

DRUG USE CHARACTERISTICS IN ARAD COUNTY

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Abstract: This research is a first assessment of the current situation of illicit substance use among school population within secondary education, representing a scientific basis for developing local strategy and a plan for early detection and intervention in the use of psychoactive substances in Arad County. The survey is representative for the school population within secondary education, representative sample (N = 197 subjects); the choice of schools where the questionnaire was applied was done by random selection. The subjects were asked about the origin of information about drugs, if they had the opportunity to take drugs, about how to get the drugs, the age at which they first consumed psychoactive substance, the form and frequency of use, consumption motivation, data about entourage and family. Following the study, we concluded that: the information on illegal substances among adolescents come mostly through media and the education made is schools; most of the subjects did not attempt to use drugs and do not wish to do this; the declared age for the first drug use is over 9 years old; the declared frequency is up to 10 times, the place where they get the drugs from is around the educational institutions; the consumers mention consumption side effects as a state of happiness and optimism, but some are aware of possible side effects harmful to health.

Cuvinte cheie: consum de droguri, județul Arad, anturaj, efecte adverse

Rezumat: Cercetarea de față este o primă evaluare a situației concrete a consumului de substanțe psihoactive ilicite în rândul populației școlare din învățământul preuniversitar, constituindu-se o bază științifică pentru elaborarea strategiei locale și a unui plan de depistare și intervenție precoce în utilizarea substanțelor psihoactive în județul Arad. Studiul este reprezentativ pentru populația școlară din învățământul preuniversitar, eșantionul reprezentativ (N=197 subiecți), alegerea unităților de învățământ unde a fost aplicat chestionarul a fost făcută prin selecție aleatorie. Au fost adresate întrebări privind proveniența informațiilor despre droguri, dacă au avut posibilitatea de consum, despre modalitatea de a face rost de droguri, vârsta la care au consumat prima dată substanțe psihoactive, forma și frecvența consumului, motivația consumului, date despre anturaj și familie. În urma studiului putem concluziona că: informațiile referitoare la substanțele ilegale, în rândul adolescenților, provin în cea mai mare parte prin intermediul mass-media și prin educația făcută prin școli; cea mai mare parte a subiecților nu au încercat să consume droguri și nici nu doresc să facă acest lucru; vârsta declarată pentru primul consum de drog este peste 9 ani, frecvența declarată fiind de până la 10 ori, locul de unde își procură drogurile fiind în apropierea instituțiilor de învățământ; consumatorii declară reacții secundare consumului ca fiind starea de fericire și optimism, o parte fiind însă conștienți de posibile reacții adverse dăunătoare pentru sănătate.

INTRODUCTION

At the level of Arad county population, there are few sociological studies on illicit drug use. Although in our county, drug use is low, compared to other counties, we have a significant problem regarding consumption and its associated issues, as well as tracking the new substances occurring on the drug market.

Those involved in the production of illicit drugs continues to seek new ways of attracting potential customers by using new substances and diversifying the methods to stimulate consumption. In this regard, besides tracking the current situation, we must pay special attention to monitoring new drugs and anticipating future threats to society by establishing indicators to measure the prevalence and epidemiological indicators for monitoring drug consumption through prevalence studies.

METHODS

The survey is representative for the school population within the secondary education, for the representative sample (N = 197 subjects), the choice of schools where the questionnaire was applied was done by random selection.

The objective of the research was a study on knowledge, motivation, type and size of illicit drug use among the school population of secondary education in Arad County.

Specific objectives:

1. Type and frequency of illicit drug use in the study group;
2. Levels, origin and type of information about illicit substances among adolescents;
3. Drug motivation.

The subjects were asked questions about the origin of information about drugs, if they had the opportunity to use drugs, about how to get the drugs, the age at which they first

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consumed psychoactive substance, form and frequency of use, motivation of consumption, data about the entourage and family.

To analyze the results, the descriptive statistics of the study group has been analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. *Where did you first found out about drugs?*

Analyzing the results of the study, the information about drugs come at a rate of 44.1% through films, 17.3% of TV shows, 11.8% of health education classes held at school, 5.9% from friends, 2.9% information obtained via the Internet and discussions with the family.

2. *If you have the opportunity, will you try a drug?* Of all subjects interviewed, 79.4% said they would never try to use drugs and a number of 5.9% would be willing to try;

3. *Have you been offered drugs for purchase?* A total of 73.5% have not been offered drugs for purchase, and 11.8% subjects have been offered once or several times, the opportunity to buy illegal substances;

4. *Have you been offered drugs to use?* Regarding offering drugs for consumption, 76.5% have never had the chance, 5.9% were urged to consume once, and 2.9% had more offers for starting to use drugs, 14.7% did not respond to these questions;

5. *Do you take drugs?* 5.9% of respondents said they had used drugs once, probably it was about those persons who have been given once free substances for consumption. At this point, we wish to emphasize that 14.7% of respondents have avoided giving answers at this item although they filled out the rest of the scale related to this. This raises the question why they avoided giving direct answers questions related to the drug use, but unfortunately we will not know. Regarding the age at which they first tried a psychoactive substance, 2.9% said they were under 9 years old, 5.9% over 9 years old, and 91.2% did not answer this question.

6. *If you take drugs, what type of drugs do you use?* Regarding the type of drug used, a large number of subjects have avoided answering - 97.1%, 2.9% answered marijuana, the declared form of consumption being the cigarette. Declared consumption frequency was up to 10 times for 5.9% of subjects, the consumption motivation for a number of 32.4% of respondents was curiosity, 17.6% wished to live new experiences, a number of 50% avoided the answer.

7. *Under what form do you take drugs?* The results suggest that most of the subjects (with reference to our group) use drugs under the form of cigarette - 66.7% of consumers declared.

8. *Why do you take drugs?* Curiosity, desire for new experiences suggest that the motivation towards sensory overstimulation as the main reason for substance use, or otherwise, for the subjects to feel better and better, this suggests that this age group does not consume substances for purposes of self-medication taken to minimize the negative effect of certain states, or as coping mechanism.

9. *Does your family take drugs?* 2.9% of subjects suggested that their mother consumes substances. This is not surprising given the role model of parents in forming habits and attitudes towards certain aspects of life.

10. *Do your colleagues, friends use drugs?* Regarding the entourage and family, 2.9% of respondents said they know that their family use drugs, 72.5% denied this; the subjects declared that among the friends from their entourage, 14, 7% use illicit substances especially at parties, 17.6% choosing not to respond in any way to these questions.

11. *Where do you take drugs?*

12. *Where do you take the drugs from?* The place from which the subjects procure the drugs are around the school for 2.9% of the subjects, 2.9% said other places mentioned in the written questionnaire, 94.1% avoided the answer. These results suggest that traders specifically approach the adolescents or that traders are even among some students, no matter which of the two conclusions would prove valid, one aspect is certain that the school is an area of risk for mental and physical health of students.

We consider absolutely necessary to adopt some education and prevention strategies in order to reduce the risk, respectively to develop some coping skills / to deal with situations where drugs are offered for consumption.

13. *What effects of drugs do you consider having a greater importance?* The effects felt by consumers were for 8.8% of subjects a state of serenity, 41.2% have harmful side effects, 50% did not answer; regarding the emotional state described by the subjects, 2.9% mentioned aggression, happiness 29.4%, 2.9% talked about a good relationship with the entourage, optimism for 26.5%, 38.2% did not answer.

14. *How can you describe yourself?* The results confirm again the idea that subjects consumed substance on a positive emotional background, and less negative as we may have expected.

15. *The family relations are:* harmonious for 55.9% of the respondents, for 5.9% of subjects, these are tense, 17.6% are indifferent, lack of parent-child communication;

16. *Family structure:* in 67.6% of the case, the subjects came from legally constituted families, 8% of divorced families, 5.9% from families otherwise constituted (cohabitation, grandparents, with no parents etc.).

CONCLUSIONS

Following the study, we can conclude that:

1. The information on illegal substances among adolescents come mostly through media and the education made in schools;
2. Most of the subjects did not attempt to use drugs and do not wish to do this;
3. The age declared for the first drug consumption is over 9 years old, the declared frequency being up to 10 times, the place where they procure the drugs from is near the educational institutions;
4. The consumers declare consumption side effects as a state of happiness and optimism, however, a part of them being aware of some possible side effects harmful to health.

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