

Educational attainment and recreational drug use education essay



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Educational attainment is a term commonly used to refer to the highest degree of education an individual has completed. There are many factors that can affect a person's educational attainment. This might include poor socialisation, poor income families, and gender and race inequality in education. Researchers suggested that the level of a person's educational attainment has always been associated with recreational drug use.

Recreational drug use here refers to drugs use with the intention of creating or enhancing recreational experience. Such drugs are commonly used by young people and the usage of these drugs can cause cognitive impairment. This research proposal is concerned with the relationship between educational attainment and recreational drug use. The particular interest here is to find whether the use of recreational drug is the reason a person leaves school at an earlier age.

Research Question

The core research question is ' why are some people more likely to have lower educational attainment, than others?'

Literature review

It has always been identified that the long term use of recreational drugs tends to have long-lasting mental and physical side-effects. Lynskey and Hall (2005) suggested that ' there is a possibility that cannabis use induces an ' a motivational syndrome' or that cannabis use causes cognitive impairment'. They made both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, which revealed the significant associations between cannabis use and range of measures of educational performances including lower grade point average, less satisfaction with school, negative attitudes to school, increased rates of

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school absenteeism, and poor school performance. John Macleod (2004) meanwhile identified 48 relevant studies and published longitudinal studies reporting the fairly consistent associations between cannabis use and lower educational attainment.

In addition to that Duarte, Escario and Molina (2006) examined the relationship which links another recreational drug that is marijuana consumption and school failure among students. They had used the information provided by the Spanish Surveys on Drugs Use in the School Population to verify that 'marijuana consumption is a determinant for school failure among Spanish students'. In New Zealand, meanwhile, a study of 1265 children was made, which showed that cannabis use was dose-dependently related to an increased risk of leaving school without qualifications, failure to enter university and failure to obtain a university degree.

Leslie Iversen (2005), however, reported that there is little evidence that long-term cannabis use causes permanent cognitive impairment, nor is there is any clear cause and effect relationship to explain the psychosocial associations. There are some physical health risks but as he mentioned in his study, cannabis could be considered as a relatively safe drug. Furthermore, Lynsky and Hall (2005) noted that even though there is an indication that early cannabis use may significantly increase risk of early school leaving, they still proposed that the link between early cannabis use and educational attainment might arise because of the social context within which cannabis is used. According to them (2005), 'early cannabis use appears to be

associated with the adoption of an anti-conventional lifestyle characterised
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by affiliations with delinquents and substance using peers, and the precocious adoption of adult roles including early school leaving, leaving the parental home and early parenthood'.

Other than the use of recreational drugs, there are other factors affecting individual educational attainment. One of them is the deprivation of the individuals in their home neighbourhood. Garner and Raudenbush (1991) did a study that test for the existence of neighbourhood effects on educational attainment. After doing a survey and controlling for pupil ability, family background, and schooling, they however find a significant negative association between deprivations in the home neighbourhood and educational attainment. This strengthens the hypothesis that the use of recreational drugs has an impact on educational attainment.

However when Harris and Nixon (1993) made a study based on interviews with students, teachers and non-teaching staff in three comprehensive schools, they found that the ' interaction of family, community, peers and teachers plays an important role in attainment, and that a number of teachers believed that some girls were doing better academically because they had learnt to ' conform to the conventions'. ' Such study helps us to understand that recreational drug is not the only factor that determines a person's educational attainment. However, since socialisation and interaction plays an important role in attainment, it can be said that poor interaction can result a person to take recreational drugs which eventually can leads to low educational attainment. Meanwhile, in Education Economic, Getinet Astatike Haile and Anh Ngoc Nguyen (2008) made a research that underscored the importance of parental background in explaining differential <https://assignbuster.com/educational-attainment-and-recreational-drug-use-education-essay/>

academic attainment between whites and ethnic minorities in the United States. They found that ' background, specifically educational and occupational background plays a vital role in determining the gap in test scores'. It is identified that low test scores is one of the ways to measure educational attainment.

Reviews of the literatures suggest that recreational drug users do suffer some adverse consequences from their use of drugs which will technically affect their educational attainment. However, there are other factors that resulted in negative educational outcomes.

Hypothesis

This proposal will be designed to assess my hypothesis that students, who used recreational drugs, are more likely to have a lower educational attainment. In conceptual form the hypothesis asserts that there is a relationship between educational attainment and recreational drug use.

Methods

Research Design

The particular interest for this research proposal is to find whether the use of recreational drug is the main reason a person leaves school at an earlier age. For this proposal I have decided to use an experimental design. As Atkinson and Bouma (1997: 126) noted ' an experimental design provides the most rigorous test of a hypothesis which specifies that X causes Y'.

In order to test the hypothesis using an experimental design I, as the researcher must: select two group of students, devise measures for the

variables, select one of the two groups to be the control group, the dependent variable will be measured before and after the drugs are given to the experimental group, and lastly any difference between the two groups can be attributed to the recreational drug use.

This experimental design will use both standard techniques of qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative method because it involves observing the behaviour of the two groups of students meanwhile quantitative because it involves turning data into numbers, which in this case measuring the students' educational performances that is through test marks. Using both the techniques has great advantages on my research because with qualitative method, I am able to gain insight into the students' behaviours and therefore obtaining more in-depth information that allows me to focus on interpretations and meaning of such behaviours. Meanwhile with quantitative method, it helps to ensure high levels of validity and reliability of gathered data.

Sample selection

As noted by McNeil(1990: 35), ' the term ' population' refers to all those people who could be included in a research'. In the case of my research proposal, my population will be the orphans. This is because with orphans, class background will not be a variable that might affect the dependent variable, which is the educational attainment. As mentioned above, I will need two groups of five students for my experiment. These students must be as alike as possible: same age, same gender, same class background, and same academic abilities. The criteria therefore that are required in the orphans are that they have to be final year male students in high school, and <https://assignbuster.com/educational-attainment-and-recreational-drug-use-education-essay/>

most importantly they have never ever taken any recreational drugs before. Since my population is not a large one and I am only interested in finding ten students which are easily studied as a whole, sampling is not an issue here. After finding all the orphans with the required criteria, they all will be given an academic test to check their academic performance. Ten students with the best and same academic abilities will be chosen. However if there are more than ten students with the same marks, then a random sampling procedure will be selected to avoid any bias. A simple random sampling procedure guarantees that each student has an equal chance of being selected. To make it less time-consuming and to avoid any bias, place all the students' names in a box and draw out the names required. After selecting ten students, divide them into two groups of five. One group will be the control group and the other will be the experimental group.

Data collection

Experiments as described by McNeil (1990: 58) 'involve comparing what happens in one situation (the control group) with what happens in another (the experimental group)'. Therefore for this research proposal I will conduct an experiment where the two groups of students will be set in a same class, having the same learning environment. Same learning environment here means that the ten students will have the same teachers teaching them the same subjects and most importantly they will have the same group of friends. This is to make sure that peer influence will not be a variable that might affect the students' educational attainment. Before conducting the experiment, one of the two groups, that is the experimental group, will be given cannabis and meanwhile the other one will be selected as the control

group. To make this experiment less time-consuming, some of the newer strains of the cannabis, including skunk is used as it can be three times as strong as traditional cannabis. It works more quickly, and creates hallucinations. Furthermore it has been reported that such drug is associated with lack of concentration and short-term memory which can lead to poor school performance, which then can leads to lower educational attainment.

It has been identified in this proposal that the concept of educational attainment will be measured through observation of behaviour and test marks. Therefore for observation method, I proposed to place a hidden video camera in the class to examine the students' behaviours in class, for example how well they respond to their teachers, and how well they can concentrate in class. This allows me to capture a set of behaviours which assist me to analyse the meaning of such behaviour. I also proposed that the teachers should give a weekly test on the students as another way of measurement. This is important as it is known that ' measurement helps us to communicate our observations more clearly' (Atkinson and Bauman, 1977: 69). These marks will be considered as a set of qualitative data and in order to summarise these data, tables and charts will be constructed.

Simply it can be said that behaviours and test marks will act as dependent variables for each group. In order for this experiment to work, these variables are important to be measured before and after the change in the independent variable, that is the recreational drug use in this case. It is relevant for me to take record of the behaviours and tests marks of the two groups before and after I give cannabis to the experimental group. Any

changes in the results may lead me to draw my conclusion about the effect
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of cannabis on the students' educational attainment. For example if the students in the experimental group are behaving in a negative way than before and their test marks are drastically deteriorating , it can be concluded that the cannabis has a negative impact on the students. Meanwhile if both groups did change but they change by the same amount. It would appear that the cannabis had no effects. This procedure will takes place for a whole year so that a clear development can be witness.

It is also highly suggested that after the end of the experiment, I should make an interview with the teachers and the students. This way I am able to get their views on their experiences. For example, if teachers I would want to know their personal opinions on teaching the students or on the changes (if there are) on the students. This same goes to the students. I would also want to know their personal experience and for the experimental group, I would ask them if they would want to leave school or continue to attain higher education in the future.

Discussion

As McNeil (1990: 52) summarised ' the purpose of the experiment is to create a standardised situation for the researcher to study, in which all variables are under the control of the experimenter, and in which the results of manipulating variables can be studied and measured. If some correlation is found between variables, the researcher has to show that this is casual relationship rather than just coincidence'. This is true but there is a major problem when it comes to experimenting human behaviours. Individuals' behaviours or responses can be difficult to measure because they can be influenced by different matter. Even though other independent variables like <https://assignbuster.com/educational-attainment-and-recreational-drug-use-education-essay/>

class background, peer influence has been controlled, there is no doubt that these two groups of students can escape from other outside influence that involve with the matter of feelings. For example, some of the students in the experimental group may not do well because they have personal problems like they fell in love with one of their classmates which result them to not concentrate on their academic performances, or they have problems back at the orphanage. Like Eisenberg (1996) once said 'rationalising behaviour through experimentation does not account for the process of thought, making outcomes of the process fallible'. Furthermore, the teachers themselves may be bias toward certain students. The teachers may give higher marks to the control group because they favour this group more than the experimental group.

Another problem that might arise is the problem with the students that are selected. As mentioned, these students are based on the test they have taken and how well they did. Therefore there might be a setback here as some of the students may actually do well on that test because they were fortunate that day, not because they are bright people. However, this problem can be fixed by asking the administrator of the orphanage which orphans have high intellectual level. There is also another problem with the selection of students. As stated they will be asked if they have taken drugs before and therefore there is a chance that these students in the control group may lie because they were scared they get caught by the orphanage.

Therefore it is best for us to accept the fact that we cannot control all the variables and the only thing we can do is to be aware of the possible

influences of other variables and try to eliminate such influences as possible.
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