

## Diagnostic Issues in Cases of Juvenile with Substance Abuse Problem in Forensic Psychology Field

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### Abstract

The article deals with the issues related to the recently-increasing problem of addiction to psychoactive substances in the context of the process of demoralization and offenses committed by minors. By making a scientific and research analysis of the phenomenon, the author looks for risk factors for juveniles falling into the mechanism of addiction, with particular emphasis on the conditions of the family environment. The article is based on theories and reports from international scientific research of the discipline compared to the research carried out directly by the author and the results obtained. The study group consisted of 54 juveniles selected on the basis of research at the Family Diagnostic and Consultative Centers at the District Court in Katowice, where the author works as a specialist in forensic psychology. The research examined the relationship between the intensification of the addiction problem and such variable groups as: intellectual development, educational conditions, conditions of family socialization, social relations, manifestations of demoralization in teenage periods, current life circumstances and psychological variables. The application allows to show particularly important factors to be taken into account in the diagnostic process, as well as to answer the key question: whether the statistical addiction of adolescent addictions is a manifestation of their demoralization or is the main factor and consequence of criminal activities.

**Keywords:** demoralization, addiction, family violence, aggression, risk factors for demoralization and addiction mechanisms.

### Introduction

Current experience related to opinion making in juvenile cases as well as statistical and epidemiological data, order to identify harmful use and dependence on psychoactive substances among a group of minors as a frequent and very serious diagnostic problem. The increase in the number of people addicted to psychoactive substances among adolescents observed in reports and scientific studies is based on three main factors : the change in the social perception of psychoactive substances and people using them, a significant increase in the number of people using substances in the school youth group in recent years, and the emergence of new ways of using the substance and easily available and at the same time particularly addictive types. Social perception of the phenomenon is based on discussions on the legalization of certain types of drugs in various countries, creating divisions on the so-called "soft" and "hard" drugs and tolerance to receiving psychoactive substances especially from the so-called "Soft assortment" (Stępień, 2005). Research indicates that

the phenomenon is occurring habituation of youth awareness concerning the danger of addiction to psychoactive substances (Hoffmann, 2009). Simultaneously the use of a significant proportion of psychoactive substances is associated, primarily by young people, with the determinant of material wealth, high social status, possession of power and influence (European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2012).

Substance use by school students on the scale of the phenomenon in Poland over the last twenty years (Malczewski, 2014) indicates that consumption of vodka at least once in the month preceding the survey in 1992 was declared by 28% of students, in 2013 it was already 68%, the consumption of beer by youth in the same years increased from 49% to 78%, in 2013, 44% of school children were drunk at least once a month. According to the same research about 94% of pupils rated alcohol and nicotine readily available to the youth group in 2013, 42% of school students thought that drugs were sold in their school, 50% of the youth surveyed as easy, assesses the gaining of marijuana and hashish. Also in the years 2004-2011, radicalization is decreasing in terms of intravenous trends in drug use (European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2012). Stimulators called in Poland „Dopalacze” – legal highs, herbal highs, smarts, boosters – a particularly dangerous group of psychoactive substances which turnover is still beyond the actual control (European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2018). What's worse messages addressed to young people on websites that provide narcotic stimulators legally creating support groups for the initiation, harmful use and addiction of youth to psychoactive substances, for which young people are particularly vulnerable, and the message used is often more effective than the language of the campaign for counteracting drug addiction.

From the point of view of forensic psychology and court opinion-making, in view of the rapidly escalating, dangerous phenomenon of harmful use and dependence of minors on psychoactive substances, there is a need to pay special attention to its background and specificity, to use the diagnostic process knowledge of the mechanism and risk factors as effectively as possible and opportunities to propose the most effective remedial solutions.

### **Research Background**

Research on addiction risk factors among young people, important from the point of view of psychological opinion making, presenting the view on the determinative effect of personality and environmental factors in this particular family and peer group, some of the researchers each time link the impact of these variables, with the fact that the phenomenon of the use of psychoactive substances by youth occurs (Scherier, 2001; Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, 2000; after McWhirter, 2008). The particular impact and significance of the variable on dysfunctionality and all forms of abuse and violence in the family in the context of the addiction of youth to psychoactive substances is underlined by researchers (Špila, Kurzeja, 2012, Doba, Nandrino i in. 2014). Adolescent addiction is strongly positively correlated with a low level of support with a weak control function on the part of parents, a high propensity to initiate family conflicts on their part. What is very important, as a risk factor of addiction among young people, the authors specify the emotional distance from the father (Doba, Nandrino i in. 2014).

Meta-analysis of research related to risk factors for addiction among young people (Makara-Studzińska, 2012) in personality conditioning revealed :lack of emotional stability, already identified at the childhood stage - fear, sense of wrong, danger, lack of ability and habit to make effort and the ability to constructively solve problems, susceptibility to frustration and low level of tolerance, reduced self-esteem, need to identify with a negative group. Among environmental conditions important proved to be : deficiencies of the desirable mother and father personal patterns, raising in a broken, incomplete family, conflicts in the family, lack of mutual emotional ties, the fact that parents are heavily involved in work outside the home, high family tolerance for nicotine use and alcohol consumption, easy access to drugs, alcohol and other psychoactive substances

### **Statement of Problem**

Numerous studies on the mechanisms of criminogenesis and deviant behavior of adolescents usually omit addiction issues or give them little attention, generally classifying as "other types of pathology". On the other hand, research on the issue of addiction of young people focuses, in the first place, on aspects related to clinical image, therapy, and omitting the aspect of demoralization and criminalization in the mechanism of addiction. In this way, the notion of the phenomenon only mentions "entering into conflicts with the law", "violating norms".

The conclusion is that there is no conceptual conjunction, possible application of the model that broadly discusses the problem of addiction mechanism in the context of the course of the process of demoralization, indispensable from the point

of view of reliable opinion-making in the welding of juveniles dependent on psychoactive substances. The answer to the question is crucial : addiction as one of the manifestations of the process of demoralization or demoralization as a result of the mechanism of addiction ?

The consequences of adopting each of the variants are of key importance for the diagnostic process, formulating opinions, including in particular conclusions and recommendations and directions for further impacts and their accurate differentiation in the diagnosis process remains pro-critical.

### **Research Methods**

The research material was collected in the period from September 2013 to May 2018 from cases initiated and conducted on the basis of the act on the conduct of juveniles for demoralization, punishable acts or change of the educational measure, and directed by the Family Court for a psychological diagnosis in which the author as a direct diagnosed and issued an opinion. In each of the cases included in the study, a psychiatric diagnosis was made, stating the harmful use or dependence of a minor on a given type of psychoactive substance. The research was carried out in the area of the Family Diagnostic and Consultation Center in Bytom, the Family Diagnostic and Consultation Center No. 2 in Katowice and the Family Diagnostic and Consultation Center in Sosnowiec. There were 54 juveniles (N = 54) in the research group gathered in this way.

The main research problem concerned the presentation of the specificity of a group of juveniles dependent on psychoactive substances in terms of the intensity of particular types of variables grouped as: demographic variables, school situation, variables related to the course of cognitive processes, personality variables, conditions of family socialization and characteristics of the family environment, manifestations of demoralization and punishable offenses, educational, correctional or curative measures applied so far, the type and nature of the use of the psychoactive substance. The values of variables from cognitive and personality variables groups were obtained on the basis of the test tools used. The nature of other variables from structured intelligence, observation and case files was obtained using qualitative data analysis methods.

Due to the low number of research groups to present the obtained results, descriptive statistics were used for most groups of variables. To test the normality of the distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. The results of the analysis used indicate that the distribution of the variables tested does not meet the conditions of normal distribution. Accordingly, the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between selected variables.

### **Results and discussion**

Demographic data indicated that The average age in the study group was 15 years and 3 months, ranging from 12 to 17 years ( $\sigma = 1.1$ ), of which: 79% were boys and 21% of the group were girls. the respondents had an average of two siblings.

Among juveniles, 13.04% were primary school students, 82.61% attended middle school, the remaining 4.35% were students of vocational schools (chart 1). Of the respondents, 8.70% had no organizational delay, 60.86% fell within the delay range from one to two years, 26.09% had a three-year period and a 4% four-year organizational delay. The main reason for organizational delays was frequent truancy, to cease to fulfill compulsory schooling (chart 2).

Chart 1: Type of school

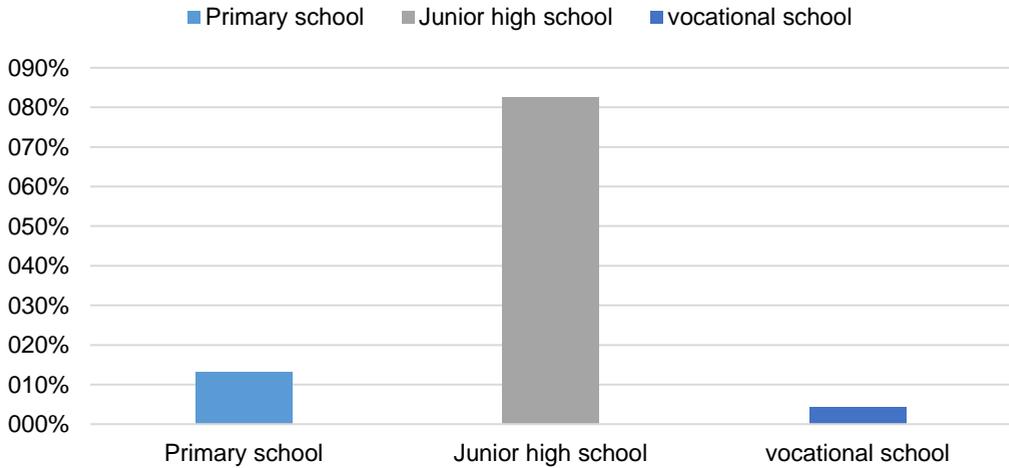
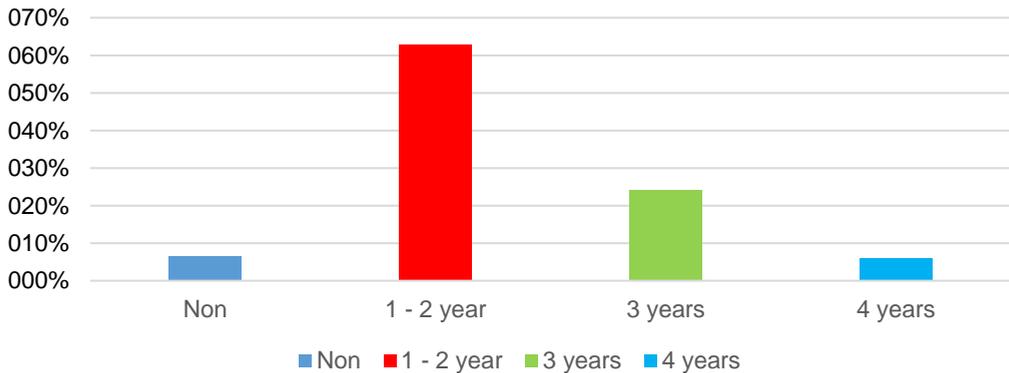


Chart 2: School organizational delay



The statistical minority (in total 45.83%) of the studied group is characterized by at least the average level of intellectual development, the fact that the greater part of the group is below the average, on the verge of norm and mental retardation and light disability (total 54.17%). Analysis of cognitive development of nearly 9% of juveniles indicated an above-average level of intelligence. It should be noted that on the basis of research, in 41.67% of cases, the possibility of microordificites within the Central Nervous System was identified and a further, in-depth neurological diagnosis was recommended. Not having the results of tests of juveniles from before their adoption of psychoactive substances, the author is unable to compare them with current research results and formulate the conclusion on the impact of substances on the formation of deficits. Nevertheless, the frequency of identifying cases of microdamage and intellectual deficits in the study group compared to the normal distribution, allows to conclude, that in the context of the subject matter of the research the formation of deficits due to intensive intake of psychoactive substances in the study group seems likely.

Table 1: Cognitive variables

The level of intellectual potential	N	%
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above average	5	8,33
average	20	37,50
below average	11	20,83
on the verge of norm and disability	11	20,83
intellectual disability	7	12,50
Central Nervous System deficits	23	41,67

The following data allow to notice clear tendencies in socialization and education conditions related to the decisive advantage of parenting upbringing in the biological family (83.33%), at which the parents relationship was broken up at some stage (70.83%). Identifies the resulting or irrelevant in other cases (father's death, mother's departure) lack of father in the family in a large part of the group (62.50%). As many as 68.96% of the fathers of juveniles were addicted to alcohol, 58,33% used violence against the juvenile's mother. Additionally, in the family there was often a difficult material and living situation (60.15%), as well as on the very similar frequency level there is a fact of criminal history and criminality among the closest family members of the respondents. The occurrence of the above phenomena in the context of addiction of adolescents from psychoactive substances is each time, according to numerous authors researching on larger trials, a very serious risk factor, in the absence of desirable personal patterns of mother and father, raising in a broken family, incomplete, conflicts, violence and addictions in family (Scherier, 2001, Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, 2000, McWhirter, 2008, Makara-Studzińska, 2012, Doba, Nandrino and others 2014).

Table 2: Conditions for family socialization

Variable	N	%
stay in a care and educational institution	2	4,17
care in a biological family	45	83,33
care in foster family	9	16,67
incomplete family	27	50,00
reconstructed family	14	25,00
disintegration of the biological parents relationship	38	70,83
death of one of the parents	20	37,50
lack of mother's participation in care	11	20,83
lack of father's participation in care	34	62,50

Table 3: Conditions for family socialization

Variable	N	%
material and living situation: v.good and good	5	8,33
material and living situation: sufficient	15	27,34
material and living situation: difficult	33	60,15
criminality in the family	32	58,33
father's alcoholism	37	68,96
mother's alcoholism	11	20,83

Table 4: Conditions for family socialization

Variable	N	%
father's violence against a mother	32	58,33
father's violence against the respondent	14	25,00
stepfather violence against the respondent	5	8,33
mother's violence against the respondent	7	12,50

Table 5: Emotional bond with biological parents

Variable	N	%
emotional bond with mother - strong	25	45,83
emotional bond with mother - reduced	16	29,17
emotional bond with mother - severely disturbed	7	12,50
lack of emotional bond with mother	0	0,00
emotional bond with father - strong	2	4,17
emotional bond with father - reduced	20	37,50
emotional bond with father - severely disturbed	9	16,67
lack of emotional bond with father	25	45,83

The following tables present selected, statistically significant correlations of variables, together with the significance level of the relationship:

Table 6: Bond with father / harmful use

Variable	Harmful use of drugs
emotional bond with father - disturbed	0,479234

Table 7: Father's violence / addiction

Variable	Addiction – "dopalacze" boosters/marijuana
father's violence against the respondent	0,467801

Table 8: Mother's violence / addiction

Variable	Drug addiction
mother's violence against the respondent	0,530330

The analysis of the entirety of material collected in the diagnostic process allows to determine that in 84.5% in the study group that the initiation of the use of psychoactive substance took place before the occurrence of other manifestations of demoralization, in part of the group giving way only to absence from school. The following results put on the significant probability of a strong base of the addiction mechanism, in a successive, often avalanche process of demoralization.

American research prove that against drug-related adulterations against 52.7%, proceedings related to crime of theft are carried out to obtain funds for the purchase of substances (Brunelle, Bertrand, Beaudoin i n., 2013). In the surveyed group, the follow-up of theft theft to purchase the substance was confirmed in 70.83% of cases.

Table 9: Signs of demoralization / punishable acts

Variable	N	%
participation in fights	32	58,33
beating	20	37,50
long absence from school	52	95,83
completely stopping the school duty	38	70,83
escape from home	45	83,33
stealing	38	70,83
robbery	9	16,67
acts of attacking an officer	2	4,17
appropriation of property	2	4,17

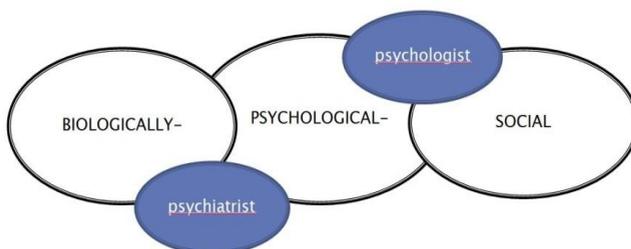
The context of using psychoactive substances emerging during the study of evidence or the collection of research material should be analyzed very carefully in terms of: type of substance, age and circumstances (including motivational background) initiation, further use and escalation of the problem and its current dimension. The above data, confronted with the process of shaping personality structures, the nature of emotional bond with biological parents and the conditions of family socialization and the educational environment, require a comprehensive analysis and presentation of a formulated opinion for the court's needs.

It should be emphasized that in the case of the diagnosis of harmful use or dependence on psychoactive substances, the lack of priority treatment of this issue (and the recommendation of the juvenile to undergo primarily therapeutic and therapeutic interactions as soon as possible) may not solve the underlying problems, result in a further observable degree demoralization and lack of improvement in functioning due to the unstoppable and continuing mechanism of addiction.

### Conclusion and Applications

The encounter in the diagnostic process for the fact of harmful use or dependence of a juvenile on psychoactive substances should each time oblige to make: thorough analysis and presentation in the opinion of multifaceted risk factors for addiction in a juvenile examined patient, a possible detailed explanation of the psychological mechanisms of addiction and the process of demoralization, delimitation of causes and effects to determine the right directions of impact – misdiagnosis of causes and the prosecution of executive interactions instead of the first intensive, healing intensive collections can have strong, destructive consequences.

In order to strive to eliminate the risk of error, it is reasonable to use the work model :



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