

PARALLEL SESSION IB

Prevention in Practice I

Characteristics of recreational drug use in Hungary: a qualitative study

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In the past decade three studies (Demetrovics, 1998, 2001; Demetrovics and Menczel, 2004) have concentrated on recreational drug use in Hungary. These quantitative surveys pointed out that party culture and recreational drug use are interconnected, and they provided a detailed picture on the extent and characteristics of legal and illegal drug use in the Hungarian recreational setting. Since some aspects of this field cannot be measured by quantitative methods, the aim of this study was to examine the characteristics of recreational drug use and the responses given to this phenomenon in Hungarian clubs, discos and parties with qualitative methods.

We aimed to explore the experiences, opinions and attitudes of people connected to the youths in this setting: social/outreach workers (who provide help on scene), emergency services, policemen, owners and employees of discos and clubs (e.g. program organizers, disc jockeys, security personnel etc.). The target group was collected from the ten biggest Hungarian cities and a total of 91 interviews were made. A further 9 interviews were made with decision makers, drug policy experts, program coordinators and other representatives of the field on a national level. They were all asked about the characteristics of drug use in this scene, medical and behavioral problems related to drug use in this setting, and their opinions about possible interventions. A so called "recreational map" of these cities was also drawn.

Results show that though recreational drug use is very prevalent in the club scene throughout Hungary, clubs and discos are not always open for understanding and handling this problem. Denial of the drug problem and negative attitudes of the owners and managers of clubs and discos are often important barriers to realize interventions in order to minimize drug related harm.

Characteristics of recreational drug use in Hungary - a qualitative study -

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Background of the study

- Only quantitative studies were carried out before (Demetrovics, 1998, 2001; Demetrovics and Menczel, 2004)
- Some aspects of this problem cannot be studied by quantitative methods
- Information was not available on a national level



Aim of the study

- To reveal the problem perception of experts and others working in or being related to the recreational scenes
- To reveal characteristics of drug use in the scene as well as the positions, opinions in relation with the necessary and possible interventions
- To map the recreational settings of the studied cities



Methodology

- Structured interviews (99) with actors of the scene in 10 different cities
 - professionals working at party services
 - professionals working at drug outpatient centres
 - doctors working in crisis intervention
 - police
 - owners and employees of entertainment venues
 - representatives of the government
- Reviewing the National Drug Strategy, results of surveys conducted in the setting, tenders announced for this field
- Searching the internet and local programme magazines



The recreational setting

- 365 entertainment venues identified (62% in Budapest)
- Average number of venues per 100,000 15-34 years old population is 43.5
- 5.3% party type, 20.2% disco type, 74.5% club type (n=337)
- 6.1% only electronic music, 52.9% electronic music as well (n=327)



Party services

- 1 in the capital, 4 in other cities
- One / more sites
- 6-63 events
- Harm reduction, outreach, prevention



Social/outreach workers of party services

- Social worker, addiction expert, mental health professional
- No significant change in drug use
- Experimenting with drugs starts at earlier age
- Drug use associated with different music trends
- PS contacted for various problems



Experts of outpatient centres

- Psychiatrist, addiction expert, social-pedagogues, social worker, psychologist, mental hygiene expert
- Drug use is increasing
- Onset of use starts at a younger age
- Consumption of extreme quantities
- Appr. 10-40% of clients from recreational setting, mostly because of criminal proceedings



Emergency services

- Limited number of interviews
- No 'protocol' how to deal with emergency cases caused by drug use
- Few clients arriving from the recreational setting (70-100% ecstasy, amphetamine users)
- Acute effects
- After detoxification → outpatient centre



Owners/employees of discos and clubs

- At least 2 interviews / city
- Different ideas on trends of drug use
- Experimenting with drugs starts at earlier age
- Different perception of gender difference
- Problems occurring due to drug use
- No general strategy on how to deal with the problem
- Safety instructions



Police

- From department of crime prevention and intelligence
- Police raids at entertainment venues
- Hardly any dealers identified
- Users 14-24 years old
- Police involved in prevention but not in the recreational setting



Conclusions

- Youngsters attending entertainment venues and start experimenting with drugs at an earlier age
- Cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamine are the most widely used drugs in this setting
- Use of LSD decreased but new drugs appeared (magic mushroom, herbal drugs, ketamine, GHB)
- Spread of cocaine use
- Poly-drug use
- Owners of entertainment venues don't really know how to deal with the problem, afraid of stigmatization
- Users from the recreational scene usually end up in treatment because of criminal proceedings (no severe addiction problems)



Thank you for your attention!

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