

Prevalence and Psychosocial Correlates of Party-Drug Use and Associated Problems among University Students in the Netherlands

Author(s)

Kunst LE, Gebhardt WA

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Recent developments in drug use patterns call for an investigation of current party-drug use and associated problems among college students, who appear to be an important target population for harm reduction interventions.

OBJECTIVES:

In addition to reporting on party-drug use prevalence, we investigated whether initial use and continuation of party-drug use among students was associated with demographic, personality and psychosocial factors.

METHODS:

An online questionnaire was administered to 446 students from a Dutch university, inquiring about party-drug use, demographic characteristics, social norms and personality (big five, impulsiveness, aggression). Univariate and multivariate bootstrapped linear regression analyses were used.

RESULTS:

Of all students, 22.9% indicated having used party-drugs at least once, with a notable sex difference (39.2% of men vs. 16.2% of women). In contrast to the reported trends in Dutch nightlife, GHB was used rarely (lifetime 1.6%) and new psychoactive substances (NPS; 6.7%) appeared almost equally popular as amphetamines (7.6%) and cocaine (7%). Mild health/psychosocial problems (e.g., doing embarrassing things, feeling unwell) were common (65%), whereas serious problems (e.g., being hospitalized) were rare. Neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and impulsiveness were associated with lifetime but not regular party-drug use. Of all predictors, lifetime and regular party-drug use were most strongly related to lenient injunctive and descriptive norms in friends, and a low motivation to comply with parents.

CONCLUSIONS:

Our findings indicate that harm reduction/preventive interventions might profit from focusing on social norms, and targeting students who are highly involved in a pro-party-drug environment while experiencing less parental

influence.

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