

Attitudes of Palestinian Arab youth inside the green line toward experimentation with and regular use of psycho-active substances: Perceptions and influencing factors

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Abstract

The study investigated the attitudes of the Palestinian Arab adolescents in Israel concerning the risks involved in the experimentation with and regular use of psycho-active substances. The aim of this study was to examine the adolescents' attitudes toward the risk of experimenting and regularly using psychoactive substances together with the contribution of the family cohesion, parents and friends attitudes towards psycho-active substances to the attitudes towards the risk of using psycho-active substances. This quantitative research employed self-report questionnaires to 548 Palestinian Arab adolescents to examine the attitudes toward the potential risks of experimenting and regularly using psychoactive substances, family cohesion, parental and friends' attitudes toward the use of psych-active substances. It was hypothesized that the adolescents would attribute higher risk to the regular use when compared with experimentation. Furthermore, family cohesion, parents and friends' attitudes toward psycho-active substances will significantly predict the attitudes toward the risk of using psycho-active substances among adolescents. After conducting regression analyses, it was found out that the adolescents attributed the higher risk to the regular use of psychoactive substances. The risk level attributed to experimenting and using psychoactive substances was associated with the risk level attributed to the different psychoactive substances; the adolescents attributed the higher risk to hard drugs, other illegal drugs and cannabis more than soft drugs like inhalants, medications, alcoholic beverages and cigarettes. Another finding was that the adolescents with cohesive and non-smoking families do not use inhalants, and/or medications in contrast with the teenagers with divided and smoking families. According to the teenagers, the stricter the parents, the higher the level of risk of experimenting with cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, inhalants and medications will be. In addition, the teenagers stated that the more negative the friends' attitudes regarding psychoactive substances, the higher the level of risk of experimenting with alcoholic beverages, cannabis, medications and other illegal drugs will be. It can be concluded that the use of psycho-active substances is considered to have more risk than the regular use of the substances. In the Palestinian society, familial factors still have a high impact on the adolescents and affect their attitudes toward major issues, such as the experimentation of substance abuse.

Keywords: *Palestinian Arab youth in Israel, drugs, abuse of psycho-active, attitudes, influencing factors*

Introduction:

The context of the Palestinian youth in Israel

In general, one issue that worries the Palestinian population in Israel is risk behaviors, especially among adolescents. These behaviors include involvement in different types of violence, dropping out of schools, and a steady increase in the use of alcohol and drugs of different types.

Drug abuse and drug use in the Palestinian society in Israel in general, and the Palestinian youth in particular is in an upward trend (Tal-Spero, 2014). A survey conducted by Azaiza and colleagues (2010) showed that about 12% of the Palestinian high-school students used drugs illegally, and 8% used medication without any doctors' prescriptions.

Several researchers have attributed the increase in the consumption of drugs and alcohol among the Palestinian youth to the social transitional processes from a conservative, collectivist society to a "modern", individualistic society that the Palestinian community has been experiencing for decades (Abu-Asbah, 2012; Azaiza and colleagues, 2010). The increasing sense of social alienation, which many teenagers experience, has contributed to their vulnerability during this transitional period (Langman & Fishman-Kalekin, 2005).

In this context, a study by Margalit (2014) found a significant correlation between the total measures of alienation index and the use of psychoactive substances. Out of all the measures of alienation, "ignorance of appropriate behavior in unfamiliar situations" was the most significant predictor for the use of psychoactive substances.

An additional explanation for the increase in drug use among Palestinian youth is associated with the paucity of health and mental health services that are accessible and culturally appropriate for the Palestinian population in general, and for this age group in particular (Abu-Asba, 2007; Mahajne, Agbaria & Abu-Asba, 2010).

In Israel, the rapid socio-economic change has led to significant changes in the Palestinian family life. For example, there have been changes in the patterns of parenting due to the Palestinian mothers' work outside the home. In addition, the traditional Palestinian family values and behavioral norms are challenged by the prevalent "Western values", which promote individualism as opposed to collectivism. (Abu Asba, 2004). As a result of these dynamics, the members of the Palestinian community in Israel experience an escalating sense of crisis (Natoor, 1999). The Palestinian culture has departed from the "innocent" era of clan culture, and is now having

Difficulties adopting a modern, independent and individualistic way of life that can confront the ensuing identity crisis. In the socio-cultural exchanges between the younger and the adult generations in the Palestinian society (between fathers and sons, and also between mothers and daughters), the older generation strengthens their argument by promoting social experiences and types of entertainment of their time. Nator (1999) pointed out that in the parents' generation leisure culture fulfilled a social function, and the collective dictated the means of entertainment. These different cultural perceptions of the younger and older generations are often the bases of differences of opinions within the same family and affect parent-child relationships (Abu-Asbah, 2012).

According to Abu-Asbah (2012), today's Palestinian parents' expectations regarding their children's future, often differ from the children's own expectations for their future. Therefore, there is a growing generation gap in Palestinian society, expressed in the lack of a uniform coherent identity in the value system of social institutions. This deficiency, in turn, projects on the socialization process of the adolescent. A salient example is the lack of correlation between the status of the child in the family and his/her status at school and the behavioral ramifications of the student in various settings.

Adolescence and substance use

Literature suggests that the rates of aggression are especially high during adolescence in comparison with other ages (Abu Asba, 2004; Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998; Gotlib, 2002). During adolescence, boys and girls often start experimenting with smoking and use drugs and alcohol. Adolescence is also characterized by rapid physiological and psychological development and wrought with tension and stress, which might be reflected in the form of physiological or emotional symptoms like recurrent headaches, stomachaches and dizziness, muscles stiffness, daily worries, depressed mood, and irritability (Harel, Molcho & Vetlinger, 2003).

The use of psychoactive substances increases the risk of involvement in violent behaviors and traffic accidents, and may also engender the individual's social and familial environment (Carmen & Alvarez, 2000).

Studies on the attitudes of youth towards psychoactive substances and the associated risks have come up with three groups of variables that may affect these attitudes: (1) socio-demographic

characteristics-gender and religiosity; (2) interpersonal factors – social cohesion, attitudes and the use of psychoactive substances by friends and parents; and (3) attitudinal characteristics – the use of psychoactive substances.

Socio-demographic characteristics of users

Studies have found that the proportion of the male teenagers who use psychoactive substances is higher than that of the girl teenagers (Ezrachi, Rosiner, Steinberg & Bar-Hamburger, 2006). Boys also had more positive attitudes towards the use of substances than girls (Musa, 2003). These differences may partly result from the patterns of parent-children relationships, degree of parental supervision and compliance with social expectations (Kosson, Steuerwald, Newman & Widom, 1994). Further, boys who perceive their parents' supervision as loose have more negative attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances, compared to more positive attitudes among children who perceive their parents' supervision as strict. A study among 17 year old adolescents in France revealed that adolescents living in divided families are more vulnerable and may engage more in the use and abuse of psychoactive substances (such as: tobacco, alcohol and cannabis), in comparison with adolescents living with both their parents (Khlaf et al., 2020).

An additional factor influencing the attitudes of adolescents regarding the use of psychoactive substances is the level of religiosity. Attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances are influenced by the adolescents' level of religiosity and their religious affiliations. Most religions oppose the use of psychoactive substances, however, there are differences regarding the use of alcohol (McBride, Mutch & Chitwood, 1996). In studies conducted among the Palestinian population in Israel, differences were observed in the attitudes of Christians, Muslims, and Druze. More specifically, Christianity perceives drinking alcohol as permissible, and it is even desirable on some occasions, whereas Islam and the Druze faith strongly oppose it (McBride, Mutch and Chitwood, 1996). These differences influence the attitudes of the adolescents from the three religions regarding the use of psychoactive substances; Christians expressed curiosity and more readiness than Muslims and Druze to use those substances (Musa, 2003). Thus, the more religious the teenagers are the more stringent are their attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances (It should be noted that the study described in this article did not examine the respondents' level of religiosity but rather their religious affiliation).

Interpersonal factors

The most significant reference groups in adolescence are friends and family, and hence the attitudes of the teenagers towards psychoactive substances and their use are the product of the influence of "significant others", who constitute the closest social environment of the teenagers. Some research has documented a negative correlation between the quality of the adolescent's relationship with his/her family and his/her attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances (Rahav & Teichman, 1995; Teichman, Rahav & Kfir, 1998). In other words, when the quality of the family relationships is poor and familial cohesion is low, the adolescent is more likely to hold a positive attitude toward the use of psychoactive substances.

The attitudes of parents and friends regarding the use of psychoactive substances can also affect the adolescent's attitudes regarding the use of psychoactive substances. Studies conducted in Israel and throughout the world support the positive correlation between parental attitudes and their children's attitude regarding the use of psychoactive substances (Austin, Macari & Lottieri, 1979; Rahav & Teichman, 1995; Teichman, Rahav & Kfir, 1998). For example, a study among Palestinian teenagers in Israel found that adolescents, whose parents opposed the use of psychoactive substances and objected to their fraternizing with the users of those substances, have negative attitudes toward the use of substances (Musa, 2003).

Other research examined the impact of friends' use of psychoactive substances on the adolescent's use pattern (Ezrachi, Rosiner, Steinberg & Bar-Hamburger, 2006; Barnea, Rahav, & Teichman, 1991). Those studies indicated that there was a higher proportion of users of psychoactive substances among youth whose friends use psychoactive substances. Furthermore, Barnea, Rahav and Teichman (1991) reported that when the friends use psychoactive substances, then the age at which youngsters use psychoactive substances is lower.

Family cohesion has been defined as the emotional bond between the family members and it is important for the child's developmental process and functioning (Ackard et al., 2006; Lucia and Breslau, 2006). Family cohesion is considered to be a special cultural protective element against psychoactive substances among U.S. Latinos (Marsiglia, Parsai, Kulis, 2009).

Stages of substance abuse

Experimental use: Experimentation relates to the first 1–2 times that a substance is used and the adolescent wants to know how intoxication from using a certain drug(s) feels. Most young people try drugs for the first time as an experiment, usually because their friends are doing it and to fit in. It tends not to last long or happen often. It depends on many factors such as: how easy it is to get drugs, where it's happening, your group of friends, and the current trends or fashion. For most young experimenters, after a few times, they decide that the substance they tried is 'not for them' or is not worth the risk and expense. The main risk of this type of drug use is that young people may not know about the effects of the drugs they try (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011).

Regular or recreational use: The experimenter may go on to more regular recreational drug use once a week or at social events. Not all young people are equally at risk of developing an addiction. Various factors including inherited genetic predispositions and adverse experiences in early life make trying drugs and developing a substance use disorder more likely. Exposure to stress (such as emotional or physical abuse) in childhood primes the brain to be sensitive to stress and seek relief from it in different ways; this increases the likelihood of subsequent drug abuse and starting drug use earlier. The state of being either impulsive or aggressive is also a factor that increases the likelihood of continued substance use. In contrast, other factors, such as parenting that is nurturing or a healthy school environment, may encourage healthy development and lessen the risk of later drug use (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014).

Attitudinal characteristics

Studies by McMillan and Conner (2003), Barnea, Rahav and Teichman (1995) found a positive correlation between attitudes towards psychoactive substances and their use. This means that the more the person has a more positive attitude towards psychoactive substances, the greater the likelihood that he/she will use those substances.

Despite the importance of understanding teenagers' attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances and their associated risks, few studies in Israel, whose focus was on the teenagers' attitudes towards repeated or regular use of psychoactive substances, investigated this issue, and even ignored the adolescents' attitudes toward random experimenting with those substances.

Therefore, this study addressed the attitudes of the Palestinian youth in Israel regarding the risk involved in experimenting or regularly using psychoactive substances, and the impact of socio-demographic, interpersonal and attitudinal characteristics on those behaviors.

A part from extending academic knowledge of the study problem, it is important to understand the adolescents' attitudes toward substance use since the adolescents' identity and values are shaped in this period. This is especially relevant in the case of the Palestinian adolescents, who live and grow up in the changing socio-cultural context of the Palestinian society in Israel; Internal processes of modernization, and external processes, related to the Jewish society and Jewish-Palestinian relations, greatly influence this society (Abu Beker, 2008), which has experienced an accelerated modernization process since the establishment of the State of Israel (1948). Among other things, the transformation is manifested in a continuous increase in the level of education, a rising standard of living and changing patterns of consumption (Knana, 2005; Ghanem, 2001). These processes are accompanied by difficulties due to the lack of congruence between the different value systems, which guide the individual's behavior, which leads to deep crisis in the processes of the change of every society, and an individual's socialization (Abu Asba, 2007). As indicated earlier, there is no problem in that the younger generation in the Palestinian society is trying to adopt different modern lifestyles from those characteristic of their parents' generation (Abu Baker, 2008).

There is a correlation between attitudes and behaviors in general, and attitudes towards psychoactive substances in particular; attitudes precede and influence behavior, and attitudes are the outcome of behavior (See review: Glasman and Albarracin, 2006). For example, the users of marijuana have more favorable attitudes toward the drug than non-users among college students (Simons & Careya, 2000).

Schmid (2006) argued that Palestinian children and adolescents are at a high level of risk. He reported that 57% of the Palestinian children endured poverty, 23% live in families with no breadwinners, 11% of the Palestinian youth did not attend schools run by the Ministry of Education, and 20-25% of 17-year-old Palestinian students did not complete 12 years of schooling. The achievements of Palestinian students both in national and international standard exams are low and have declined over the years. 43% of all adolescent criminal files in Israel were opened for non-Jewish teenagers.

From the above literature review, it was shown that the adolescent Palestinian population in Israel has unique properties and little research has been conducted on the relationship between the attitudes toward psychoactive drugs and the use of those drugs; therefore, further research is required for the purpose of understanding the possible affecting factors of their attitudes toward the risk of using and experimenting with psycho-active substances. To that end, the aim of this study is to examine the adolescent's attitudes toward the risk of experimenting and regularly using psychoactive substances and the contribution of family cohesion, parents and friends attitudes towards psycho-active substances to the attitudes towards the risk to use of psycho-active substances.

The researchers hypothesize that adolescents would attribute higher risk to regular use of psychoactive substances in comparison with experimenting with psychoactive substances. Furthermore, family cohesion, parents and friends attitudes towards psycho-active substances will significantly predict the attitudes towards the risk of using psycho-active substances among adolescents.

Methods

Participants

Five hundred and forty-eight Palestinian adolescents from Israel, age 16-18, participated in the study, approximately 76% were boys. The study was conducted in ten Palestinian localities, five in Northern Israel, three in Central Israel and two in Southern Israel. These localities were chosen because they represented the geographic distribution of the Palestinian population in Israel and their socio-economic status. About 42% of the participant teenagers reported using cigarettes, approximately 20% - alcoholic beverages, approximately 15% - inhalants, 5% - cannabis, approximately 4% admitted using medications not for medical needs, and approximately 2% reported using other illegal drugs. The rates of use of psychoactive substances in this study were not significantly different from those reported in other studies among this population (Azaiza, Bar-Hamburger, & Moran, 2007). The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Al-Qasemi College.

Data-collection instruments

The research employed questionnaires used previously by Barnea, Rahav and Teichman (1991); Rahav & Teichman, 1995, Rahav, Teichman, Gil, Rosenblum & Bar-Hamburger, 2001.

The study variables were as follows:

Attitudes towards the risks from experimenting with and regularly using psychoactive substances

This is a 16-item scale that evaluates the risk that the participant attributes to regular use or random experimentation with psychoactive substances (Rahav et al., 2001). The psychoactive substances included: (1): cigarettes, (2) alcoholic beverages (wine, beer, hard liquor), (3) medications (amphetamines, weight reducing drugs, and sedatives not for medical indications), (4) cannabis (hashish and marihuana), (5) inhalants (paint thinners, glue, various gases), and (6) other illegal drugs (hard drugs) like opiates (opium, Persian coke, heroin), crack, L.S.D., methadone, ecstasy, and P.C.P. The teenagers were asked to rank the risk of each of the psychoactive substances in two situations: experimental use or regular drug consumption/drug use. The range of scores for each statement was from 1- not dangerous at all to 4 - very dangerous. The highest score on the experimentation scale or the regular drug consumption scale indicates an attribution of high risk.

Interpersonal characteristics

Three interpersonal variables were examined: family cohesion, parental attitudes and friends' attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances.

Family cohesion: This construct was measured using 11 items derived from the brief version of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation questionnaire (FACES-III, Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985), translated into Hebrew by Teichman and Navon (1990) and translated from Hebrew into Arabic by the researchers (with $\alpha = 0.8$ to translated version). The variable of cohesion reflects the degree of connection or separation prevalent between family members. In addition, the level of cohesion depends on the ability of the family system to change its power structure, role relationships and the rules that organize the relationships within, in response to environmental and developmental pressures.

Teenagers were asked to rank the level of each item of the family cohesion scale on a five-point Likert scale. Examples for the items are: “Family members like to spend leisure time together”; “Family members feel close to one another”; and “We help each other with household chores”. A high score indicates high family cohesion. Internal reliability of the questionnaire was high ($\alpha = 0.89$).

Parental attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances: This was measured by a one item scale that assesses parental attitudes regarding the use of psychoactive substances measured on a 4-point Likert scale, where a high score indicates positive parental attitudes regarding the use of psychoactive substances (FACES-III, Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985).

Attitudes of friends regarding the use of psych-active substances: This was also measured with a one item scale measured on a 4-point Likert scale. A high score indicates friends’ positive attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances (FACES-III, Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985).

Attitudinal characteristics

The following variables were also examined:

Respondents' attitudes regarding the use of psychoactive substances: There were 12 items on the scale of general attitudes towards psychoactive substances (Rahav et al., 2001). The scale for each item ranged from 1-strongly disagrees, to 5-strongly agree. Examples for the items: “You should not trust drug users”; “There should be a harsh reaction to people that use drugs”; and “A person who uses drugs should be sentenced to life imprisonment”. A high score indicates positive attitudes towards the use of psychoactive substances. Internal reliability of the scale was good, Cronbach's alpha 0.78.

Index relating to the use of psychoactive substances: the index relates to the use of all groups of psychoactive substances (cigarettes, alcohol, medications, cannabis and other illegal drugs). Teenagers were asked whether they had ever used psychoactive substances (yes/no) (Rahav et al., 2001).

Demographic characteristics: The items eliciting demographic characteristics were derived from the study by Azaiza, Bar-Hamburger & Moran (2007), and included the following variables:

Gender, age, years of formal education for mother and father, level of religiosity; and family status (live with both parents; dormitory, kibbutz, with relatives, with foster family, other).

Research Procedure

The study was conducted from August 2013 through January 2014. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with the Palestinian adolescents in Israel. The teenagers were randomly selected after dividing each of the selected localities into four quarters; teenagers ages 16-18 were sampled from each quarter using the method “one house yes, one house no” from the various neighborhoods in the locality. After locating the teenagers, the researchers explained the subject and aim of the research to the teenagers and their parents and assured them that the respondents' anonymity would be maintained in any publication of the research and that the data would be used solely for scientific purposes. Therefore, the parents gave their written consent for the participation of their children in the study. The interview lasted about thirty minutes and was conducted in Arabic by trained research assistants. It was emphasized to the teenagers and their parents that participation in the study was voluntary and they could cease participation at any time.

Results

Table 1 presents the respondents' assessment of the risk involved in experimenting with or regularly using the various psychoactive substances: cigarettes, alcohol, medications, cannabis and other illegal drugs. The table shows that there is variation in the perceptions of the risk that the teenagers attributed to different psychoactive substances. The teenagers attributed medium to high risk to experimenting with cannabis and other illegal drugs (hard drugs) ($M= 2.93$), medium risk to experimenting with inhalants, medications, and alcoholic beverages (soft drugs) ($M= 2.74$, $M= 2.68$ and $M= 2.49$ respectively), and low risk to smoking cigarettes ($M=1.93$). The report of risk that the teenagers attributed to psychoactive substances increased significantly with the transition to the dimension of regular use. Teenagers attributed high risk to the regular use of all psychoactive substances (hard and soft drugs), except for smoking cigarettes, which, in their view, had a medium risk.

The teenagers' perception of the diminishing order of risk for the different types of drugs was identical both for experimentation and regular use of the psychoactive substances, as follows: other illegal drugs and cannabis, inhalants, medications, alcoholic beverages and cigarettes.

Table 1: Means and standard deviation of attitudes of teenagers regarding the risk of experimenting with and using psychoactive substances

Substance	Drug use		Experimentation with drug		T
	SD	M	SD	M	
Cigarettes	1.37	2.52	1.25	1.93	-12.66***
Alcoholic beverages	1.32	2.93	1.36	2.49	-12.53***
Wine	1.35	2.86	1.39	2.38	-12.14***
Beer	1.34	2.91	1.39	2.48	-11.43***
Hard liquor	1.34	3.01	1.39	2.60	-10.99***
Cannabis	1.33	3.19	1.34	2.93	-8.69***
Hashish	1.33	3.20	1.35	2.91	-8.53***
Marihuana	1.33	3.18	1.35	2.94	-8.46***
Inhalants	1.33	3.13	1.36	2.74	-10.23***
Medications	1.32	3.08	1.32	2.68	-11.76***
Stimulants	1.34	3.14	1.37	2.79	-9.64***
Sedatives	1.35	3.08	1.38	2.65	-11.38***
Diet	1.34	3.02	1.40	2.61	-10.34***
Other illegal drugs	1.32	3.19	1.30	2.93	-9.82***
Methadone	1.33	3.12	1.37	2.77	-9.93***
Opiates	1.33	3.21	1.33	2.98	-8.78***
Hallucinogens	1.32	3.19	1.35	2.93	-8.21***
Ecstasy	1.34	3.20	1.35	2.93	-8.81***
Crack	1.33	3.21	1.33	3.01	-7.51***
PCP	1.33	3.20	1.34	2.94	-8.58***

*** P < .001

To examine the factors that influence the perception of risk that teenagers attribute to experimentation with or regular use of psychoactive substances, a series of 12 multi-linear regression analyses was performed (6 for experimental use and 6 for regular substance use).

One of the groups of psychoactive substances (cigarettes, alcohol, medications, cannabis, and other illegal drugs) was defined as a dependent variable in each regression analysis, and the socio-demographic, interpersonal and cognitive characteristics were defined as independent variables. Tables 2 and 3 show the standardized regression coefficients (β) and the variance in predictions of experimentation and use of substances, respectively.

Table 2: Linear regression analyses for the prediction of factors that influence risk perception of experimenting with psychoactive substances

Variable	Other illegal drugs B	Medications B	Inhalants β	Cannabis B	Alcohol B	Cigarettes B
Socio-demographic characteristics						
Gender (0-female)	-0.00	0.01	0.06	-0.02	0.03	0.00
Age (reference group – 16)						
17	-0.02	-0.03	-0.04	-0.03	0.01	0.01
18	-0.03	-0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.03	0.02
Father's education	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.08	0.09*
Mother's education	-0.04	-0.06	-0.01	-0.08*	-0.08	-0.05
Religiosity	0.02	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.12***	0.09*
Living arrangements (0-lives with both parents)	-0.05	-0.01	-0.00	-0.07*	-0.07*	-0.03
Interpersonal characteristics						
Family cohesion	0.15***	0.17***	0.16***	0.15***	0.13***	0.23***
Parental attitudes	0.04	0.07*	0.12**	0.04	0.08*	0.11*
Friends' attitudes	0.07*	0.10*	0.04	0.08*	0.10**	-0.03
Cognitive characteristics						
Positive attitudes	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01**	-0.13***	-0.05
Use of psycho-active substances (0-does not use)						
Cigarettes	-0.10**	-0.07*	-0.16***	-0.09**	-0.12**	-0.21***
Alcohol	-0.12***	-0.13***	-0.04	-0.14***	-0.27***	-0.08*
Cannabis	-0.11***	-0.08*	-0.10**	-0.08**	0.02	0.02
Inhalants	-0.52***	-0.44***	-0.44***	-0.50***	-0.36***	-0.23***
Medications	-0.31***	-0.25***	-0.28***	-0.30***	-0.15***	-0.12***
Other illegal drugs	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01

R ²	0.630***	0.500***	0.501***	0.633***	0.512***	0.324***
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* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001

The data that appear in Table 2 indicate that the variables that were significantly associated with the perception of risk of all psycho-active substances are: family cohesion, cigarette smoking, use of inhalants and use of medications. Teenagers with high family cohesion and those who do not smoke did not use inhalants, and/or medications, attributed higher risk to experimenting with psychoactive substances compared with teenagers with low family cohesion, who smoke and/or use inhalants and medications.

Moreover, the variables that contributed significantly and relatively consistently to the models were: parental attitudes towards cigarettes, alcohol, inhalants and medications; friends' attitudes towards alcoholic beverages, cannabis, medications and other illegal drugs; use of alcohol – contributed to the use of cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis, medications, and other illegal drugs; use of cannabis – contributed to the use of cannabis, inhalants, medications and other illegal drugs. When the parents' attitude regarding psychoactive substances was stricter, the teenagers attributed a higher level of risk to experimenting with cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, inhalants and medications. In addition, when their friends' attitude regarding psychoactive substances was more negative, the teenagers attributed a higher level of risk to experimenting with alcoholic beverages, cannabis, medications and other illegal drugs. Adolescents that did not use alcoholic beverages attributed higher risk to experimenting with cigarettes and alcoholic beverages, cannabis, medications and other illegal drugs, than those who used alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, teenagers that did not use cannabis attributed higher risk to experimenting with cannabis, inhalants, medications and other illegal drugs, than those who used cannabis.

Moreover, the findings suggest an inconsistent significant contribution of socio-demographic characteristics and the variable of positive attitudes to the research model: father's level of education – to cigarettes use; mother's level of education – to cannabis use; religiosity – to cigarettes and alcoholic beverages use; living arrangements – to alcoholic beverages and cannabis use; and positive attitudes – to alcoholic beverages and to cannabis use.

The data shown in Table 3 indicate that the variables that were significantly associated with the perception of risk in the use of all groups of psychoactive substances are: family cohesion, parental attitudes, use of inhalants and use of medications. Teenagers with high family cohesion and those

Whose parents have strict positions against psycho-active substances attributed high risk to the use of psycho-active substances. It was also revealed that adolescents who did not use inhalants and medications attributed higher risk to the use of psychoactive substances than adolescents who used those substances.

Table 3: Linear regression analysis for the prediction of the factors that influence perception of risk in the use of psychoactive substances

Variable	Other illegal drugs B	Medications B	Inhalants B	Cannabis β	Alcohol β	Cigarettes B
Socio-demographic characteristics						
Gender (0-female)	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	-0.00	-0.09*
Age (reference group – 16)						
17	-0.02	-0.03	-0.03	-0.01	-0.01	0.02
18	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	0.00	-0.01	0.04
Father's education	0.01	-0.10	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.10*
Mother's education	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.02	-0.03	-0.05
Religiosity	-0.02	-0.00	-0.03	-0.02	0.03	-0.02
Living arrangements (0-lives with both parents)	-0.01	-0.00	-0.01	-0.00	-0.02	-0.03
Interpersonal characteristics						
Family cohesion	0.17***	0.13***	0.10***	0.11***	0.13***	0.10**
Parental attitudes	0.06*	0.07*	0.07**	0.06*	0.08*	0.12**
Friends' attitudes	-0.00	0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	-0.17***
Cognitive characteristics						
Positive attitudes	-0.02	-0.01	-0.05	-0.06	-0.13***	-0.18***
Use of psycho-active substances (0-does not use)						
Cigarettes	-0.08**	-0.05	-0.06*	-0.08**	-0.06*	-0.17***
Alcohol	-0.03	-0.08*	-0.03	-0.03	-0.17***	-0.02
Cannabis	-0.18***	-0.16***	-0.17***	-0.17***	-0.08**	-0.05
Inhalants	-0.59***	-0.56***	0.60***	-0.60***	-0.50***	-0.40***
Medications	-0.40***	-0.37***	-0.40***	-0.40***	-0.30***	-0.26***
Other illegal drugs	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
R ²	0.441***	0.478***	0.587***	0.536***	0.450***	0.497***

* P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .00

Other variables that were significantly associated with the use of psychoactive substances included: the use of cigarettes – for cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, cannabis, inhalants, and for other illegal drugs; the use of cannabis for alcoholic beverages, cannabis, inhalants, medications and other illegal substances. Teenagers that did not use cigarettes attributed higher risk to the use of cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, cannabis, inhalants and other illegal drugs, more than those who smoked cigarettes. Similarly, teenagers that did not use cannabis attributed higher risk to the use of alcoholic beverages to cannabis, inhalants, medications and other illegal drugs than those who used cannabis. In addition, the findings suggest an inconsistent significant contribution of socio-demographic characteristics and following variables:

Gender – to cigarettes use, father’s level of education – to cigarettes use; friends’ attitudes – to cigarettes use, positive attitudes – to cigarettes and alcoholic beverages use; use of alcoholic beverages to alcoholic beverages and medications use.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine adolescent's attitudes towards the risk of experimenting with and regularly using psychoactive substances and the contribution of family cohesion, parents and friends attitudes towards psycho-active substances to the attitudes towards the risk to use of psycho-active substances.

The findings indicated that there were gaps in the risk levels that teenagers attributed to the experimentation with and regular use of psychoactive substances. More specifically, the adolescents attributed the higher risk to the regular use of psychoactive substances than to the experimentation with those substances. The risk level attributed to experimenting with and using psychoactive substances was associated with the risk level attributed to the different psychoactive substances. For example, the adolescents attributed the higher risk to hard drugs, other illegal drugs and cannabis than to soft drugs: inhalants, medications, alcoholic beverages and cigarettes. The gap in the transition from the level of experimentation to the regular use of psychoactive substances was documented for the use of cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. The adolescents were open to the experimentation with alcoholic beverages, which are at the medium risk level when compared

to the high risk of regular use. However, the adolescents associated low risk to experimenting with smoking when compared to the medium risk of the regular use.

Another finding was that the adolescents with high family cohesion and those who do not smoke do not use inhalants, and/or medications, compared with teenagers with low family cohesion, who smoke and/or use inhalants and medications. That is to say, when the parents' attitude regarding psychoactive substances was stricter, the teenagers attributed a higher level of risk to experimenting with cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, inhalants and medications. In addition, when their friends' attitude regarding psychoactive substances was more negative, the teenagers attributed a higher level of risk to experimenting with alcoholic beverages, cannabis, medications and other illegal drugs.

Therefore, the researchers concluded that the adolescents' perception of risk associated with experimenting with and using psychoactive substances was affected by the adolescents' close environment and social norms. That is, the adolescents' perceptions of cigarettes smoking as a low risk activity may stem from the fact that smoking is a custom associated with the Arab hospitality and life experiences (Al-Omari & Scheibmeir, 2009).

Family cohesion was consistently associated with the adolescents' attitudes toward experimenting and regularly using psychoactive substances. However, parents' and friends' attitudes did not have a consistent association with those attitudes; parental attitudes were associated with the teenagers' attitudes regarding experimentation with all psychoactive substances, except for cannabis and other illegal drugs. With regard to regular usage, parental attitudes were associated with the adolescents' attitudes regarding all groups of psychoactive substances.

Friends' attitudes influence the attitudes of the teenagers regarding experimentation. The findings support the argument that the significant others – friends and family- influence the attitudes of the teenagers regarding psychoactive substances (Mayer, Forster, Murray, & Wagenaar, 1998). However, the findings reveal a greater impact of the Palestinian family on shaping the opinions of their children. This influence draws its strength from the patriarchal social structure that prevails in the Palestinian society and grants the family and adults the ability to influence their children and demand their full compliance with the laws and values of the family (Sharabi, 1997).

The findings regarding the association between attitudinal factors and the use of psychoactive substances are in line with the previous findings reported in the literature that indicate the correlation between the respondents' attitudes towards psychoactive substances and their actual use of substances (Barnea, 1985; Rahav & Teichman, 1995; McMillan & Conner, 2003).

The findings also suggest that the socio-demographic characteristics of the teenagers had little contribution to the prediction of the perception of the risk regarding experimenting with or regularly using psycho-active substances. In contrast, interpersonal characteristics were associated with the teenagers' attitudes, though this association changed in the transition from the stage of experimentation to the stage of use.

The findings illustrated the conflict that the Palestinian youth experience in view of the transition of the Palestinian society from the traditional to the modern society; the transition is accompanied by many changes in different life domains and the adoption of modern lifestyles. The adolescents attributed a medium to high risk to most of the psychoactive substances, however, those attitudes were considered lenient, especially in terms of a traditional society that is in the early stages of transition to modernity and which is still vehemently opposed to the use of psychoactive substances, except for cigarettes. The adolescents' attitudes represent the initial transition from the traditional society to the modern society that permits the use of psychoactive substances. However, that transition does not detach them from the traditional patriarchal societal structure and the values and principles of the Palestinian society and they remain sensitive to the influence of their family on their attitudes and identity.

It can be concluded that the use of psycho-active substances is considered to have more risk than the regular use of the substances; in the Palestinian society, familial factors still have a high impact on adolescents and affect their attitudes toward major issues such as the experimentation of substance abuse.

Limitation of the study

The research sample included a narrow age range (16-18). Therefore, further work is needed to examine the younger and older children to understand what their attitudes are.

Government and civil organizations that deal with psychoactive substance use could avail themselves of the information gathered in this research, and consequently develop intervention programs for risk behaviors (use of psychoactive substances) in the Palestinian population, increase the understanding of the Palestinian teenagers' perceptions of hazardous substances, as well as the factors that impact those perceptions. In addition, this study has revealed the importance of the parent's attitudes on their children; therefore, the intervention programs should also target the parents to increase their understanding and awareness of the positive effect that they can have on their children in preventing experimentation with psychoactive substances.

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مواقف المراهقين العرب الفلسطينيين في داخل الخط الأخضر اتجاه تجربة والاستخدام المنتظم

للمخدرات، وجهات نظر وعوامل مؤثرة

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ملخص

بحث هذا المقال مواقف المراهقين العرب الفلسطينيين في إسرائيل فيما يتعلق بالمخاطر، وذلك نتيجة تجربة المخدرات، والاستخدام المنتظم لها، وكان الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو فحص مواقف المراهقين تجاه مخاطر تجربة المخدرات واستخدامها بانتظام وفحص مدى التماسك الأسري، ومواقف الآباء والأصدقاء تجاه المخدرات، وإلى أي حد يسهم ذلك في بناء المواقف اتجاه مخاطر استخدام المخدرات. وتم استخدام البحث الكمي من خلال استبيانات التقرير الذاتي لفحص المواقف اتجاه مخاطر تجربة المخدرات واستخدامها بانتظام، والتماسك الأسري، ومواقف الوالدين والأصدقاء اتجاه استخدام المخدرات بين 548 مراهقاً عربياً فلسطينياً. وفرضيات البحث: سيدعي المراهقون أنه توجد مخاطر كثيرة وكبيرة للاستخدام المنتظم مقارنةً بتجربة المخدرات. إلى جانب ذلك؛ سوف يتنبأ التماسك الأسري، ومواقف الآباء والأصدقاء اتجاه المخدرات بمواقف المراهقين اتجاه مخاطر استخدام المخدرات. وأشارت نتائج البحث إلى أن المراهقين يعززون مخاطر أكثر إلى الاستخدام المنتظم للمخدرات بالمقارنة مع تجربة تلك المواد. كما وجدت علاقة بين مستوى الخطر المنسوب إلى تجربة واستخدام المخدرات، وبين نوع المخدرات. ويعزى المراهقون إلى المخدرات القوية والمخدرات غير القانونية مثل القنب، خطورة اشد من المخدرات الخفيفة: المستنشقات والأدوية والمشروبات الكحولية والسجائر. ثمة نتيجة أخرى ظهرت في الدراسة مفادها ان المراهقين ممن عبروا عن وجود تماسك أسري عال لديهم، وأولئك الذين لا يدخنون ولا يستخدمون المستنشقات و/أو الأدوية، يعززون مخاطر أكبر لتجربة المخدرات بالمقارنة مع المراهقين من ذوي التماسك الأسري المنخفض، والذين يدخنون و/أو يستخدمون المستنشقات والأدوية. وبينت النتائج أنه عندما كان موقف الوالدين تجاه المخدرات أكثر صرامة، حمل المراهقون مخاطر أكبر من تجربة السجائر والمشروبات الكحولية والمستنشقات والأدوية. وإلى جانب ذلك، فعندما كانت مواقف الأصدقاء تجاه المؤثرات العقلية أكثر سلبية، حمل المراهقون مخاطر أكبر إلى تجربة المشروبات الكحولية والقنب والأدوية والعقاقير غير القانونية الأخرى. ويمكن أن نستنتج أن استخدام المخدرات يعد أكثر خطورة من الاستخدام المنتظم لهذه المواد، كما أنه في المجتمع الفلسطيني لا تزال العوامل الأسرية لها تأثير كبير في المراهقين وتؤثر في مواقفهم تجاه القضايا الرئيسية، مثل تجربة المخدرات وتعاطيها.

كلمات مفتاحية: المراهقون العرب الفلسطينيين في إسرائيل، استخدام المخدرات، التماسك الاسري، مواقف، عوامل مؤثرة.