

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS AND THEIR IMPACT ON ALBANIANS ADOLESCENT'S BEHAVIOUR TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE

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PËRMBLEDHJE

Qëllimi i punimit është analiza e tendencës së adoleshentëve drejt substancave abuzive dhe analiza e faktorëve psikologjik e social që ndikojnë në qëndrimin e adoleshentit shqiptar ndaj drogave dhe alkolit. Metodologjia mbi zgjedhjen e kampionit u krye përmes teknikës së zgjedhjes me kuotë. Shkalla e përdorimit të drogës është rreth 10.2 %. 15 % e adoleshentëve përdorues janë vajza. 50 % e adoleshentëve përdorues e marrin nga kurioziteti. 35 % e adoleshentëve e marrin se i motivon për të kaluar shqetësimet. 36 % përdorin alkol nën ndikimin e shokëve. 20 % përdorin alkolin se kërkojnë të imitojnë modelin e prindit. 22 % e përdorin alkolin për krijimin e një situatë të pëlqyeshme humori. 40 % e adoleshentëve përdorues i drejtohen familjes për ndihmë psikologjike. 25 % e adoleshentëve përdorues drejtohen për ndihmë psikologjike grupit të shokëve. 20 % e adoleshentëve përdorues drejtohen për ndihmë te shërbimi psikologjik. 10 % e adoleshentëve përdorues drejtohet për ndihmë te qendrat e specializuara me programe

SUMMARY

The analysis of the tendency of adolescent toward abusive substance and the analysis of psychological and social factors that influence the attitude of Albanians teen toward drug and alcohol. The methodology of sample selection was conducted through the selection technique with quote. The rate of drugs use is about 10.2%. 15% of users are adolescent's girls. 50% of users use it for curiosity. 35% of adolescents receive it because motivates them to overcome concerns. 36% consume alcohol under the influence of friends. 20% consume alcohol because they try to imitate the model of their parents. 22% use alcohol to get a better mood. 40% of adolescents users are directed towards family for psychological help. 25% of adolescents users are directed toward the group of friends for psychological help. 20% of adolescents users are directed toward psychological services. 10% of adolescents users are directed toward specialized centers.

Key Words: Drugs, alcohol, abusive behavior, psychological services

1. INTRODUCTION

The recognition of many abusive substances which belong to the group of drugs and alcohol dates back to the ancient times. Substances like opium are mentioned in the literary works of Greek playwrights in ancient civilization. Opium is considered to have been used by many personalities in Ancient Rome. The spread of opium is noticed in many moments in European social life by becoming a factor of evidence

especially in the 16 and 17 century (Julien, 1998). The use of alcohol until middle Ages was believed to be an element of prolonging life of the individual. Other abusive substances are also used in the culture of different people. Thus, the Inka people used the leaves of coca plant. Caffeine was used in Saudi Arabia or in China. Nicotine was used in Central America etc. The use of abusive substances was usually present in different religious ceremonies, where people

under their use, often lost consciousness. The use of abusive substances often occurred based on the idea that it helped in the healing of diseases or the stimulation to the growth of people skills like patience, motivation etc. (Hanson 2006). The recognition and the use of abusive substances slowly took a social size phenomenon acceptable by human society, spread also in Albanian society mainly used by males. Only after the Second World War, there was a growth and consolidation of institutions which deal with medical treatment for the problems that the abusive substances have on group ages of Albanian population, except psychological treatment. The lack of specialized institutional structures for the psychological treatment of behaviour under the effect of abusive substances created deficiency in the recognition and prevention of such phenomena in Albanian population. The researches consider the use of drugs in the second half of 20th century as an unfamiliar phenomenon and banned for the Albanian society. Narcotics can be used only for medical purposes under the doctor permission. Whereas the use of alcohol, a familiar phenomenon in Albanian society, was mainly checked by propaganda means and legal prohibition for the citizens who reflected a unruly behaviour under the effect of alcohol in society. Political, economical, demographic and social changes of Albanian society brought about some new phenomena in the sociology of Albanian society after the 90s'. The rise of such phenomena in Albanian society as the free market, free movement of people, employment, immigration, new economic relations in family, private property, etc., created a new structure of functioning of this society. This structure also created a new mentality in the behaviour of different age groups of population as to the narcotics use and alcohol. These substances not only were present in the society but the use was no more considered a taboo. There are some factors like the facility to provide alcohol and other abusive drugs, the lack of a punishing legislation, transitory situation in Albania etc. which initiated the occurrence of abusive

behaviour under the effect of such use for different group ages in Albanian population. These factors with a social and And psychological effect led to the growth of drug and alcohol users in different age groups Albanian population, especially at the adolescents age group who attend high school. The use of alcohol and other abusive substances at this age group is now a worldwide problem. Statistics show that drug use is a present phenomenon in European youth of high school (Nelson 2010). Figures in 2008, show that this group age has a distribution of such a size and spread of abusive substances use to the European range.

	Cannabis use	Use of amphetamine	Use of ecstasy	Use of cocaine
High school age group (15–17 years)	13 - 25 %	1 – 8 %	0,1 – 6 %	0,1 -2.5 %

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction 2009

As the figures taken from the Ministry of Health show the number of drug users in Albania in 2008 may be 30 000 users. This proves the fact that the adolescents` age group who attend high school are considered the most problematic age group, mainly users of light drugs and threatened for being users of hard drugs with the age growth.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research, firstly, aims at studying what is the tendency of adolescents in high school to use alcohol and other abusive drugs, and secondly, to make evident the psychological and social factors which affect in the occurrence of drug and alcohol appeal for the adolescents. This study has a target the adolescents` age group in high school, located in Tirana and its suburbs. The sample concentration in this geographical region is accomplished because of the following reasons:

- in this region lives 1/3 of Albanian population
- there is an intensive economic and social life
- there are big demographic changes
- there are encountered all age groups populations of diverse social mentalities and prejudices
- It is an avangard of youth life development
- It is one of the richest regions economically speaking
- It has the market of drug and abusive substance use

The study will be based on a questionnaire for 800 adolescents, high school pupils of Tirana district. The sample is structured by maintaining

the data of INSTAT and is based on different geographic location of the adolescents from the centre of the city to its suburbs. The sample is also based on the gender distinction within this age group.

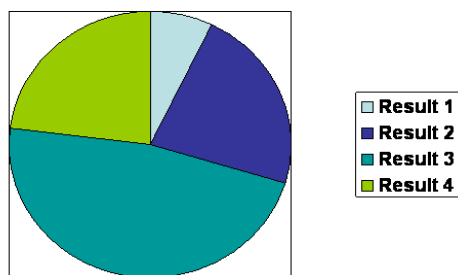
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Drugs

Teenage age groups still have a low perception to the awareness of risks that drug use provokes in the terms of physical or psychological dependency to drugs. The results that the interviewees express are shown in table 1.

I am aware of the fact that drug use makes me depended	7.3
I think that drug use makes me depended	22.4
I am not aware of the fact the that drug use makes me depended	47.2
I know that that drug use does not make me depended	23.1

Table 1 Scale of perception to the awareness of drug use leading to physical or psychological dependency



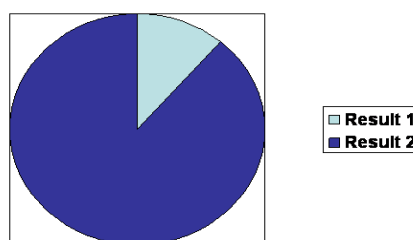
Graphic 1

2 teenagers out of 3 interviewed, express that their awareness of risks and relation to drug use provokes physical or psychological dependency in organism are not sufficient. They say that they do not know the mechanism of such dependency relation and have a sense of ignoring the risk that the use of drugs has on their health Furthermore one teenager out 4 interviewed expresses with full certainty negating that the drug use creates dependency in organism. This fact reveals that school programmes either do not supply with full

knowledge on the drug use effect on physiological organism, or this information is not acquired at the proper levels by the adolescents. Frequencies of drug use by adolescents at high school express these results.

I use drugs	11.3 %
I do not use drugs	88.7 %

Table 2 Scale of drug use by adolescents



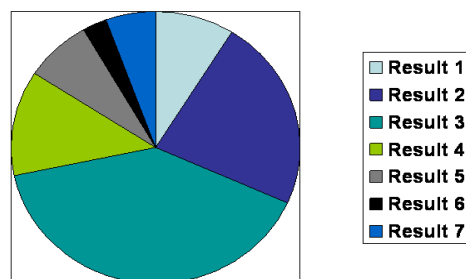
Graphic 2

One teenager out of 9 interviewed accepts that he uses drugs. This fact shows the occurrence if

such phenomenon in adolescents, a fact that is accepted already as a reality by social groups who work in the Albanian high school system. The number of users might be higher considering that there is a part of adolescents who have tried drugs for at least once or twice but do not regard themselves as users or are afraid to accept this fact because of their classmates' opinion. The average figure of drug users in national range can be lower than the data taken from the study carried out in Tirana district. This is due to the fact that different regions in Albania reveal lower rates of drug use. However the figures and number do not count. What is worth discussing is the need to prevent the spread of drug use in adolescents. The preventive process demands for the application of an efficient strategy through giving adequate information about drugs and setting qualified psychological services at schools, in order that the school becomes a preventive centre for the spread of drugs use. The scale for drug use viewed from a gender perspective reveals that boys are the greatest users of most drugs. From the age group of adolescents' drug users about 85% of them are boys and only 15% report that they are girls. These data complies with the mentality and prejudices that Albanian society has. This pressure tends to restrict the social life of a girl and checking it more strictly compared to the boys' social life. Placing a set of restrictions to the social behaviour that an adolescent girl has is the main source that influences the difference to the drug use in both genders. These data show another fact too. If the 90s' was the age when the discussion about drug use by females was beyond imagination, today the females' drug abuse is a reality that is familiar and accepted in the social and psychological context of Albanian society. The awareness to this fact is evident and helps to build strategies against drug abuse because these girls are going to be mothers in the future and will educate children in the future. There are many studies that discuss about the role that some psychological and social motives have to attract this group age to the drug use. The data shows these results:

I use it because many distinguished people in the world use it	12.4 %
I used it because it helped me to overcome a difficult time I am having at home and school.	31.3 %
I used because of curiosity and not be ignorant to what it is	54.8 %
I use because my friends use it too	17.5 %
I use because I attract the attention of the other sex	10.3 %
I use because my partner asks me to	3.5 %
I use because it makes me more appealing to friends	7.8 %

Table 3 Motives that drive adolescents to drugs use



Graphic 3

The main motive that pushes adolescents to drug use is the curiosity. 1 out 2 interviewed express that they have used drugs because of the fact that they are curious to see what its effects is in their organism. This motive connected also to the psychological characteristics that this group age has, prepares them psychologically to use drugs. This result goes alongside with the above findings that state that the adolescent has a relatively low degree of information supply about drug use. The lack of information to drugs, considering it always in a negative orientation and making it an evil force of terrible consequences, however without motivating why it is such. This model attracts the adolescent's sense of curiosity to try it, so as to directly see the part that does not convince

him/her why it is bad. The reality is their appeal to use drugs. Another motive is that the drug use is a means of overcoming worries and anxieties they go through at home, school and society. Adolescence being the age that undergoes physical, psychological and social changes is the age is open to risks for stressful and anxious states. This situation primarily comes from the lack of help that the adolescent takes by the psychological services at school and secondly, from the low level of awareness that the school and family have for the stressful state that the adolescent can find her/himself in. Facing such situations makes him/her tend to use drugs as a means of reducing the stressful and anxious behaviour at school and family. On the other hand, the facility to provide drugs makes the adolescent to take it as an efficient and prompt means so that he/she can resolve the problems in their behaviour. Another motive is their friendship. The adolescent, due to the fact of not being segregated from the friends' group, must behave the group rules. This fact leads them to the use of drugs, because they are part of the group which uses drugs. Modelling upon the behaviour of distinguished or important people is another motive that drives to the use of narcotics. 1 teenager out of 8 interviewed express that models on the important people lives. Newspaper sections, fashion magazines, sensational news on TV for drug use abusive cases of celebrities etc., have a negative effect on the adolescents. This media production is risking at making a myth out the image of the celebrity for the adolescents mind. Being attracted to model on his/her behaviour the adolescent uses drugs to become important and distinguished in his/her microenvironment. Other motives why they use drugs are because their partner asks them to or they want to appear attractive in their friendship, however they have a rather smaller role.

B. Alcohol

The adolescents age group, in comparison to drug use, reflects a higher use level as far as alcohol is concerned. The adolescents awareness

about the role alcohol has as part abusive substances is still insufficient and does not make them conscious for the risk exposed to health because of alcohol use.

1. I am aware of the fact that alcohol belong to drug groups	24.4
2. I am no sure of the fact that alcohol belong to drug groups or not	25.3
3. I am not aware of the fact that alcohol belong to drug groups	50,3

Table 4 Perception scale adolescents have for alcohol as a drug substance

Only 1 out of 4 interviewed expressed that he/she is aware of the fact, that alcohol belongs to the drugs category. Whereas 1 out 2 denies that he/she knows that alcohol belongs to the drugs category. The adolescents group generally reflects lack of knowledge about alcohol. this lack of information might come as a complex of flaws that school programmes have, as well as from the interaction of some social or psychological factors that influence the adolescent. The analysis of this result shows that the adolescent age group, being exposed to alcohol as an available element in many activities of daily social life, leads to risk for their involvement in alcohol use. The attitude of adolescents for being users or not users of alcohol is shown in table 5.

1. I am an alcohol user	40 .5 %
2. I am not an alcohol user	59.5 %

Table 5 Adolescents attitudes as alcohol users

The data reveals that 2 out of 5 interviewed perceive themselves as alcohol users. They consider alcohol use as a normal behaviour in society. The figure for adolescents using alcohol is higher than the figure standing for the drug use. There is a series of factors that might influence in adolescents for the alcohol use. Some of these highly influencing factors are:

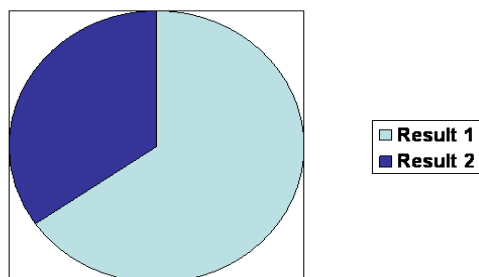
- Family tradition for the use of alcohol
- Low levels of trust in religious institutions
- Easy available Albanian market for alcohol,

- Albanian traditions that men should drink alcohol
- Low rates of legislation application in cases of alcohol prevention
- Great number of activities out of school environment for adolescents
- Recent traditions for celebrating in pubs or disco where alcohol is served
- Greater financial opportunities
- Less control from school and society to alcohol drinks

The scale of attitudes and perception that adolescents have as alcohol users, from a gender point of view is different.

Yes, I am an alcohol user	Boys	Girls
	65.2 %	34.8 %

Table 6 The scale of alcohol use



Graphic 4

Data shows that boys are more driven to alcohol. The highest rate for alcohol use in boys comes from the differentiation of behaviour by family and society that is shown when a series of factors are affect in adolescents` social life. Family and public opinion apply different standards for the application of alcohol by both genders. The consequence that comes from differentiations of the standards application is that family and society accept the alcohol use easier by boys than by girls. On the other hand, these figures reveal another fact that the Albanian adolescent there is an increase of belief that girls are also users of

alcohol, one it was a taboo in social life of Albanian girls. When asked about the motives that drive adolescents to drug use, the adolescents express the following results:

1. Communication problems in Albania	11 %
2. The parents allows the drinking of one glass of alcohol	20 %
3. Parties with friends can not be imagined without drinking alcohol	35 %
4. The alcohol drinking phenomenon is a familiar in Albania	17 %
5. It helps at school	2 %
6. It makes them more appealing in society	6 %
7. It creates a pleasant spiritual feeling	22 %
8. The partner asks them to	3 %

Table 7. Motives that drive adolescents to alcohol use

The main motive that drives the adolescent to alcohol use is the tendency to be subdued to the group pressure. The increasing numbers of parties where the adolescent takes part and the establishment of a tradition to spend free time in coffees or favourite clubs where alcoholic drinks are available, bring about the risk that the adolescent use alcoholics. Doing the same activity as their group of friends and having the good spiritual feeling of first moments after alcohol consumption helps the adolescent to accept the phenomenon of drinking as a means that makes him feel good with themselves and friends. Thus 1 out of 3 interviewed, agrees that he/she uses alcohol in birthday parties and pubs because this makes him/her part of the group that takes alcohol drinks. Also, the modelling upon the parents behaviour who takes alcohol drinks at home and the state of humour like when someone takes alcohol, are two other motives which have more or less the same appealing force to alcohol use for the adolescent. The adolescents accept that 1 out of 5 interviewed who use alcohol, are affected by these motives. Whereas other motives such as the demand for alcohol consumption because the partners ask them to or the effects that alcohol

drinking has in academic results are motives of a little value in the drive for alcohol use.

1. I do not trust talking to anybody	10.1
2. I trust talking to the school psychologist	21.7
3. I trust addressing to the teachers	6.4
4. I trust addressing to close friends	27.4
5. I trust addressing to parents	40.2
6. I trust addressing to elder brother and sister	14.2
7. I trust addressing to specialized treatment centers	9.8

Table 8 Reliability scale that adolescents have in institutions which offer psychological help

The figures show that family is the key institution where adolescents head for help in case of problems they encounter with drugs and alcohol. Thus 2 adolescents out of 5 interviewed accept that when they need help they ask the family because they trust them. This fact perceives family as the place where their problems are easily understood and can be resolved in a right way. The family help is accepted to come mainly from mothers. However what it is to be emphasized is that the help taken is not professional, instead it lies on the sentimental values support. While 1 adolescent out of 7 interviewed asks for help to the elder brother or sister. Friends group is still an element where the adolescent heads for help. Thus 1 adolescent out of 4 interviewed ask their friend help, because they perceive the friends help as the main source where they find solution. These supportive elements are present in the request for help to use of abusive drugs but their help is not professional. Specialized services are perceived in very low levels by the Albanian adolescent. Thus 1 out of 5 interviewed considers psychological

service at school as an efficient service and that could provide proper help. Even lower figures stand for the perception of qualified institutions such as psychology clinics, counselling centres, etc. Only one out of 10 interviewees accepts that they go to specialized institutions for help. The reliability scale that the adolescents approach to the request for help shows that they mostly rely on institutions that provide unqualified or empirical help rather than the specialized institutions psychological service.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Some conclusions about the attitude of adolescents to drug and alcohol use are:

1. Abusive behaviour to drugs and alcohol by the Albanian adolescents are a reality in Albanian society of nowadays, similar to phenomena with the same traits that this group age reveals in Europe and in USA
2. Adolescents are alcohol users to a greater extent compared to drug use.
3. There is an increasing trend of Albanian girls as users of alcohol and drugs.
4. Albanian adolescents still show deficiency and insufficient awareness to the psychological and physical effects the drug and alcohol use have on them. Institutions that offer psychological service to the abusive substance use do not yet offer high standards of service, thus initiating a feeling of disbelief at the adolescents.

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