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Research Article

## Causes of Drug Abuse among College Students: The Philippine Experience

*Dr. Freddie Bencio Caday*

Associate Professor, College of Criminology, Ifugao State University, Philippines

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**ABSTRACT:** Drug abuse among the youth is a widespread problem in many countries including the Philippines. Thus, this study was conducted to determine the root causes of drug abuse among students in colleges as an avenue in looking for possible solutions. Mere law enforcement activities will be ineffective in curbing the prevalent drug abuse if its root causes will not be properly addressed. With this, there is a need to know the causes of drug abuse as a framework in re-aligning the prevention and rehabilitation programs to ensure its effectiveness. Survey instruments and interview were employed as techniques in gathering data. The respondents includes the law enforcement agencies handling drug related cases such as the police and drug enforcers. College faculty and staff whose function is related in handling cases of students were also included. The result of this study revealed that the top ten causes of drug abuse among students in colleges are peer influence, lack of attention from parents, serious problems in the family, lack of guidance from parents, weak foundation on moral values, suffering frustrations, absence of school anti-drug abuse council, lack of drug abuse prevention activities, means to temporarily forget problems, and lack of concern from faculty and staff.

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**Keywords:** *Drug Abuse, Peer Influence, Parent's Attention, Family Problem, Parent's Guidance, Moral Values, Frustrations*

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### INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse is one of the world's most pressing problems threatening people of every age, socio-economic background, geographic region, educational level, and ethnic or racial identity. What is alarming is its gradual change from social disease into a household companion in many communities where people regard its presence as a normal thing in the society.

The most startling worldwide trends that have emerged are the increased availability and variety of drugs and the prevalence of drug abuse among the youth. The Philippines is no exception: research has shown that drug abuse is on the rise, and in particular it is increasing among young people. Drug abuse patterns among youth change rapidly with different drugs becoming popular. Drug abuse has also expanded to a younger and wider segment of the youth population.

Millions of Filipino youths nationwide are using prohibited drugs. The drug abusers are mostly adolescents ranging from 17 to 28 years of age. Majority of them are males with a ratio of 12:1 compared to females. Most abusers are freshmen and sophomore college students (Manwong, 2002).

Students manifest vulnerability to drug abuse. Because of their immaturity and tender age they have yet to develop the strength to resist the thrill and the euphoria which the dangerous drugs offer. They have yet to uphold value and internalize the behavioral norms which could help them cope with the social and personal problems within the framework of socially, legally, and morally acceptable standards. Their defense mechanism against damaging influence of drugs is still inadequate.

In view of the foregoing, this study was conducted to identify the root causes of drug abuse among college students which will be used as a framework for possible solutions.

### METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive method of research with the

survey instruments and interviews as techniques in gathering data. This is the most appropriate method since according to Sevilla (2002), Calmorin (1996), Holpin (2004), and Best (2003), the method presents and provides systematic and factual information that can be used to assess and evaluate conditions and variables being investigated.

The population of this study includes the college faculty and staff, officers of the Philippine National Police (PNP), and officers of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA). Specifically, the first group of respondents in this study includes the faculty and staff who are handling criminology and social science subjects in the different colleges and universities located in the Cordillera Administrative Region, the northern part of the Philippines. It also includes the personnel of the Office of Student Affairs and the guidance office who are handling cases of students. The second group of respondents is composed of the officers of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency which is the country's leading unit for anti-drugs operations in coordination with other law enforcement agencies. Lastly, the third group of respondents is composed of the officers of the Philippine National Police particularly those assigned in the anti-illegal drugs unit, operation division, and investigation unit.

This study used the purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling to draw the respondents. As its name suggests, purposive sampling is about selecting a particular sample with a purpose. The factors according to which the sample is drawn up are analytically and theoretically linked to the research questions being addressed. In purposive sampling, a researcher uses special knowledge or expertise about a specific group to select subjects who will represent the population (Borg, 2004). Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique that does not involve random selection. It is usually used to get the opinion of the few who are familiar with the subject.

### Description of Respondents

Table I. Percentage Distribution of Respondents by group

Group of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
College Faculty and Staff	294	47.1
Drug Enforcement Agents	46	7.4
Philippine National Police	284	45.5
Total=	624	100

Table I shows the distribution of respondents by group. There are 47.1% College Faculty and Staff, 45.5% from the Philippine National Police and 7.4% from the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Table II. Distribution and Percentage of College Faculty and Staff According to School

Name of College/University	F	%
ASIST- Abra State Institute of Science and Tech.	14	4.76
ASC- Apayao State College	13	4.42
BSU- Benguet State University	16	5.44
CCDC- Cordillera Career Development College	29	9.86
ELC- Eastern Luzon College	14	4.76
IFSU- Ifugao State University	27	9.18
KASC- Kalinga Apayao State College	16	5.44
KCST- Kalinga Colleges of Science and Tech.	22	7.48
MPSPC-Mt. Province State Polytechnic College	34	11.56
BCU- Baguio Central University	21	7.14
SLU- Saint Louis University	19	6.46
UB- University of Baguio	32	10.88
UC- University of the Cordilleras	37	12.59
TOTAL=	294	100

Table II shows that there are 294 respondents who are college faculty and staff from the different Universities and Colleges in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Philippines. There are more respondents from the University of the Cordilleras (UC) at 12.59%, 11.56% from MPSPC, 10.88% from UB, 9.86% from CCDC, 9.18% from IFSU, 7.48% from KCST, 7.14% from BCU, 6.48% from SLU, 5.44% were taken both from KASC and BSU, 4.76% are from ASIST and ELC, and 4.42% from ASC.

### Research Instruments

This study used the survey questionnaire. It was administered to the respondents while at the same time conducting informal interview. The instruments used in this study were validated by applying concurrent validity and dry-run validity. Concurrent Validity was done by presenting the instruments to the faculty and staff in the colleges and universities, police officers, and drug law enforcers in the different places in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Philippines. Their comments and suggestions were properly incorporated to ensure that the instrument is reliable. On the other hand, dry-run Validity was done by administering the instruments to the three groups of respondents in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley), Philippines which was not covered by this study. This was done to determine the administerability, correctness, and clarity of each statement, instructions, language used, and its

construction as a whole. The results of the dry-run validity was incorporated for further revision of the instrument to make sure its reliability and validity. The respondents in the pre-testing were not included as respondents in the survey proper.

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, the test-retest method utilized. The questionnaire was administered in region two to the three groups of respondents twice with ten days as waiting period. The reliability index for instrument 2 is 0.96 indicating very high reliability. Instrument 3 has a reliability index of .9314 which also indicates very high reliability.

### Statistical Treatment of the Data

Frequency and Percentage Distribution was used to establish the profile of the three groups of respondents. Weighted mean was used in computing the assessment of the respondents on the causes of drug abuse. The following scale was used in the analysis and evaluation of the data that was obtained from the survey as to the causes of drug abuse among college students.

Scale	Range Equivalent	Description (D)
5	(4.20-5.00)	Strongly Agree (SA)
4	(3.40-4.19)	Agree (A)
3	(2.60-3.39)	Moderately Agree (MA)
2	(1.80-2.59)	Disagree (D)
1	(1.00-1.79)	Strongly Disagree (SD)

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table III. Causes of Drug Abuse Among College Students as Assessed by the Three Groups of Respondents

	Causes of Drug Abuse Among College Students	Over-all		
		Mean	D	Rank
1	Low grades/scores	3.15	MA	31
2	Failed/incomplete grades	3.59	A	28
3	Dropped in class	3.76	A	25
4	Inability to understand topics	2.86	MA	32
5	Scolded in school	3.74	A	26
6	Embarrassed in school	3.84	A	22.5
7	Insufficient or ineffective guidance and counseling program	3.59	A	28
8	Absence of Peer Counselors Club in the school	3.99	A	19
9	Lack of concern of faculty and staff to students	4.22	SA	10
10	Lack of advise or guidance of faculty and staff to students	3.98	A	20
11	Absence of School Anti-Drug Abuse Council in the campus	4.38	SA	7
12	Failure of the school to incorporate drug education in the curriculum	4.10	A	13
13	Lack of Drug Abuse Prevention activities in the school	4.29	SA	8
14	Lack of sports and recreational activities in the school	4.06	A	15.5
15	Lack of sports and recreational facilities in the school	3.77	A	24
16	Absence of Campus Christian Organizations or ministries	4.09	A	14
17	Lack of activities for moral and spiritual development of students	4.11	A	12

## Dr. Freddie Bencio Caday/ Causes of Drug Abuse among College Students: The Philippine Experience

18	Very weak foundation of students on spiritual and moral values	4.41	SA	5
19	Serious conflict or misunderstanding in the family	4.60	SA	3
20	Lack of guidance from parents	4.44	SA	4
21	Lack of attention and affection or love from parents	4.67	SA	2
22	Too much strictness of parents	4.06	A	15.5
23	Lack of knowledge about the bad effects of drug abuse	3.84	A	25.5
24	Suffering frustration in love, goal, or any desire/plan in life	4.39	SA	6
25	For curiosity sake/ experimentation	4.03	A	17
26	Suffering boredom	3.89	A	21
27	Means to temporarily forget problems	4.23	SA	9
28	Suffering heavy stress	4.01	A	18
29	Influence of drug abuse presented in the media	3.56	A	30
30	Peer influence	4.70	SA	1
31	Easy access to drugs and suppliers	4.20	SA	11
32	For stimulation or enhancement of performance and activeness	3.59	A	28
Over-all		4.01	A	31

Table III presents the over-all assessment of the three groups of respondents which is 4.01 implying that they all agree to the various causes of drug abuse enumerated in the questionnaire.

As to their assessment on the top ranking causes of drug abuse among college and university students in which they all strongly agree, peer influence is the number one with a mean of 4.70. It was followed by lack of attention and love from parents, 4.67; serious conflict or misunderstanding in the family, 4.60; lack of guidance from parents, 4.44; and very weak foundation on spiritual and moral values, 4.41. Other top causes of drug abuse includes suffering frustration in love, goal or any desire/plan in life, 4.39; absence of School Anti-Drug abuse Council, 4.38; lack of drug abuse prevention activities, 4.29; means to temporarily forget problems, 4.23; and lack of concern o from faculty and staff to student's needs and problems, 4.22.

Conversely the perceived least among the causes of drug abuse includes inability to understand topic, low grades/scores, influence of drug abuse presented in media, failed or incomplete grades, insufficient or ineffective guidance counseling program, for stimulation or enhancement of performance, scolded in school, embarrassed in school, and lack of knowledge on bad effects of drug abuse.

As a whole, the group of respondents strongly agreed that the causes of drug abuse among college students are peer influence, lack of concern of faculty and staff to student's needs and problems, absence of school anti-drug abuse council, lack of drug abuse prevention activities in the school, very weak foundation on spiritual and moral values, serious conflict or misunderstanding in the family, lack of guidance and attention from parents, a means to temporarily forget the problems, and easy access to drugs. The result implies that

role of faculty and staff, parents and peers are very vital in most of the causes of drug abuse among college students.

On the other hand, they moderately agreed that low grades and inability to understand lesson or topic leads to drug abuse. Other suggestions of the respondents on the causes of drug abuse are too much money given by parents, envy, and unexpressed anger or deep-seated anger against themselves.

The aforementioned results coincides with the citation of Suwanwela (1986) that a case study of the United Nations found out that peer pressure is one among the apparent contributory factors to drug abuse. It stated that the reasons of people turning to narcotics varies as to the type of people who abuse it. One of the greatest obstacles in combating the growing abuse of drugs has been identifying the cause of the deviant behavior. However, whatever the cause, the important message to get across is that all drugs are dangerous and deliberate ingestion of drugs for non-medical reasons is wrong and harmful to the individual, the family, the community, and the society. Some of the more apparent contributory factors to drug abuse are as follows:

1. Peer pressure. Whether peer pressure has positive or negative impacts depends on the quality of peer group. Drug users like other people seek approval for their behavior from their peers so they often try to convince others to join in their habit as a way of seeking acceptance.
2. Curiosity. So much has been written and said about drugs that many people are tempted to experience them out of curiosity. The younger the age at which an individual first tries drugs, the more he/she is to try again.
3. Ignorance. For decades, misinformation about the dangers of illegal drug use has been plentiful. Individuals often begin taking drugs as an experiment with the belief that the substances are not dangerous. If the drug provides the effect the individual is seeking, then the user's lack of knowledge about the health consequences permits continued use. By the time the dangers are fully realized, it is often too late for the person to stop taking drugs. And to reverse structures can lead to loneliness, isolation and despair; lack of schooling and/or skills often translates to unemployment; the nature of city life in general may be difficult to adjust to. Many of the problems associated with creating a new lifestyle can lead individuals to turn to drugs.

According to Vinluan (2005), drug abuse in our society is not new. It is difficult to sort out all of the factors contributing to this epidemic experimentation and involvement with drugs but several are obvious such as pressure from associates, curiosity, easy availability of drugs, and the teen-agers relationships with their parents.

In the book of Sotto (1997), it also stated that the sources of drugs were friends, pushers, drugstores, private houses or clinics. The reasons for taking the drugs in order of frequency

were: 1) curiosity about the drug, 2) “pakikisama” or on account of friends, 3) “katuwaan lang” or taking drugs for kicks, 4) to forget one’s problems and worries, 5) “uso” I want to belong to the now generation, 6) to relieve me of pain and discomfort, and 7) I can’t help myself.

Agcaoli (2005) also stated that the influence of peer pressures cannot be underestimated as one among the causes of drug abuse.

The aforementioned discussions on the causes of drug abuse among the students truly reveals the high degree of emotional needs that the youth demands from peers, parents, and the faculty and staff who are handling them. If you notice most of the identified causes of drug abuse among the youth are usually connected to their relationship to peers, family, faculty and staff and other people around them. Suffice to say that what needs to be addressed are relational aspects of the youth to all the people around them. Relationship matters among the youth as they demand for love, attention, guidance, and sense of belongingness. These are mostly relational matters that cannot be addressed by mere law enforcement. It takes an educated, compassionate, and coordinated response from the parents, other family members, friends, faculty and staff, community officials, religious communities, and the law enforcement agencies.

However, other causes of drug abuse needs also to be given attention. Siegel (199) stated that the onset of drug abuse can be tied to such other factors such as racial prejudice, devolved identities, low self-esteem, poor social and economic status, high level of mistrust, negativism, and defiance found in lower social economic areas. Such drug abuse could also be related to a variety of family, personal, and socialization difficulties.

Fonseca (1996) cited in her study that drug abuse was brought about by a lot of factors existing in the midst like psychological, social, economic, and other factors as shared by the respondents.

According to study of James (2001), he found out that “our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, while all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential form of consciousness entirely different”. Some people deliberately seek this other consciousness through the use of drugs; others come upon them by accident while on drugs. Only certain people ever have such a consciousness-expanding experience in its fullest meaning, and the questions of its value to the individual must be entirely subjective. For many people the search for psychedelic experience is less a noble aim and more the simple need of a psychic jolt or lift. He summed up his study that many persons face situation with which, for one reason or another, they cannot cope successfully, and in the pressure of which they cannot function effectively. Either the stress is greater than usual or the individual’s adaptive ability is less than sufficient. In either instance, there are a variety of tranquilizing and energizing drugs that can provide psychological support. This is not chemotherapy in its more

ideal sense, but it enables large number of persons to face problems that they might not have otherwise been able to face. Some situations or stresses are beyond the control of the individual, and some individuals simply find themselves far more human and productive with drugs than without drugs.

In the study of Tremble (2002), drug addiction is associated with socio cultural factors. He found out that most young addicts who join the drug culture become increasingly withdrawn, indifferent to their friends and apathetic about sexual activity. They are likely to abandon scholastic and athletic endeavors and to show a marked reduction in competitive and achievement strivings. Most of those addicts appear to have lack of good sex-role identification and experience feelings of inadequacy when controlled with the demands of adulthood. While feeling progressively isolated from the broader culture, the feeling of group belongingness are bolstered by continued association with the addict milieu. At the same time they come to view drugs both as a means of revolt against authority and conventional values as a device for alleviating personal anxieties and tensions.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

From the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that the top root causes of drug abuse among college and university students as assessed by the faculty and staff, drug enforcers, and police in which they all strongly agree includes peer influence, lack of attention and love from parents, serious conflict or misunderstanding in the family, lack of guidance from parents, and very weak foundation on spiritual and moral values, suffering frustration in love, goal or any desire/plan in life, absence of School Anti-Drug Abuse Council in the school, lack of drug abuse prevention activities, means to temporarily forget problems, and lack of concern of faculty and staff to student’s needs and problems.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends that the concerned colleges and universities shall address the top identified causes of drug abuse among college and university students in coordination with the Commission on Higher Education, police, and drug enforcement agency. The prevention and rehabilitation programs should be re-aligned to address the root causes of drug abuse students such as peer influence, lack of attention and love from parents, serious conflict or misunderstanding in the family, lack of guidance from parents, and very weak foundation on spiritual and moral values, suffering frustration in love, goal or any desire/plan in life, absence of School Anti-Drug Abuse Council in the school, lack of drug abuse prevention activities, means to temporarily forget problems, and lack of concern of faculty and staff to student’s needs and problems.

Strong coordination between the drug enforcement agency, police, Commission on Higher Education, local government units, and the concerned colleges and universities shall also be established by creating liaison offices and assigning officer/s to ensure efficient linkages or networks in campus drug abuse

prevention.

The Commission on Higher Education shall coordinate with the police, drug enforcement agency, and the concerned colleges and universities to adopt and implement campus-based drug abuse prevention programs in various colleges and universities.

Similar studies are also recommended to be undertaken along the issues and concerns in which this study is limited to further address the issues on the drug abuse.

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