ADOLESCENCE AND A HIGH RISK BEHAVIOUR: DRUGS

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Abstract

Adolescence is defined by psychical fragility and exposure, most frequently voluntary, to terribilism and excesses. The relative psychological balance requires a rational knowledge of exogenous factors involved in the harmonious development of the teenager's personality.

The present paper focusses on some aspects of drug consumption in teenagers from 2 cities in the South-West of Romania. The Western border is an entrance and exit gate for drugs, which cross this part of Europe. We instrumented an individual anonymous questionnaire in high-school teenagers in four classes. A 25% (28) of the 17-18 year old pupils had already consumed drugs once or twice, 2.7% (3) 3-10 times, 1.8% (2) over 10 times. The age of the first drug intake is between 16-18 years.

The used drugs are cannabis, psychotropical drugs associated with alcohol, ecstasy. In the peer groups of the teenager, 20% (23) of the frends and 26% (29) of acquaintances offer the example of drug consumption. Health promotion programs must take into account the main information source indicated by interviewed subjects: mass media.

Keywords:

adolescence, psychical lability, drugs, health promotion

1. Introduction

Studies on drug consumption in teenagers from Romania (NP 8) show an increase of the number of consumers over the last years and with age. Toxicophiliacs create a frendly circle where the consumption is spread and a trend for abandoning the family and quitting school emerges. Due to the fact that drug consumption is illegal, users are involved in a network of delinquency and potential violence. Many youngsters use prostitution, crimes in order to aquire drugs.

Populational studies which offer information on drug consumption in teenagers are necessary for designing programs of health promotion in schools. The research which is the basis of the present paper is included in this context.

2. Methodology

The descriptive epidemiological inquest based on anonimous questionaires included 112 teenagers aged between 17 and 18 years from 2 high school classes in Timişoara and Arad, respectively. The age groups and the two genders had a balanced repartition in this case study. The individual results were statistically processed.

3. Results and Discussions

- The perception of the self-image in teenagers and causes that may lead to drugconsumption (Table 1, 2).

Table 1. Perception of the self-image

How would you describe yourself?	Number of cases	Prevalence %
good realtions with the environment	35	31.3
happy	15	13.4
nervous	4	3.6
depressed	2	1.8
agressive	7	6.3
tired	9	8.0
euphorical	1	0.9
sleepless	26	23.2

The positive perception of the self-image is present in 56.3% (63) of the teenagers, only 6.3% higher than the negative perception. The most important causes of self-discontency are insufficient sleep, tiredness, aggressively, nervosity.

Curiosity is the most frequently involved reason for drug consumption: 42.9% (48). It is followed, in decreasing order of prevalence, by the need of new experiences and even the offer of drugs in 17.8% (20), then peer group example in 13.4% (15).

Table 2. Motivations leading to drug consumption

What is the reason for drug consumption?	Number of cases	Prevalence %
curiosity	48	42.9
need for new experiences	20	17.8
the offer of drugs	20	17.8
peer group example	15	13.4
fear of responsability	6	5.4
family conflicts	3	2.7

- Family climate and drug consumption in the family
- The optimal family climate offered by an organised family is mentioned in 83.9% of cases (94).
- Harmonious family relationships are predominant in 62.5% (70) of the teenagers. In the same time, tensioned or indiferent relationships are frequently indicated in 26.8% (30) and 10.7% (12) of cases, respectively.
- In the families of interviewed teenagers, drug consumption among brothers is present in 2 cases (1.8%).
- Extrafamilal groups and drug consumptions
- A percent of 26 (29 cases) of teenagers declare that they know persons who consume drugs
- In peer groups, 20% (23) consume drugs
- Sources of information about drugs (Table 3)

Table 3. Sources of information about drugs

Where did you first find out about drugs?	Number of cases	Prevalence %
movies	60	53.6
TV, radio shows	19	17.0
friends	12	10.7
News-papers, journals	11	9.8
Health education classes	10	8.9
family	2	1.8

Sources of information represented by movies, TV and radio shows, journals and news-papers represent 80.4% (90). Health education classes in schools offer information in 8.9% (10) of cases. The role of the family in the information about high risk behaviour of drug consumption is dangerously low.

- Peculiarities of drug consumption in teenagers
- The reality of drug consumption (Table 4)

Non-consumers are predominant – 70.5% (79).

Out of the 29.5% teenagers who admit consumption, only 5.4% (6) used a drug only once. Most of them admit two occasions in which they consumed drugs, 19.6% (22); 3-10 occasions, 27% (3) and over 10 times 1.8% (2).

Table 4. Drug consumption in teenagers aged between 17 and 18 years

Do you consume drugs? How many times have you been under the influence?	Number of cases	Prevalence %
never	79	70.5
Yes, once	6	5.4
Yes, twice	22	19.6
Yes, 3-10 times	3	2.7
Yes, more than 10 times	2	1.8

- Used drugs (Table 5).

Table 5. Types of drugs consumed

Consumed drugs	Number of cases	Prevalence %
Only canabis	15	45.5
Only medicines with alcohol	7	21.2
Only ecstasy	3	9.1
Canabis and medicines with alcohol	5	15.2
Canabis and ecstasy	3	9.1

A percent of 75.8 (25 cases) consumed only one type of drug. In decreasing order of prevalence, the list of drugs is: canabis, with a high prevalence as compared to the other types – 45.5%; medicines with alcohol, 21.2% (7); ecstasy, 9.1% (3).

Experimenting more drugs is present in 8 cases, 24.3%; more frequently, canabis and medicines with alcohol, less frequently, canabis and ecstasy.

- The first used drug (Table 6)

On the first place is canabis, as the first used drug, 69.7% (23). On the second place are the combination of medicines and alcohol, and on the third place ecstasy.

Table 6. First used drug

First used drug	Number of cases	Prevalence %
canabis	23	69.7
Medicines with alcohol	7	21.2
ecstasy	3	9.1

Taking into account statistical data from other countries, our study also points out the more frequent use of canabis and its "quality" of first used drug. Although there is no such a rule, canabis is considered to be a drug, which opens the way to other drugs.

- The administration route is smoking of canabis cigarettes, 69.7% (23), and the oral administration for the other used drugs.

- The age of the first consumption is situated between 16 and 18 years, more than half of the consumers – 54.5% (18) - declaring the age of 17.
- The answers to questions about the way of acquisition show that school surroundings and even schools are used by drug dealers in order to offer drugs for consumption in 97.0% of the situations. Consumer friends are also an important source, being also dealers: 57.6% (19) of the cases of consumption.
- The opinions of teenagers about the effects of drug consumption on human health (Table 7)

Table 7. Effects of drug consumption indicated by teenagers

Which of the effects of drugs do you consider to be more important?	Number of cases	Prevalence, %
They give you self confidence.	21	18.8
They comfort you.	2	1.8
They cause addiction.	60	53.6
They induce aggressive behaviour	17	15.2
They lead to antisocial acts	12	10.7

4. Conclusions

- Drug consumption is a reality in the interviewed teenagers. Most of the consumers used drugs at least 2 times. The first consumed drug and also the most frequently used is cannabis. Thus, literature data, which state that cannabis, is a possible intermediate stage on the road to a stronger drug: heroine, cocaine, is confirmed.
- Acquisition of drugs especially in the surroundings of schools and even in schools is one of the causes of drug consumption
- The drug offer must be in the attention of authorities. Detection of dealers and consumers networks and respecting the legislation are imperative.
- Informations on drugs rarely received in school or in the family, together with the important informative role of the media are major medical, educational, psychological and social problems of the Romanian society.
- A positive aspect is represented by the level of information in teenagers with respect to the negative effects of drug consumption. Over 50% (60) mention addiction, this being in truth one of the first serious health consequences: psychical and physical addiction, tolerance. The level of information should be an important cathalist in choosing not to expriment this behaviour.

5. References

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