

More Students Embarrassed by Family Drug Addiction than by Schizophrenia

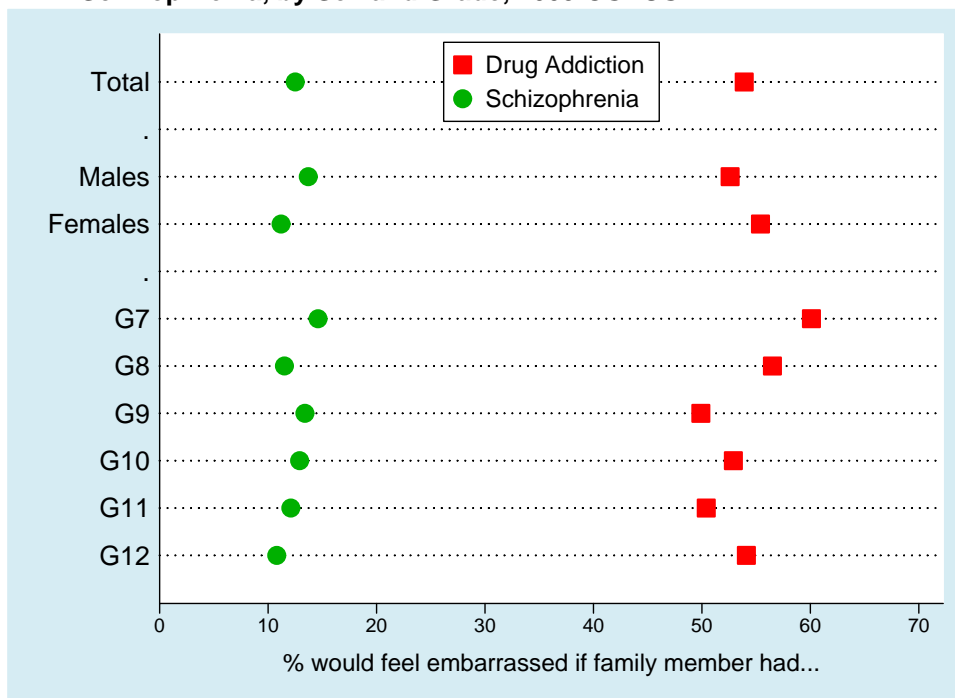
Societal attitudes towards addiction can influence how users are treated and whether they seek treatment. Research based on the attitudes of adults has shown that people with addictions are more stigmatized than those with other psychiatric conditions.¹

This *eBulletin* compares the attitudes of elementary and secondary school students towards someone with an addiction versus someone with schizophrenia. Presented here are results from two questions drawn from the 2005 *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)*, which is an anonymous in-class survey of 7th- to 12th-graders conducted every two years in Ontario schools. Students were asked if they would be embarrassed or ashamed if, hypothetically, their friends discovered that someone in their family was addicted to drugs or had schizophrenia.

Overall, 54% (95% CI: 52%-56%) of students reported they would definitely or probably feel embarrassed if their friends found out that a family member was addicted to drugs. There was no statistically significant sex difference (53% of males, 55% of females) or grade variation (ranged from 50%-60%).

In contrast, about 13% (95% CI: 11%-14%) of students reported they would feel embarrassed if their friends found out that a family member had schizophrenia. Again, there was no significant difference between males (14%) and females (11%), nor among the grades (ranged from 11%-15%).

Figure 1. Percentage of Students Reporting They Would Feel Embarrassed if a Family Member Was Addicted to Drugs vs. Had Schizophrenia, by Sex and Grade, 2005 OSDUS



Methods:

The *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)* is an Ontario-wide survey of elementary (grades 7 and 8) and secondary (grades 9-12) school students conducted every two years since 1977. The 2005 survey, which used a stratified (region) two-stage cluster design (school, class) included 7,726 students in grades 7 to 12 from 42 school boards, 137 schools, and 445 classes. Self-administered, anonymous questionnaires were distributed and collected by staff from the Institute for Social Research, York University on a classroom basis between January and June 2005. The student participation rate was 72%. The 2005 full sample size of 7,726 students represents about 975,200 students in grades 7 to 12 in public and Catholic schools across the province.

The present analysis is based on half samples that were randomly assigned one of two questionnaires: n=4,078 students were assigned the form containing the question about drug addiction, n=3,648 were assigned the form containing the question about schizophrenia. All survey estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design.

Terminology:

- **Drug Addiction** The question used was: “*Would you feel embarrassed or ashamed if your friends knew that someone in your family was addicted to drugs?*” Response options were: definitely, probably, probably not, definitely not, and not sure. The first two options were merged and used as the outcome.
- **Schizophrenia** The question used was “*Schizophrenia is a mental health problem experienced by some people. Would you feel embarrassed or ashamed if your friends knew that someone in your family has schizophrenia?*” Response options were: definitely, probably, probably not, definitely not, not sure, and don’t know what schizophrenia is. The first two options were merged and used as the outcome.
- **95% Confidence Interval (CI)** can be crudely interpreted as being 95% likely to include the “true” value if every student in grades 7 to 12 in Ontario was surveyed.
- **Significant Difference** refers to a difference between two percentages that is not likely due to chance. For example, a difference found at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance is one that is less than 5% likely to occur by chance alone.

Source:

Based on unpublished analyses of the 2005 *OSDUS*.

References:

1. Link, B. G., Phelan, J. C., Bresnahan, M., Stueve, A., & Pescosolido, B. A. (1999). Public conceptions of mental illness: Labels, causes, dangerousness and social distance. *American Journal of Public Health, 89*, 1328-1333.

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To receive future issues of the *eBulletin*, please contact Maureen Kothare via email at: maureen_kothare@camh.net

Media Enquiries: Tel: 416-595-6015