

Perceived Parental Acceptance-Rejection, Family-Related Factors, and Socio-Economic Status of Families of Adolescent Heroin Addicts

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Aim. To compare adolescent heroin addicts and non-addicts with respect to their perceived parental acceptance and rejection, family factors (structure of the family, parents' marital status, and psychopathological disorders in the family), socio-economic status, and subjective appraisal of their family relations.

Methods. Fifty-two heroin addicts aged between 17 and 21, were compared with a group of 52 non-addicts of the same age. The comparison group was selected from an ad-hoc sample of high-school juniors and seniors and first- and second-year university students. Only participants who reported never to have taken any drugs were selected for the group of non-addicts. The perceived parental behavior of mothers and fathers was assessed by the 32-item version of Rohner's Parental Acceptance-rejection Questionnaire. Three other questionnaires were constructed to collect information on family factors, socio-economic status, subjective appraisal of family relations, and drug usage.

Results. The addicts perceived their mothers as more rejecting ($p=0.018$ for total score), more aggressive ($p=0.007$), and showing more undifferentiated rejection ($p=0.001$) than non-addicts. The addicts perceived their fathers as more rejecting than their mothers ($p=0.002$ for total score), less warm and accepting ($p<0.001$), and more neglecting ($p=0.001$). In comparison with non-addicts, the addicts evaluated the relationships with their mothers ($p=0.001$) and general satisfaction with their families ($p=0.021$) as poorer. Adolescent addicts mostly came from intact families. In the addicts' primary families (mother, father, and siblings), there was significantly higher incidence of addiction ($p=0.041$), schizophrenia ($p=0.022$), and suicide or attempted suicide ($p=0.012$). Addicts' families belonged to higher income groups than non-addicts ($p=0.021$). Addicts' fathers were on average less educated than non-addicts' fathers ($p=0.040$); typically to a high school level. The education level of addicts' mothers was similar to that of non-addicts' mothers ($p=0.091$), typically they were educated to a high school level.

Conclusion. The results of this research indicate the importance of parental rearing practices, especially mothers', on adolescent drug abuse and addiction. As addicts perceived their mothers as more rejecting than non-addicts, mothers' rejection could be one of the major risk factors for developing drug addiction.

Key words: adolescence; family relations; heroin; parent-child relations; social class; substance-related disorders