

Research Report On
A Study To Identify The Risk And Protective Factors
On Drug Use Among The Youngsters

Submitted to The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN)
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By

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Once more, we would like to thank all the respondents and research assistant of the survey for their valuable assistance, without which the survey would not have materialized.

We do hope that the findings and recommendations of this report could be put to good use by policy makers, social administrators, program designers and all colleagues concerned with the prevention of drug abuse among young people in Hong Kong.

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Hong Kong Jockey Club Drug Info Centre

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report, we have thoroughly reviewed available literature about risk and protective factors contributing to adolescent drug abuse in local studies as well as those conducted in Western countries. In order to determine whether the identified risk factors are associated with higher involvement with illicit drug use among the youth and if any protective factors could moderate the impact of certain risks on drug abuse, a cross-sectional study, involving 2,909 adolescents, was conducted through questionnaires surveys in both one to one and group settings.

Through this study, we have identified 19 risk variables in five domains, namely the personal attributes, the family, peers, schools and the community. For personal attributes, coping with stress through substance use, failing to cope through physical exercise, and through socio-recreation activities, and the lack of intimacy competence were found to be risk factors. Irregular marital status of parents, lack of positive relationship with adults, inadequate family strength, lack of family sanction against substance misuse, and disagreement between parents and peers were risk factors in the family domain. For peer variables, dominating peer influence over parents, weak or absence of peer sanction against substance abuse, inadequate availability of role models for conventional behavior, but available friends and models for problem behavior, peer substance abuse, and peer drug encouragement were risk variables for adolescent substance abuse. Moreover, the lack of educational aspiration and poor school performance were also risk factors. Finally, access to and ease of drug acquisition were risk factors on the community level. Each of the five systems studied has contributed at least one or more variables associated significantly with adolescent drug abuse, and our finding of their interaction shows that drug abuse is a problem with multi-dimensional causality.

Among the protective factors identified, five of them are personal attributes related variables including coping through physical exercise, coping through social-recreational activities, self-efficacy, positive affect, and value achievement. Two protective factors belonged to the peer domains which were number of friends for conventional behavior and peer sanction against substance abuse. We also found that two family-related protective variables being family sanction against substance abuse and regulatory control in the family. Lastly, educational aspiration and attachment to one's school were two protective factors identified in the school domain. Obviously, some of the risk and protective factors in a given domain such as adequate or inadequate coping skills for personal attributes, adequacy of family sanction and peer modeling as well as the educational aspiration of the school system are all variables along the respective axis of change. The apparent implications on prevention is how to improve the coping skills of individual youth, family control, peer modeling and school performance. Ironically, our data did not indicate any protective factor in the community system opposite the availability of drugs.

All protective factors appear to play an important role of moderation of or buffer against adolescent drug abuse. Our findings argue that preventive intervention should be broadened beyond its traditional attention on risk factors only but to encompass

various means to strengthen possible protection as well. One important finding of the current research is that some immalleable risk factors can be moderated by certain malleable protective factors. The researchers find that educational aspiration, family sanction against substance abuse, and number of friends or role models for conventional behavior can moderate the effect of age whereas marital status of parents can be counteracted by two protective factors namely educational aspiration and regulatory control in the family. It is well-known that adolescent from single-parent household are more likely to be involved in drug abuse. Our findings infer that the disadvantage of single parenthood can be moderated by better discipline (regulatory control) and more positive role modeling. These should cast practical and meaningful implications for the planning of prevention programmes in Hong Kong, especially the family drug education or parent drug-wise training.

Based upon the findings of the present investigation, we have formulated the following recommendations for the consideration of policy makers and constructive criticism by our professional colleagues: 1) Early identification of adolescent at risks for drug abuse may be possible because we have demonstrated certain risk factors which can be screened easily to serve as a warning for timely intervention, e.g. single parenthood (include divorce and separation) and poor school performance; 2) Coping strategies like doing physical exercise and participating in soico-recreational activities should be encouraged for adolescents to encounter stressful events. Besides, effective stress coping skills like social problem solving methods should also be taught to adolescents; 3) Assertive decision making, tactful resistance to peer pressure and "how to say no" must be taught and practised as early as possible; 4) Peer sanction against substance misuse and peer support for non-use should be promoted because both variables are effective intervention for adolescent at risk for drug abuse; 5) Family sanction against substance misuse and family strength should be enhanced by programmes organized by family counselors and youth workers. Moreover, drug abuse prevention orientation and training should be provided to Family Life Educators; 6) Adolescents who have good academic performance, close attachment to their schools, high educational aspiration and positive value on achievement seldom misuse or abuse drugs. This is an area of prevention which should be focused on by school authorities, parents and youth workers jointly; 7) Parent-Teacher Associations should be expanded and enhanced to promote conserted intervention and joint programmes to link the family domain with school systems as well as the community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Chinese Version)

在這個報告中，我們深入地回顧了與青少年濫用藥物的危機因素及保護因素有關的現存文獻，這些文獻包括了在本地及外國進行的研究。為了瞭解危機因素是否導致青少年沉迷吸毒的原因，以及保護因素能否抵消某些危機因素的負面影響，社聯進行了一個橫斷的問卷研究，以單獨面談或小組形式訪問了2,909個青少年。

我們首先在這個研究中確定了19個危機變數，這些變數分別來自五個範疇，包括個人屬性、家庭、朋輩、學校及社會。¹在個人屬性方面，以濫用藥物應付壓力、不能以運動和社交文娛活動應付壓力，以及缺乏與別人建立親密關係的能力，都被認定為危機因素。²父母離異、與成年人缺乏良好關係、沒有足夠的家庭力量、家庭對藥物濫用行為採取姑息態度，以及與家長及朋輩之間出現齟齬，都是家庭範疇中的危機因素。³至於朋輩方面的變數，則包括朋輩的影響遠超過父母的影響、朋輩間對濫用藥物行為抵制不足或缺乏嚴懲、朋友中缺乏循規蹈舉的典範，卻結識不少有行為問題的朋友、友儕間出現藥物濫用，以及互相標榜吸毒行為，都是青少年染上毒癮的危機變數。⁴無心向學或學校成績欠佳都是危機因素。最後，在社會層面方面，有機會接觸或容易取得毒品，亦是危機因素。在研究的五個範疇中，每個範疇至少有一個或多個變數與青少年吸毒有明顯的關連，當我們研究這些範疇的相互關係時，發現它們互為影響，致使吸毒成為一個非常錯綜複雜的問題。

在確認的保護因素之中，其中五個是與個人屬性有關的變數，包括借助運動應付壓力、透過社交文娛活動應付壓力、自我抗衡、良好影響，以及價值成就。屬於朋輩範疇的保護因素則包括有模範行為的朋友數目，以及朋輩間反對/抵制藥物濫用的行為。研究亦找出兩個與家庭有關的保護變數，即家庭嚴懲濫用藥物以及家庭對青少年嚴加管教。最後，有志於學業及對學校有歸屬感，是學校範疇中的兩個保護因素。很明顯，在某個範疇中的一些危機因素及保護因素，例如個人屬性中是否有足夠能力應付壓力、家庭對物質濫用行為是否嚴厲懲處、朋輩間有沒有良好榜樣，以及學校能否協助青少年訂下學習目標等，都是影響青少年誤入毒品圈套，抑或能潔身自愛的變數。這清楚顯示，要預防青少年染上毒癮，就要提高青少年的適應能力、加強家庭的管束、樹立朋輩榜樣，以及改善他們在學校的表現。不過在這次的研究中，我們的數據未能找出社區範疇中與容易取得毒品抗衡的保護因素。

所有的保護因素似乎在阻止或減輕青少年吸毒問題上扮演著重要角色。我們的研究建議預防性的工作應該擴闊，不應傳統地局限於減少危機因素，而應包含不同方法以加強保護因素的效能。這個研究其中一個重要的發現，是一些可塑性

高的保護因素可以約束一些無法改變的危機因素。研究員發現：教育抱負、家庭制裁藥物濫用、有傳統模範行為的朋友的數目，都可以減低年齡增加對青少年濫用藥物的影響；而教育抱負及家庭的規限這兩個保護因素，則可以抗衡父母的婚姻狀況。眾所周知，單親家庭的青少年比較容易染上毒癮，我們的研究發現，嚴格的紀律及樹立良好的榜樣可以彌補單親家庭的不足，這對香港在計劃推行反吸毒活動，特別是家庭反吸毒教育及提高家長對毒品問題的醒覺訓練方面，有很實際的啓發意義。

根據現有的調查結果，我們作出了一些有建設性的批評及建議，給政策制訂者參考：(1)由於我們已經找出某些容易被發現的危機因素，例如單親（包括離婚及分居）及學校表現欠佳等，都是些很容易就察覺得到的警告訊號，因此，及早發現有危機的青少年，然後作出及時的介入，是可以做得到的。(2)應向青少年介紹多些減壓的方法，如做運動、參與社交康樂活動等，並教導青少年如何面對壓力。(3)應儘早加強青少年獨立自決的能力，教導他們如何技巧地對抗朋輩壓力，及如何說『不』。(4)應鼓勵朋輩間抵制藥物濫用的風氣及互相鼓勵遠離毒品的行為，因為這兩個因素，都能有效地阻止青少年吸毒。(5)家庭輔導員及青少年工作者應舉辦多些活動，提高家庭嚴懲濫用藥物的決心，以及加強家庭力量。同時，應向家庭生活教育工作者提供推行反吸毒教育訓練。(6)有良好學術成績表現、對學校有歸屬感、有遠大抱負，以及有成功感的青少年絕少濫用藥物，學校、家長及青少年工作者應攜手在這方面努力，協助青少年抗拒毒品的誘惑。(7)應拓展家長教師協會來增強對青少年的危機介入，並發展將家庭、學校，以至社會聯繫起來的活動來增強三者的關係。