

CONTEMPORARY CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS OF YOUTH DRUG ABUSE IN GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA

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- Abstract-

This study investigated the contributory factors of drug abuse among youths and other juvenile delinquencies in Gauteng. The study made use of purposefully selected respondents from the South African Police Service and Juvenile secure care centres located across Gauteng. While primary data were obtained from the respondents through survey instrument, secondary data were extracted from statistical reports and documents made available from various centres. Among others, socio economic condition; familial structure and relationship; familial problems; community and neighbourhood context; parenting style; non-completion of education; gender; race and age of juvenile were identified as background factors that contribute to drug abuse. The findings of this study corroborate various theoretical foreground of differential opportunity, strain, differential association, and social disorganisation where deviant behaviour is intricately linked with socio economic conditions, social interaction with deviant groups and fast changes in industrialization and urbanization.

Keywords: *Social Problems, Delinquency, Drug Abuse, South Africa*

JEL Classification: R50, Z18

1. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency was relatively unknown as a distinct area of academic interest to most scholars in sociology and related disciplines until the late nineteenth century. Prior to that time, juvenile offenders were considered culpable of certain crimes or punished like adults in the criminal justice system without any special consideration of their age (Obioha & Nthabi, 2011:75). Little distinction was made between adult and juvenile offenders. Although judges considered the age of an offender when deciding on punishment, both adults and children were eligible for prison, corporal punishment, and even the death penalty. In fact, children were treated with extreme cruelty at home, at school, and by the law (Siegel, 2002:13).

Juvenile delinquency in South Africa is a cause for concern hence the development of statutory framework such as Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill 1998, Child Justice Act, 2008 (Act No. 75 of 2008), Children`s Act, 2005 (Act No. 38 of 2005). In South Africa, especially in Gauteng Province, juvenile delinquency and associated drug problems abound (Masombuka, 2013:131; Machethe, 2015; Maupa, 2015), as the phenomenon of alcohol and drug abuse among juveniles has been escalating worldwide since past decade, especially in urban areas (Wagner, 1996:375). Urban residence like Pretoria had been cited as a confounding factor in some studies of the relationship between substance use and violence, since these studies used samples drawn from high-density urban areas (Wagner, 1996:375). The high rates of alcohol and drug abuse incidents reported among the youth in Pretoria, especially in Marabastad and Sunnyside during the past ten (10) years and their contributory factors, which has spiral influence on delinquency among children is the main problem of this study. More recently, the alarming figure of youth using the illicit drug called Nyaope in Atteridgeville, west of Pretoria has been in the headlines where more than half of the youths in the township are alleged to be using use it (Pretoria News 2013). According to South African Police Service (SAPS) office Sunnyside, a total of 83 children were arrested over the period of a year (January to December 2011), out of which a majority of those children 51 (61.5%) were arrested for Schedule 1¹

¹Schedule 1 offences are less serious offences such as common assault, shoplifting, statutory rape and *crimen injuria*.

offences, 26 (31.3%) for Schedule 2² offences, and 6 (7.2%) arrested for Schedule 3³ offences.

The police statistics also give a disturbing insight into the scale of drug-related crime. In South Africa, a total of 95 690 of such crimes were committed from April 2005 to March 2006, an increase of 11 691 on the previous year April 2004 to March 2005 (13/3/2013). This drug problem as indicated over a decade ago does not seem to be improving based on recent documentations. In the more recent time and specifically, possession of drug and drug related offence was among top six offences committed by children in Gauteng Proteam Secure Care Centre. Furthermore, approximately 120 children between the age of 14 and 18 who are in conflict with the law are in custody at Water Sisulu Secure Care Centre and Proteam Secure Care Centre (Maupa, 2015:4). The above mentioned statistics do not include offenders who were released on bail into their parents` custody. This portrays a disturbing scenario of drug, alcohol and other juvenile delinquency problems in Gauteng, which needs urgent attention to tackle and deal with the multiple menace by respective role players. Against this background, this study is positioned towards establishing the missing link with regard to factors that influence alcohol and drug abuse among the juveniles/youth, which will lead to achieving the desired drug free youths and society in Gauteng.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This present study made use of a combination of theoretical postulations in explaining drug abuse and other delinquencies among juveniles and youth in the society. These include, sub-culture theory, differential association theory and social disorganization theory. The *sub-culture theory* assumes that human beings are invariably products of their environment and social background. According to sub-culture theory as propounded by Albert Cohen (1955), the influence of sub-culture manifests where lower class boys rejected the standards of achieving set goals by middle class. In line with this theory, the lower class boys form their own values, which in most cases lead to delinquent behaviour, including drug abuse. While those from high resource base families exhibit values that are acceptable standard, those from low class families invariably get involved in other

² Schedule 2 offences are serious offences such as housebreaking and theft, common robbery and assault Grievous Bodily Harm.

³ Schedule 3 offences are more serious offences such as robbery with aggravating circumstances, murder, rape and drug trafficking.

activities and behaviours that earn them acceptance and popularity in their specific deviant sub-culture (Obioha and Nthabi, 2011:167; Obioha, 2009). In other words, instead of behaving in conformity to the societal standard, those individuals behave according to the standard of their contra-culture or sub-culture which is in disharmony with the mainstream societal values. The provision of *sub-culture theory* is similar to *Strain theories*, in that *Strain theories*, as discussed by Glanz (1994:25) proposed that a sense of failure, or anticipation of failure, is conducive to involvement in juvenile delinquency.

Differential Association Theory as propounded by Sutherland, though with modifications in recent literature advanced that criminal behaviour is learned through social interaction, especially within the primary groups. Primary groups are the people with whom an individual has intimate and frequent face-to-face interaction. They include the individual's parents, spouse, children, close peers, colleagues, and most significant others. Sutherland emphasized that children and other individuals usually tend to accept those definitions of behaviour that they encounter most often in their primary group interaction, irrespective of whether the behaviour is legal or not (Obioha and Nthabi, 2011:167). The theory clearly assumes that deviance, including drug abuse among youth is acquired through a learning process, where potential delinquent is in constant interaction with deviant groups compared with his or her less interaction with non deviant groups. It further argues that individuals learn to be deviants through exposure to more definitions of what behaviour is acceptable through illegal than to those that conform to the law (Lauer, 1998) quoted by (Obioha and Nthabi, 2011).

Similarly, *Ecological approach* as defined by Shaw and McKay (1942) in Obioha and Nthabi (2011), indicates that the nearer one lives to the central business district, the greater the rate of delinquency and the farther one lives from the centre of the city the lower the rate of delinquency. This emanates from the assumption that decline in efficiency of institutional and informal social control increases with the fast changes in industrialization and urbanization (Bezuidenhout, 2004: 88). Shaw and McKay confined their ecological approach to the concept of social disorganization. By using *Social Disorganization Theory*, Shaw and McKay demonstrated that social disorganization is prevalent in the urban areas, specifically the slum and areas of transition, where migrants can only afford to live. These are characterized by a high rate of population turn over and ethnic diversity.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher used mainly primary (survey and oral interviews) and secondary data sources (official statistics or records of juveniles in custody). This study was carried out among members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Pretoria Central and Sunnyside police stations, from the rank of constable to lieutenant colonel, with one or more years of work experience, who are performing operational duties at community service Centre; all police detectives also with one or more years of experience whose duties are to investigate juvenile delinquency cases; all permanently employed personnel (including managers) at Proteam Secure Care Centre and Walter Sisulu Secure Care Centre, with one or more years of experience, who are responsible for rendering therapeutic and life skills programmes. The purposive sampling method was used to select respondents from already stratified group of officials. Twenty-one officials (social workers 5, care workers 7, Secure Care Centre manager 1, police officials at community service Centre 4, and police detectives, 4) were interviewed. Fifty seven (57) self-administered questionnaires were completed by the respondents in the survey. The questionnaire is divided into seven sections as follows, Section A: Demographic Information, Section B: Socio-economic Issues, Section C: Criminality and Rehabilitation Issues, Section D: Drugs/Alcohol Abuse related Issues, Section E: Familial Issues, Section F: Peer Social Network System, Section G: Community/Neighbourhood Issues. Data generated from the survey instrument (questionnaire) were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, while secondary data including annual crime statistics, number of juveniles in custody and source documents or records obtained from research locations were analyzed by categorizing, organizing and summarizing them in order to find answers to the research questions (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1999:143).

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 General background factors associated with alcohol and drug abuse

During interviews, participants were requested to name the risk factors of alcohol and drug abuse without limiting the number. The responses as obtained from each participant, were analyzed and indicated below in chronological order according to total number of nominations provided by twenty one (21) participants, as

presented in Table 1. The study found excessive provision of money to a child as the most dominant risk factor of children engaging in drug abuse. This is followed by family problems, parenthood and parenting styles, parental alcohol or drug abuse, socio-economic conditions, community/neighbourhood contexts as among top six potent factors to consider in child drug and alcohol abuse. Among the last five factors that are considered less important compared to the top six are lack of recreational facilities, peer pressure, adolescent development stage, lack of knowledge about the law and least in the order of ranking, hostile school environment.

Table 1: Summary rankings of background factors associated with alcohol and drug abuse

FACTORS	RANKING OF IMPORTANCE
Excessive provision of money to a child	1
Family background/problems	2
Parenthood and parenting styles	3
Parental alcohol or drug abuse	4
Socio-economic factors	5
Community and neighbourhood context	6
Lack of resources/recreational facilities	7
Peer pressure	8
Adolescent/Teenage development stage	9
Lack of knowledge of the law	10
Hostile school environment	11

Source: Fieldwork 2014.

4.2 Drugs and alcohol abuse related history of juvenile delinquents

Regarding drugs/alcohol abuse history of juvenile delinquents (Table 2), the study revealed that a majority (54.4%) of juveniles were in custody at secure care centers for committing crime, compared to 45.4% who are kept for rehabilitation purpose. Out of the ones who are kept for rehabilitation purpose, 58.1% are attending drug abuse programmes while 34.9% attend life skills programmes and 7% sexual offender programmes. This result further indicates that a majority of juveniles have drug abuse problems, where 94% of the juveniles are using drugs compared to 6% who are not; 83% using alcohol compared to 17% who are not. The top six drugs used by the juveniles are Indian Hemp, *Dagga* (35.4%), *Nyaope* (30.4%), *Cocaine* (27.8%), *Ecstasy* (3.8%), *Heroin* and *Khat* (1.3%). Fifty percent of the juvenile were found to have started using drugs at their teen age,

specifically 14 to 18 years. Based on the age distribution for drug use inception this indicates that children are more likely to begin drug experimentation at older teen age bracket. In terms of exposure to drugs/alcohol, quite a huge proportion of juveniles (86.3%) are exposed to drugs compared to 13.7% who are not, while 90.2% are exposed to alcohol compared to 9.8% who are not. The high rate of exposure to alcohol and drug abuse are therefore important factors associated with majority of juvenile delinquents, especially when they are living in townships where alcohol and drugs are easily accessible, than in the suburbs. Interestingly, among those who are in custody for committing crime, offences were committed as a results of drug abuse (77.5%) compared to gangsterism (14.3%) and alcohol abuse (8.2%).

Table 2: Crime and drugs and alcohol abuse history of juveniles

Characteristics		%
Reason for in custody	Crime	54.4
	Rehab	45.6
	Total	100
Rehab needed	Drug abuse	58.1
	Life skills	34.9
	Sexual offender programmes	7
	Total	100
Cause of crime	Alcohol abuse	8.2
	Drug abuse	77.5
	Gangsterism	14.3
	Total	100
Use of drugs by juvenile	Agree	94
	Dis agree	6
	Total	100
Use of alcohol by juvenile	Agree	83
	Dis agree	17
	Total	100
Exposure to drugs	Agree	86.3
	Dis agree	13.7
	Total	100
Exposure to alcohol	Agree	90.2
	Dis agree	9.8
	Total	100
Juvenile delinquent`s age when started using drugs/alcohol	Below 10	9.8
	10yrs - 13	39.2
	14-18	50
	Total	100
Top 6 drugs commonly used	Dagga	35.4
	Nyaope	30.4
	Cocaine	27.8
	Ecstasy	3.8
	Heroin	1.3
	Khat	1.3
	Total	100

Source: Fieldwork 2014.

The result of the study reveals that drug abuse is implicated in criminal behavior of the juveniles compared to other precursors of crime such as gangsterism and alcohol abuse. The study further shows the importance of teenage age as the stage of drug initiation.

4.3 Crime, drugs and alcohol abuse history of juvenile`s family

The crime and drug abuse history of juvenile`s family is indicated in Table 3. The study revealed that an average of 58%, 46% and 56% mothers, fathers and siblings have been arrested for criminal acts.. The top six crimes committed by the above mentioned family members are Theft (30.2%), Shoplifting, Rape and Possession of drugs (15.1%, Robbery Aggravating (13.2%) and House breaking and theft (11.3%).

Table 3: Crime, drugs/alcohol abuse history of juvenile`s family

Characteristics	/%	
Arrest of mother	Agree	58
	Dis agree	42
	Total	100
Arrest of father	Agree	46
	Dis agree	54
	Total	100
Arrest of sibling(s)	Agree	56
	Dis agree	44
	Total	100
Top 6 common crimes committed by juvenile`s family members	Theft	30.2
	Shoplifting	15.1
	Rape	15.1
	Possession of drugs	15.1
	Robbery aggravating	13.2
	HB and theft	11.3
	Total	100

Source of information: perception survey 2014.

4.4 Characteristics of Abusive environment experienced by the Juveniles

The abuse history of environment in which a juvenile grew up is indicated in Table 4. With regard to abuse in the family, 82.4% of the juveniles have been physically abused; 86.3% emotionally abused; and 72% sexually abused. High rate of abuse indicates that most of these children grew up in abusive environment and might end up themselves being abusers. Secondly, abusive environment would have led to children fleeing their families and ending up in the streets and drugs. Regarding abuse of drug among significant others, more of the juvenile`s siblings (51.4%) are using drugs compared to both parents (20%), father (17.2%) and grand-parent (11.4%). Once again, the reason for high rate of drug abuse by

the siblings might be that the child is closer to the siblings than his/her parents, which indicates that whatever he/she is doing, his/her siblings are also doing because they play together, learn from each other and spend a lot of time together.

Table 4: Characteristics of Abusive environment

Characteristics		%
Physically abused –juvenile	Agree	82.4
	Disagree	17.6
	Total	100
Emotionally abused - juvenile	Agree	86.3
	Disagree	13.7
	Total	100
Sexually abused - juvenile	Agree	72
	Disagree	28
	Total	100
Use of drugs in the juvenile`s family	Father	17.2
	Both parents	20
	Sibling (s)	51.4
	Grant parent	11.4
	Total	100

Source: Fieldwork 2014.

4.5 Relevant socio-demographic linkage to drug and alcohol abuse

The study reveals (Table 5) that a majority of the juveniles consist of males (90.4%), between the age of 16 to 17 (60%) who did not complete or dropped out of primary education. Lack of religiosity or a sense of commitment to morality was prevalent as most of them (65.3%) do not attend church or affiliated with any church, which may be explain the children current behaviour. With regard to current locations of abode, most of the juveniles are from Pretoria CBD, followed by Soshanguve Township, Mamelodi and Soweto Townships, while others are from Alexander Township and East Rand. Although Pretoria CBD tops the list, overall Township locations were the most prevalent place where juveniles hail from. One can therefore conclude that most juvenile delinquents come from townships to city centers, where there is a lot of businesses, with different intentions including committing crime.

Table 5: Socio-demographic characteristics of the juveniles.

Characteristics		/%
Gender	Male	90.6
	Female	9.4
	Total	100
Age	16-17	60
	14-15	29.1
	13-Oct	10.9
	Below 10	0
	Total	100
Level of education	Grade 1-3	37.7
	Grade 8 and above	35.9
	Grade 4-7	18.9
	Grade 000-0	7.5
	Total	100
Membership of church	Yes	34.7
	No	65.3
	Total	100
Location of residence	Pretoria	27.3
	Soshanguve	20.5
	Mamelodi	15.9
	Soweto	15.9
	Alexander	11.4
	East Rand	9
	Total	100
Province of juvenile (where he/she grew up)	Gauteng	85.4
	Kwazulu Natal	6.3
	Western Cape	6.3
	North West	2.0
	Total	100

Source: Fieldwork 2014.

4.6 Soci-Familial background of the Juveniles

Regarding the family background of the juvenile (Table 6), the study revealed that majority of the juveniles (54.8 %) are living with single parents, while 19.4% are living with both biological parents or do not have parents at all, and only 6.4% are living with their grand-parents. Most of the juveniles found to be in conflict with the law are either first born (30.6%) or second born (30.6%) mainly from the family of three (44.7%) including him/herself. Unemployment among parents was not found to be a major risk factor in drug and alcohol abuse, as the study

found that a half of the children found in the centers have at least one of their parents employed, while only 15.7% have both parents employed. However, the fact that 33.3% of the juveniles have both parents unemployed points to some other anomalies and risk to poverty in the families.

Table 6: Socio-Familial background, parenthood and familial problems of the juveniles

Characteristics		%
Parenthood	No parent	19.4
	Single parent	54.8
	Both biological parents	19.4
	Grant Parent (s)	6.4
	Total	100
Siblings size (including him/herself)	1	14.9
	2	2.1
	3	44.7
	4	31.9
	5 and above	6.4
	Total	100
Birth position	1 st born	30.6
	2 nd born	30.6
	3 rd born	20.4
	Last born	18.4
	Total	100
Employment of parents	Both employed	15.7
	One employed	51
	Both unemployed	33.3
	Total	100
Methods of discipline applied by parents when a child is caught using drugs/alcohol	Corporal punishment	36.8
	Privilege taken away	31.6
	Verbal warning	21.1
	Expel from home	10.5
	Total	100
Exposure to violence – him/herself beaten	Agree	74
	Disagree	26
	Total	100
Exposure to violence – parents fighting	Agree	78.8
	Disagree	21.2
	Total	100

Source: Fieldwork 2014.

With regard to maintenance of discipline at home, most of the parents (36.8%) apply corporal punishment as a means of disciplining their children compared to taking away privilege (31.6%), verbal warning (21.1%) and expelling a juvenile

from home (10.5%). Correspondingly, about two-third of juveniles are exposed to physical assault by their parents and have witnessed their parents fighting at home. The above result points to preponderance of violence at homes from where these juveniles come from.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found excessive provision of money to a child as the most potent risk factor in drug abuse among juveniles in school. This means giving more money than necessary to a child results in him misusing surplus money to buy drugs and alcohol. Or when the parent is unable to give the same amount, he will commit a crime (steal) to get more money and buy drugs in order to satisfy his drug addiction. Second to excessive provision of money is family background problems. When there is a problem at home such as fighting between parents or divorce at the extreme, the child will escape from the family problem for elsewhere to try and forget about it. Getting intoxicated on drugs or alcohol usually function as a temporary escape route for the child to forget any problems at home. Specifically, in the case of divorce, as much as children want their parents to be together, there is little or nothing that they can do to resolve the problem other than to indulge in drugs and alcohol to seek attention and ease the familial stress.

Participants signaled parenthood and parenting style as an important risk factor. Sometimes single parenting is similar to neglect because a single parent spends most of the time away from his/her children, either at work or doing some business and that will result in lack or poor supervision, monitoring and control over children. Enough supervision is lacking in single parent headed family, when a mother is raising boys for example. The older the boys become, the less the respect they may have for their mothers. Similar situation is also applicable between single fathers and girl children. The consideration about the relationship between the gender of single parent and that of a child had been previously analyzed by scholars. For instance, Videon (2005) explained that the link between fathers` parenting and mothers` parenting to adolescents` delinquency may differ for several reasons. Firstly, apart from the fact that the quantity of the time the fathers and mothers spend with their children is different, there are indications that parental involvement is also qualitatively different (Videon, 2005). Despite these results, relatively little research has examined the quality of fathers` parenting compared to mothers` parenting in relation to the child well-

being and behavior (Williams and Kelly, 2005). Similarly, a child that grew up in a disintegrated family condition may try to replace the love at home by associating with peers outside home. These among others such as lack of family's emotional, spiritual, financial and physical support is a risk for a child to be involved in wrong doing.

This study also revealed that a majority of the children in the centers originate from townships and poorer families where significant others abuse alcohol and drugs. This result is important to our understanding of the permissive familiar background. Children normally copy what their parents are doing including bad things. If a single parent or both parents are drug addicts, there is a great chance that their child will also learn from them and become drug addict. Exposure or access to drugs and alcohol in this case usually occurs when children are sent to buy drugs and alcohol or when drugs and alcohol are easily accessible and available in the community or at home. The ease of availability and accessible of drugs in the streets corners and everywhere in the neighbourhood also encourage the child to try them. In South Africa, taverns are remarkable feature of the townships and informal settlements where a lot of illegal taverns abound, when compared with middle class sub-urban areas. As a result of the ease of accessibility and availability of alcohol and drugs in those taverns, any child in the neighborhood will be exposed to drug use and ultimately juvenile delinquency. The above is akin to what Bartol and Bartol (1989: 42) termed the law of reciprocity, refers to the process whereby the individual and social environments mutually influence one another in one way or another.

Though with some differences, the revelation of this study is consistent with the previous position of Glanz (1994), Obioha, (2002) and Obioha, (2009). According to Glanz, the socio-economic circumstances include poverty, rapid population growth, and inadequate provision of shelter, housing and social services, urbanization, unemployment, the breakdown of family units together with erosion of traditional values, internationalization of behavior patterns, and the weakening of community support systems. On the other hand, Obioha found familial structures, disciplines and other differences as important variables to drug abuse and also the social impact of substance abuse on family, which provokes moral questions among members.

6. CONCLUSION

Juvenile misbehavior and offending, including drug abuse are associated with multiplicity of factors and social contexts. Among other things, this study found

that while the most commonly abused drug is dagga (Indian hemp) and least abused is Heroin, drug use among juveniles in Gauteng is associated with excessive provision of money to a child, other crimes, exposure to drugs, exposure to alcohol, parental and siblings' offending history, drug use by significant others in the family, history of physical and emotional abusive environment, maleness, later teenage developmental period, non-completion of primary education or dropping out of school, non-religiosity (does not belong to any church or attend any church), townships and Central business district of Pretoria neighborhood.

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