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Problem of taking drugs by the students of Lublin schools

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Abstract

Introduction. The problem of drug use among young people is noticeable and has its basis not only in the individual problem, but also in the broader sense of acceptance of the peer group or the prevailing fashion.

Aim. The aim of the study is to identify the level of consumption of psychoactive substances by pupils of Lublin schools and to indicate the socio-demographic components of behavior.

Material and methods. The study was conducted on a random sample of 1444 students from 32 schools. A survey questionnaire was used as an anonymous questionnaire.

Results. Men are more likely to be exposed to drug use. Taking into account the level of schools attended by the students, the largest group dealing with drugs are middle school students. Drugs are not foreign to primary school students. The atmosphere at home affects the consumption of drugs. The highest level of knowledge about the organization of helping people who have a problem with drugs is the high school students.

Conclusions. The study of the problem of drug use by students from Lublin schools is a serious social problem.

Key words: drugs; students; middle school students; high school students; addiction

INTRODUCTION

Among older adolescents and young adults it is becoming increasingly common to use not only extracts from cannabis, but also synthetic drugs, especially amphetamine, ecstasy and fashionable mood-boosters. Increasingly important are health problems as results of occasional drug use. Given the growing prevalence of synthetic drugs, one can expect the upward trend of drug addiction and further, the change of the image of health problems associated with it.[1]

Detailed tasks and expected results are contained in the National Health Program document where operational purposes on reducing substance use and related harm are described in detail. One of the expected effects of the Program is to inhibit the growth of the number of children and young people who use psychotropic substances, and to strengthen public awareness in this particular respect. An important element is also an increase in the number of training courses organized for people who carry out preventive measures in the field of substance use in schools, educational and cultural institutions. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines drug addiction as a chronic mental and sometimes physical reaction that occurs between the organism and the drug. This is characterized by changes in behavior that always include continuous compulsion or periodic drug taking in order to provide psychological comfort or to avoid symptoms resulting from the lack of it. In addition to the proven physical and psychological dependence, the social aspect is also important, i.e. the need for drugs under the pressure of the peer social group or prevailing

fashion/trend.[2,3,4]The first encounter with drugs falls mostly between 14 and 18 years of age, and addiction seems more common in men, residents of large urban agglomerations.[5]

AIM

The aim of the research was to identify the level of psychoactive substances consumption by the students from Lublin schools, an indication of the socio - demographic components of behaviour, as well as prevention activity in the field of drug use and to identify the level of awareness of students from Lublin schools in terms of existing support systems.[6]

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted on a random sample of 1 444 students from 32 schools (12 primary schools, 10 gymnasium schools and 10 secondary schools). The tool used in the study was an anonymous questionnaire survey. The collected data were statistically analyzed taking into account: 1) sex, 2) school level, 3) the atmosphere in the family home.

Among the respondents there prevailed girls who accounted for over half of all respondents (respectively: girls – 55.9%, boys – 44.1%) The largest percentage of girls was reported in secondary schools, while the lowest in primary schools (respectively 59.2% and 51.6%).

As many as 1 242 successfully completed questionnaires were obtained, representing 86% of all respondents. In this group, there were 466 students from 6th class of primary school, 340 students from 3rd class of gymnasium school, and 440 students from 2nd class of secondary school, which is respectively 37.4%, 27.2% and 35.4% of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The question: "Are you currently taking any drugs?" was responded positively by 7.5% of the students involved in the study. At the same time, only a few respondents declared that they take drugs "regularly", others claimed that they take them only "sometimes" (respectively 1.3% of girls, 6.2% of boys).

Given the level of school the subjects attended , the largest group dealing with drugs were gymnasium students. According to the declarations of drug taking, more than one in ten gymnasium student was in drug habit – 13.2%. Less likely to reach for drugs are secondary school students, what constitutes 9.3%. Most worrying, however, is the fact that drugs are no

strangers for elementary school students. The data indicate that the contact with them was notified by 1.5% of the students.

As for the frequency with which drugs are taken by the youth in Lublin schools, it seems clear that, regardless of whether it is "often" or "sometimes" in both cases a dominating group are the gymnasium students (respectively: 2.4 % and 10.8%).

TABLE 1. Declarations concerning the frequency of taking drugs depending on the school level.

		Drug taking frequency			Total
		Frequently	Occasionally	Never	
		%	%	%	%
School	Elementary	0.6	0.9	98.5	100
	Gymnasium	2.4	10.8	86.8	100
	Secondary	1.2	8.1	90.7	100
Total		1.3	6.1	92.6	100

A more vulnerable group of drug takers are boys. They resort to the drugs not only more often than girls (respectively 9.2% and 6.2%), often also they declare that they do it "often" (respectively: boys – 2.1%, girls – 0.7%) and only "sometimes" (respectively: boys – 7.1%, girls – 5.5%).

Declarations of drug use by young people taking part in the study are clearly related to the assessments of the atmosphere in the family home. The evaluation of these are worse; the more respondents declare that they cannot communicate with their parents, the more frequent declarations confirming the use of drugs. Thus, one-third (33.3%) of respondents claim that their home is a place where they experience various troubles and almost ten times fewer respondents (3.7%) claim that their home is a safe place where they can talk about all the problems counting on understanding of parents.

Atmosphere at home also clearly affects the frequency with which Lublin students use drugs. This is particularly visible when the students use the term "often". For comparison of the clearly dissatisfied with the atmosphere at home taking drugs with such frequency is declared by every fifth (20.8%) study participant, among others, satisfied at least to a small degree the figure is only 1.5%.

Slightly different is the situation in the event of another frequency with which drugs are taken – "sometimes." Analysis of the data shows clearly that the fewest declarations (3.1%) of taking drugs with such frequency are filed by respondents most satisfied with the atmosphere in their home. Its slight deterioration causes a rapid increase in the number of similar declarations.

TABLE 2. Declarations pertaining to the frequency of drug taking depending on the atmosphere in the family home.

		Drug taking			Total
		Often	Occasionally	Never	
		%	%	%	%
Home atmosphere	a)	0.6	3.1	96.3	100
	b)	1.5	9.5	89.0	100
	c)	1.2	11.6	87.2	100
	d)	20.8	12.5	66.7	100
Total		1.3	6.2	92.5	100

a) My home is a place where I feel safe and I can talk about all my problems counting on understanding my parents' understanding.

b) It is true that my house is a place where I feel safe, but I cannot talk about all my problems counting on my parents' understanding.

c) It is true that my house is a place where I feel safe, but I prefer not to talk about my problems with my parents.

d) My home is a place where I experience various troubles and I cannot get along with my parents.

The question "Are there any organizations in Lublin that help people having problems with drugs?" was positively answered by 4.5% of respondents participating in the research.

When there comes to knowledge about the activities of such organizations in the city, the best-oriented in this respect are secondary school students. Surprising is the fact that the smallest knowledge in this respect is presented by gymnasium students (respectively 28.2% and 10.9%). At the same time, it is them who most often (21.0%) claim that such organizations in Lublin 'simply do not work'. By comparison, 14.1% of elementary school students believe that such organizations operate in the city, while opposite opinion is

presented by only 4.2% of students of these schools. Convinced about the activities of such organizations in the city are more girls than boys (respectively 31.3% and 24.2%).

Of the total number of study participants only very few (0.3%) mentioned the name of the organization that helps people addicted to drugs. Most often they pointed to "MONAR".

The question: "Do you want to stop using drugs?" was answered by one in four (24.7%) of the total number of respondents taking drugs. One third of (35.5%) respondents taking drugs regardless of the level of school "do not know" if they want to give up their habit. Nearly half of respondents (43.0%) say that they do not want to give up drugs. This is expressed, first of all, by students from primary and gymnasium level schools (respectively 50.0% and 42.9%). Most of the study participants, regardless of their school, are ready to give up drug use, moving the decision indefinitely. Only a few actually decide to take such step "now" (respectively 16.1% and 5.4%). At the same time one can see a clear positive relationship between the level of school and statements relating to the resignation from drugs. The most common willingness to give up "now" is declared by elementary school students, while secondary school students are the least likely (respectively 10.0% and 2.4%) to do so.

TABLE 3. Declaration pertaining to the decision of giving up taking drugs and the level of school.

		The type of declaration				Total
		Yes, but not now	Yes, now	No	I don't know	
		%	%	%	%	
School	Elementary	10.0	10.0	50.0	30.0	100
	Gymnasium	14.3	7.1	42.9	35.7	100
	Secondary	19.5	2.4	41.5	36.6	100
Total		16.1	5.4	43.0	35.5	100

Giving up drug taking is more primarily popular among boys than girls (respectively 46% and 37.8%). It should be noted, however, that, while boys often declare that they will consider such decision, most of them postpone it, (respectively: "yes, but not now" – 20.4%, "now" – 8.2%). The same regularity applies to girls, in this case, however, there are fewer of them willing to give up in the future or immediately (respectively 11.1% and 4.4%).

Clearly, the willingness to make a decision to abandon the drugs is dictated by the atmosphere of a family house. The drugs are not wanted to be given up primarily by those least satisfied with their relationships with their parents, as well as by those who evaluate them as very good (respectively 62.5% and 51.9%). Dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in the house contributes to the total absence of a declaration concerning resignation from drug use at "now". It also interferes with taking such decision in indefinite future (respectively 0.0% and 12.5%).

TABLE 4. Declaration pertaining to the decision of giving up taking drugs and the satisfaction with the atmosphere at home.

		Type of declaration				Total
		Yes, but not now	Yes, now	No	I don't know	
		%	%	%	%	
Atmosphere at home	a)	14.8	3.7	51.9	29.6	100
	b)	16.7	11.1	36.1	36.1	100
	c)	17.4	4.3	34.8	43.5	100
	d)	12.5	0.0	62.5	25.0	100
Total		16.0	6.4	42.6	35.0	100

a) My home is a place where I feel safe and I can talk about all my problems counting on my parents' understanding.

b) It is true that my house is a place where I feel safe, but I cannot talk about all my problems counting on my parents' understanding.

c) It is true that my house is a place where I feel safe, but I prefer not to talk about my problems with parents.

d) My home is a place where I experience various troubles and I cannot get along with my parents.

Summing up, regarding the level of school, the largest group dealing with drugs constitutes gymnasium school students. Drugs are taken by one in ten of gymnasium school students. Less likely to reach for drugs are secondary school students participating in the study. Drugs are nothing strange to the elementary school students, even though the contact with them is only reported by 1.5% of respondents. As for the frequency with which drugs are accepted, regardless of whether that is "often" or "sometimes", in both cases, such

declarations are given by gymnasium school students. The students know about the organizations helping drug users in the city; the best knowledge is presented by secondary school students, the worst by gymnasium school students. At the same time they usually say that such organizations in Lublin 'do not work'.

By analyzing the variable of sex, it can be seen that the higher risk of drug problem affects boys. They resort to drugs more frequently than girls, and also they declare that they do it "often". More convinced of the activities of the helping organizations are girls, rather than boys.

Declarations of drug use expressed by young people are clearly related to the assessments of the atmosphere in home. The worse evaluation of home atmosphere, the more frequent the declarations confirming the use of drugs. Drugs are taken by one-third of respondents claiming that their home is a place where they experience various troubles with almost ten times fewer respondents clearly satisfied with their relationships with parents. Atmosphere at home also affects the frequency of drug use. Students clearly dissatisfied with the atmosphere at home take drugs "often" and this is declared by every fifth participant of the research, among others, satisfied even to a small extent, this percentage is at most 1.5%. When it comes to "occasional" drug use, the fewest declaration of taking drugs with this frequency were filed by respondents most satisfied with the atmosphere in the family home.

The first symptom of a social signal of drug use is the isolation of the individual, growth of conflicts and the breakdown of relationships. Damage to the personal life of the young man seems to be huge - a reduction of development opportunities, absence from school, guilt, low self-esteem, increase in crime or risky behaviors. Epidemiological studies conducted by Fatyga and Rogala-Obłękowską of children entering adolescence (10 - 14 years) suggest that on average over 13% of the respondents have already tried some form of the drug. It is worth mentioning that children living in the cities are at least two times more likely to have tried drugs than children living in rural areas. In contrast, the study of Janusz Sierosławski carried out on a group of older adolescents reveals it that the frequency of drug use shows a constant tendency with the age, and decreases rapidly in people over 35 years of life. [7,8]

According to a report prepared by the World Health Organization, the anxiety associated with growing interest in marijuana smoking is justified. Plenty of studies over many years have shown that cannabis is widely used in developing countries, despite the fact that they are drugs which cause intoxication. Researchers have identified plenty of adverse psychological and health consequences of substance abuse. [9]

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research, the following conclusions were made:

1. The largest group dealing with drugs are middle school students.
2. The greatest knowledge about the activities of organizations providing help to drug addicts are secondary school students.
3. More threatened of the problem of drug addiction are boys than girls.
4. Taking drugs is sometimes caused by the atmosphere at home. The worse the ratings, the more likely the statements confirming drugs taking.

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