Decision-Making Trends Regarding Drug Use Among Inmates in Palestinian Correctional and Rehabilitation Centers

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to analyze the factors influencing drug use decisions among inmates in Palestinian correctional and rehabilitation centers. By understanding these factors, effective strategies can be developed to reduce the incidence of drug use and improve rehabilitation opportunities for inmates.

Methodology: A descriptive approach was employed to achieve the study's objectives. The study population consisted of inmates in correctional and rehabilitation centers in the Beitunia Center. The study sample included 70 inmates selected through convenience sampling. The "Decision-Making Trends Toward Drug Use" scale, which includes 20 items distributed across two domains—positive and negative trends—was utilized.

Results: The results showed statistically significant differences in negative attitudes toward drug use based on the type of drug, duration of imprisonment, and method of obtaining drugs. Inmates who found it difficult to obtain drugs showed more negative responses, as did those who spent longer periods in prison. Cocaine users showed more negative responses compared to cannabis users.

Conclusions: The results indicate that the type of drug, difficulty in obtaining it, and length of imprisonment affect inmates' attitudes toward drug use. Strategies should be developed to reduce drug use among inmates by raising awareness of risks and improving rehabilitation programs in prisons.

Keywords: Drug use, decision-making, inmates, correctional and rehabilitation centers, rehabilitation.

Introduction

Drugs are one of the most complex challenges facing modern societies, negatively affecting various social, economic, health, and security aspects. Recent decades have witnessed an increase in drug use rates, especially among young people who suffer from difficult economic conditions, including unemployment and social marginalization, leading many of them to resort to drugs as a means of coping or escaping reality (Shaghaghy et al., 2011; Al-Khazaleh, 2003; Al-Badaina, 2010).

Decision-making trends regarding drug use among inmates in correctional and rehabilitation centers reveal a complex interaction between factors influencing both drug use and treatment

methods. Research indicates that inmates often face significant barriers to accessing effective drug treatment programs, which may lead to continued drug use (Bimo et al., 2024). This problem is particularly exacerbated within correctional and rehabilitation centers, where inmates are exposed to multiple psychological and social pressures that increase the likelihood of drug use, making it a complex challenge to address in these environments (Degenhardt et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2023).

In the Palestinian context, the phenomenon of drug use has worsened in recent years due to economic, social, and political pressures. Palestinian authorities have dealt with an increasing number of drug-related cases, reflecting the growing level of challenge facing the community. The Israeli occupation and political pressures are considered major factors contributing to the destabilization of Palestinian society, enhancing the spread of drugs as one of the facets of this disruption (Abu Dhahir, 2023).

Individuals' psychological and cognitive orientations are closely related to behaviors related to drug use, where feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem can drive individuals toward drugs as a means to overcome those feelings (Karimi et al., 2019). Social factors, such as family disintegration and loss of social support, also contribute to an increased likelihood of drug use among young people (Kendler et al., 2003).

Research shows that prisons contain a large number of individuals with a history of drug use, where the prison environment can increase the likelihood of relapse (Fazel et al., 2017). Inmates face challenges such as psychological stress, depression, and mental health disorders, which can increase the chances of drug use during detention (Degenhardt et al., 2021). Studies indicate that prison environments often lack adequate rehabilitation support, making inmates more susceptible to relapse after release (Heidemann et al., 2016). Research shows that rehabilitation programs focusing on improving mental health and enhancing decision-making skills can play a pivotal role in reducing drug use within prisons. Providing psychological and social support can reduce relapse rates and help reintegrate inmates into society after release (Belenko et al., 2013).

This study aims to analyze the factors influencing drug use decisions among inmates in Palestinian correctional and rehabilitation centers. By understanding these factors, effective strategies can be developed to reduce the incidence of drug use and improve rehabilitation opportunities for inmates, enhancing their ability to integrate into society and contribute positively to its development.

Previous studies indicate a variation in perceptions and attitudes toward drug use based on multiple factors, affecting individuals' ability to make appropriate decisions in this context. For example, a study by Abdel Majeed et al. (2018), conducted on drug addicts at the Hayat Center in Khartoum State, indicates that these individuals suffer from a high sense of psychological loneliness and a weak ability to make decisions, showing an inverse correlation between loneliness and decision-making ability, without differences in psychological loneliness based on the duration of use. The study by Degenhardt & Hall (2008) published in PLOS Medicine indicates that cannabis is more commonly used compared to cocaine globally, reflecting a variation in social acceptance and perceived risks between the two substances. Similarly, the study by Pabayo et al. (2020) shows that social anxiety about cocaine use remains high, while anxiety about cannabis is decreasing in the context of its legalization in several regions. On the other hand, the study by Gowin et al. (2018) indicates that poor decision-making is a common trait in all substance use disorders, regardless of the legal and health consequences of the substances used. It shows that decision-

making patterns do not differ significantly between users of different substances, indicating similarity in decisions related to drug use regardless of the chosen substance.

Regarding the impact of imprisonment duration on inmates' attitudes, the study by Binswanger et al. (2007) supports the idea that longer prison terms increase awareness of the health risks associated with drug use, enhancing negative responses among inmates. The study by Wolff et al. (2012) indicates that rehabilitation programs in prisons improve negative attitudes toward drugs, confirming the impact of the imprisonment duration. Conversely, the study by McNeill (2019) indicates that some individuals may maintain positive attitudes toward drugs regardless of their imprisonment duration due to social and psychological pressures. The study by Lund & Lund (2019) adds that external factors such as social and family influence may have a greater impact on positive attitudes, explaining the absence of differences in attitudes based on imprisonment duration.

Despite extensive research on drug use and its effects on societies, there is a lack of deep understanding of the impact of social, economic, and political factors on inmates in Palestinian correctional and rehabilitation centers. Many studies have not focused on how this unique prison environment in Palestine affects inmates' decisions related to drug use. Therefore, there is an urgent need to study these factors more deeply to improve intervention strategies and reduce drug use among inmates.

Method and Procedures

Study Methodology: The descriptive approach was used to achieve the study's objectives, as this methodology is suitable for the nature and objectives of the study. The descriptive method is defined as the approach used to study a current phenomenon or event, allowing for information collection to answer research questions without researcher intervention. The descriptive approach aims to describe the phenomenon under study and analyze its data scientifically and systematically, focusing on describing, classifying, and accurately analyzing the problem.

Study Population and Sample: The study population consisted of inmates in correctional and rehabilitation centers, specifically in the Beitunia Center. The study sample included 70 inmates selected through convenience sampling.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the study sample according to study variables:

Variables	Level	Frequency	Percent
Type of drug	Cocaine	20	28.6%
	Cannabis	50	71.4%
Method of obtaining drugs	Easy	32	45.7%
	Somewhat difficult	38	54.3%
Duration of Imprisonment	Less than a year	29	41.4%
	1-5 years	29	41.4%
	More than 5 years	12	17.1%
Duration of time spent in prison	Less than a year	36	51.4%
	More than a year	34	48.6%

Study Tool: Based on the review of educational literature and previous studies related to the study's subject and the scales used, the "Decision-Making Trends Toward Drug Use" scale was used, as applied in related studies (De Andrade et al., 2018; Tomaz et al., 2023), prepared by Velicer et al. (1985). The scale consists of 20 items distributed across two domains: positive and negative trends. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, with response levels classified as follows: low (1 to <2.33), medium (2.34 to <3.67), and high (3.68 to 5).

Validity and Reliability: The validity of the tool was verified by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient between the questionnaire items and the overall tool score, showing statistical significance in all items, indicating internal consistency. The reliability of the tool was also verified using the Cronbach's Alpha equation, with an overall score of 0.93, indicating suitable reliability for the study's purposes.

Statistical Processing: After collecting the questionnaires and ensuring their validity for analysis, the data was coded and entered into a computer for appropriate statistical analysis using the SPSS program. Statistical analyses included extracting arithmetic means and standard deviations for each item, using the t-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation coefficient, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability equation.

results:

The analysis of the study results related to" Decision-Making Trends Toward Drug Use Among Inmates in Correctional and Rehabilitation Centers" will be presented, showing the impact of each variable through the sample's responses to the study tool and analyzing the obtained statistical data.

Table 2: T-Test Results for Responses on Decision-Making Trends Toward Drug Use According to the Drug Type Variable

Drug Type		N	M	S D	T Value	Sig
Negative Trend	Cocaine	20	3.86	.63	2.86	.006
	Cannabis	50	3.12	1.07	3.53	.001
Positive Trend	Cocaine	20	2.58	1.09	-3.48	.001
	Cannabis	50	3.54	1.01	-3.37	.002

The T-Test results indicate statistically significant differences in decision-making trends toward drug use according to the drug type. Negative responses for cocaine had a higher mean (3.86) compared to cannabis (3.12), with strong statistical significance (sig = 0.006 and 0.001, respectively). In contrast, positive responses showed a higher mean for cannabis (3.54) compared to cocaine (2.58), also with strong statistical significance (sig = 0.001 and 0.002, respectively).

Table 3: T-Test Results for Responses on Decision-Making Trends Toward Drug Use According to the Method of Obtaining Drugs Variable

Method of Obtaining Drugs		N	M	S D	T Value	Sig
Negative Trend	Easy	32	2.97	1.15	-2.88	.005
	Somewhat difficult	38	3.64	.78	-2.79	.007
Positive Trend	Easy	32	3.26	1.12	-.024	.981
	Somewhat difficult	38	3.27	1.12	-.024	.981

The T-Test results for responses toward drug use based on the method of obtaining drugs indicate statistically significant differences in negative cases, where responses showed a lower mean for individuals who consider obtaining drugs easy (2.97) compared to those who consider it somewhat difficult (3.64), with strong statistical significance (sig = 0.005 and 0.007, respectively). In contrast, there were no statistically significant differences in positive responses, as the means were very close between the two categories (3.26 and 3.27), showing no statistical significance (sig = 0.981).

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Results for Responses on Decision-Making Trends Toward Drug Use According to the Duration of Imprisonment Variable

Duration of Imprisonment		N	M	S D	F Value	Sig
Negative Trend	Less than a year	29	2.91	1.15		
	1-5 years	29	3.60	.86		
	More than 5 years	12	3.71	.65	4.77	.01
Positive Trend	Less than a year	29	3.18	.98		
	1-5 years	29	3.16	1.11	1.15	.32
	More than 5 years	12	3.71	1.38		

The one-way ANOVA results indicate statistically significant differences in negative responses toward drug use based on the duration of imprisonment. Individuals whose sentences ranged from 1-5 years and more than 5 years had higher means (3.60 and 3.71, respectively) compared to those whose sentences were less than a year (2.91), with strong statistical significance (F = 4.778, sig = 0.011). This suggests that longer imprisonment durations may increase negative trends toward drug use. In contrast, positive responses did not show statistically significant differences based on imprisonment duration, as the means were close (3.18, 3.16, and 3.71), with no meaningful statistical significance (F = 1.157, sig = 0.321).

Table 5: T-Test Results for Responses on Decision-Making Trends Toward Drug Use According to the Duration of Time Spent in Prison Variable

Duration of Time Spent in Prison		N	M	S D	T Value	Sig
Negative Trend	Less than a year	36	2.98	1.14	-3.18	.00
	More than a year	34	3.71	.72		
Positive Trend	Less than a year	36	3.35	.98	.68	.49
	More than a year	34	3.17	1.25		

The T-Test results for responses toward drug use based on the duration of time spent in prison indicate statistically significant differences in negative trends. Individuals who spent more than a year in prison show a higher mean in negative responses (3.71) compared to those who spent less than a year (2.98), with strong statistical significance (sig = 0.002) in both cases. This suggests that longer prison durations are associated with increased negative trends toward drug use. In contrast, there were no statistically significant differences in positive responses, as the means were close (3.35 for less than a year and 3.17 for more than a year), with no meaningful statistical significance (sig = 0.493 and 0.496).

Discussion:

The results of this study reflect the importance of the impact of a range of factors on decision-making trends toward drug use among inmates in Palestinian correctional and rehabilitation centers. The study examined the impact of drug type, method of obtaining it, duration of imprisonment, and duration of time spent in prison on these trends, showing statistically significant differences in some cases.

The results showed clear differences in negative responses toward drugs based on the drug type, where cocaine showed a higher mean compared to cannabis, with strong statistical significance. These results can be explained by the fact that cocaine is considered a substance with severe negative effects on physical and mental health, reinforcing negative responses due to fear of legal and social consequences associated with its use. In contrast, cannabis is viewed more favorably due to its potential medical uses and legalization in some countries, leading to higher positive responses. These results support previous studies, such as the study by Degenhardt & Hall (2008), which showed widespread cannabis use globally, and the study by Pabayo et al. (2020), which showed decreased social anxiety about cannabis use compared to cocaine.

The study results indicate that the difficulty of obtaining drugs is associated with an increase in negative trends toward their use. Individuals who find it difficult to obtain drugs showed a higher mean in negative responses compared to those who find it easy. This can be explained by the fact that difficulty enhances awareness of risks and social and legal pressures, leading to a greater negative attitude toward use. These results support studies like Pabayo et al. (2020), which linked difficulty of obtaining with increased risks, and the study by Galea et al. (2003), which showed

that ease of obtaining may reduce awareness of risks. In contrast, studies like Van Hasselt et al. (2015) indicate that the perception of ease is not always associated with a negative attitude, as cultural and social factors play a significant role, while the study by Kilmer et al. (2007) showed that local policies can have a greater impact on perceptions.

The one-way ANOVA results showed statistically significant differences in negative responses toward drug use based on the duration of imprisonment. Individuals who spent 1-5 years or more had higher means in negative trends compared to those whose sentences were less than a year. These results can be explained by the fact that longer prison terms enhance risk awareness due to exposure to rehabilitation programs and psychological and social pressures in the prison environment. These results are consistent with studies like Binswanger et al. (2007), which showed increased risk awareness among inmates, and the study by Wolff et al. (2012), which indicated the role of rehabilitation programs in improving negative attitudes.

The results also showed statistically significant differences in negative trends based on the duration of time spent in prison. Individuals who spent more than a year showed a higher mean in negative responses compared to those who spent less than a year. This reinforces the idea that longer prison terms increase awareness of risks and social and psychological pressures that may drive individuals to avoid behaviors that may repeat negative experiences, such as drug use. This idea is supported by the study by Binswanger et al. (2007), which indicates that long prison terms enhance individuals' awareness of health risks, and the study by McNeill (2019), which indicates that rehabilitation and monitoring programs contribute to improving negative attitudes.

The study did not show statistically significant differences based on imprisonment or prison duration, as the means were close. This may mean that factors influencing positive trends toward use are related to personal or external social factors not directly affected by prison duration. The study by Lund & Lund (2019) indicates that social and family influence plays a significant role in shaping these trends, while the study by Wildeman &Western (2010) indicates that community and economic factors may have a greater impact than prison on positive perceptions toward drugs.

Conclusions

This study reveals that the type of drug, difficulty in obtaining it, and duration of imprisonment affect inmates' attitudes toward drug use. Cocaine is considered more dangerous than cannabis due to its strong negative effects, leading to greater negative responses. Additionally, difficulty in obtaining drugs increases risk awareness, thereby reinforcing negative trends toward use. Moreover, inmates who spent longer periods in prison show greater risk awareness, driving them to avoid drugs. However, positive trends toward use are not significantly affected by imprisonment duration.

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