

An associative relationship between drug abuse and child abuse



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Problem/Question How far do the levels of drug abuse in individuals influence their mistreatment of children in their care Independent variable = drug abuse; dependent = child abuse.

Hypotheses

1. The instances of child abuse increase along with an increase in the abuse of drugs.
2. The degree of child abuse increases with an increase in the abuse of drugs.
3. Drug abuse is a causative factor in child abuse.

Methods of Investigation

Hypothesis One: Participants who have admitted to (or been found guilty of) having abused children in their care while under the influence of drugs would be solicited via mail and telephone from public drug rehabilitation centers. Several calls, letters, and visits will be made to these centers to procure the assistance of the administration. Questionnaires would be administered to approximately 50 of those who comply. The questions will ascertain how often abuse of the child occurred subsequent to the use of drugs and whether these instances were prone to change with changes in amount and type of drug used. Hindrances to data collection may include time to contact enough persons in order to get a proper sample. It may also include the reluctance or fear of the subjects to provide accurate data about a private and embarrassing matter. It might also be difficult for some to accurately remember the details of the situations involved. If sample size falls too low, critics might consider the data unreliable (Hopkins, 1997).

Hypothesis Two: The same participants as for the previous hypothesis would
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be used for this part of the study. The items on the questionnaire used would also include probes about the different circumstances under which these persons were most likely to use drugs and how much drug use was associated with these times. They would also be asked whether they considered their actions toward the children to be dependent on the amount of drugs they used. Each questionnaire would also include the option to accept an interview. Those interviewed would be probed about the circumstances surrounding the most intense of the abusive episodes in order to shed light on the amount of drug abuse involved in the situation. It might, however, be a challenge to get persons to agree to an interview. Obtaining clearance to enter the rehabilitation centre would prove problematic, and interviews that take place over the phone might be criticized as having lost the element of immediacy and the access to body language that would increase the depth of the findings.

Hypothesis Three: Still the same participants would be used. Some questionnaire items would seek to ascertain whether the child in question had done something to cause the abuse. But especially during the interviews, questions will be posed regarding the existence of abuse in the childhood of the abuser. It will also be ascertained whether abuse of the child ever occurred when no drug abuse had taken place. The nature of the child abuse will be determined, as well as the any other factors known to trigger the abuse. Participants might, however, be reluctant to talk about childhood experiences, or about any current or recent emotions that had triggered the abuse of the child in their care. Such circumstances might be decried by critics as affecting the reliability of the answers given and consequently the reliability of the study.

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Conclusion

Such a study would provide quantitative as well as qualitative information about the nature of child abuse and the influence that drug abuse has on it. This will include degree and type of abuse of both drugs and child. All the data will have to be analyzed for and correlated to ascertain whether the trend proves the hypotheses acceptable or unacceptable.

Reference

Hopkins, W. G. (1997). " Generalising to a population: estimating sample size." A new view of statistics. Sportsci. <http://www.sportsci.org/resource/stats/samplesize.html>