

Influence of the friends' network in drug use and violent behaviour among young people in the nightlife recreational context

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Abstract

Party networks of young people are important for socialization, but can also influence their involvement in risk behaviours. We explored the individual-centred networks (7.360 friends) of 1.363 recreational nightlife users in 9 European cities in 2006, through 22 friend characteristics. As expected, deviant networks are related to violence, smoking, illegal drug use and drunkenness. However, socializing and helping networks are also associated with fighting, smoking, use of illegal drugs - except for cannabis - and getting drunk. Not having a deviant network and not having a helping/socializing network can be protective against smoking, violence and illegal drug use, as well as protecting ex-users from relapse. Closeness to friends is also a network protective factor. A possible reason why socializing networks are related to fighting, illegal drugs and drunkenness is that these behaviours are somehow desired, adaptive and prosocial in recreational contexts.

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