

Substance Use among Adolescents: Risk Factors, Determinants and Prevention

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Abstract

Substance use is an important issue that concerns adolescents. This review paper aimed to illustrate the risk factors, determinants, and interventions that can be used to prevent and reduce substance use among adolescents. An electronic searching was performed in three electronic databases: EBSCO, CINHALL, and PubMed. There are many factors that affect substance use among adolescents. Parents and the community can carry out several interventions to prevent and reduce substance use among adolescents.

Keywords: Substance Use; Adolescents; Determinants

Introduction

Adolescence is the stage of life between childhood and adulthood, from the age of 10 to 19. It is a unique stage of human development and an important time for laying the foundations for good health [1].

There are many health problems facing adolescents; related to growth and development, school, childhood diseases, mental health disorders, illegal behaviors, injuries, infectious diseases, substance use, traffic accidents, and violence that cause death and disability for adolescents [2-21]. Psychosocial adjustment is a milestone at this stage; it is related to a self-challenge in matters of identity, autonomy and relationships. Psychosocial disorders are most common in adolescence. Many problems occur at this stage such as obesity problems, substance use and violent behavior, which can cause health problems, chronic diseases, or morbidity later in life [22,23].

The concept "substance use" refers to "the use of drugs or alcohol, and includes substances such as cigarettes, illicit and prescription drugs, inhalants and solvents" [24]. This problem occurs when using alcohol or other drugs that cause harm to an individual or others, and it may lead to addiction [25-27]. The most common substances used are tobacco, marijuana and alcohol. For example, about two thirds of students have tried alcohol by the 12th grade, and almost 2 out of 10 used the medications without a prescription [28].

Substance use affects the growth and development of adolescents, especially brain development. Adolescents display risky behaviors and contribute to the development of health problems in adults such as heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep disorders [29] and many other types of chronic illnesses [30-48],

Aim of the Study

This study aims to review the key literature regarding the risk factors, determinants, and interventions that help in reducing and preventing substance use among adolescents.

Method

Search methods

The search was achieved in some databases including EBSCO, CINHALL, and PubMed. The keywords were "Substance Use", "Adolescents", "Determinants". Papers published between 2010 and 2021 were obtained. Those published in the English language that assess substance use among adolescents in terms of risk factors, determinants, were included in the current review. Studies involving other age groups were excluded. In addition, review articles, comments, editorials, letters, books, and thesis reports were excluded from the present study.

Search outcome

A literature search produced 150 titles for review. The final examination leads to 10 articles, excluding articles consisting only of abstracts and unrelated articles.

Results and Discussion

Adolescence is an important stage in a person's life. It is considered a transitional stage, and at this stage, substance use is a public health concern. Many factors affect substance use based on the adolescent's perception such as the poor relationship between parents and their adolescents, poor observation by parents, family conflicts, boredom, peer using the drug, poor knowledge about the risks of substance use, availability of the substance in the community and schools, as well as lack of educational campaigns [49,50].

Electronic bullying "Cyber bullying" is a new form of bullying through the use of various social media platforms to harass, humiliate, and intentionally threaten others in a repetitive and hostile way. The roles of cyber bullying are witness, victim and perpetrator. The witness role is enough to be associated with the risks of future substance use in adolescents with or without the other two roles. There is a relationship between cyber bullying and the use and poly use of substances among youth, such as the recent increase in electronic cigarette use, marijuana and opioids [51,52].

Among the determinants that affect substance use in adolescents are coping efficacy and perceived social support from family, they have a negative relationship with adolescents' substance use. While psychological stress has a positive relationship with substance use in adolescents [53,54]. Substance use increases among depressed adolescents [55,56].

Self-medication of over-the-counter medications is an example of substance use among school students. In Jordan, the prevalence of self-medication among school students is high because many types of medications are easily accessible from local pharmacies without physician prescriptions [57-61].

In Turkey, a study indicated the risk factors for substance use as the following: studying in vocational schools, negative feelings towards school, the feeling of lack of success in school, failure in school, absenteeism from school, and smoking and the use of alcohol by families and friends of adolescents [62].

Parents and community can carry out several interventions to prevent and reduce substance use among adolescents, such as closed monitoring by parents, enhance the relationship between parents and adolescents, the adolescence's allowance is proportional to their

needs, enhance the parent's awareness about substance use and its risks, selecting of peers, being aware of substance abuse, install closed-circuit television in the schools, student's bag should be checked regularly, psychological support should be affordable in schools, increase the control on shops selling tobacco and enhance the policy that controls the substance use [63]. As well, training of adolescents on effective coping methods, increase perceived social support from the family, reduce stress and anxiety surrounding adolescents, and protect teens from cyber bullying [54].

Simultaneously, there is a need to develop policies and legislate laws to control over the supply of medications without medical prescriptions. The role of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health should be activated by providing counseling and educational programs for students. In addition to the role of and the participation of school health nurses and local health workers in disseminating health education campaigns about the safe use of medications by school students, parents and families [57].

Finally, although there are difficulties in conducting large-scale surveys on substance use among adolescents, it is important to provide up-to-date data that can help in dealing with substance use through education [64-72], prevention and policy development, effectively usage of resources and meet the needs of those at high risk of substance misuse and harms caused by substance use [64].

Conclusion

Adolescence is an important stage in a person's life in which physiological and psychological changes occur, which influence one's future life. The use of substances is one of the most important problems facing adolescents. It is important to identify risk factors and determinants of substances use in order to help parents, decision makers and the community to intervene effectively in this issue.

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