

The Effects of Drug Abuse on Children's Behavior as Perceived by the Community

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Abstract. Drug abuse remains a persistent social problem that adversely affects users and vulnerable family members, especially children. Exposure to drug-affected family and community environments can influence children's emotional, social, moral, and academic development. This study examined the perceived effects of drug abuse on children's behavior in Barangay Poblacion, Getafe, Bohol, during the Academic Year 2025–2026. A descriptive-correlational design was used. Data were collected from 185 community residents selected through stratified random sampling using a validated, researcher-developed questionnaire. The instrument measured perceptions on drug abuse effects in terms of family environment, socioeconomic status, community and social environment, and parenting practices, as well as children's social, emotional, moral, and academic behavior. Validity was established through expert review, while reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, weighted means, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. Findings revealed that respondents strongly agreed that drug abuse significantly affects children's development, particularly in the family environment (WM=3.50), community and social environment (WM=3.45), parenting practices (WM=3.45), and socioeconomic status (WM=3.43). They also strongly agreed that it negatively influences children's social behavior (WM=3.44), emotional behavior (WM=3.41), moral values (WM=3.41), and academic performance (WM=3.46). Correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between drug abuse and children's behavioral outcomes ($p < .05$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concludes that exposure to drug-related environments contributes to adverse child behavioral outcomes and underscores the need for strengthened family support, community interventions, school counseling, and anti-drug awareness programs.

Keywords: Academic Performance; Children's Behavior; Community Perception; Drug Abuse; Emotional Development

Introduction

Drug abuse continues to be a major public health and social concern worldwide. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2024), approximately 296 million people globally used drugs in 2022, representing a 20 percent increase over the previous decade. The report further emphasizes that substance abuse adversely affects not only users but also family members, particularly children who are exposed to drug-related environments.

In the Philippines, the Dangerous Drugs Board (2024) reported that illegal drug use remains prevalent in many communities despite intensified anti-drug campaigns. Data from the Philippine National Police and the Department of Health indicate that thousands of families continue to experience the social and psychological consequences of substance abuse, including family disruption, domestic conflict, neglect, and child welfare concerns. Children exposed to parental or community drug abuse are at increased risk of emotional distress, poor academic achievement, social maladjustment, and behavioral problems.

Recent international studies have established significant associations between parental substance abuse and children's developmental outcomes (Smith et al., 2022; Chen & Wang, 2024; Hawkins et al., 2022). Likewise, Philippine-based studies have highlighted the influence of drug-affected environments on juvenile behavior, school performance, and psychosocial functioning (Santos et al., 2022). However, most existing studies focus primarily on the perspectives of healthcare professionals, educators, parents, or government agencies. Limited research has explored how community members perceive the effects of drug abuse on children's behavior, particularly in rural Philippine communities.

This gap is significant because community members directly observe children's daily interactions, social adjustment, and behavioral manifestations within their local environment. Understanding community

perceptions may provide valuable insights for developing localized intervention programs and strengthening community participation in child protection initiatives.

Therefore, this study examined the effects of drug abuse on children's behavior as perceived by community members in Barangay Poblacion, Getafe, Bohol. Specifically, it investigated the effects of drug abuse on child development in terms of family environment, socioeconomic status, community and social environment, and parenting practices, and assessed its influence on children's social behavior, emotional behavior, moral values, and academic performance.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the effects of drug abuse on child behavior as perceived by the community in Barangay Poblacion, Getafe, Bohol, during the Academic Year 2025–2026.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of ;
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 sex, and
 - 1.3 educational attainment?
2. What is the level of effects of drug abuse on child development in terms of:
 - 2.1 Family Environment;
 - 2.2 Socioeconomic Status;
 - 2.3 Community and Social Environment; and
 - 2.4 Parenting Practices
3. What is the level of perception of child behavior in the community in terms of:
 - 3.1 Social Behavior
 - 3.2 Emotional Behavior
 - 3.3 Moral Values
 - 3.4 Academic Performance
4. Is there a significant relationship between drug abuse and child behavior?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on examining the effects of drug abuse on child behavior as perceived by community members in Barangay Poblacion, Getafe, Bohol. The study concentrated on children affected by drug abuse within family and community environments and explored its influence on social behavior, emotional behavior, moral values, and academic performance. The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design involving one hundred eighty-five (185) respondents from the community. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The study was limited to the perceptions and observations of respondents within the selected barangay and did not include other communities or municipalities. Variables such as specific drug types, duration of exposure, and severity of drug abuse were not covered in the study.

Literature Review

Drug Abuse

Drug abuse refers to the harmful or excessive use of illegal substances or misuse of legal drugs that negatively affects an individual's physical, emotional, and social well-being. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022), drug abuse significantly affects not only the individual user but also family members and the wider community. Children living in drug-affected environments are particularly vulnerable to behavioral and developmental problems. Research consistently shows that drug abuse contributes to unstable family relationships, neglect, emotional insecurity, and poor supervision among children (Smith et al., 2022). Children exposed to drug abuse often demonstrate emotional withdrawal, aggression, poor academic engagement, and antisocial behavior.

Family Environment

The family environment plays a crucial role in shaping children's behavior and development. Studies suggest that children raised in homes where substance abuse exists are more likely to experience emotional neglect, inconsistent discipline, and poor parental supervision (Bowen, 1978). Such environments may contribute to anxiety, low self-esteem, and behavioral problems. Research also indicates that healthy family interaction and supportive parenting practices help children develop positive emotional and social behavior. However, drug abuse disrupts family functioning and weakens emotional attachment between parents and children.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status influences children's access to education, healthcare, and social support. Families affected by drug abuse often experience financial instability, unemployment, and social stigma, which contribute to developmental challenges among children. Studies reveal that children from disadvantaged households are more vulnerable to emotional stress, academic difficulties, and behavioral problems due to unstable living conditions and limited resources (Reardon & Portilla, 2020).

Community and Social Environment

The community environment significantly affects children's attitudes, behavior, and social interaction. Shaw and McKay's Social Disorganization Theory (1942) explains that communities characterized by crime, poverty, and drug abuse often influence children's behavior negatively. Research by Martínez and García (2022) revealed that exposure to risky neighborhood conditions contributes to aggression, deviance, and poor social adjustment among children. Community members also perceive drug-affected environments as unsafe and harmful to child development.

Parenting Practices

Parenting practices influence children's emotional and moral development. Positive parenting provides emotional support, guidance, and discipline, while inconsistent parenting often leads to behavioral problems. Studies show that substance abuse among parents reduces caregiving capacity and weakens emotional attachment with children (Smith et al., 2022). Children exposed to poor parenting practices often display aggression, anxiety, and poor social behavior.

Child Behavior

Child behavior refers to children's emotional, social, moral, and academic responses influenced by family and environmental conditions. Research indicates that children exposed to drug abuse environments often experience emotional instability, low academic performance, poor moral judgment, and antisocial behavior. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) explains that children learn behavior through observing and imitating the people around them. Exposure to substance abuse increases the likelihood of children adopting negative behaviors. The reviewed literature establishes that drug abuse significantly affects child behavior in terms of emotional, moral, social, and academic development. Family environment, parenting practices, socioeconomic conditions, and community surroundings all contribute to children's behavioral outcomes.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, using a survey questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument. The descriptive component was used to determine community perceptions regarding the effects of drug abuse on children's behavior, while the correlational component examined the relationship between drug abuse and various dimensions of children's behavior, including social behavior, emotional behavior, moral values, and academic performance. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to describe existing conditions and determine the degree of association between the variables under investigation without manipulating the research environment.

Sampling Design

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to select the respondents from Barangay Poblacion, Getafe, Bohol. The population was grouped according to age and sex to ensure adequate representation of different demographic sectors within the community. From these groups, respondents were randomly selected to minimize sampling bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample. A total of one hundred eighty-five (185) residents participated in the study. To qualify as respondents, individuals had to be at least eighteen (18) years old, have resided in Barangay Poblacion for at least one (1) year, and voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. This sampling method was employed to obtain reliable and representative data regarding community perceptions of the effects of drug abuse on children's behavior.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Barangay Poblacion, Getafe, Bohol, during the Academic Year 2025–2026. Barangay Poblacion was selected as the research locale because it is the central barangay of the municipality and is composed of diverse community members who can provide relevant insights and observations

regarding the effects of drug abuse on children within the community. Its accessibility and varied population made it a suitable setting for examining community perceptions and experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Instrument

The researchers utilized a researcher-made structured questionnaire designed to gather data regarding the effects of drug abuse on children's behavior as perceived by the community. The questionnaire consisted of items measuring the effects of drug abuse on child development in terms of family environment, socioeconomic status, community and social environment, and parenting practices. It also assessed children's social, emotional, and moral behavior, as well as academic performance. To ensure the instrument's quality and accuracy, the questionnaire underwent content validation by three experts in criminology, psychology, and research methodology. The validation process yielded a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.92, indicating excellent content validity and confirming that the instrument adequately measured the intended constructs. Furthermore, a pilot test was conducted among thirty (30) respondents from a neighboring barangay who were not included in the actual study. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating high reliability and strong internal consistency among the questionnaire items. These results established the instrument's suitability for data collection.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researchers secured approval from the College Research Committee and obtained permission from the Barangay Officials of Barangay Poblacion, Getafe, Bohol. After obtaining the necessary permissions, the validated questionnaire was reproduced and prepared for administration. The researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to the selected respondents. Before answering the questionnaire, respondents were informed of the study's objectives, significance, and procedures. They were assured that participation was voluntary and that all information provided would be treated with strict confidentiality. Completed questionnaires were personally retrieved by the researchers to ensure a high retrieval rate and verify response completeness. The collected data were organized, encoded, tabulated, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and educational attainment?

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (n = 185)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Under 18	16	8.65%
	18–25	35	18.92%
	26–33	39	21.08%
	34–41	40	21.62%
	42 and above	55	29.73%
Sex	Male	73	39.46%
	Female	112	60.54%
Educational Attainment	No Formal Education	5	2.70%
	Primary Education	37	20.00%
	Secondary Education	74	40.00%
	College Level/Graduate	63	34.05%
	Postgraduate	6	3.24%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents by age, sex, and educational attainment. The findings reveal that females constituted most of the respondents, comprising 60.54% of the total sample, while males accounted for 39.46%. This suggests that women were more actively represented in the study and may have had greater involvement in observing children's behavior within the community. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents belonged to the 42 years old and above category (29.73%), followed by those aged 34–41 years (21.62%) and 26–33 years (21.08%). The predominance of mature adults indicates that the respondents possessed substantial life experiences and community involvement, enabling

them to provide reliable perceptions regarding the effects of drug abuse on children. Regarding educational attainment, the majority had completed secondary education (40.00%), while a considerable percentage were college-level students or college graduates (34.05%). These findings indicate that the respondents possessed adequate educational backgrounds to understand and evaluate the social consequences of drug abuse. Overall, the demographic characteristics of the respondents suggest that they were capable of providing informed and credible assessments regarding the effects of drug abuse on children's behavior within the community.

Research Question 2. What is the level of effects of drug abuse on child development in terms of family environment, socioeconomic status, community and social environment, and parenting practices?

Table 2. Summary of Composite Means on the Effects of Drug Abuse on Child Development

Variable	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Family Environment	3.50	Strongly Agree
Socioeconomic Status	3.43	Strongly Agree
Community and Social Environment	3.45	Strongly Agree
Parenting Practices	3.45	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.46	Strongly Agree

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the effects of drug abuse on child development. The overall weighted mean of 3.46, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," indicates that respondents strongly perceived drug abuse as having significant adverse effects on children's developmental outcomes. Among the indicators, family environment obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.50, suggesting that respondents considered family-related consequences as the most serious effect of drug abuse. This finding implies that substance abuse disrupts family stability, weakens parental supervision, and reduces the emotional support necessary for healthy child development. Community and social environment and parenting practices both obtained weighted means of 3.45, indicating that respondents recognized the influence of drug abuse on children's social interactions and the quality of parenting they receive. Socioeconomic status recorded a weighted mean of 3.43, suggesting that respondents perceived financial instability and limited access to resources as important consequences associated with substance abuse. These findings support Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978), which emphasizes that disturbances within the family system affect the functioning and development of all family members. Likewise, the results are consistent with Smith et al. (2022), who reported that substance abuse contributes to neglect, family conflict, and developmental challenges among children. The consistently high ratings across all indicators demonstrate that community members recognize drug abuse as a serious social issue that negatively affects children's growth and development.

Research Question 3. What is the level of perception of children's behavior in the community in terms of social behavior, emotional behavior, moral values, and academic performance?

Table 3. Summary of Composite Means on the Level of Perception of Children's Behavior

Variable	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Social Behavior	3.44	Strongly Agree
Emotional Behavior	3.41	Strongly Agree
Moral Values	3.41	Strongly Agree
Academic Performance	3.46	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.43	Strongly Agree

Table 3 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding children's behavior in communities affected by drug abuse. The overall weighted mean of 3.43, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," indicates that respondents strongly believed that drug abuse negatively influences children's behavioral outcomes. Among the indicators, academic performance obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.46, suggesting that respondents perceived educational achievement as the most affected aspect of children's behavior. This finding indicates that children exposed to drug-affected environments may experience difficulties in

concentration, motivation, classroom participation, and academic achievement. Social behavior ranked second with a weighted mean of 3.44, indicating that respondents observed challenges in peer relationships, social interaction, and community participation among affected children. Meanwhile, emotional behavior and moral values both obtained weighted means of 3.41, suggesting that respondents perceived children from drug-affected environments as more likely to experience emotional distress, anxiety, reduced self-control, and weakened moral judgment. These findings support Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which posits that children acquire attitudes and behaviors through observation and imitation of significant individuals within their environment. The findings further corroborate the study of Chen and Wang (2024), who reported that children exposed to substance abuse environments frequently demonstrate emotional instability, social maladjustment, and reduced academic performance.

Research Question 4. Is there a significant relationship between drug abuse and children's behavior?

Table 4. Relationship Between Drug Abuse and Children's Behavior

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Drug Abuse and Children's Behavior	0.68	0.000	Reject Ho

Table 4 presents the relationship between drug abuse and children's behavior. The computed Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient yielded an r-value of 0.68, indicating a strong positive relationship between perceived drug abuse and children's behavioral outcomes. The corresponding p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The findings imply that as exposure to drug abuse within the family and community environment increases, behavioral problems among children become more evident. Specifically, children exposed to drug abuse are more likely to experience emotional instability, weakened moral values, poor social interaction, and reduced academic performance. The strong positive correlation indicates that drug abuse is significantly associated with adverse behavioral outcomes among children. These findings support the studies of Hawkins et al. (2022) and Martínez and García (2022), which concluded that children living in substance-abuse and high-risk environments are more vulnerable to behavioral and psychosocial difficulties. Furthermore, the findings reinforce Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which emphasizes the influence of environmental factors on children's behavioral development. The significant relationship observed in this study highlights the need for comprehensive intervention programs that strengthen families, protect children, and reduce substance abuse within communities.

Ethical Considerations

The study obtained ethics clearance from the Colegio de Getafe Research Ethics Committee before data collection. All respondents signed informed consent forms after receiving detailed explanations regarding the study's objectives, procedures, benefits, and potential risks. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were allowed to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained through coding procedures. Data were stored in password-protected electronic files accessible only to the researchers. The study adhered to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice consistent with institutional and national research guidelines.

Conclusion

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on the social consequences of drug abuse by highlighting the community's perspective regarding its effects on children's behavioral development. Findings demonstrate that drug abuse negatively affects children's social behavior, emotional functioning, moral development, and academic performance. Family instability, inadequate parenting practices, and adverse community environments emerged as key factors associated with these behavioral outcomes. The significant relationship between drug abuse and children's behavior underscores the need for comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies. By documenting community perceptions in a rural Philippine setting, this study provides localized evidence to guide policymakers, educators, law enforcement agencies, and community leaders in developing child-centered and family-focused anti-drug initiatives.

Recommendaions

Based on the findings, the Philippine National Police should strengthen community policing by providing continuous training and enhanced logistical support for PCAD Officers. Local government units and barangay officials must collaborate closely with law enforcement to institutionalize evidence-based anti-drug education programs for parents and youth, while allocating dedicated funding for family rehabilitation and psychosocial support services. To safeguard vulnerable youth, schools should establish early detection systems and counseling interventions for children from drug-affected households, while parents should actively participate in parenting programs that emphasize positive discipline and emotional support. Furthermore, community organizations must strengthen grassroots child protection and mentoring initiatives. Law enforcement agencies should shift away from purely punitive approaches and collaborate directly with schools and social workers to implement preventive, rehabilitative programs. Finally, future researchers should utilize mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to systematically examine the causal pathways between drug abuse exposure and children's long-term behavioral outcomes across different regions.

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