

# AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH REGARDING ILLEGAL DRUGS

D.S. Bălăuță

**Dănuț-Sorin BĂLĂUȚĂ,**

PhD student

West University of Timișoara, Romania

**Abstract:** This paper's theme falls into an area that is gaining momentum globally. Representing one of the great challenges of humanity, for Romania, drug use has started to become a problem along with the socio-political changes of '89. Knowledge and use of drugs is a matter not only of contemporary times, it is not a recent phenomenon. The consumption of illegal substances is of social, moral and legal interest, a dimension regarded and regulated differently, depending on culture and education and is becoming of increasing concern for Romania. This paper is an analysis that highlights both awareness of youth on the negative effects of illicit drugs and also their level of involvement in this issue.

**Keywords:** illegal drugs, youth, awareness, involvement

## **Theoretical considerations**

Since ancient times, people have known the properties of drugs (the oldest natural drugs are the Indian hemp, coca leaves and poppy grain), selecting plants that have euphoric action, which they used in ceremonies, religious rituals or therapeutic purposes. In the last 100 years, the development of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries has enabled the creation of new drugs, synthetic or semi synthetic.

The *drug* substance refers to any plant, animal or mineral used in the preparation of meds or as a narcotic (<http://dexonline.ro/definitie/drog> accessed in March 2017)

Narcotics are substances that inhibit the nerve centers, causing a state of mental and physical inertia (Gavrilă-Ardelean and Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2015). Commonly used, they lead to tolerance and the need for increased doses. Narcotics can be either natural or synthetic, leading to addiction, if excessively consumed. The most popular narcotics are morphine and heroin. (Sandu, 2002)

Two common terms related to drug discussions are addiction and withdrawal. Drug addiction is behavior leading to mandatory use of the drug and is

characterized by the need to use the drug (Gavrilă-Ardelean and Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016). It is "a cluster of physiological, behavioral, cognitive and psychological phenomena, developed after repeated, continuous or episodic administration of a substance, to achieve psychic effects or to remove an unpleasant condition." (Bărbat, 2010, p. 31)

Dependence can be of three types: psychological, physiological or mixed.

Withdrawal, in its general sense, it is the manifestation of the body's psychosomatic manifestation from accidental or voluntary interruption of consumption of the product (in this case drug) taken for a long period of time, in large amounts. (Trancă, 2016)

By origin, drugs can be both natural but also synthetic and semi-synthetic (most drugs). A widely used classification distinguishes:

I. Euphoric drugs

4. Opioids

Phenanthrene

- Natural: morphine codeine

- Semi-synthetic: heroin (diacetylmorphine)

- Synthetic: methadone

Isoquinolon: Papaverine and Noscapine

5. Coca alkaloids

II. Inebriants

5. Alcohol

6. Solvents, varnishes, glues

7. Fuels

8. Aerosols

9. Gases

10. Nitrite

III. Hallucinogens: LSD, Mescaline, Cannabis

IV. Stimulants: amphetamines, ecstasy, caffeine. (Bărbat, 2010)

Risks of substance use/abuse can be enhanced by several factors: a difficult economic climate, school failure, violence, abuse, mental health problems, a parent who is a drug addict, high permissiveness on consumption, attendance in marginal groups, and excessive rigidity on consumption. Early experimentation with illicit drugs is risky for later consumption. (Bărbat, 2010)

The person consuming drugs may present problems in the family plan, financial plan, health, and also maintaining a job. A very permissive legislation along with high social tolerance are key contextual factors that favor the use and abuse of illicit substances.

As mentioned above, mental health is an important aspect when it comes to various drugs. The ability of handling inner and outer conflicts, to control emotions

properly so as not to cause an inner imbalance and the ability to understanding and accept experiences (Kelemen et al 2016) can prevent future drug consumption.

Certain circumstances may mediate or moderate exposure to illicit drugs. They are known as protective factors. Clear family rules, proper communication between members, personal balance, all these are protective factors that reduce the risk of addiction. Also, a balanced financial situation, no mental health problems (of the individual and parents), self-confidence, ability to control emotions, success in school, all contribute to reducing the risk of future consumption of illicit drugs. (Bărbat, 2010)

In general, drug users are stigmatized, both by others and by the professionals that work with them (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016). The social worker is among the professionals involved in helping users/addicts, and in the evolution of forms of rehabilitation and social reintegration, being obliged to recognize a potentially addicted client. When it comes to stigma and marginalization, a social work language with inconsistent semantics may enhance the social exclusion of the client, in this case, the consumer. (Goian, 2010)

For drug users, the social worker aims at restoring the social integration of the person. The social inclusion issue does not arise in the same way for all individuals. Thus, the social worker can be involved in employment of the drug user. This could mean a course of training, literacy, school completion or obtaining social support in case of major disability. For those who already possess a professional qualification, the social workers can arrange meetings with potential employers. As the consumer can also be part of a vulnerable group, social economy can come into play here, when it comes to labour market integration (Goian, Vasiluță-Ștefănescu, 2013)

## **Methodology**

The main purpose of this study is to highlight the awareness and the main misconceptions of youth regarding consumption of illegal drugs. The specific objectives of the study are the following:

15. Highlight the level of awareness among youth regarding consumption of illegal drugs.
2. Highlight the involvement of young people on the issue of resorting to illegal drugs.
3. Highlight the possible prejudices regarding the issue of illicit drugs.

The research is a quantitative approach that used a structured questionnaire with 18 questions. 5 - on general information about drugs (ex .: "What types of illicit drugs do you know?", "Which of the following drugs can be used medically?"), 3 - on their involvement in drug issues; 10 - on perceptions and prejudices about illicit drugs and consumers. (Ex .: "Drug addiction can only happen to those people that have weak will?", "Illegal drugs can give addiction only when consumed in a pure state or as injections?").

Data were statistically analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics, version 20, and the methods used were frequency analysis.

In all the research steps the ethical principles have been taken into account and the anonymity of respondents was assured. We mention that because of the small number of respondents, the study results can not be generalized beyond this lot.

## **Results and discussions**

This study takes into account 80 students from Banat's University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine (35 male, 45 female; mean age = 23 years). Following the analyzes that were conducted, no significant differences were found between statements supported by male and female students. Thus, their reports were analyzed in a cumulative way.

Among respondents, according to their statements, the number of cases of consumption decreased from 33.75% to 11.25% in the past now. According to their statements, 76% know the harmful effects of illicit drugs. Of these, only 24% consumed in the past, compared with half of all the respondents who do not know the harmful effects of illicit drugs and have resorted to consumption. Whether they know drug-related harms or not, there is a great temptation to take drugs as 68.75% of all respondents answered yes to the question "Are you tempted to use illicit drugs." Worrying is that the temptation to use illicit drugs is higher among those who do not know their adverse effects (83.33% versus 60%).

Only 6.25% of the total respondents were involved in organizations or activities with direct reference to drug use and 15% were not involved, but they have expressed desire to be involved in the future.

Besides being an illegal act, unanimously respondents considered illicit drugs as dangerous for health. In their assessment the most often mentioned were heroin and ecstasy (97.5%, and 83.75% of the responses). Also, according to respondents, illicit drug use at macrosocial level can be affected by legislation (through source control) but also through education.

Although 87.50% of respondents know that whatever their mode of administration (pure or injectable) drugs can lead to addiction, the same respondents said that drugs can be addictive only for those who are weak-willed. At the same time, more than half (57.5%) did not know that the use of cannabinoids (cannabis, hashish, marijuana, ganja) can lead to addiction

## **Conclusions**

Without any doubt the drug issue was, is and will be very controversial. From a socioeconomic approach of the issue of drugs, we should not lose sight of the role and importance that society has towards recourse to illegal drugs. Illicit drug consumption has a negative impact on the functioning of society in general and especially individuals.

Few consumers are aware that between the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs aside from the harmful effects of the drug itself, even involving in accidental or experimenting is an illegal activity and may result in criminal prosecution. A low standard of living, fragile governance, lack of information and education, lack of involvement in drug problems can be fertile ground for the production, trafficking and drug abuse.

From the research results we can highlight that if young people know the harmful effects of illicit drugs, then the decision to consume is lower, and although most young people (75 out of 80 - representing a rate of 93.75%) do not engage in organizations or activities with direct reference to drug use together with other knowledge on the harmful effects of drug use, the chances of consuming are lower, but the temptation remains, it is existing even if people have not tried yet.

Another explanation would be that the most influential factor in the use of illicit drugs consumption is the curiosity, more than half of the respondents (ie 43 to 53.75%), placing it as the first in importance followed by pressure of the group (by 32-40%) and only the 3rd place for eccentricities.

We should mention that one of the greatest prejudices of young people in terms of consumption of illegal drugs is that addiction occurs only when consumers have weak will, this statement is supported by 70 respondents, representing a percentage of 87.50% of the total.

One could say that our country currently faces a low rate of consumption of illicit drugs and is only a transit country. But it is absolutely necessary to promote social policies of support for those who have fallen into the trap of drugs and policies designed to prevent (possible) use of these substances.

### **References:**

- Bărbat, C. A. (2010). *Adolescenții și drogurile: repere socio-psihologice*, Editura Victor Babeș, Timișoara
- Gavrilă-Ardelean, M., Gavrilă- Ardelean, L. (2016). *Elemente de medicină internă și socială: note de curs*, Ed. a 2-a, rev. și adăug., Colecția Medica, Editura Școala Ardeleană, Cluj-Napoca, Editura EIKON, București
- Gavrilă-Ardelean, M., Gavrilă- Ardelean, L. (2015). *Neuropsihofiziologie: curs*, Ed. a 2-a, rev. și adăug., Colecția Medica, Editura Școala Ardeleană, Cluj-Napoca, Editura EIKON, București
- Gavrilă-Ardelean, M. (2016). *Reducing the Stigma of People with Mental Handicap*, Agora Psycho-Pragmatica, Paper presented at The International Symposium *Research and Education in an Innovation Era*, 6th Edition, December 8th -10th 2016, Arad, Editura Universității „Aurel Vlaicu” Arad, 10(2):39-45, [www.uav.ro/jour/index.php/app/article/](http://www.uav.ro/jour/index.php/app/article/)
- Goian, C. (2010). Ten Categories of Semantic Inconsequentialities in the Romanian Social Work Language. *Revista de asistență socială*, 1, 79-90. Retrive from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277143556\\_Ten\\_Categories\\_](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277143556_Ten_Categories_)

of\_Semantic\_Inconsequentialities\_in\_the\_Romanian\_Social\_Work\_  
Language

- Goian, C. & Vasiluță-Ștefănescu, M. (2013). Profesionalizarea prin intermediul masteratului în economie socială – dimensiune a parteneriatului între comunități, mediul de afaceri și cel educațional universitar. *Revista de Economie Socială*, 5, 175-187
- Kelemen, G., Fond-Harmant, L., Gavrilă-Ardelean, M., Nache, C., Plus, M, & Stassen, J.-M. (2016). Education For Mental Health. *Journal Plus Education*, 14, 48-58. Retrieved from <http://www.uav.ro/jour/index.Php/jpe/article/view/631>
- Trancă, L. M. (2016). Sevraj. In Neamțu, G. (coord.) *Enciclopedia asistenței sociale* (pp. 815-816), Editura Polirom, Iași
- Sandu, F. (2002). *Stop drogurilor*, Editura Sylvi, București  
<http://dexonline.ro/definitie/drog>