a standard consent form. Participants were not bound to be the part of the study; they had given the right to withdraw from the study at any time when they feel. All the participants were educated about the nature and the purpose of the study to protect any biasness that can contaminate the results. The data for this research was conducted from different rehabilitation centers of Karachi. The permission was taken from the administration of all the centers where data was collected. Questionnaires based on self-esteem and peer pressure were used. Research was conducted in a proper sitting area where there was least distraction. Participants of the study were properly debriefed before attempting the survey and a consent form was also signed by them which include the purpose of study, statement regarding maintenance of confidentiality of the participants. Participants were given the right to leave the research survey any time they want to. Every item of the questionnaire was explained to every participant and after that their responses were recorded. After conducting research, a session was conducted again to check if any of the statements have triggered some sort of distress in the participants which needs to be catered.

Results

Data were analyzed through the IBM SPSS Statistics. The tests which were used to attain the objectives of the study were Pearson's product moment correlation, Simple Linear Regression Analysis, ANOVA analysis and Independent Sample t-test.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Reliability Coefficient, Univariate Normality of Study Variables (N=155)

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Self Esteem	155	.92	22.27	9.83
Peer Pressure	155	.96	130.74	30.39

This table shows the number of participants, Cronbach's alpha, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the variables utilized in this present study. The table also indicates that all the data is normally distributed and the alpha reliabilities of all scales fall into the acceptable range.

Table 3

Prevalence of Low Self-Esteem and High Peer Pressure in Male Adolescents using Drugs (N=155)

Variables	%
1.Self-Esteem	44
2.Peer Pressure	73

Table shows the prevalence percentage of two variables low self-esteem and high peer pressure which are used in this study. According to the table, there's a high prevalence of peer pressure (73%) in drug-abusing adolescents. Also, the prevalence of low self-esteem is high which is 44%. While making a comparison of it, high peer pressure impacts the low self-esteem in drug-abusing adolescents.

Table 4

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation for Self-Esteem and Peer Pressure in Adolescent Males Using Drugs

Variables	1	2
1.Self-Esteem	-	-.75**
2. Peer Pressure		-

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

This table shows the product moment correlation for low self-esteem and high peer pressure in drug abusing individuals identified in the study. It shows that low self-esteem has a strong negative strong correlation with peer pressure ($r = -.754$) which is significant at 0.01 level.

Table 5

Regression Coefficients of Peer Pressure

Variable	B	S.E	β	t	p
(Constant)	54.205	2.305		23.513	.000
Peer Pressure	-.244	.017	-.754	-14.217	.000
R ²	0.569**				

This table shows the regression coefficients of peer pressure. It shows the value of standardized coefficient beta which is $-.754$. It indicates the significant strong negative relationship between low self-esteem and high peer pressure.

Table 6

Independent Sample t-test for Self-Esteem and Peer Pressure in Adolescent Male Students of school and madrasa students using drugs (N=155)

Variables	E.D	M	SD	t(153)	p	95% CI	
						LL	UL
Self-Esteem	Madrasa	-3.73461	2.11487	-1.76	.080	-7.92263	.45341
	School	-3.73461	1.92140				
Peer Pressure	Madrasa	13.62722	6.38238	2.13	.035	.98837	26.26608
	School	13.62722	6.20481				

Table compares the self-esteem and peer pressure of madrasa and school going adolescents. However, a significant difference has been found in the self-esteem and peer pressure of madrasa and school students. Results indicated that madrasa students have lower self-esteem and higher peer pressure as compared to the school going students. Though, both the categories are suffering from low self-esteem and high peer pressure in overall result of the study.

Discussion

The discussion of the results is indicated in the previous chapter. The link between the hypotheses and results was generated through analysis. It also highlights the limitations that were faced during the course of the study along with the recommendations that were made. Our current study aimed to explore the psychological input of drug abuse and its concurred relationship with peer pressure and self-esteem.

Around the world, drug addiction is a major issue. A high number of young people are abusing drugs and losing their lives as a result. Such an addiction is harmful to one's mental, physical, and emotional well-being (Keane, [2002](#)). Drug abuse is a prevailed social evil that eats up the marginalized youth of any society (Coumans & Spreen, [2002](#)). Drug abuse leads to hazardous physical and psychological complications (Peckham,

2022). Low self-esteem and peer pressure have often been exclusively linked with drug abusers and specifically during the period of adolescence (Mujiyati & Adiputra, 2020). Hence the current study provided indigenous data on these variables.

Our first hypothesis assumed that the self-esteem of adolescent males using drugs will be highly affected and they will have a collectively lower incidence of self-esteem among their population in different rehabilitation centers in Karachi. Table 3 indicates that there is a relatively higher incidence of low self-esteem at a value of 44% in the total population of 155 participants. This value indicates self-esteem is an adjunct feature of drug abusers' individuals and has a greater impact.

Previous literature also points in the same direction as our generated results. A study was conducted by Akhtar (2013) to see the relationship between Self-Esteem and Substance Use among adults aged 20-30. A total of 240 people were chosen from different cities and educational institutions in Karachi, Pakistan. For each drug, 80 people were chosen. Low self-esteem was associated with high substance use, while high self-esteem was associated with lower substance use. The findings support the hypothesis. Hence proves self-esteem is one of the important factors which lead to drug consumption.

Henceforth it can be stated that self-esteem is an important psychological construct when it comes to the physical health and addiction trends in individuals. A person suffering from low esteem can be easily influenced and involved in drug consumption.

The second hypothesis aimed to investigate the higher prevalence of peer pressure in adolescent males using drugs. Our result in Table 3 indicates that there is a high incidence of peer pressure observable in adolescent males using drugs (73%).

Peer pressure and conformity are factors that are predominant in the life of adolescents. Giving in to the request of friends and trying to merge in the social circle is often a contributing factor in certain deviant behaviors carried out by the youth. A study was conducted by (Foo et al., 2012) which examined the significance of peer pressure in adolescent males using drugs. According to the findings of the study peer pressure plays a vital role in forming drug abuse habits or it can lead a person towards drug use easily and is one of the main factors leading to drug abuse.

The third hypothesis states that there will be a negative relationship between self-esteem and peer pressure in adolescent males using drugs. Table 4 indicates Pearson's product-moment correlation for self-esteem and peer pressure in adolescent males using drugs as having a strong negative correlation, which shows that self-esteem and peer pressure are linked and produce a greater impact on drug-abusing tendencies.

Self-esteem which comprises negative evaluation by self as well as others can be a leading factor in conforming to the norms and subjugating to the will of others. Researches indicate that people who lack self-belief are often the ones who conform to their environment B.C, (2012). The adolescent period is often marked by emotional turmoil and hormonal changes (Larson et al., [2002](#)) due to which impressionistic interactions often leave a mark on the young generation. Drugs taking behavior has always been glamorized and highlighted in media and social media, due to which youth often looks at smoking and drinking as a sign of confidence and maturity. Drug abuse can have severe effects on the physical and mental health of an individual.

The predictive role of peer pressure has also been established in the current study, Table 5 indicated that the regression coefficient is significant at 0.05 level, with peer pressure causing 57% variance in the values of self-esteem for adolescent males using drugs this further proves our 3rd hypothesis, framing peer pressure as a solid indicator for low self-esteem eventually leading towards deviancy and drug consumption.

Our study further additionally analyzed the demographic information to check the impact of environmental variables on the self-esteem and peer pressure of drug abusers. Result of Table 6 indicates that our t-test values were significant at 0.05 levels for both the variables. Independent sample T-test for self-esteem indicated. Similar difference was observed for pressure. The results indicate that individuals going to madrasa have lower self-esteem and high peer pressure as compared to school-going students.

A study conducted by Baldry ([2004](#)); Gladstone et al. ([2006](#)); Klomek et al., ([2008](#)) showed that violence at educational institutes results in low self-esteem among students.

According to the findings of this research, Madrassa students have low self-esteem and higher peer pressure as compared to the students who went to school.

The findings of this study are that adolescents who have low self-esteem have higher peer pressure among them and vice versa. The findings show that the individuals who are going to madrasa have low self-esteem and high peer pressure as compared to the adolescents who go to other educational institutes. The explanation for this can be that in Madrasa students usually face violence and bullying more as compared to schools and colleges, therefore their self-esteem is shattered and they are easily convinced by their peers to escape the situation by indulging in unacceptable and harmful behaviors like consuming drugs. The results indicate a strong negative correlation between the two variables (self-esteem and peer pressure) which means if one variable will increase other will decrease by its impact. Hence hypotheses are proved by the results. There is an impact of peer pressure on the self-esteem of adolescent males using drugs.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the present study that low self-esteem and high peer pressure is one of the leading factor towards drug abusing individuals. Drugs have adverse effect on individual's physiological as well as psychological wellbeing. The research shows that individuals with low self-esteem and with high peer pressure are most likely to be a victim of drug abuse. They tend to have lower self-esteem and are influenced by peers. Individuals who are influenced by peers have low self-esteem and are victim of drug addictions. They have negative self-worth and self-esteem hence involved into drugs abuse.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

The scope of the current study was limited to the family backgrounds and social classes as the participants who were the part of our study came from a variety of social and ethnic origins, as well as educational backgrounds, since some have never attended school and were street children, while others are enrolled in schools and madrassas. The sample size was minimal, limiting the generalizability of the findings to a wider range of groups. Moreover, due to limits imposed by Covid-19, we were unable to obtain responses from a variety of drug centers within the project's timeframes, limiting us to only a few institutions. Also, there was gender and age constraints as we only chose males adolescent as our participants and age range from 10-19 years, which limits the application of this study to other age groups. This study did not consider the familial environment,

which is one of the primary causes of low self-esteem and adolescent drug use as an escape. Research was conducted only in Karachi although it's a big city but it bounds the population. The size of the population sample can be increased to encompass a wider range of people, making the results more reliable. Also, researchers should conduct home and street surveys since there are many teenagers who take drugs for the same reason but are never counted as they are difficult to approach. Researchers should consider the family environment, as it is one of the key factors that drive individuals to use drugs. In order to raise awareness and to deal better with such occurrences, new counsellors and psychologists should be hired in schools and institutions. As well as, parental counselling sessions should be scheduled and made mandatory for all parents to attend in order to assist them in raising their children better. Researchers should look at people of various ethnicities and genders, as there are many females who take drugs these days, but they were not the part of current study.

Implications

This research can be used as a foundation for future researches, and other researchers can add to it and modify it. Current research can be used in educational institutions to revise curriculum and extracurricular activities, as well as raise student understanding of the importance of self-esteem and the adverse effects of drugs. Also, it can be used to raise parental awareness and teach them how to raise their children. Moreover, the government can utilize these statistics to amend and improve their policies and take legal action against those abusing drugs. Doctors and psychologists might utilize it in rehabilitation institutions to help drug users get better treatment.

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