

Drug Addiction, Criminality and Birth Order

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Abstract

The aim of present study was to see the frequency of crime among individuals with drug addiction with respect to birth order. Data of 332 (73 first born; 188 middle born; and 71 last born) indoor male patients was taken from a tertiary care drug addiction treatment centre and rehabilitation centre Pakistan. The age range of the participants was from 15 to 57 years ($M = 29.5$, $SD = 2.4$). Findings showed that the frequency of substance abuse among first born, middle born and last born was 22%, 57% and 21% respectively. And the frequency of crime was 26.03% among first born, 29.79% among middle born and 29.58% among last born. Results showed that there is no difference among the groups across birth order and crime.

Keywords: Substance abuse; Crime; Birth order

Introduction

The association between substance abuse and criminal behaviour is well documented [1]. However, there are mixed findings in the literature that regarding the association between drug use, crime and birth order. For example, some researchers demonstrated that middle born and last born are much more likely to use drugs and be sexual related crimes than the firstborns [2]. Other showed that middle born children are more likely to become delinquent than the first or last born children. However, this effect is negligible in small families. Birth order data for male and female alcoholic showed that more cases were last born than first born among males [3].

High rates of criminal acts were found during the year prior to drug treatment, with one third of the group having been convicted of at least one criminal offence [4]. Although addicts vary with regard to the type, amount, and severity of crime they commit. The relationship between crime and drug misuse is often strongest where drug misuse involves the regular and dependent use of drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Crimes involving theft have been found to be a common offence among heroin addicts. In addition, heavy involvement in either alcohol or cocaine use seems to be a sufficient condition for criminality [5].

While examining the predictors of illicit drug and crime, it was demonstrated that younger age, homelessness, heavier patterns of use and a more prolific criminal justice history were associated with criminality [6]. Moreover, being male, running away more frequently from home, greater child physical abuse and partner victimization, and more deviant beliefs were all associated with greater illicit drug use [7]. Moreover, ample of evidences showed the relationship between substance abuse, personality disorders, and nonviolent criminality [8].

Sample

The sample of present research includes 332 males. The data was collected from a tertiary drug addiction treatment and rehabilitation centre. The patients of substance abuse include all the patients who were using any drug (i.e., heroin, cannabis and alcohol). The age range of the participants was from 15 to 57 years ($M = 29.5$, $SD = 2.4$).

Results and Discussion

Percentages and frequency distribution was done to compute the results shown in (Table 1). The results showed that the prevalence of substance abuse among first born was 21.98%, 56.63% among middle born and 21.4% among last born. And the frequency of criminality

was 26.03% among first born, 29.79% among middle born and 29.58% among last born. So the percentages show no difference in the birth order and crime.

Drug addicts go for crime may be because of need of drugs as they feel it difficult to tolerate craving symptoms. As mostly the drug addicts are not financially supported by their families so they are involved in criminal acts for their drugs. Moreover the influence of stimulants may cause impaired judgment, impulsivity and aggressiveness, leading to a range of different offences. Besides, personality disorder, gender, and young age are strong predictors of criminal behaviour in substance abusers [9]. Anxiety is also considered as one of the factors that lead towards drugs, the youngest child is more inclined to use substances as a way of escaping such situations [10]. These all factors might be considered while devising the treatment plan.

Treatment is one the major tool to prevent addiction and related crimes, for example, studies showed that after treatment conviction rates and numbers of offences had significantly reduced. Treatment can mitigate the effect of delinquent behaviours. Moreover, the establishment of stable partnerships, parenthood and employment in the lives of those with long term criminal and dependent drug using careers are critical factors in both motivating and sustaining desistance [11]. Besides treatment; law enforcement is a more effective method of crime prevention among individuals with substance use [12].

Present study had certain limitations. For example the participants

Birth Order	Substance abuse	Criminality
First born	73 (21.98%)	26.03%
Middle born	188 (56.63%)	29.79%
Last born	71 (21.39%)	29.58%

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of cases of substance abuse and criminality (N = 332).

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of the study were taken only from the rehabilitation centre. The middle born is cumulatively considered in the study. The nature of the criminal acts was not considered in the study so the future researchers should incorporate it. The study may be insightful for the law enforcement agencies, mental health professionals and particularly drug abuse counsellors to plan the strategies for reducing the criminal behaviours among drug addicts.

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