

Determinants of Adolescent Buprenorphine/Naloxone Abuse

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ABSTRACT

Street heroin completely disappeared from the black market in 2019 in Bandung, Indonesia. This situation occurred because many heroin abusers switched to the more readily available and cheaper buprenorphine/naloxone. The purpose of this study was to analyze the factors that encourage adolescents to engage in buprenorphine/naloxone drug abuse. Qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach was used. In-depth interviews were conducted from September to November 2021 with 13 male and 4 female students as informants. The research findings showed that all research informants had a history of drug abuse since elementary and middle school. Before being addicted to buprenorphine/naloxone, informants were already addicted to drugs, some were even at the level of hardcore addiction or severe addiction. Factors that encouraged informants to abuse drugs included a negative environment at home, among friends and school, and ineffective communication between children and parents. In everyday life, apart from peers, informants also have older friends who have a negative influence. Informants also have low self-control as indicated by drug taking.

Keywords: Drug Abuse, Buprenorphine/Naloxone, Bandung Raya.

1. Introduction

Drug abuse is a global problem that affects all corners of the world. In general, drug problems that occur in one country will be interrelated with other countries, especially in terms of drug smuggling. In Indonesia, this problem has become one of the main issues besides corruption and violence (Sulastri, 2024). The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, once stated that 2015 was the year that recorded the most drug abuse cases in the country (delivered at the commemoration of International Anti-Narcotics Day in 2015).

One of the strategies in reducing the number of drug abusers is the recovery approach. The recovery contained in Law No. 35 of 2009 is about drugs, namely medical recovery. As the main sector in medical recovery, the Ministry of Health is responsible for managing all the requirements related to recovery. All these arrangements are regulated in the Minister of Health Regulation (PMK).

The use of buprenorphine as designed in the Minister of Health Regulation (PMK) No. 47 of 2016 in the Administration of Buprenorphine Therapy is for the purpose of Opioid withdrawal syndrome therapy and/or maintenance therapy using buprenorphine in combination with

naloxone. The use of buprenorphine is allowed for opioid-dependent patients who need to stop taking it in the short term.

Abuse of buprenorphine has long gone hand in hand with heroin abuse. In a study involving the issue of injection drug use, the AIDS Commission (KPA) had conducted a survey in 2010. The results of this survey found that the majority of OST informants in Banten, DKI Jakarta, Central Java, Yogyakarta, and Bali used Methadone. Meanwhile, most informants in West Java and East Java used buprenorphine obtained through prescriptions from the doctors they met. Many buprenorphine or suboxone users prefer to inject these substitute drugs (KPA, 2011, Yasmani et al, 2012).

Meanwhile, buprenorphine that has been abused in Bandung City in recent years is buprenorphine combined with naloxone. In the Grapiks Foundation's 2020 records, 910 people have abused buprenorphine in Cimahi City, Bandung City, and Bandung Regency. Of these, 61 were teenagers and high school students.

This study aims to understand in depth the factors that drive buprenorphine/naloxone abuse among adolescents in Bandung City. By taking a case study approach, this research aims to identify the social background, environment, as well as family and social dynamics that influence substance abuse behavior. The research findings are expected to serve as a basis for developing more effective prevention strategies and intervention policy recommendations based on the socio-cultural context of adolescents in Bandung.

2. Methods

The approach used in this study is a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological studies emphasize direct experience as the starting and closing point of the study. In this study, the phenomenon of Buprenorphine/Naloxone abuse among adolescents in Greater Bandung is the focus. The 17 informants were selected based on having no background of heroin addiction, obtaining Buprenorphine/Naloxone illicitly, being under 18 years old, using Buprenorphine/Naloxone by injection and willing to participate in the study. This is contrary to the Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia No. 47/2016 on the Implementation of Buprenorphine Therapy. To facilitate data analysis, data reduction, and presentation of the final results, the researcher will use NVivo qualitative data analysis software. This is important to present the data more precisely and make data processing more practical.

3. Result and Discussions

There are several factors that encourage adolescents to engage in buprenorphine/naloxone drug abuse. These factors include adolescents and their school, adolescents and their peers, adolescents and their parents, and adolescents and themselves.

3.1. Adolescenst and Their Schools

The learning outcomes assessment system in Indonesia based on Curriculum 2013 focuses not only on assessment in the cognitive domain, but also on the areas of practice and student attitudes. This means that students who have poor attitudes will affect their educational success at the level where they study.

In this study, informants have been asked about their school activities and school environment.

Regarding school rules, all informants said that they were aware of the written school rules and realized that there would be consequences for breaking these rules. However, all informants admitted that they often violate these rules.

At first, when breaking school rules, they felt embarrassed the first time they were punished. However, over time, it became normal because they often violated and received punishment as a result. After being punished several times, the feeling of embarrassment became normal because it was not only them who got punished. Some informants stated that they were often punished with their friends.

Rules that were often broken by the informants included skipping school, being lazy, coming late to school, and fighting with other students. In addition, there were other students who said they were punished for having long hair, being caught smoking at school, not doing homework, and even bringing drugs to school.

In *social learning theory* (Akers, 1998), it is explained that deviant behavior is learned through social association. Violation of school rules can be the initial stage where adolescents learn to deviate through interaction and social reinforcement from the group. If rule-breaking behavior validated or even rewarded in the group, then the adolescent will feel encouraged to continue to more serious forms of deviance, such as drug use.

Violations of the rules and systems established by the school have a negative impact on students. The informants who are in the age range of 15-18 years are still pragmatic at this stage and do not fully realize the consequences of their actions. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1983) state that individuals with low levels of social control tend not to consider the negative effects of their behavior and consider these consequences as trivial. They see the short-term benefits as more important than the long-term consequences of their actions.

Repeated offenses are an indication that informants are not afraid of the risks to their education. Hirschi argues that adolescents who have a close relationship with school will have a fear of losing respect from teachers and other members of the school community. Hirschi measures the relationship with school through indicators of academic effort and achievement, how much students listen to teachers' opinions, and acceptance of school authority in setting behavioral rules. According to Hirschi, students who perform well academically tend to exhibit more positive behaviors at school, are rewarded for their achievements, and are more eager to attend school than underachievers. Those who like school and pay attention to the views of their teachers tend to comply with all the rules and avoid negative behaviors. A person will refrain from engaging in delinquent activities if they realize that such actions can damage their performance at school. This kind of relationship is seen as a form of social control (Hirschi, 1969).

Hirschi found that standardized educational expectations were negatively related to delinquency, and this relationship held true for both white and black boys. Hirschi's findings provide strong support for the idea that those who have career or educational goals, and actively work towards achieving them, are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.

Research by Han et al. (2015) reinforced this relationship, where *teacher attachment* and *educational aspiration* were found to be negatively associated with early alcohol and cigarette use. This suggests that students who have strong social ties to the school environment and have clear educational goals are more likely to be protected from the risk of substance abuse. In contrast, research by Jang (2002) and Bahr et al. (2005) underline the significant role of

adolescents' social environment, particularly peer influence and weak parental control, in promoting deviant behavior. In this context, school rule violations may serve as a bridge between weak social ties and the formation of deviant learning patterns through social interactions.

In addition to school relationships affecting adolescent achievement, the learning process at school also includes curriculum-based and non-curriculum or extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities are a series of activities that basically support curriculum activities. Various activities in extracurricular activities are usually based on students' interests in certain fields, such as sports, religion, scouting, and others. These activities are carried out outside of class hours, either on Monday through Friday, or focusing on Saturday.

The informants were then asked about their activities after school, when their friends were participating in extracurricular activities. The activities they chose included hanging out at stalls while smoking, playing with friends until late in the afternoon or even at night, going home, working as parking guards at the mini market, and playing sports. Some informants admitted that they had participated in extracurricular activities such as soccer, futsal and volleyball.

However, involvement in these extracurricular activities slowly began to diminish as they interacted with friends who did not participate in extracurricular activities. Gradually, the informants were introduced to alcohol and drugs, and eventually became addicted to Buprenorphine/Naloxone. As a result, their physical condition was no longer as strong and healthy as before their involvement in drug abuse. Eventually, they stopped participating in extracurricular activities and spent more time on activities that did not support their educational achievements at school.

4.2. Adolescents and Their Peers

Adolescents' relationships with parents and the school environment are the most important aspects of adolescents' lives. Close relationships between adolescents and parents, peers and schools play a crucial role in the formation of social control. When the relationship between adolescents and their parents and school begins to crack, it is likely that adolescents will engage in behaviors that violate applicable norms and regulations.

In the context of the relationship between parents and teenagers, there are two main findings from this study. First, some informants stated that they did not receive any attention from their parents. In fact, there was an informant who admitted that he had lived with his grandmother since childhood and rarely met his mother. Although the distance between their mother's house and their grandmother's house is quite close, the encounters feel unfamiliar, as if their mother does not know them.

Secondly, there were also informants who reported that their mothers paid attention to them by contacting them when they were playing outside. However, informants' responses to this attention tended to be flat; some even admitted to feeling embarrassed when their mothers came to pick them up at the playground. After returning home, follow-up communication often did not occur, with some informants even confessing that they preferred to shut themselves in their rooms after being scolded.

In this context, parents' attention to their teenage children does exist, but it does not get a positive response from informants. This is due to the communication patterns applied by parents that are not fully understood by their children. Informants only know the existence of unwritten rules at

home. For example, informants understand that they have to go home at a certain time, but this rule is often violated.

Third, father's attention to male informants also emerged in the findings of this study. A male informant admitted that he often communicates or talks with his father at certain times. His father, who was also aware of the informant and his brother's dependence on drugs, often talked to them about their respective addiction experiences. The informant's father was a drug abuser himself, but he often advised the informant to be more careful in his drug use. In many ways, the informant showed a tendency to follow his father's advice.

In the context of parent-adolescent relationships, Hirschi examines three main dimensions: virtual surveillance, intimacy of communication between children and parents, and children's identification with parents. Hirschi argues that virtual surveillance, i.e. the extent to which parents pay attention to the presence of their children and friends, has a negative relationship with children's deviant behavior. This shows the importance of parents' psychological presence in children's lives, especially when children are faced with temptations to engage in bad behavior (Hirschi, 1969).

The closeness of communication between children and parents is measured by how often they talk about important matters, which Hirschi argues is negatively correlated with juvenile delinquency. The third dimension, children's attitudinal identification with their parents, refers to the extent to which children want to be like their father or mother. Hirschi's initial hypothesis was that adolescents who have a strong desire to emulate their parents will be more respectful of their parents' opinions and less likely to engage in criminal or deviant behavior.

This support for the importance of family ties is also reinforced by various other studies. Norman and Ford (2015) found that adolescents with strong ties to family and school had a lower risk of using ecstasy compared to adolescents with weak ties. Meanwhile, Barfield-Cottledge's research showed that adolescents who reported weak family relationships were more prone to engage in juvenile delinquency, including alcohol consumption and marijuana use.

In another study, Han et al. (2016) noted that additional factors leading to delayed smoking and alcohol consumption were parental and teacher supervision. However, peer influence remains a major factor that drives people to engage in drug abuse at a young age.

The style of communication between fathers to drug abusers and informants in the results of this study is at the level of emotional closeness. In the world of addiction or in the recovery process in recovery institutions, drug abuse often occurs when an experienced addict reminds another addict in the context of his addiction.

In a support group session, for example, when a recovering *addict* shares his addiction and asks for advice for the good, other participants who are also friends of recovering addicts give the best advice based on their experience. Often the support group facilitators, who are usually recovering addicts and addiction counselors, provide good treatment options.

Other communication in the world of addiction, such as between a recovering addict and a counselor, is built on trust, appreciation, and mutual respect between each other. One of the successes of addiction counselors in gathering information about drug abusers is when they manage to get clients to tell them about their addiction.

For example, in the drug abuse *screening and assessment* process, the addiction counselor conducting the assessment will have this explanation, which is then used as the basis for developing a therapeutic program that suits the client's needs after being advised in a case hearing involving other professions.

Other studies show that healthy, open and empathic communication patterns between parents and children have a strong preventive effect on various forms of deviant behavior. Han et al. (2015), through a social control theory approach, showed that strong attachment with parents and teachers correlated with delayed initiation of alcohol and cigarette use. In this context, communication is a key tool in shaping attachment and commitment to positive social norms.

In contrast, Muhibuddin's journal (2024) highlights that communication failures characterized by prejudice, semantic interference, and lack of empathy can create an emotional gap between children and parents. Children who feel misunderstood or unappreciated in the family sphere tend to seek escape in the form of peer groups, which are often the entry point for deviant behavior, including drug abuse.

Furthermore, in a study by Yulianti and Putri (2022), unbalanced communication in the digital era - where children interact too much with gadgets and parents lose their active supervisory function - can lead to addiction and emotional disconnection. This situation increases the risk of children feeling uncared for, which then seeks an outlet in the form of deviant behavior.

Research by Bahr et al. (2005) emphasized the importance of a combination of attachment, supervision, and values taught by parents. Although peer influence is very strong in determining adolescent behavior, good communication within the family serves as a counterbalance or even a shield from external environmental pressures.

Another study finding is the communication pattern between parents and their children who have problems because the parents are separated. Informants have said that since their parents divorced, the only communication that still exists is with their mother. Communication with her mother is still limited because, for one, her mother is married and has a child from her new husband.

Regarding the communication between parents and children from divorced families, several studies have shown that parental divorce is one of the structural factors in the family that can significantly disrupt children's emotional closeness with parents. Based on the journals of Muhibuddin (2024) and Pusnita (2021), children who come from non-intact families or who experience chronic family conflict show a higher tendency towards deviant behavior, including substance abuse.

Pusnita (2021) notes that families who lose their social function due to divorce or internal conflict experience a decrease in their ability to carry out roles and responsibilities, which has an impact on the harmony of relationships with children. This causes a decrease in children's emotional attachment to their parents, making children feel less cared for and losing role models.

Muhibuddin (2024) also underlines that family integrity is very important in forming emotional attachment and effective communication. In families that are not intact, interactions between children and parents are limited or full of conflict, so children are more likely to experience emotional alienation.

Within the framework of Hirschi's social control theory, divorce can weaken all key elements:

attachment, commitment, involvement and *belief*. Especially in the attachment element, children who feel emotionally unattached to their parents will lose internal social control to behave according to the norms. This explains why many children from divorced families are more vulnerable to bad peer influences or social environments that are permissive of deviance (Hirschi, 1969).

The situation as described by Hirschi occurs when communication classified as a form of parental attention to their children is based on mutual understanding and gives effect to understanding and mutual respect between each other. In the research findings, there was an imbalance in communication that caused the Informant to be disobedient and even rebellious. As a result, the Informants did not feel at home, often played until late at night and some even left the house. Finally, they meet other teenagers who have the same problems at home, form groups, have agreed on values and commit deviant acts.

4.3. Adolescents and Their Parents

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Within the framework of Hirschi's social control theory, divorce can weaken all key elements: *attachment*, commitment, involvement and *belief*. Particularly in the attachment element, children who do not feel emotionally close to their parents will lose internal social control to behave according to norms. This explains why many children from divorced families are more vulnerable to bad peer influences or social environments that are permissive of deviance (Hirschi, 1969).

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4.4. Adolescents and Themselves

The fourth element in social control theory is belief. This element leads to the extent to which a person practices values related to regulatory behavior. Beliefs in this case lead to norms and religion. It is assumed that the more important values are to a person, the less likely he or she will engage in behavior that deviates from the norms of belief.

Informants' beliefs in norms and religious life are diminishing compared to before they abused drugs, especially in terms of religious life. In terms of belief in norms or rules, there are two things explored in this study. The first is rules at school and rules at home.

All informants said they often broke school rules both during the interview and before they started abusing drugs. At the beginning of the punishment, all said they still felt embarrassed and afraid, but then it became a habit to break school rules frequently. Especially when breaking the rules with their friends.

Informants realize that there are negative consequences if they break school rules. For example, in the school message book there are scores related to the type of offense. Within each type of offense there will be a punishment that the student must accept. Up to a high score level, a student may be subject to punishment in the form of being returned to their parents. Drug abuse is one of the high offenses and can be subject to the most severe punishment.

Drug abuse in a higher legal context is regulated in Law No. 35/2009 on Narcotics. Article 127 states that a person who does not have the right and unlawfully misuses class II narcotics for himself can be punished with a maximum imprisonment of 2 years.

The diction is not entitled in this regulation because the offender does not have the power or does not have a doctor's prescription for those who are sick to use class II narcotics. In the context of this study, the informant was not in the process of treatment for heroin addiction with buprenorphine therapy. This means that from a legal perspective, the informant does not have the right to use Buprenorphine/Naloxone. When they encounter legal cases in the process of recovery, they can be charged.

Akers' Social Learning Theory states that adolescents and their close-knit groups will influence each other, resulting in the formation of group values that are agreed upon and carried out, even though these values may be seen as deviant by other communities (Akers, 2010). That is, in this research violations of school rules or violations of laws and regulations are commonplace because they are used to it and their friends do the same.

This is a form of integration that is wrong in several ways. For example, if a member of their group is mistreated by another group member, they simultaneously defend it without knowing whether it is right or not. Informants admitted that resolving issues like this often leads to physical touching, whether it happens at school or outside of school.

Resolving conflicts between adolescents by means of physical violence is said to be their weak social control. Hirschi and Gottfredson (1994) stated that individuals who have low social control tend to have low tolerance for disappointment and perform certain behaviors because they provide

relief from short-term suffering. Therefore, individuals with low social control usually resolve conflicts using physical means compared to using verbal resolution methods.

Another part of the belief element in Social Control Theory (Hirschi, 1969) is religious practice. The informants in this study all had problems with the practice of their religion, Islam. Two things that were asked of them were related to the implementation of the 5 daily prayers and fasting in the month of Ramadan.

In relation to this, informants stated that they were diligent in praying, reciting the Quran and fasting when they were children. However, as they grew older and interacted with their peers, their religious practices became less intense. In social learning theory, it is said that the values believed by the group will change and influence the values practiced by previous individuals. This happens because of the enormous influence of the group in instilling values that are considered correct by them.

Some informants said they were always told and reminded to pray by their parents, but often this was not done due to disobedience to parents and part of the informants' time was spent with melepak activities with their group. So when they gather, religious values are no longer a concern. In the context of drug abuse, research by Desmond, Ulmer, and Bader (2013) showed that religiosity contributes to strengthening self-control, which acts as an intermediary in preventing adolescent drug and alcohol use. This is reinforced by the findings of Santoso and Samputra (2023), which showed that spiritual and religious approaches in rehabilitation are able to increase individual resilience and self-awareness. In terms of preventive intervention, Maarif and Munir (2023) emphasized the importance of religious education and understanding of legal values to prevent adolescents from falling into drugs. They found that an understanding of moral and legal consequences can strengthen resistance to deviance.

In the world of collectors, those who are already addicted to drugs talk about addiction and drugs, how they can buy them, who they buy them from, the latest drug dealer information including information on fellow collectors being arrested by the police. Anything beyond that becomes unimportant.

5. Conslusions

Based on the results of the study, all research informants have a history of drug abuse since primary and secondary school. The substances they abused ranged from alcohol to drugs that needed to be prescribed by a doctor. Before becoming addicted to Buprenorphine/Naloxone, informants stated that they were already addicted to drugs and some of them were already at the stage of severe addiction. Difficulty in obtaining drugs, the influence of older friends, peer influence, boyfriend/girlfriend influence, and the marketing approach of Buprenorphine/Naloxone dealers influenced informants' first-time Buprenorphine/Naloxone abuse. At the time of the interviews, all informants were addicted to Buprenorphine/Naloxone. The factor that drove the informants to abuse drugs was the weak relationship between the informants and their parents. This was characterized by ineffective communication and weak parental supervision of the informants. The informant's relationship with the school is also very weak. The informants' school performance as an indicator of the relationship with the school is not good. Their involvement in after-school activities is minimal. Their commitment to learning is also very low. In addition, the informants are attached to or are leaders of a group of teenagers who tend to agree with things that are considered contrary to the rules. They consider breaking school rules as normal, then agree or cooperate to commit violence against other groups as an

option when facing conflicts, and use after-school time to kick around with their groups for hours into the night. It can be said that they have entered into a negative environment. Finally, all informants said that they were not strong in religious (secular) practices at the time of the interview. This was indicated by the fact that some of them still left their prayers, many of them broke their fasts, and some of them still did not recite the Qur'an.

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