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Drug Abuse Among Young People In Northern Kosovo

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ABSTRACT

Drugs have the capacity to cause changes in behavior, perception, cognition and mood, and the desire to continue with their use, despite potentially very damaging consequences. The use of these substances occurs in both sexes and in all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and geographic groups. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of drug abuse among students of the Faculty of Technical Sciences, Department of Environmental Protection from Kosovska Mitrovica.

Materials and Methods: The data is presented in tables, absolute numbers and with the corresponding percentage structure in parentheses. Analysis of respondents was based on the year the respondent was attending, type of psychoactive substances, and in relation to gender. Comparison of the frequency of the parametric was performed by a chi-square test. Statistical analysis of the collected data was performed using SPSS 17.0 for Windows XP with the level of significance of $p < 0.05$. Authorized questionnaires were distributed to students, the objectives of the study were explained to them and they were given the necessary instructions to properly complete the questionnaire, after which participants agreed to fill out the questionnaire in 15 minutes on a voluntary and individual basis. Respondents were guaranteed privacy through anonymous participation.

Results and Discussion: In the total sample of 122 respondents who participated in the study, all were students, with the average age of 20.93±2.48. Of this number, 86 (70.5) were male and 36 (29.5) were female. Of the total number of students, 65 of them (53.3%) had never tried a narcotic. The number of those who have tried or are currently consuming is 57 (46.7%). Most of them have tried or consumed marijuana (17 - 29.8%) and ecstasy (17 - 29.8%), and most of them attended the fourth (9 - 64.3%) and fifth year (12 - 66.7%), while the lowest number attended the second year (16 - 36.4%).

Conclusion: The obtained results show that the tested students are not using any drugs that would be a threat to their health. Marijuana use is higher among male population. Bearing in mind the consequences drug use has on young individuals at a sensitive stage of development, such as the student population, the entire society at all its levels, from the legislative sphere, media, local community, universities, up to the family itself, should approach preventing the spread of this phenomenon in an extremely serious and responsible manner, providing maximum potential in each of its segments.

Keywords: drugs, students, risk.

Introduction

Drug abuse among children and young people presents one of the gravest contemporary problems not only due to the long-term negative effect it has on all aspects of a young person's life (physical and mental health, education, quality of interaction with their family, developing intimate relationships, etc.), but also because of a specific transgenerational effect it has. It is believed that 5-10% of people under the age of 19 have drug problems which require clinical treatment (Carr A., 1999; Nikolić D., 1998) When observed through different temporal and cultural perspectives, risk behaviour has always been an integral part of the student population; however, lately we have witnessed its significant expansion along the lines of contemporary social trends, while countries in the process of transition typically exhibit declining social control and the establishment of a new system of values, which are all factors contributing to the spread of risk behaviour patterns among the student population.

Addictions, which include drug addiction, are a mass, chronic, non-contagious disease of a pandemic character. They are often called behaviour diseases, and are often a part of a social pathology with inevitable consequences to the health. This disease has its specifics in its etiopathogenesis, geographical distribution, manifestations, clinical forms, treatment, etc.
The most frequent manifestations of this disease are often not limited to just using drugs, but often encompass abusing several harmful agents (alcohol + smoking, drugs + alcohol + smoking, pills + smoking, pills + alcohol...), so one could rightly conclude an ever increasing presence of polytoxicomania (Nikolić D., 1998). Regardless of whether we are talking about individual or combined addiction diseases, the characteristics they share are the following:

- they appear under the influence of the environment;

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- they have harmful consequences to the health, and the material and (sometimes) moral state;
- treatment is very complicated, difficult and uncertain;
- there is no country "immune" to addiction diseases;
- prevention is the most efficient measure in their suppression (3rd Yugoslavian Symposium on Addiction Diseases, 1998).

Addiction diseases among young people present a special medical and social problem, especially among the high-school and student population.

The main goal of the research being conducted within this paper is to determine the consumption of certain kinds of psychoactive substances among the student population.

Material and Methodology

The research was conducted on a total of 122 respondents, all students ranging from the first to the fifth year of the Department of Environmental Protection at the Faculty of Technical Sciences of the University in Priština situated in Kosovska Mitrovica, in November of the 2012/2013 academic year.

This drug abuse research gives an answer to the question of the general degree of illegal psychoactive substance abuse among young respondents, and it comprised of 12 questions related to the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as the exposure of different risk factors.

The latter questions relate to the frequency of glue, pill (Diazepam, Valium, etc.), marijuana, hashish, cocaine, ecstasy and heroin abuse.

The overview of the conducted research is attached.

The data acquired is presented in tables, in absolute numbers and with the appropriate percentage structure in brackets. The respondent analysis was performed on the basis of the year of studies they were attending, the kind of psychoactive substance they used and the gender of the respondent. The frequency comparison was performed by a nonparametric chi-square test. Statistical analysis of the collected data was performed using SPSS 17.0 for Windows XP on the level of significance of $p < 0.05$.

The questionnaires were handed out to students who were then familiarized with the goal of the study and the necessary instructions for properly completing the questionnaire, after which the students were given 15 minutes to individually answer the questions on a voluntary basis. The respondents' privacy was assured through the anonymity of the answers.

Research Results

The research included 122 respondents, whose average age was 20.93±2.48. 86 (70.5%) of those were male, while 36 (29.5%) were female. Regarding the academic characteristics of the sample, there were students of all years (first: 32.8%; second: 36.1%; third: 4.9%; fourth: 11.5% and fifth: 14.8%).

65 (53.3%) of the respondents have never tried a narcotic. The number of those that have tried or were currently consuming narcotics is 57 (46.7%), the majority of which tried or were currently using marijuana and ecstasy, both categories containing 17 respondents (29.8%). The next narcotic in terms of its prevalence are pills (9 – 15.8%), hashish (6 – 10.5%), cocaine (5 – 8.8%), glue (2 – 3.5%) and heroin (1 – 1.7%). Multiple drug abuse was reported by 15 (12.3%) respondents (Table 1).

By observing the number of students that tried or were consuming some narcotic, it can be seen that the majority of them were in their fourth (9 – 64.3%) and fifth year (12 – 66.7%), while the smallest number attended the second year (16 – 36.4%). It can be noticed that there is a statistically significantly higher rate among respondents attending the fifth, as compared to those in the second year (χ^2=4.66, p=0.03) (Table 1).

Table 2 exhibits ways of consuming narcotics according to the gender of respondents. Upon observing the prevalence of using the mentioned narcotics, no statistically significant difference can be noticed between the genders. The highest number of respondents has not tried any narcotic, and even if this was the case, they did it only once or twice and in an earlier period. The largest number of male respondents (7 – 8.1%) and a single female respondent consumed marijuana occasionally, while only one male respondent reported using it daily. Apart from marijuana, the highest prevalence was attributed to ecstasy – 14 men (15.1%) and 4 women (11.1%). One of the male respondents in the first year of his studies is a heroin addict and stated that he took heroin daily. Glue inhaling is very rare (2 – 2.4%); however, one respondent stated he did it daily. 9 respondents (10.5%) admitted to trying or previously using pills. 5.8% of male and 2.8% of female respondents tried or were consuming hashish, out of which two respondents admitted to taking hashish occasionally. 4.7% of men and 2.8% of women tried or were consuming cocaine.

Discussion

The results of the presented research dealing with the drug-related behaviour of students, which was performed on a sample of 122 respondents attending the University of Priština situated in Kosovska Mitrovica, are almost identical to the results of the research performed on 5,385 respondents belonging to the youth student population in Serbia (Dragišić-Labaš S & Milić M., 2006).

It is obvious that the phenomena of using psychoactive substances is very widespread among the youth student population, which implies that persons in positions of authority in the environment where young people grow up need to be extremely vigilant.

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10.5%), cocaine (5 – 8.8%), glue (2 – 3.5%) and heroin (1 – 1.7%). 15 of them (12.3%) used several narcotics.

Considering the numerous and often harmful consequences using marijuana has on the student population, the results obtained point to the fact that this kind of behaviour, which gained significant proportions, presents a serious jeopardy to the mental and physical health and the appropriate development of young people (Vujović M., 1999; Mandić-Gajić G., 2008).

The findings of the ESPAD research performed in 2007 in Europe point to the fact that 23% of young men and 17% of young women used drugs at least once in their life, and Nordic and Eastern European countries exhibited lower usage rates. The majority of young people that used illegal psychoactive substances used marijuana. According to the study, 19% of European adolescents used marijuana at least once in their life, while 7% of respondents tried some other kind of drugs, or even several kinds. Marijuana is followed by ecstasy, cocaine and amphetamines, which, according to this large-scale European research, take second place regarding usage frequency among the adolescents who participated – 3% of the respondents tried some of these substances. Third place was occupied by LSD, crack and heroin, which were used by 1-2% of adolescents surveyed. During the previous year, marijuana was used by a total of 14% of adolescents in the sample population and a slight decrease in consumption was recorded since 2003 in the majority of European countries. The frequency of sedative use among European adolescents ranges from 0-2% (Austria, Russia, Great Britain) up to 15% in certain European countries (Poland, Lithuania, France, Monaco). 6% of young respondents stated that they combined alcohol with pills, while the use of inhalants ranges from 3 to 16% in certain European countries (Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia) Johnston LD et al, 2008; Kapor-Stanulović N., 1988. Relatively scarce studies about illegal psychoactive substance use in adolescence in Serbia yielded mostly similar results (Šolaja D., 2007; Hibell B et al, 2009).

A pilot research regarding psychoactive substance abuse by young people was performed in 2002 in six Serbian towns (Šolaja D., 2007). The results point to the fact that around 9% of respondents have tried marijuana, 0.4% tried cocaine, 0.7% tried heroin and 0.6% tried ecstasy, while 15% of the subjects tried the combination of alcohol with sedatives and sleeping pills.

The health of the young population in this period in the widest sense depends on the health potential which was transferred from the high-school period of life, as well as the life conditions after moving in order to start their studies. The health potential presents a significant component of the previous and current health capacity of the young population and the foundation of their health (Mandić-Gajić G., 2008).

Serbian universities at the moment have about 150,000 students (Johnston LD et al, 2008). They lead their lives in different living conditions (student dormitories, private accommodation, at their parents' house) and with different socio-economic possibilities. This paper will, at least partially, attempt to answer the question posed in this research regarding the degree of behaviour forms which improve or at least preserve their health as compared to the degree of risk behaviour jeopardizing it that come about in these conditions.

The territory of northern Kosovo faces numerous problems, while unemployment and a poor general state the country is in give no positive example and no future perspective to many, and especially young people, which is why they resort to negative behaviour patterns, like smoking, drug or alcohol abuse and violence (Blum K *et al*, 2012; Marsch LA & Dallery J., 2012).

The availability of drugs increases when the knowledge, awareness and engagement of the public decrease. Every individual engagement and experience presents a basis for future work on prevention. The foundations of prevention are individuals who engage themselves and create a network for fighting drug abuse (A questionnaire-base survey of Pakistani medical students about drugs and alcohol, 2006). Every addict presents an individual tragedy, which is hard to understand and treat.

Primary prevention also includes investing in the improvement of life conditions and creating an environment which gives possibilities for engaging in culture, sport or leisure activities.

Drugs and alcohol are often connected to negative social values, which is normal having in mind all the pain and suffering that drug and alcohol abuse brought to the person and his/her environment. Drug and alcohol abuse are the most common causes of violence (75-80% of violent crimes), which often have fatal consequences (De Maeyer J *et al*, 2010). The foundation of the policy to fight drug abuse and alcoholism is the legal system (A questionnaire-base survey of Pakistani medical students about drugs and alcohol, 2006; De Maeyer J *et al*, 2010).

The advantage of this survey is that it was performed precisely in this population, and on a relatively large sample.

Apart from that, this research included just students of a single faculty and a significantly larger portion of them were male, which could have been expected, having in mind the predominance of male students at technical studies. What would give a clearer and more complete image of this highly significant problem in the Serbian community are researches that would be conducted in different faculties and which would analyze gender differences, the personal perception of the behaviour towards narcotics, socio-demographic, psychological and cultural factors, as well as the influence on academic achievement.

Conclusion

Having in mind all the consequences that drug abuse leaves on young persons like students, the conclusion can be reached that all levels of society, starting from the legislative sphere, the media, the local community, the universities, up to the family itself, need to approach preventing the spread of this phenomena in a serious and responsible manner, achieving their maximal potential in every aspect. Experts and scientists

identified the use of marijuana, which is most common in this research, as one of the risk factors for developing schizophrenia.

Familiarizing young people and the general public with these risks would be invaluable to the prevention of narcotics use and its extremely grave consequences.

It has to be the case in the north of Kosovo, that the social problems of the younger people are cause for drug use. Younger people do not know how to use the time in the productive way. In other words, our society needs more sound government concept, that is more successful country politics, more available job positions and in that way, brighter perspective and modern way of dealing with problems. As long as we do not develop the other, necessary and more promising point of view and way of dealing with current situation, drug will still be the main threat to all layers of our society.

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Tables

	I	II	III	IV	V	Total
Has never tried	23 (57.5)	28 (63.6)	3 (50.0)	5 (35.7)	6 (33.3)	65 (53.3)
Has tried or is consuming	17 (42.5)	16 (36.4)	3 (50.0)	9 (64.3)	12 (66.7)[A]	57 (46.7)
Glue	2 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (3.5)
Pills	4 (23.5)	1 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (33.3)	1 (8.3)	9 (15.8)
Marijuana	6 (35.3)	4 (25)	1 (33.3)	2 (22.3)	4 (33.3)	17 (29.8)
Hashish	2 (11.8)	2 (12.5)	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	1 (8.3)	6 (10.5)
Cocaine	0 (0.0)	2 (12.5)	1 (33.3)	1 (11.1)	1 (8.3)	5 (8.8)
Ecstasy	2 (11.8)	7 (43.7)	1 (33.3)	2 (22.2)	5 (41.8)	17 (29.8)
Heroin	1 (5.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.7)
Several narcotics	10 (25.0)	4 (9.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	15 (12.3)
Sum	40 (100.0)	44 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	18 (100.0)	122 (100.0)

The percentage structure of consuming individual narcotics was calculated with regard to the total number of consumers per year. The percentage of multiple narcotics consumers is related to the total number of respondents per year.
[A]-(V vs. II)

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Table 2: Ways of consuming narcotics according to the respondent's gender

	Glue		Pills		Marijuana		Hashish		Cocaine		Ecstasy	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
Never	84 (97.7)	36 (100)	77 (89.5)	36 (100)	72 (83.7)	33 (91.7)	81 (94.2)	35 (97.2)	82 (95.3)	35 (97.2)	73 (84.9)	32 (88.9)
Tried once or twice	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	6 (7.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.5)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.2)	1 (2.8)	2 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	6 (7.0)	3 (8.3)
Used to consume	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.5)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.5)	2 (5.6)	2 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.3)	0 (0.0)
Consumes occasionally	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (8.1)	1 (2.8)	2 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.2)	1 (2.8)	5 (5.8)	1 (2.8)
Consumes daily	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Sum	86 (100)	36 (100)	86 (100)	36 (100)	86 (100)	36 (100)	86 (100)	36 (100)	86 (100)	36 (100)	86 (100)	36 (100)

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