

## **The negative impact on students from substance abuse**

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## **Abstract**

The consumption and abuse of soft & hard drugs among students is a significant public health concern because of the negative impact on the mental and physical state of these human beings. Previous research has shown that students who abuse drugs can experience physical and emotional damage and negatively impact their families and many others with whom they have contact. The purpose of this research is to provide a comprehensive image of why students start abusing drugs and what could be the solution to this problem. Firstly, the literature about this problem has been reviewed. These topics include drug use among students, mental health problems, financial problems, and impact on society. Secondly, additional data has been obtained by a small survey among students. These include topics such as why they tried drugs for the first time, what kind of drugs they tried, and if they felt any negative effects of these. It was discovered that there is a tendency among young adults to try illicit drugs, and people who get addicted to them face negative impacts, mostly guilt, shame, and financial problems. A possible solution to this problem could be to educate students on a regular basis about the consequences of drug use and for teachers/parents to start focusing on being more open about drug use, instead of telling them not to, to find a way that the student can try it in a safe environment.

## **Keywords**

Drugs, mental health, addiction, negative effects, public health problem

## **Introduction**

The usage of substances among students has been considered a serious problem for many years. Many actions were taken to fight this problem, but as many surveys are being taken every year, the results do not show any positive change. In fact, some researchers suggest that the problem is still rising. Different parts of the world show different results, and different statistics, therefore we wanted to see what the situation in average European countries is. Moreover, we will discuss the negative impacts of substance abuse on relationships to physical and mental health.

Hypothesis: Almost all students have tried at least one legal substance, the majority of students have tried one or a few different illegal substances including marijuana and other soft drugs, while only a minority has an addiction to those substances. The majority of students have had some kind of negative impact from using or abusing substances. We expect to see a link between our research as well as used articles.

## **Literature review**

### **Why do students start abusing substances and what are their negative impacts?**

Students start abusing substances for many reasons. Often students find drugs to be helpful when dealing with a lot of pressure. Others feel pressured into using drugs by their peers. Some students try drugs plainly out of curiosity. Different studies report that substance abuse increases every year among young adults (usually in studies young adults are considered people between age 15 to 29). Many scientific articles are written to acknowledge the problem of substance abuse that is growing at an alarming rate in different parts of the world between students and becoming a national health problem.

“The consumption and abuse of alcohol and other drugs are increasingly present in the lives of university students and may already be considered a public health problem because of the direct impacts on the physical and mental health of these individuals.” (Candido et al., 2018). A few studies were made in different medical universities in Brazil. The data differed in each study, but there were some similarities between each of them: around a half of students could not explain a reason why they have tried any kind of substances, a third tried it out of curiosity or for fun. No matter the reason for trying the substances, most students reported that they were introduced to the substances by their friends. After questioning different grade medical students, the data collected showed that higher grade students were more likely to abuse any kind of

substances with males being the dominant part abusing stronger substances and more often. Therefore, this study's results show some connections between students' increasing stress levels, which are caused by their high tempo studies, and the increasing consumption of different substances.

The problem does not lie in medical students in Brazil only. Another study with high school students in Jordan shows that the situation there is also getting worse (Haddah et al., 2010). Although, of different religion, region, culture, stress level and a little different age, young people still face problems with substance abuse. A survey was given to tenth and eleventh grade students to test their knowledge about substance abuse. This research has shown that most students know about negative impacts of substances, but reports have documented a global increase in drug consumption, stating that 43% of students aged between 15 and 16 had already tried illicit and or addictive drugs. Therefore, showing that knowledge about the harm of substances does not prevent one from trying them. In the same research, when asked about ways of resisting the temptation of trying addictive substances, the most popular answer was to resist peer pressure, meaning that peers have the biggest impact on trying drugs.

The living environment and role of parents in relation to drug use among adolescents were explored in a study conducted by the public health institute of Canton Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mesic, et al., 2013). Students from a variety of secondary schools were invited to complete a survey that included questions on their home situation and drug use. According to the findings, 15,25 percent of students experimented with marijuana, 6 percent with ecstasy, speed, and LSD, and 4 percent with cocaine. In response to the question, "Why do young people use drugs?" 19 percent said pressure of their friends, 30% said they were curious, and 10% said they had family troubles (Mesic, et al., 2013). Furthermore, other research findings clearly show that parents' marital status, work position, number of family members, kind of school, and self-satisfaction do not have a direct impact on drug use among young people. On the other hand, how well educated the parents are, their financial standing, their use of alcohol, and their connection with one another all have an impact on drug usage (Volkow et al., 2021).

The reason why the rise of substance abuse is concerning is because it has negative impacts on the individual consuming them as well as the society. Speaking from individual's perspective, the negative sides occur on both physical and mental health. When taken in high doses, drugs can cause acute toxicity. Different drugs have different side effects. Alcohol, for example can have many different side effects: from mental confusion to alcohol poisoning, which includes

vomiting, struggling to remain conscious, seizures no gag reflex and some other. These side effects, which occur not only from alcohol, but any overdosed drug, can lead a person towards permanent damage on their brain or even death. CDC reported that in 2021 deaths due to overdose topped one hundred thousand in the US. A 28.5% increase to last year's statistics (National Center for Health Statistics 2021). Many drugs have long-term consequences on one's health even if consumed in non-lethal doses, although repeatedly (Fox, T. P., Oliver, G., & Ellis, S. M. 2013). Different drugs cause different harm to the body. Even harmless-looking drugs like marijuana has impact on mental health after a chronic use of it. Marijuana's abuse can lead a person towards depression, stronger anxiety. Not only does an individual harm himself by abusing substances, families, communities, and societies also feel the harm. Alcoholism is often linked with domestic abuse. Drug abuse has a major impact on hospitals and other public services. Our society, having to take care of overdosed users suffers from significant economic losses. In 2013 it was reported that Class A drugs caused around £15.4 billion economical damage per year. Constant substance abuse causes that substance tolerance to appear in one's body, resulting in increased dosages, which often lead drug addicts into financial deficit. Having no money for their addiction, drug abusers often turn to crime. If drug abusers did not commit any drug related crimes, our society's financial costs towards crimes would drop 10 times (Barber et al, 2017).

It is apparent that student drug usage has become a substantial public health concern throughout the years. As a result, it's critical to consider how to avoid this situation in the first place. According to a study by Johnson, college is a key player in drug prevention because it is the gateway to adulthood for about half of the US population and the time when most young adults begin or increase drug use (Johnston et al., 2004). The University of New Mexico implemented a campus-wide alcohol and drug addiction prevention program from 2012 to 2013. The goal of this campaign was to change people's minds about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs. After 1,5 years of intervention, results show that participants at the University of New Mexico's use of marijuana has declined dramatically and their perceived danger of substances has climbed to a greater level when compared to those who did not participate in the program. As a result, it may be argued that universities have a significant impact on drug prevention (Ashley, 2013).

In conclusion, students become addicted to substances for a variety of reasons, including peer pressure, curiosity, amusement, and stress alleviation. Substance abuse is on the rise at an alarming rate, posing a serious threat to society's health. Drug misuse creates major health concerns, and overdosing can result in irreversible brain damage or death. Families and

civilizations are harmed by drug users. The harm might range from domestic abuse to financial hardship. As a result, rather than focusing on the solution, it is critical to concentrate on problem avoidance.

## **Method**

**Thesis:** Why do students start abusing substances and what are their negative impacts?

For this research, we asked a total of 30 students to fill in a survey about substance abuse amongst students, why they believe students start abusing drugs, and common knowledge about their negative impacts.

The topic can be sensitive to some people, therefore by collecting data we were obligated to guarantee respondents' personal information was secure. Thus we created an anonymous survey which we sent to a large group of people, indirectly asking them to fill in the form.

## **Results**

In this section, the results of the conducted questionnaire will be given. A summary of the results is provided and will be supported with graphs.

After the analysis of all the 30 questionnaires that have been filled in, it was noticed that 90 % of the respondents are between 18 and 25 years old, 6,7% are between 25 and 31 years old and the remainder 3,3% are under 18. The majority of the respondents are students (70%) and the other ones are working students (30%).

Regarding the use of legal substances, 18 of the respondents answered that they used both tobacco and alcohol. The remaining 12 respondents answered that they only used alcohol before. Thus all of our respondents have tried legal substances.

Then our respondents were asked if they ever tried illegal substances. Cannabis scores the highest with 73,3%, followed by XTC/ MDMA with 26,7%. 4 out of 30 respondents have tried cocaine and 6 out of 30 respondents have tried hallucinogens or none (see appendix A).

The majority of the respondents stated that they never or almost never use illegal substances (both 30%). 13,3% of the respondents use illegal substances at least once a month, and the same

percentage use at least once a week. 6,7% of the respondents use drugs at least 4 times a year, the same percentage uses drugs on a daily basis (see appendix B).

On the question “why do you think students try any kind of substances?” Almost all the respondents answered that they think students are curious and want to have fun (29 out of 30 respondents). 50% of the respondents think it is because of societal pressure from friends of fellow students. 56,7% think anxiety and stress have an influence. 16,7% think it is because of the lack of parental guidance on drug abuse. Only 1 respondent thinks it is to find new friends, this same amount also thinks that it is for a new experience (see appendix C).

Regarding the start of abusing drugs, 70% of the respondents think mental health is the problem. Followed by pleasure (66,7%), Boredom (46,7%), and social pressure (40%). There was also an option to fill in others and provide an answer yourself. The two answers that were given were loneliness and to get away from problems (see appendix D).

The respondents were also asked (if it was applicable to them) what kind of negative impacts they have experienced from substance abuse. 47,6% answered that they felt guilt/shame during this period. 38,1% encountered financial problems from drug abuse. 28,6% encountered mental health problems (see appendix E).

Finally, we asked as an open question what the respondents think about the solution to stop using drugs. One respondent said it is important to educate students on a regular basis about the consequences of drug use. Another one responded that teachers/parents should focus more on being open about drugs, instead of telling them not to, to find a way that the student can try and use drugs in the right quantities and time. People also responded that they think students start using drugs because they don't have better things to do or are easily bored, so it is important to keep them busy. To get in touch with people that abused drugs before and are fully recovered was also said. These people can share their experience which will have a positive impact on students.

## **Discussion**

The results indicate that our hypothesis was right for the most part: A huge part of students (73.3%) have indeed tried marijuana, which, in most countries, is an illicit drug. Every student that participated in the survey has tried alcohol. Only a minority of students reported using drugs once or more per month. Most of the students that have had some kind of experience with addiction, have had negative impacts. Most of them reported feeling guilt or shame (47%),

financial problems was not an uncommon answer (38%), followed by mental health issues (29%). Although, we also expected the results to be somewhat similar to our used articles in the paper. As most results did not seem to be much different, the amount of people that have tried marijuana is concerning. In a study of the public health institute of Canton Sarajevo, the results show that only 15.25% of students have tried marijuana, while our research has given us much different results: 73% of respondents have tried it. The main reason we believe the results vary so much is because of the age gap. The other article's survey respondents were secondary school students, while our research was focusing more on young adults. If anything, that only proves another article's statement from their collected data, that higher grade students have a bigger tendency on trying illicit drugs (The use of drugs and medical students: a literature review. Associação Médica Brasileira 2018).

## **Conclusion**

Note, that our research was little. It has only 30 answers, meaning that our results are not 100% accurate. As our hypothesis was not entirely correct, we learned that there is a tendency between young adults to try illicit drugs, and people who get addicted to them face negative impacts, mostly guilt, shame and financial problems. But the percentage of people who had tried and or abused drugs in every research is different. From what we have learned, there are many factors that have an impact on this number: region, culture, age, and more. In the future, researchers on drug use and or abuse should experiment more by creating hypotheses, and linking drug abuse with different personal problems, such as childhood trauma or others as we still do not have answers on why exactly people start using drugs. Future researchers could use our data as proof for justifying the statement that, although the data varies in different regions, all of them still have smaller or bigger tendencies on using illicit drugs.



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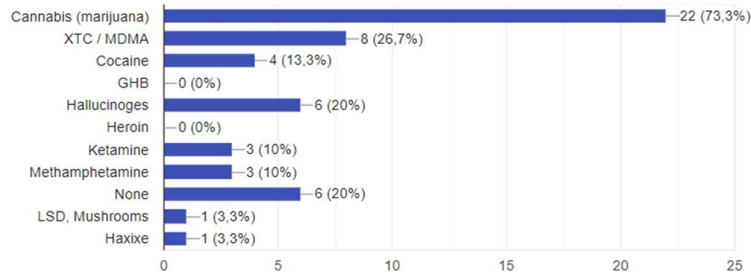
## Appendices

### Appendix A: *What illegal substances have you ever tried?*

What illegal substances have you ever tried?

Kopiëren

30 antwoorden

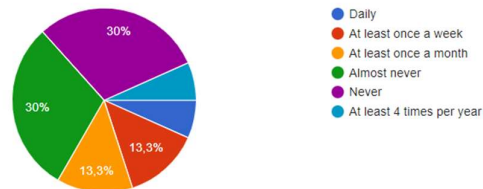


### Appendix B: *How often do you use illegal substances?*

How often do you use illegal substances?

Kopiëren

30 antwoorden

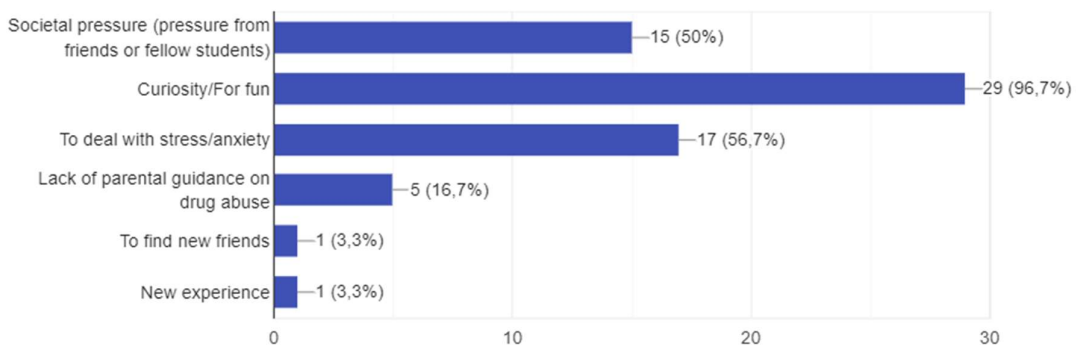


### Appendix C: *Why do you think students try any kind of substances?*

Why do you think students try any kind of substances?

Kopiëren

30 antwoorden

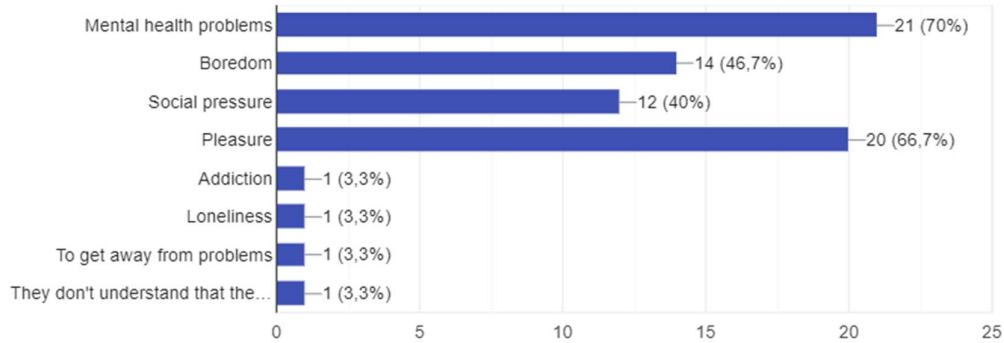


## Appendix D: *Why do people start abusing any kind of substances?*

Why do people start abusing any kind of substances in your opinion?



30 antwoorden



## Appendix E: *What kind of negative impacts have you experienced from substance abuse? (If applicable)*

What kind of negative impacts have you experienced from substance abuse? (If applicable)



21 antwoorden

