



Use of psychoactive substances by parents and relationships with children: an integrative literature review


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Objective: to describe the impact of parenting by psychoactive substance users on the mental health and development of their children. **Method:** this is an integrative literature review whose search occurred between August and October 2020. Studies were selected whose theme investigated the influence of parenting on the development and mental health of children. The exclusion criteria were articles that approached the theme tangentially, such as the behavior of parents regarding the use of substances by their children. **Results:** five articles were selected that addressed elements of parenting that influence the development of mental disorders in children. The negligent parenting style was related to negative consequences in the lives of children, especially because it is associated, in most cases, with substance abuse. **Conclusion:** it was found that parenting style can directly influence the lives of children, leading to a problem in mental health and development, especially through lack of care, abandonment by parents, and decreased school performance.

Descriptors: Substance-Related Disorders; Child Development; Parent-Child Relation; Child.

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Uso de substâncias psicoativas pelos pais e relações com os filhos: revisão integrativa da literatura

Objetivo: descrever o impacto da parentalidade de usuários de substâncias psicoativas na saúde mental e no desenvolvimento dos filhos. **Método:** trata-se de uma revisão integrativa de literatura cuja busca ocorreu entre os meses de agosto e outubro de 2020. Foram selecionados estudos cuja temática investigou a influência da parentalidade no desenvolvimento e na saúde mental dos filhos. Os critérios de exclusão foram artigos que abordaram o tema de forma tangencial, como o comportamento dos pais frente ao uso de substâncias pelos filhos. **Resultados:** foram selecionados cinco artigos que abordaram elementos da parentalidade que influenciam o desenvolvimento de transtornos mentais em crianças. O estilo parental negligente esteve relacionado a consequências negativas na vida dos filhos, sobretudo por estar associado, na maioria das vezes, com o uso abusivo de substâncias psicoativas. **Conclusão:** constatou-se que o estilo parental pode influenciar diretamente a vida dos filhos, acarretando um problema na saúde mental e no desenvolvimento, sobretudo pela falta de cuidado, abandono pelos pais e diminuição do rendimento escolar.

Descritores: Transtornos Relacionados ao Uso de Substâncias; Desenvolvimento Infantil; Relações Pais-Filho; Criança.

Uso de sustancias psicoactivas por parte de los padres y relaciones con los hijos: una revisión integradora de la literatura

Objetivo: describir el impacto de la paternidad de los usuarios de usuarios de sustancias psicoactivas en la salud mental y el desarrollo de los niños. **Método:** se trata de una revisión integradora de la literatura cuya búsqueda se realizó entre los meses de agosto y octubre de 2020. Se seleccionaron estudios cuyo tema investigó la influencia de la crianza de los hijos en el desarrollo y la salud mental de los niños. Los criterios de exclusión fueron artículos que abordan el tema de manera tangencial, como el comportamiento de los padres frente al uso de sustancias por parte de sus hijos. **Resultados:** se seleccionaron cinco artículos que abordaron elementos de la paternidad que influyen en el desarrollo de trastornos mentales en los niños. El estilo de crianza negligente se relacionó con consecuencias negativas en la vida de los niños, principalmente porque se asocia con mayor frecuencia al abuso de sustancias psicoactivas. **Conclusión:** se encontró que el estilo de crianza puede influir directamente en la vida de los niños, provocando daños en la salud mental y el desarrollo de los niños, especialmente por falta de cuidados, abandono de los padres, disminución del rendimiento escolar.

Descriptorios: Trastornos Relacionados con Sustancias; Desarrollo Infantil; Relaciones Padre-Hijo; Niño.

Introduction

The attachment structures built throughout children's development are often regulated by the way the individual seeks comfort and protection in life. In this context, parent-child relationships have a fundamental influence on children's behavior and development, especially since they are their first socialization context before exploring the world⁽¹⁻²⁾.

The literature has pointed out the importance of parental attitudes and behaviors in this area, especially with regard to parental educational patterns⁽¹⁻³⁾. In a typological approach, some authors have contributed, in an elementary way, to the debate around the influence of parents on children's development through two elementary domains: responsiveness and demand⁽⁴⁾. Responsiveness refers to the parent's sensitivity and adaptation to the child's signals, states, and needs, and demanding refers to the child's need for supervision, maturity, discipline, and readiness to confront a child who disobeys⁽⁵⁾.

The author also defines the Parental Style, which refers to the set of parental attitudes adopted in raising children and represents the way in which caregivers deal with issues of emotional support, hierarchy and discipline, being defined by three main styles: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive⁽⁵⁻⁶⁾.

The term authoritative characterizes the parental style that persists in the manifestation of affection and support at the same time that demands and carries out, in an appropriate way, the exercise of authority with high levels of control and affection. Authoritarian parents are those who model, control and evaluate the child's behavior according to established and usually absolute rules of behavior, i.e., they show little affection, with the predominance of imposing rules, with a high standard of demand, without caring about the relevance of the children's opinions. On the other hand, the permissive ones present themselves to the child as a resource for the fulfillment of his/her desires, not as a model and not to direct his/her behavior. They tend to behave in a non-punitive and receptive way towards the child's wishes and actions⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾.

There is yet another line of study on parenting styles that encompasses neglectful families. The negligent parenting style refers to those who fail to establish their parenting roles in the long term, that is, the components of the parenting role tend to progressively diminish, resulting in a minimal functional relationship between parents and children⁽⁷⁾.

Sequentially, other authors have broken the permissive parenting style into two, that is, they have designated it as indulgent style and negligent style. Indulgent parents are those who are not very demanding, but rather affectionate. The negligent style, on the other hand, presents a low level of interest in activities and

concern for their children, in which a loose relationship of affection and control is established⁽⁷⁾.

Therefore, the presence of negligent family relationships or with extreme disciplinary rigidity can lead to damages in the behavior of children. Another important aspect is that, in the case of negligent family contexts, the use and abuse of Psychoactive Substances (PASs), abandonment situations, and violence are often common⁽⁸⁾.

PASs are substances that have the ability to modify the human body. Used in a problematic way, they cause damage to the organism, exposing the individual to abusive and continuous use⁽⁹⁾. Although it is used in all societies and cultures, it differs only in the way it is manipulated, produced and used.

Nowadays, the easy accessibility to these substances by the user makes the abusive use more prone, leading to a public health and socioeconomic problem⁽¹⁰⁾. The seriousness of this is deepened by the fact that the use of PASs causes a change in the individual's consciousness, mood, and thought processes⁽¹¹⁻¹²⁾.

Many times, the children of these individuals may suffer from some mental disorder, because the children experience stressful events. These events include family fights, domestic violence, economic difficulties, among others⁽⁸⁾.

Around the world, about one in ten children or adolescents live with people who use PAS, most of them under the age of five. Thus, the use of PASs by parents can cause modifying effects on the family structure, and feelings of anguish, fear, denial, abandonment, irritation, guilt or disruption of family relationships are common⁽¹³⁾.

Given the above, it is suggested that the behavior of parents who are harmful users of PASs may influence the development of their children. Thus, this study becomes necessary because it allows, through an integrative literature review, to better understand how parenting style can influence the development and mental health of their children and to identify the gaps in the body of science on the issue. It is believed that such knowledge will be favorable to the implementation of new studies and intervention strategies for these families.

In this sense, this study starts from the following guiding question: "What is the impact of the parenting of psychoactive substance users on the mental health and development of their children?". Therefore, the aim of this paper was to describe the impact of parenting of psychoactive substance users on mental health and child development through an integrative literature review.

Method

This is an integrative literature review whose research method is an important tool because it allows the analysis of existing publications, providing an understanding of a particular object of study in a comprehensive manner,

which can be applied to various topics and/or study designs in health⁽¹⁴⁾.

The integrative review consisted of the following steps: 1) definition and validation of the guiding question; 2) delimitation of descriptors and key words; 3) definition of the research method; 4) definition of the inclusion and exclusion criteria; 5) reading of the titles and abstracts of articles; 6) selection of the most pertinent articles to be read in full; 7) preparation of summaries of the articles selected in the final sample; 8) interpretative analysis and discussion of the results⁽¹⁴⁻¹⁵⁾.

Data collection was carried out between August and October 2020. The operationalization of this research began with a consultation to the Descriptors in Health Sciences (DeCS), through the Virtual Health Library (VHL), and to the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), of the National Library, for the knowledge of the universal descriptors.

Therefore, the controlled descriptors in Portuguese were used: *transtornos relacionados ao uso de substâncias; transtornos mentais; desenvolvimento infantil; relações pais-filhos; criança; comportamento infantil; relações mãe-filho; relações pai-filho; transtornos de adaptação*. Descriptors in English: substance-related disorders; mental disorders; child development; parent-child relations; child; child behavior; mother-child relations; father-child relations; adjustment disorders. Descriptors in Spanish: *trastornos relacionados con sustancias; trastornos mentales; desarrollo infantil; relaciones padres-hijo; niño; conducta infantil; relaciones madre-hijo; relaciones padre-hijo; trastornos de adaptación*.

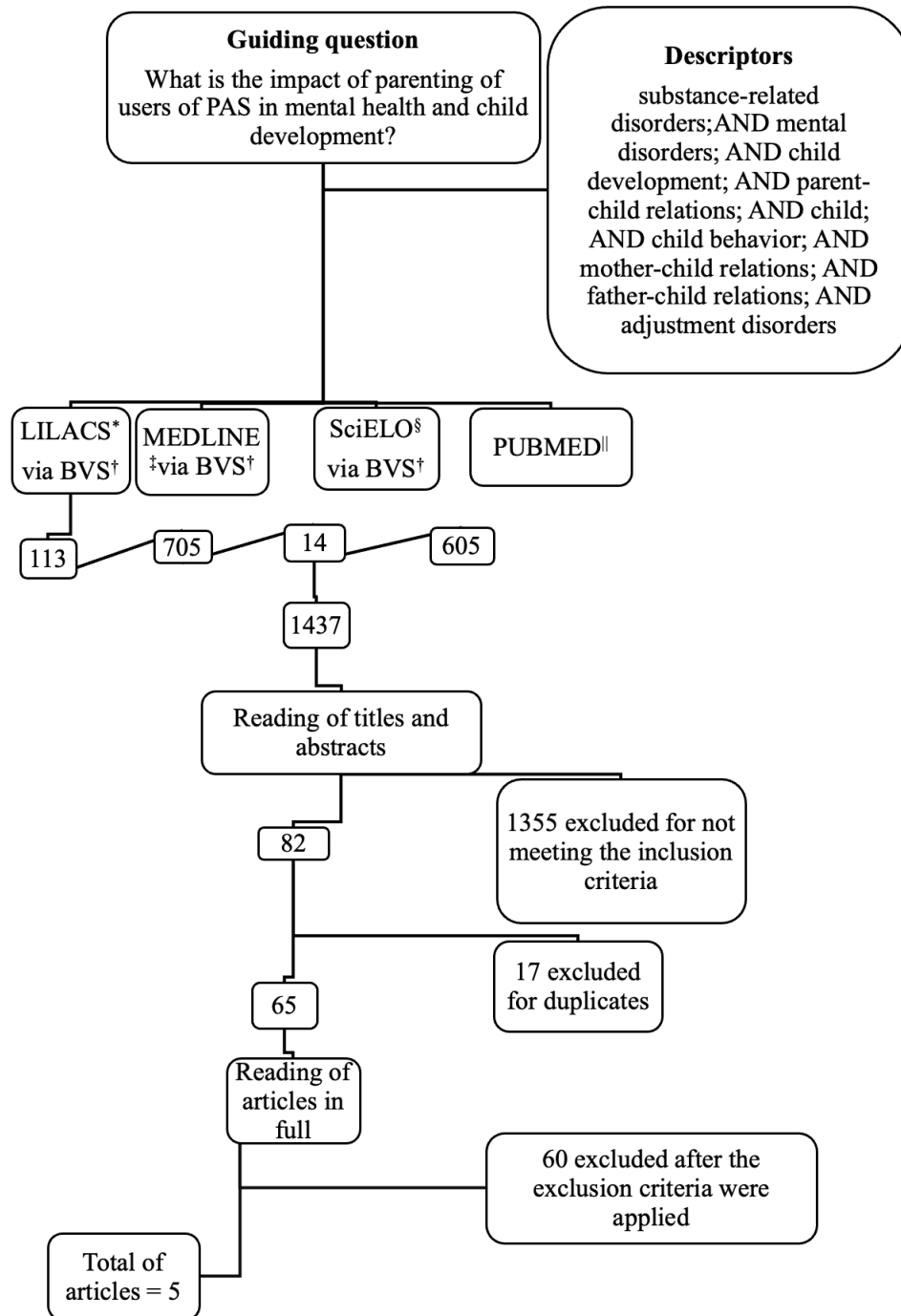
The following keywords were used in Portuguese: *abuso de substâncias psicoativas; transtornos mentais; desenvolvimento infantil; pais; crianças; transtornos reativos; convívio e cuidadores; sofrimento mental;*

infância; filhos adultos. Keywords in English: abuse of psychoactive substances; mental disorders; child development; parents; child; adjustment disorders; conviviality e caregivers; mental suffering; childhood; adult children. Keywords in Spanish: *abuso de sustancias psicoactivas; desordenes mentales; desarrollo infantil; padres; niño; trastornos reactivos; socialidad e convívio; sufrimiento mental; infancia; hijos adultos*.

To increase the scope of the search, the crossings were first made only with the descriptors, then only with the keywords, and finally, permuted among themselves, using the Boolean mechanisms AND and OR.

Data collection was performed by three independent researchers in national and international databases, using the Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE); Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS); Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and U. S. National Library of Medicine - National Institute of Health (PubMed). National Library of Medicine National Institute of Health (PubMed), in two phases, where the first consisted of an advanced search in the databases, detailing the quantity of articles: LILACS (113 articles); MEDLINE (705 articles); SciELO (14 articles); via VHL and PubMed (605 articles).

The inclusion criteria were articles whose theme investigated the impact of the parenting style of PAS users on the mental health and development of their children. Only studies that reported at least one of the parents as users and with an important bond at some point in their lives with their children were included. We excluded articles that approached the theme tangentially, that focused on the behavior of parents regarding the use of PAS by their children, that included neurological problems caused by substance use during pregnancy, and those without full access (Figure 1).



*LILACS = Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences; †BVS = Virtual Health Library; ‡MEDLINE = Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online; §SciELO = Scientific Electronic Library Online; ||PubMed = National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health.

Figure 1 - Flowchart of the process of collection and composition of the study corpus

Then, the articles were read in full for a more systematic analysis, and 17 articles were excluded because they were repeatedly indexed in one of the databases and seven articles because they did not allow free access. Then, the duplicate studies were computed only once, resulting in a final sample of five articles, which were read in full.

The PICO strategy was used⁽¹⁷⁾, whose acronym represents, in each letter, a correspondence, being P - population: parents users of psychoactive substances; I - intervention: how the use of psychoactive substances by parents or caregivers influences the parent-child relationship; C - control: not applicable; O - outcomes/outcome: "What is the impact of parenting of psychoactive substance users on the mental health and development of their children?" (Figure 2).

		Keywords	Descriptors
PICO*		"substance abuse; mental disorders; child development; parents; children; reactive disorders; socializing and caregivers; mental distress; childhood; adult children"	"substance use disorders; mental disorders; child development; parent-child relationships; child; child behavior; mother-child relationships; parent-child relationships, adjustment disorders"
P	Parents or caregivers, children and adolescents.	"parents" and "adult children"	"parent-child relationships"; "children"
I	How the use of psychoactive substances by parents influences the mental health of their children	"mental disorders" and "substance abuse" and "living together" and "mental suffering"	"mental disorders" or "substance use disorders"
C	Not applicable.	Not applicable	Not applicable
O	How parenting influences the mental health of children?	"child development" and "mental disorders" and "mental suffering" and "childhood"	"child development" and "mental disorders"

*PICO = Population, Intervention, Control, Outcome.

Figure 2 - PICO strategy - used in the process of collecting and composing the study corpus

Results

It was observed that all studies were published in international journals. Most were quantitative studies (3; 60%), followed by qualitative (1; 20%) and quantiquitative studies (1; 20%). Two studies (40%) were descriptive, two (40%) were randomized clinical trials, and one study was a cohort study (20%). Four articles (80%) were from the United States of America and one (20%) was from Sweden.

The five studies⁽¹⁷⁻²¹⁾ aimed to identify or evaluate the elements of parenting that influence the development of mental disorders in children. The analysis of the articles identified that the use of PASs translated as a practice that has an important relationship with reduced care effectiveness, causing parents to often leave their children more exposed to the occurrence of abuse and violence^(18,21).

Negligent and indulgent parenting styles stand out here as elements present in most of the studies found, especially in parents who use PASs⁽¹⁸⁻²¹⁾. Children or

adolescents who live in an environment with and are cared for by abusive users of PASs are more likely to present depressive and anxious pictures and to be more stressed than children who are not exposed to this environment. The impact on their lives refers to the difficulties in relating to other people, as these children show problematic behaviors in other environments, such as school, and are also at risk of being removed from their homes, which can further aggravate their behavior and mental health.

Besides the impact on mental health and interpersonal relationships, the use of PASs by parents can lead to the use of PASs by their children⁽¹⁷⁾. This consumption of PAS by children and/or adolescents is even more problematic, since they often have greater difficulty in expressing their feelings and externalizing problems. The articles that made up the final selection were arranged in a chart (Figure 3).

Title	Country/Year	Journal	Type of study	Study design	Objective	Results Found
Risk for behavior problems in children of parents with substance use disorders ⁽¹⁷⁾	USA (2015)	The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry	Quantitative study	Retrospective descriptive study	To analyze whether parenting style influences recovery for substance use disorder.	It was found that children, children of parents who are PAS ⁺ users, may be more likely to have impairments in their development and mental health.
Study protocol: families and childhood transitions study (FACTS ⁺) – a longitudinal investigation of the role of the family environment in brain development and risk for mental health disorders in community based children ⁽¹⁸⁾	USA (2016)	BMC Pediatrics	Quantitative-analytical study	Cohort study	Identify the influence of family environment and stressful events on the development of mental problems in late childhood.	The child's neurobiological and behavioral manifestations are influenced by the way he was raised by his parents, leading to problems in the neurocognitive development of this individual.

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Title	Country/ Year	Journal	Type of study	Study design	Objective	Results Found
Cumulative contextual risk and behavior problems among children with substance using mothers: The mediating role of mothers' and children's coping strategies ⁽¹⁹⁾	USA [*] (2016)	American Journal of Orthopsychiatry	Quantitative-analytical study	Randomized Clinical Trial	Assess the risks of substance-using mothers and their influence on their relationship with their child's behaviors.	A greater influence on children's behavior was perceived when mothers face emotion-driven problems, interfering, in a negative way, with their children's mental health.
A longitudinal examination of toddlers' behavioral cues as a function of substance abusing mothers' disengagement ⁽²⁰⁾	USA [*] (2016)	Infant Mental Health Journal	Qualitative-analytical study	Randomized Clinical Trial	To analyze the levels of neglect and demand of substance-using mothers in their relationship with their children.	It was observed that substance-using mothers increase the chances of being neglectful of their children.
Struggling with one's own parenting after an upbringing with substance abusing parents ⁽²¹⁾	Sweden (2018)	Int J Qual Stud Health Well-being	Qualitative study	Descriptive exploratory study	Assess the implication of adverse experiences by children of substance-using parents on their mental health and that of their future children.	The study shows that growing up with substance-using parents contributes to children becoming more anxious, depressed, and also increases the chances of them having substance problems. Their education is impaired due to the neglect and violence experienced in the family environment.

*USA = United States of America; ¹PAS = Psychoactive Substance; ¹FACTS = Families and Childhood Transitions Study.

Figure 3 - Relationship of articles published between 2015 and 2018 and their respective study designs

Discussion

The results, in general, point to a strong relationship between the use of PASs by parents and parenting in the upbringing of their children. In terms of parenting styles found, the negligent and indulgent styles were present, to a greater or lesser degree, in all the studies found⁽¹⁷⁻²¹⁾.

It is observed, considering that an ideal parenting style would be the one able to enable open communication and verbal exchanges between parents and children and to promote their autonomy and individuality, according to the theoretical framework⁽⁴⁾, that neither the negligent nor the indulgent style would be ideal configurations, but rather an authoritative style. This is justified by the fact that, in the authoritative profile, parents exercise firm control, are affectionate and, at the same time, responsive to children's needs, clearly stating their values, expecting children to comply with the rules that concern them, and sharing with them the reasons for the decisions to be made⁽²²⁾.

Therefore, the findings of this study show that the authoritative profile was hardly present in the parental relationships of PAS users, suggesting that the abusive use, along with other factors that may arise from this use, such as violence, economic and social issues, may make it impossible for parents to exercise their role towards their children effectively. This is an important finding, since parents are the first source of contact of the child with the world and society, serving as a reference for their future actions⁽¹⁷⁾.

The family is considered to be the first social institution of the individual, where the first impressions about the world will be formed and where one learns based on the observation of behaviors. Thus, children exposed to environments where consumption is abusive tend to repeat the same patterns as adults or to refute any type of PAS. This will depend on other socializing factors, such as having other social support networks⁽²³⁾.

A study conducted in Minas Gerais showed that not living with parents increases the chances of teenage drinking⁽²⁴⁾, not having parents present or less parental supervision increases the chances of alcohol use by young people⁽²⁵⁾.

The presence of both parents can be pointed out as a facilitator for surveillance and setting limits for children. Researches conducted in England and Chile reported that the consumption of beverages by adolescents depends on the communication between parents and children, in addition to the imposition of limits⁽²⁶⁻²⁷⁾.

But one fact demonstrated by the literature is that, regardless of the consumption of PAS by this child or adolescent, these individuals will be more likely to develop dysfunctions in relationships in adulthood, impaired school performance, and mental disorders in adulthood^(24,28). Many times, the abuse of PAS by parents will cause the adolescent to have a representational disconnection, because the use is accompanied or resulting from other factors, such as relational frictions and hospitalizations due to PAS consumption. Thus, the lack of this parental reference will cause the young person to seek support in

other places or people. This separation makes adolescents more anxious and prone to depressive disorders⁽²¹⁾.

The maternal role is very important when analyzing the factors related to the use of PAS by adolescents, and a widely used indicator is maternal education, in which the low education level of women is related to the use of PAS by adolescents⁽²⁹⁾. The literature shows that low maternal education is related to lower income and increased social vulnerability⁽³⁰⁾.

When we add the picture presented to the use of PAS by mothers, the impact on the lives of these children is aggravated, as these women tend to be more neglectful, may not notice behavioral signs in their children and, in the future, these children may end up excluding them from decision-making⁽¹⁹⁻²⁰⁾.

Therefore, although there are several factors that influence the mental health of children, it seems that the use of PASs by parents or caregivers was an element that significantly contributes to the occurrence of mental disorders in children and adolescents, in addition to being related to increased risk of developing external problems, such as disengagement from school and dysfunction in interpersonal relationships.

A gap found in the literature review is that no studies were found to answer whether children of authoritarian or negligent parents have greater chances of using PAS in adolescence or adulthood, as well as it would be important to delve into other elements that, along with the use of PAS, can influence parenting and mental disorders in children. In any case, the importance of the findings and the relevance of the problematic pointed out is recognized. The volume of publications, for being a very specific theme, was considerable and the journals considered to be reliable, with high impact factors and indexed in national and international databases.

The results reveal, therefore, that most of the studies pointed out that parents who use PAS and present a negligent or indulgent parenting style are the ones who most influence the development of mental health problems and development in children⁽¹⁷⁻²¹⁾.

From this perspective, the results of this study point out that the different parenting styles of socialization, as well as the parenting practices that permeate the relationship between parents and children, can influence the behavior and mental health of adolescents, and one of the aspects that influence parenting style and practices is the abusive use of PAS by caregivers.

It is important to emphasize that the findings of this study direct, in general, that in order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the different elements that make up the family context. Therefore, one should not analyze the relationship of parenting style in isolation, as if it were a unique and determinant element of the children's development and mental health. It is

necessary to understand parenting in combination with different other contexts, as well as the practices that are established within the relationship between parents and children, including here the use of PASs⁽¹⁷⁻²¹⁾.

The abusive use of PASs is a collective health problem worldwide, and can influence the unleashing of psychological, social, and emotional damage for users, their families, and people who live with them⁽¹⁰⁾.

Thinking about this panorama, the treatment must be carried out in a way that the user is welcomed and sensitized, approaching it in a collective and holistic way, also including the others affected, such as family and friends, besides evaluating the economic, political and social ramifications so that the interventions carried out meet the needs of each user to achieve satisfactory results⁽³¹⁾.

Based on the findings and the gaps found in the review, it is suggested that further studies on the topic should delve into the various connections between mental disorders in children and adolescents and the use of PAS by caregivers, and that a follow-up of these children should take place into adulthood to monitor the impacts of parenting style on their lives.

The limitations of this study relate to the inclusion and exclusion criteria themselves, and to the fact that only articles from the last five years were searched, portraying only part of the study universe. Another limitation is that only articles available in open access were included, which may have excluded other important studies.

It is recommended that new research be conducted with this purpose in order to deepen the debate on the theme. We suggest, especially to researchers working in the area, a greater emphasis on understanding the other elements that may be associated with the mental health of the children of parents who use PASs so that there can be a deeper reflection on this theme.

Conclusion

The objective of this review was to describe the impact of parenting by substance users on the mental health and development of their children. The results pointed out that parenting influences the development of mental disorders in children, causing damage to children's mental health and development, either by lack of care, abandonment by parents or decreased school performance.

The negligent parenting style was related to negative consequences in the lives of their children, especially because it is associated, most of the time, with substance abuse. It is hoped that this work can contribute to a further exploration related to this theme, recognizing the weaknesses and potentialities of these children and adolescents in situations of parental vulnerability.

The importance that new implementations and studies bring more relevant results to these families is also emphasized, contributing to avoid or minimize the damage to the health of these children and adolescents.

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