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 partydrug use and associated problems among college students, who appear to be an important target population for harm reduction interventions.

OBIECTIVES:

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 proparty-drug environment while experiencing less parental influence.

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