

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEER RELATIONSHIPS, DRUG USE, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

- This study was a secondary analysis of longitudinal data from the Schools and Families Educating (SAFE) Children Study.
- The objectives of the current study were to 1) examine the correlation between peer relationships and future aspirations, and 2) examine drug use and the effect it has on peer relationships and future aspirations.
- This study utilized data gathered through self-administered questionnaires.
- Positive peer relationships were associated with higher levels of future aspirations.
- Drug abuse was positively correlated with future aspirations.
- Gender plays a significant role in future aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

- Peer relationships play a critical role throughout the developmental years and provide the opportunity for social interaction, as well as the development of social skills (Asher & Coie, 1990; Gray, Culpepper, Welsh, 2012).
- Peer relationships can provide both a positive and negative influence.
- Researchers link peer relationships to future aspirations (Cunningham, Corprew, Becker, 2009).
- Future aspirations can be defined as statements, values, and beliefs regarding plans conceptualized by the youth (Khatta, 2015).
- Positive future aspirations provide hope and direction for one's future (Wall, Covell, Macintyre, 1999).
- Understanding the effect that peer relationships have on future aspirations will allow social workers to serve youth better.
- Social workers will be able to provide interventions and education to help foster positive peer relationships during adolescence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Positive peer relationships play a part in the overall wellbeing of youth such as physical, emotional, and mental health, happiness, and life-satisfaction (Raboteg-Sacric and Sakic, 2014; Gauze et al., 1996).
- Goodenow (1993) reports there is a correlation between positive peer relationships and higher academic grades and higher aspirations for the future.
- Risky peer relationships are associated with an increase in exposure to violence and substance use (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996).
- Substance use in adolescence can have a significant impact on the overall health and well-being of youth; it is known to have many adverse effects (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2019; Johnson, 2009).
- Lobato and colleagues (2017) showed that youth with close friends who smoked marijuana were eight times more likely to use marijuana.
- Substance use could endanger the youths' capability of achieving long term-goals (Henry et al., 2005).



METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

- The SAFEChildren is a longitudinal panel study that began in 1997.
- Four hundred and twenty-four students were selected to participate in the study.
- The SAFEChildren study used a randomized control trial.
- The study lasted approximately 13 years.
- Over this time, 11 waves of data were collected in three phases.
- The present study specific utilized the data set from SAFE wave 11.
- The present study was a secondary data analysis with a cross-sectional design.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

- SAFEChildren's study used a purposive sampling approach.
- The SAFEChildren's sample consisted of kindergarten students attending public schools in the inner-city neighborhoods of Chicago, Illinois.
- Seven elementary schools were selected to participate, and the parents of all the kindergarten students were contacted and asked to participate in the study.
- Of the 507 families eligible, 424 families consented to participate and completed a minimum of one baseline assessment.

MEASURES

- Eight questions measured peer relations including, "Have your parents told you not to hang out with any friends?"
- Six questions measured substance use including, "Do you use drugs more than once a week?"
- Six statements measured future aspirations, "I will have a happy life."

DATA COLLECTION

- SAFEChildren study utilized interviews, self-created questionnaires, and phone follow-ups.



RESULTS

- Pearson correlation coefficients were computed among peer relationships, drug abuse, and future aspirations.
- Results of the correlational analyses showed that peer relationships and future aspirations, $r(306) = .160, p < .01$; and drug abuse and future aspirations, $r(103) = .259, p < .01$ were statistically significant.**
- An independent-samples t test was calculated comparing the mean score of future aspiration of participants who identified themselves as males to the mean scores of participants who identified themselves as females.
- Results of the t test shows a significant difference was found ($t(310) = 3.035, p = .003$).**

Correlation of Peer Relationships, Drug Abuse, and Future Aspirations

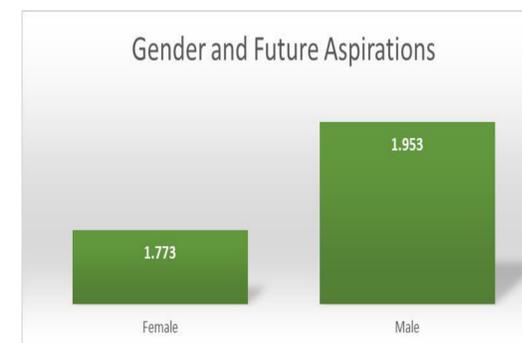
	Peer Relationships	Drug Abuse	Future Aspiration
Peer Relationships	---		
Drug Abuse	-.044	---	
Future Aspirations	.160*	.259*	---

* $p < .01$

T test: Gender

	GENDER	T	P	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer Relationships	Female	306	.257	2.4126	0.63246
	Male			2.4977	0.68481
Future Aspirations	Female	310	.003*	1.7730	0.50013
	Male			1.9530	0.54742

* $p < .05$



DISCUSSION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- The first key finding was the significant correlation between peer relationships and future aspirations. Meaning, those positive peer relationships were associated with higher levels of future aspirations.
- The results revealed the correlation between drug use and future aspirations was statistically significant. It was suggesting that higher levels of drug use were associated with higher levels of future aspirations and that lower levels of drug use were associated with lower levels of future aspirations.
- Future aspirations and gender revealed a significant difference. Males displayed higher levels of future aspirations compared to females.

IMPLICATIONS

- The study established the need to foster the development of positive peer relationships to better adolescents future aspirations.
- The study provides a basis for social workers, schools, and mental health providers to establish programs focused on social skills and building positive peer relationships.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

- A limitation is that self-reports were utilized to gather information. Information that is gathered during self-reports may include social desirability bias. The participants might answer questions in a way that is accepted in society rather than answer the question truthfully.
- Another limitation includes a small sample size of 424 participants. Wave 11 had 112 participants not complete the interview leaving the true sample size at 312.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further research should be conducted to conclude the best practices and interventions for social workers, schools, and mental health providers to foster positive peer relationships.
- Future research should be conducted to explore the correlation found between substance use and future aspirations.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my parents, son Kaysen, and Village:
Without each one of you, my success would not have been possible. I will forever be grateful. Thank you.