Substance Use Among Teenagers: Individual, Family, School and Community Correlates for Lifetime Use

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Framework

The aim of this study is to identify individual, family, school and community variables correlated with lifetime substance use among young people aged 11 years old and above.

The data presented in this study refers only to tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and cocaine lifetime users.

Method

Procedure:

Data was collected between late 2009 and mid 2010, through a user-friendly-self-report questionnaire entitled *"Drug Prevention Programmes' Outcomes and Impact Evaluation Questionnaire"* (DPPOIEQ), specifically developed for this research. Its design allows respondents to only answer to questions about subjects they are aware of and relevant to their substance use experience.

Participants:

The *DPPOIEQ* was delivered to 3553 students. Questionnaires with missing data higher than 50% or with inconsistent answers were eliminate from the database (n= 282). The final sample included 3271 students, corresponding to 92% of the original sample size.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of participants

Variables	n	%
Gender	**3063**	
Male	1643	53.64
Female	1420	46.37
Age	**3127**	
12 years or younger	803	25.68
13 years	606	19.38
14 years	434	13.88
15 years	368	11.77
16 years	402	12.86
17 years	281	8.99
18 years or older	173	5.53
Nationality	**3203**	
Portuguese	2972	92.79
Other	231	7.21
Economic level	**2995**	
Low	409	13.66
Medium	2011	67.15
High	575	19.20

Results

Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS 17. Data was analyzed using Chi-Square test and the significance level considered for all statistical calculations was α = 0.05.

Table 2
Risk Perception Among Tobacco, Alcohol, Cannabis and Cocaine Users

Answer	Tobacco (n = 3238)			Alcohol (n = 3233)			Cannabis (n = 2170)			Cocaine (n = 2610)		
	n	%	p	n	%	p	n	%	p	n	%	p
Slight risk	55	58.18		202	77.72		73	56.16		38	23.68	
Moderate risk	739	59.13	**.000**	1527	63.98	**.000**	402	28.61	**.000**	427	5.39	**.000**
Great risk	2444	31.30		1504	44.68		1695	7.14		2145	1.07	

> There is a statistically significant correlation between risk perception and tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and cocaine lifetime use

Table 3
Parents' Reaction to Substance Use Among Tobacco, Alcohol, Cannabis and Cocaine Users

Answer	Tobacco (n = 3196)			Alcohol (n = 3206)			Cannabis (n = 2123)			Cocaine (n = 2553)		
	n	%	p	n	%	p	n	%	p	n	%	p
Indifference	41	87.81		215	93.49		22	59.09		14	64.29	
Disapproval	378	76.46	**.000**	556	89.93	**.000**	51	68.63	**.000**	27	25.93	**.000**
Punishment	887	40.70		881	54.82		638	15.36		721	1.39	
Prohibition	1890	28.41		1554	39.38		1412	8.99		1791	1.62	

> There is a statistically significant correlation between parent's reaction to substance use and tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and cocaine lifetime use

Table 4
School Environment Among Tobacco, Alcohol, Cannabis and Cocaine Users

Answer	Tobacco (n = 2635)			Alcohol (n = 2635)			Cannabis (n = 2641)			Cocaine (n = 2138)		
	n	%	p	n	%	p	n	%	p	n	%	p
Never	217	59.91		216	73.61		215	21.40		168	5.95	
Seldom	296	55.07		298	71.81		299	11.37		246	3.66	
Sometimes	769	46.29	**.000**	767	63.36	**.000**	769	10.66	**.000**	617	2.59	**.000**
Often	706	33.60		709	54.58		709	7.19		581	1.38	
Always	647	24.26		645	36.28		649	3.70		526	0.38	

> There is a statistically significant correlation between school environment and tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and cocaine lifetime use

Table 5
Best Friend's Substance Use Among Tobacco, Alcohol, Cannabis and Cocaine Users

Answer	Tobacco (n = 2916)			Alcohol (n = 2798)			Cannabis (n = 1964)			Cocaine (n = 2403)		
	n	%	p	n	%	p	n	%	p	n	%	p
Never	1739	15.01		1218	20.36		1647	3.04		2320	1.03	
Quiter	395	62.28		224	66.96		112	51.79		39	25.64	
Occasionally	395	71.90	**.000**	1320	88.71	**.000**	164	67.07	**.000**	36	38.89	**.000**
Daily	387	90.18		36	83.33		41	80.49		8	62.50	

> There is a statistically significant correlation between best friend's substance use and tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and cocaine lifetime use

Conclusions

The higher the **perception of risk** associated with using substances, the lower the substance use prevalence.

Parents who are expected to react with indifference to their children's substance use are associated with highest prevalence, whereas parents who are expected to punish or prohibit their children's substance use are associated with the lowest prevalence.

The more a **school environment** is perceived as being enjoyable (measured by enjoying going to school), the lowest the prevalence of any substance use.

Best friend's substance use behavior is directly proportional to substance use prevalence, being those whose best friend never used a particular substance the ones with the lowest substance use prevalence. Likewise, those whose best friend use a particular substance on a daily basis show the highest prevalence for that substance use.

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