

LOCAL SURVEY REGARDING DRUG USAGE AMONG ADOLESCENTS FROM ARAD COUNTY

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Abstract: We initiated our survey in the year 2009 with the purpose of determining the level of drug usage in Arad County. The results obtained in our survey were used to elaborate a local strategy and a local plan for developing efficient prevention measures against drug consumption in our community. Also the results obtained from this survey were used to justify our local projects and to draw other resources for our antidrug campaigns and activities.

Keywords: drugs, survey, respondents, usage, tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs.

Introduction

“The social environment immensely influences our psychological reality. Thus radical changes in society’s structure will bring about radical changes in our perceptions of events taking place at the micro-level of inter-subjective actions. A good case in point is that of how society’s views of drug addiction have changed through time. Today’s representations of addictions are inseparable from certain ideologies produced during the industrial Revolution. First and foremost, drug dependence today is viewed not as the moral question it once was,

but rather as an issue to be handled by medical science. According to contemporary medical expertise, drug addiction is basically a disease of the brain. Yet, unlike a number of other illnesses, addiction is seen as something that has more to do with one's mind than with one's body. The human brain is central to our sensing, thinking, feeling and the control of our behavior. It is the realm of "self" or "identity". In labeling an illness a brain disease, this entails something is fundamentally wrong with not so much the structures or operation of the given organ but instead with its whole organization regarded as the very essence of our personal existence – identity." (*Kelemen, Erdos, p. 19*).

According to this quote drug usage is and will be one of the most important problems of modern society. Even though a lot of resources were spent to prevent drug usage and to offer medical assistance, psychological therapy and social reintegration for drug users the surveys are showing that usage of drugs especially among teenagers is rising. The National Drug Report from 2011 – 2012, states that drug usage during the lifetime of those interviewed is 10%, for the illegal drugs and if we include the new substances with psychoactive properties the percent rises to the value of 19,2.

In the year 2011 according to the same report the usage of illegal drugs was 4,4%, with the mention that this value doesn't include the usage of tranquilizers and sedatives. If we compare the results provided by these two reports – one from the year 2011 and the other one from the year 2012 – we can see a growth in drug usage between the year 2011 and the year 2012 by more than 50%.

Research

In order to know the dimension of this phenomenon The Local Antidrug Center from Arad made in 2009 a survey called “Prevalence of drug usage among teenagers from Arad County”.

The purpose of this survey was to obtain relevant information regarding the dimension of drug usage and to adapt, according to the results and realities provided by this survey, the activity in the field of drug usage prevention.

The study was conducted on a group of 658 students, with the age between 15 and 19 years old.

Also the survey was applied in all high schools from Arad County, the established error level was +/- 3.5% with a trust level of 95%.

The form used for this survey was provided to us by The National Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drugs Addiction, it had 67 questions, completing time required was 60 to 65 minutes, the method used for applying the form was face to face interview and this was made possible by the volunteers from Aurel Vlaicu’s University.

Because of the length of the form and the complexity of our study we selected a few items that present a high level of interest as follows:

- The number of the respondent’s family members that are currently using tobacco;
- At what age the respondents started to use tobacco;
- The number of times in which the respondents used tobacco so far;
- The number of times in which the respondents used alcohol so far;
- How much easy would it be for them to procure any illegal drugs;
- The number of times drugs were offered to our respondents;

- How difficult it would be to procure drugs;
- The number of times in which the respondents used marihuana or hash;
- When did the respondents tried for the first time marihuana or hash;
- The number of times in which the respondents got the opportunity to use drugs but they didn't;
- How did they obtain the illegal drugs?
- When the respondents did used a specific group of substances?
- What measures would they take to prevent drug usage?

One of the most harmful legal drugs from our country is alcohol and tobacco therefore we tried to determine the number of consumers for these drugs and the way that the pattern of consumption is promoted from to parents to their children.

Results and discussions

As we can see, chart I, is showing data about how many parents are promoting the usage of tobacco at home. As we can see the parents are smoking a lot around their children – 35,6% of the fathers and 20,7% of the mothers are smoking daily, while 45,3% of the fathers and 58,3% of the mothers are non smokers.

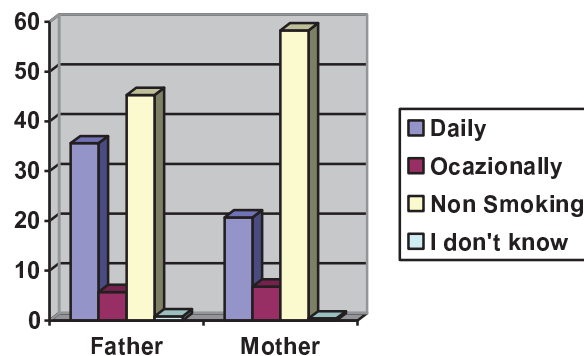


Chart I: Parents that are smoking in front of their children

Regarding the brothers and sisters of the respondents we can remark that only 18, 1% of them are smoking daily and 48, 9% are not smoking. The percentages are similar when we look at situation of the respondents closest friends, 12, 4% of them are smoking and 44, 3% of them are not smoking (Chart II: Other relatives and friends that are smoking in front of the respondents).

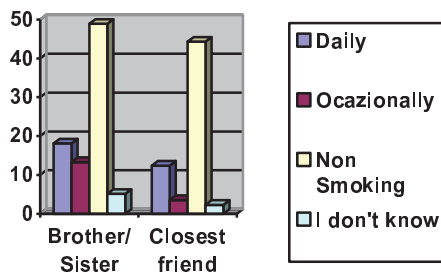


Chart II: Other relatives and friends that are smoking in front of the respondents

Regarding the answers that were given by our respondents about their own experiences with tobacco things look even more reassuring, 40, 6% of them said that they never even tried, 66, 3% of them said that they are not daily smokers, so we have an debut age for the first cigar at 9 years old for 7, 8% and of only 0, 8% for the daily smokers (Chart III: Debut age for smoking).

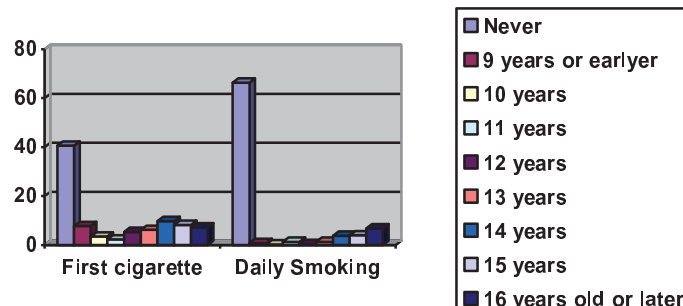


Chart III: Debut age for smoking

Also 55% of our respondents declare that they never smoked in the last 12 months and 64, 8% sustain that they didn't smoked in the last 30 days (Chart IV: Patterns of tobacco usage).

Even though smoking is highly promoted by the parents and the big tobacco companies, children seem to ignore that destructive behavior and to realize what is best for them financially and of course they choose a better and healthier way of life.

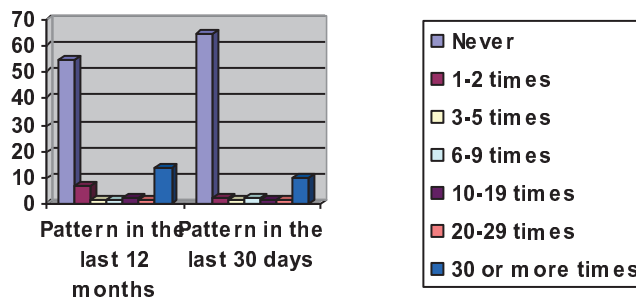


Chart IV: Patterns of tobacco usage

The percentages are very different when we look at the alcohol usage among our respondents, 21,4% of them declared that they never used alcohol until now and 18,1% of them said that they used alcohol more than 30 times (Chart V: Usage of alcohol among respondents).

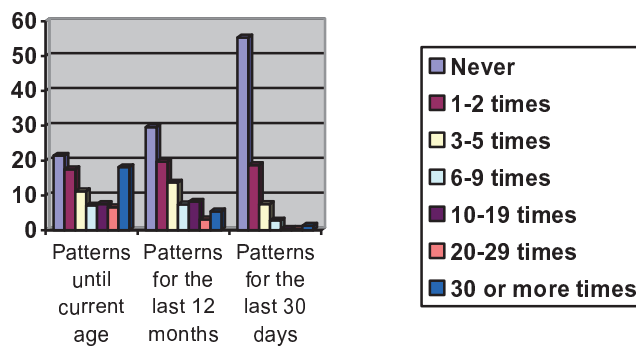


Chart V: Usage of alcohol among respondents

The main purpose of our survey is the drug consumption among adolescents. To determine that in this article we are going to focus on the data obtained in our analysis.

If we look at Chart VI we are going to notice information about the availability of drugs in our community.

Our respondents declare that to 6, 9% of them were offered drugs for money and to 16, 3% had the opportunity to procure drugs for free. This shows a dangerous fact that anyone who wishes to get drugs can do so because of the drug availability and the fact that our country is situated on one of the main route for trading drugs from Asia to Europe.

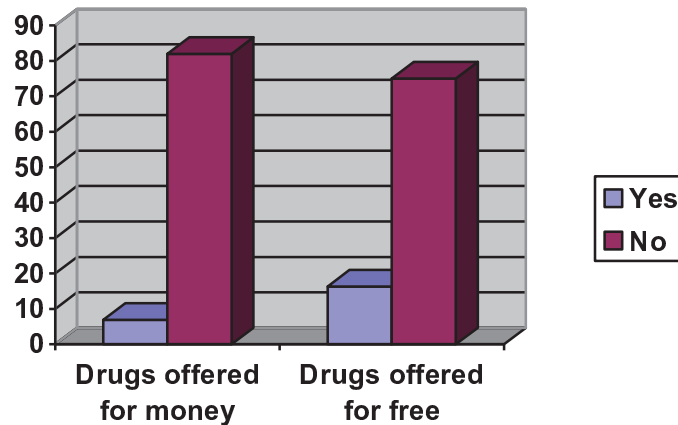


Chart VI: Drugs availability (1)

If we study the information regarding the availability of drugs around schools, neighborhoods and around the paces of entertainment for adolescents we can see that 2% of our respondents are saying that it is very easy to get drugs in these locations especially around schools, while 7, 8% declare that it is very hard to accomplish that and the majority of

our respondents (70, 3%) declared that they never tried to get drugs in locations like that especially near schools.

The percentage slightly increases when we talked about the neighborhood where our respondents live – 3,1% of them declare that it is very easy to get drugs there, 6,1% said that is very hard and 69,9% never tried to procure drugs in a location like that.

An interesting fact is the high percentage of respondents declaring that it is very easy to get drugs in clubs or other places for entertainment (5,7%), only 4,7% of the respondents said that is very hard but not impossible to do that and 68% declared that they never tried such a thing (Chart VII).

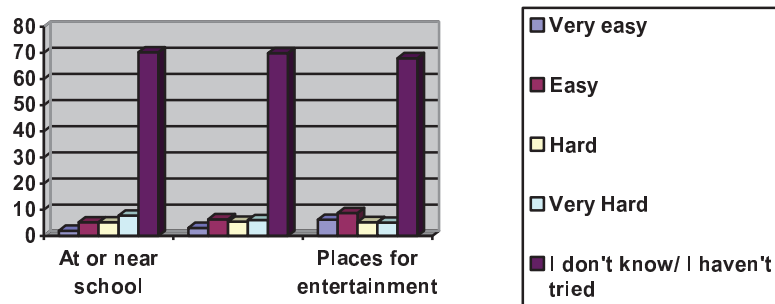


Chart VII: Drugs availability (2)

Also related to the availability of drugs in a specific area we asked about how easy it would be to get specific drugs like marijuana or hash if they wanted to, 4% of our respondents declared that it would be very easy, 9, 6% said that it would be very hard, while 55, 7% affirmed that they don't know that because they never tried (Chart VIII: Usage of marijuana and hash).

One of the “biggest” and important question of our survey was how many times did the respondents use marijuana or hash by this age, 3% of them said that they used these drugs once or twice while the

majority declared that they never used these drugs in their entire life (86,4%).

We also looked at the 12 months pattern of drug usage for marihuana and hash and the results for that time were even more reassuring, only 2,1% of our respondents admit that they tried these drugs once or twice, while the majority of the respondents said that they never used marihuana or hash during that period.

Things are looking even better when we talked about the usage of marihuana and hash in the last 30 days, only 0.6% of the interviewed declared that they used these drugs once or twice and 88.5% said that they never used it.

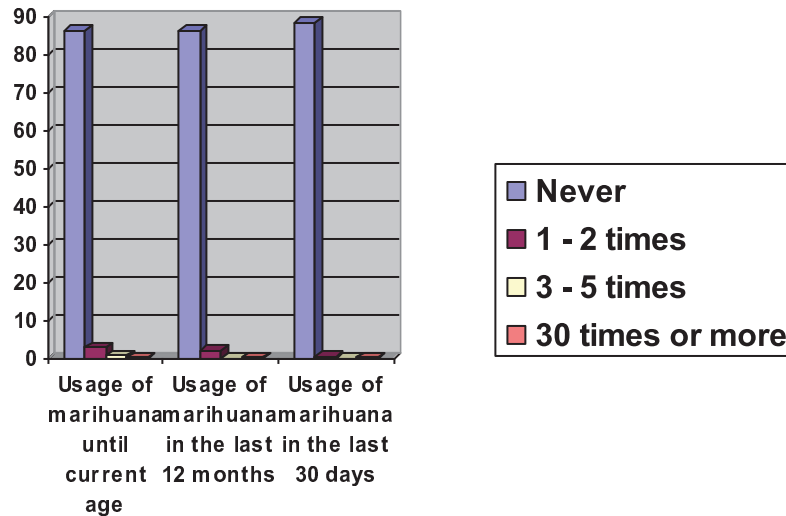


Chart VIII: Usage of marihuana and hash

We also asked about the debut age for using marihuana and hash, 83.3% of our respondents answered that they never used these drugs and 2,8% declared that they started using at sixteen years old or

later. The debut age in present days dropped dramatically, in our field work we encountered cases of students that are curious about the effects of marihuana from the eight grades or even earlier.

An interesting question was if they ever had the possibility to try marihuana or hash but they didn't do that, 18,2% answered yes, I had that option (here it is confirmed the easy access to drugs in our community) and 72,4% answered no. Also 6, 8% said that they had the possibility of using these drugs but they didn't one or two times, 2, 7% of our respondents said that they had this possibility 3 to 5 times and only 0, 3% of our interviewed answered that they had this possibility more than 30 times (Chart IX).

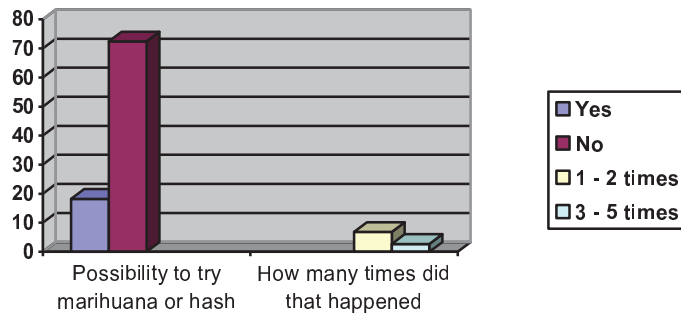


Chart IX: Drugs availability (3)

In our survey we wanted to know the patterns of usage for other drugs than marihuana and hash.

To accomplish that we asked our respondents about the usage of tranquilizers and sedatives without a medical prescription, 5,8% admitted that they've donned that and 84,9% of our respondents answered that they did not used these kind of drugs without a medical prescription. Also when our respondents were asked about if they ever mixed alcohol with

medicines only 1, 7% said that they did that while 88% said that they didn't (Chart X).

One of the most used drugs, beside marihuana and hash, from our region is ecstasy. The results of our survey are showing a very low percent of ecstasy users in 2009, so only 0, 8% declared that they used at least once this kind of drug. Ecstasy usage increased significantly since then, to 2, 6% for the western region of our country (Chart X).

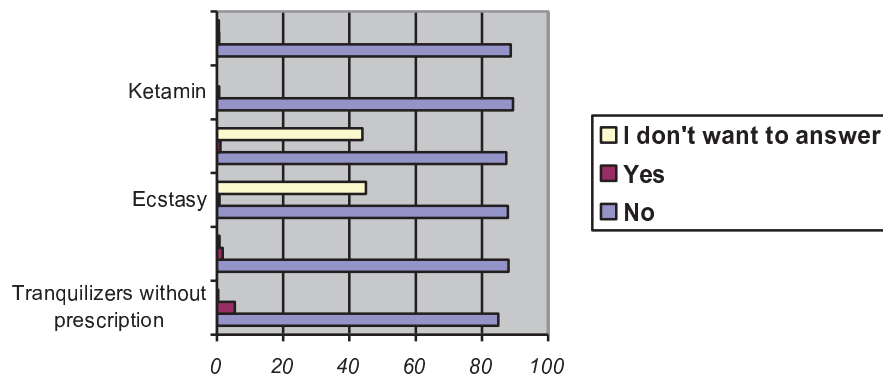


Chart X: Other drugs usage

Usage level of cocaine was high in 2009, 1, 1% our respondents admit that they've used this drug at least once. Even though this percentage seems small, cocaine is a very powerful, dangerous and a highly addictive drug and this percent should be seriously taken into consideration (Chart X).

Usage of ketaminã and steroids among our respondents is only 0, 7% even though usage of these drugs increased since 2009 (Chart X).

Things are looking very different when we look at the usage of marihuana, which according to our survey is one of the most popular drug from our area, 4,1% of our respondents admitted that they used cannabis or hash at least once.

Another point o view that we approached in our survey was the knowledge, opinion and interest of our respondents regarding drug use.

To accomplish that we asked about the obstacles that can stop drug usage, so 30, 8% of our interviewed agreed that one of the factors that can stop drug usage is fear of dying, this was considered to be one of the most convincing thing when somebody is thinking to use drugs. Also 8,5% of our respondents considered conscience to be one of the obstacles in the way of drug usage, other factors that can prevent drug usage were fear of God (10%), fear of becoming an addict (16,1%), awareness of the danger implied by drug usage (7,5%), family and friends support (4,2%), fear or respect for the parents (2,7%) and resistance to group pressure (3,5%) - Chart XI: Barriers to drugs usage.

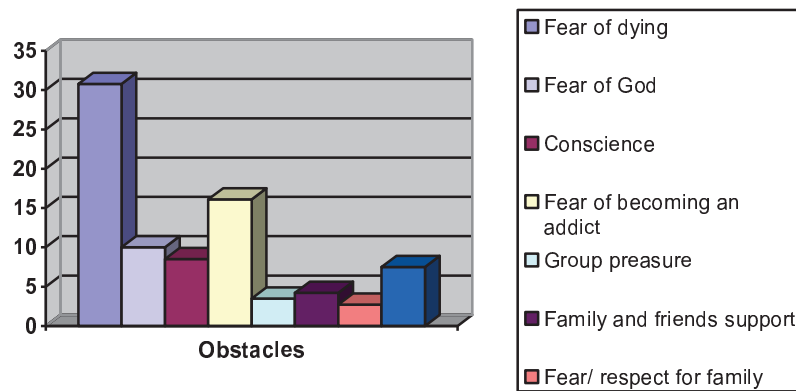


Chart XI: Barriers to drugs usage

Another item of our survey was about what we can do as an individual or as a society to prevent drug usage. In answer to that 48,2 % of our respondents considered severe punishment of drug users to be a solution, only 6,5% considered punishing drug dealers as a way to

prevent the usage of drugs, 13,2% wanted a better communication between adolescent and parents, 8,8% wanted to be able to talk about these problems with a school psychologist (Chart XII: Prevention methods).

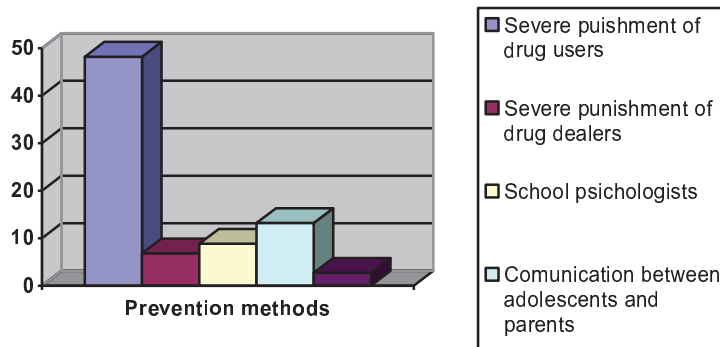


Chart XII: Prevention methods

Conclusions

In conclusion if we look at the results of this survey we can realize that drug usage was and will be a problem of modern society. Also it is not something that should be ignored by the local authorities even though the effects are not always visible. Adolescents are the most susceptible to drug usage because sometimes they lack the experience, they are curious and they can be easily influenced by the group pressure. One of the things that anyone that wants to try drugs must keep in mind is that maybe at the beginning it seems to be something fun and enjoyable but on the long term, the effects of drug use are very serious and can affect a person for their entire life.

I like to end this article with a quote from an ex drug user that states “After twenty years of seemingly hopeless stagnation I had an

opportunity for a clean, useful and rich life. This is a miracle. I believe that the miracle can go on if I am able to express my gratitude for it”.

Bibliography:

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National drug report 2011 – 2012.