

Social network ties to nightlife and healthcare professionals and prescription drug misuse among young adults

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Abstract

Background:

Nightlife scenes have been characterized as risk environments where social ecology and network ties facilitate substance use. In contrast to other substances, the prescription drug problem also has been shaped by the healthcare system. How network ties to professionals in these domains are associated with prescription drug misuse remains a key area of study.

Methods:

We analyzed a sample of 404 young adults who misuse prescription drugs, recruited from nightlife venues primarily via time-space sampling. We evaluated nine types of network ties via friends and family (5 nightlife professions and 4 healthcare professions) as well as total ties in each occupational domain and their relationship to three different outcomes – frequency of misuse, escalation to non-oral use, and substance-related problems. Negative binomial, logistic, and linear regression methods were employed. We then examined mechanisms by which these network associations may operate.

Results:

Ties to party promoters ($p < .05$) and bouncers ($p < .01$) were positively associated with all three outcomes. A single outcome each was associated with ties to DJs (problems, $p < .01$), musicians (frequency, $p < .05$), and bartenders (escalation, $p < .05$). The total number of network ties in the nightlife domain was positively associated with all three outcomes, with each additional tie increasing frequency (20.3%, $p < .001$), odds of escalation (OR = 42.9%, $p < .01$), and problems (12.5%, $p < .01$). The number of sources, peer norm context, and social bonding were explanatory mechanisms for all three outcomes for nightlife networks. Specific occupational ties and the total number of ties to healthcare professionals were not associated with any outcome.

Conclusion:

Embeddedness in nightlife networks is related to patterns of prescription drug misuse, and some of this association can be explained by multiple mechanisms of social networks. By contrast, ties to healthcare professionals are not associated with patterns of misuse among such young adults.

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