

## ILLEGAL DRUG USE – AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL DRUG PHENOMENON

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**Summary.** This paper aims to present several causes that generate an increasing consumption of illegal drugs in Europe and Romania, as well as some aspects of how young people perceive the medical and psychosocial effects of this expenditure. Also, the study will present a series of arguments for which illicit drug use is associated with an anthropological phenomenon. A total of 30 students from the Faculty of Medicine took part in this qualitative study, conducted between April and June 2017. The students were female and male, Romanian and other. The sampling was random, on a voluntary basis. The structured interview method was used. The increased incidence of drug use may be due to the rebellious nature and curiosity of adolescents, but also to the exponential growth of stress, people looking for the pleasure and ecstasy that drug use offers them. Most of the interviewed students said they would recognize an illegal drug quite hard, that they were tempted and had the opportunity to consume illicit drugs, but either refused or tried several times. Most have said that drug use and abuse would radically change their personal and professional lives and cause sadness in their families. Illegal drug use is considered an anthropological phenomenon because it can be perceived as a "fashionable" thing by young people who want more independence. Illegal drug use, as an anthropological phenomenon influenced by cultural evolution and socio-economic conditions, has no benefit for health, for family, and society.

**Key words:** students, illegal drugs, anthropology.

### Introduction

Drug use has been reported from the earliest times, but it is currently experiencing an explosion that turns it into one of the plagues of contemporary society. It is estimated that a total of 246 million people, or 1 out of 20 people aged 15–64 consumed an illegal drug in 2013. This represents an increase of 3 million compared to the previous year, due to the increase in the world population. Illicit drug use, in fact, remained stable (World Drug Report 2015).

The report on the drug situation in our country conducted by the National Anti-drug Agency shows that there is a stability in drug abuse in Romania. At the same time, our country continues to be among the countries in the European Union (EU) with the lowest consumption of prohibited substances, being, for most drugs, below the European average of consumption. The areas with the highest drug consumption in Romania are Bucharest and the counties of Constanta and Timis (National Report on the Drug Situation 2016-Romania-New Trends and Trends, 2016). Drug consumption and trafficking is a complex, dynamic phenomenon that has also seen in Romania new forms of manifestation, such as the appearance and spread of the use model, the emergence of new substances with easily accessible psychoactive properties, changes in the pathology associated with the consumption of

psychoactive substances, caused partly by the practice of use and, on the other hand, by the unknown effects of the consumption of new substances with psychoactive properties (National Anti-drug Strategy 2013 - 2020).

Drugs are harmful to humans, and addiction increases the risk of these negative effects, be it physical, mental illness or social exclusion, as a result of poorly acceptable behaviors.

Drug users are often labeled as "losers," with no chance of joining the society. They are often marginalized both in their own families (especially if they are not other family members) and in workplaces and in society, primarily due to drug use and physical and mental disorders due to consumption, but also (hepatitis C, hepatitis B, HIV / AIDS, all of which are serious, transmissible diseases) (Baciu and Pungă, 2017).

Drugs are quite easily accessible, including to children, which is why education needs to be increased to reduce demand. Although health education is expensive, making these investments, society could save more (Kuhn et al., 2013).

*The objectives* of this paper are to present arguments for the association of illegal drug use as an anthropological phenomenon, as well as the main causes of illicit drug use and some aspects of how medical students perceive the medical and psychosocial effects of this abuse.

## Material and Methods

A total of 30 students from the Faculty of Medicine, aged 20-21, participated in this qualitative study, conducted between April and June 2017. There were 17 female students and 13 male students, from Romania and other countries. The structured interview method was used, applied face to face. The interview guide contained 12 open questions, and the running time was about 30 minutes. In this paper, eight questions will be presented. The sampling was random, on a voluntary basis, while respecting the ethics of research. Subjects could withdraw at any time of the research.

## Results and Discussions

To the question: *What are the illegal drugs that you know are used today in human society (from Romania and the world)?*

most responded: marijuana, cocaine, heroin, amphetamine, methamphetamine.

Considering that the most widely used illicit plant on the planet is cannabis and the products derived from it are the most demanded (51.5 million men and 32.4 million women), it is not surprising that all students have exemplified their cannabis or its derivatives the drugs they knew. Lifetime cannabis use figures range from about 4 out of 10 adults in France and 3 out of 9 adults in Denmark and Italy, less than 1 in 10 adults in Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta, Romania and Turkey (European Report on Trends and Trends, 2016). In Romania, both in the general population and among young people, the most demanded and most consumed drug is cannabis (4.6% of the general population aged 15-64). This drug ranks first and second in terms of demand for treatment and seized quantity. In 2015, cannabis recorded 44.3% of the total amount of drugs captured. According to the youngsters' opinion, cannabis is also the drug that is most easily obtainable (National Report on the Situation of Drugs 2016-Romania-New Trends and Trends, 2016). The evolution of the drug phenomenon could be influenced by the emergence and spread of the multi-use model, as well as the emergence of new psychoactive substances on the drug

market, with very high accessibility and availability but also with unknown effects (National Anti-drug Strategy 2013-2020).

To the question: ***What do you think are the reasons why you would be tempted to consume an illegal drug?***

We have selected the following responses:

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Because of the sense of rebellion among teenagers; the temptation to try something new."*

Student, female, 20: *"The high incidence of drug use may be due to the exponential increase in stress. Usually, the fact that you want to try it out is the main reason (at least in the beginning). Then, addiction and pleasure prevail as reasons."*

Another student responded, *"The increase in illicit drug use is due to the fact that we live in a very stressful society, and yet another thing is that in Hollywood movies, drug use is very often positively represented."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"Young people are interested in trying new things and are eager to stand out."*

Student, female, 21 years: *"Because the population finds a refuge in these substances. The problems of our century are growing and few people are choosing the right way."*

Student, male, 20: *"To take refuge is for some people a means to deal with depression."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"Due to the entourage or living conditions (abuse)."*

Student, male, 20 years old: *"The phenomenon of illegal drug use is increased due to the socio-economic status of the people who use it, or because in many cases it started as an experiment and this consumption takes place in a social group, at parties etc."*

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Socio-economic conditions (poor access to health services, especially psychological, difficult economic conditions, availability of drugs), as is the case with the blue whale: a lot of people want to talk about it and some of them are wanting to try it."*

It can be concluded that most students appreciate that the phenomenon of drug use is due to the fact that young people want to start new experiences, test drug sensations out of curiosity and once they have used, it is difficult to stop them. The desire to be popular and to join certain groups, family problems, depression, emotional crises, loneliness, school abandonment, stress, curiosity and intense mediatization, and the lack of instruction of students about the negative effects of drug use, are all other causes of consumption.

The main causes of drug use are curiosity, the desire to try something new, to experience everything, to lift intellectual performance and even the desire to be modern. All emotional disturbances, anxiety, depression, insomnia, frustration and interpersonal conflicts can be risk factors that can cause drug use. Specialists have noticed that "friend" or "fellow" is one of the strongest factors of influence, especially among young people, often the group becoming superior to the family. The behavior by which the member of a group of friends will act in accordance with the group's requirements, only to be accepted by the group ("do not smoke with us, you are not ours") is called by sociologists social normative influence (Bălăceanu Stolnici et al., 2012). The dynamics of society, the identity crisis alongside age-related curiosity, the desire to belong to a particular social group, friends' pressure, family models can make young people use drugs (Georgescu et al., 2007).

To the question: ***The data shows that we are witnessing a high accidental consumption. Do you think you could recognize if you could offer such a substance for consumption? How?***

I have the following responses:

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Yes, I could recognize it quite easily. For example, marijuana differs from tobacco by smell."*

Student, female, 20: *"I could recognize a drug according to his physical form (white powder). I could also guide myself after the person who would like to give me this substance."*

Arab Student: *"I could admit because I know they bear the generic name of chemicals, but they are actually substances of this kind."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"I do not know if I would admit, because I accidentally consumed drugs. It depends on the sensations I would have, both then and after, and it also depends on what I would remember."*

Student, female, 21 years old: *"I think it's pretty hard to recognize. I'd try to avoid using substances from unknown people."*

Student, female, 19: *«Mood changed suddenly; pupil dilation; redness of eyes; events take place "in rewind".»*

Student, male, 20 years old: *«I do not think I can really recognize it unless it's something very obvious like "take this smoke", "take this pill to feel good", otherwise if I do not consider other people that are trying to drug me for "not clean" purposes, I doubt the existence of the possibility of accidentally taking a hit.»*

It has been noticed that most of the interviewed students said they would not recognize an illegal drug unless it has a classic look (a cigarette hand smoked with a different feel than tobacco, or white powder). Some have said it's hard, practically impossible to tell if the product is pure or altered in any way.

Most often, drugs are used to generate pleasant (hedonic) or "exciting" experiences. These conditions are associated with changes in human personality (depersonalization, trance, mystical exaltations, etc.), but especially the surrounding reality (sensory-sensory distortions, time or space alterations, hallucinations or delusions). Because these drugs are administered for time to pass by easily they have been called recreational drugs (Bălăceanu Stolnici et al., 2012).

To the question: ***Have you ever consumed any illegal drugs (if so, how many times and what?). And if not, how close were you to take any illegal drugs in terms of the opportunities that were offered to you?***

I have selected some answers:

Student, male, 20 years old: *"I did not take, and there were two occasions when I could have."*

Student, female, 20: *"Yes, I have smoked marijuana many times (I do not know the exact number)."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"I have never used any drugs, but I often see young people who are drugged (in the train station, through parks, in Vama Veche). I would never want to try it because it is dangerous to my physical and mental health and I could become an addict."*

Arab Student: *"I have used 10-12 times."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"I have never used, but I was tempted. Once I was very close to trying."*

Student, female, 21 years old: *"Yes, once, out of pure curiosity. The occasions in which I have been given such substances have been countless, but I know their negative effects and I am not tempted by them. I do not want to damage my health."*

Student, 20 years old: *"I have not consumed and would not want to consume. Only smoking was a curiosity, but I realized it is harmful and I quit."*

Student, female, 22: *"Three times weed, I did not have much opportunity, but I do not want to."*

Student, male, 21 years old: *"I was not offered any opportunity, and I would not even consume it."*

The European Drugs Report, issued in 2016, analyzes current trends in illicit drug use in the European Union, starting from 2014 statistical data. Thus:

- One in four European citizens once experienced an illegal drug use in their lives.
- Figures show that in the EU, a quarter of the population in the target group aged 15 to 64 (88 million) tried forbidden substances at some point in their life. Of these people, probably because of the more dangerous way to live, most are men (54.3 million) compared to women (34.8 million).

The data illustrating recent illicit drug use and the last year's most recent drug use is particularly centered on young people (15 to 34 years old) who are most open to such an experience. Thus, over the past year, an estimated 17.8 million young adults who would have consumed banned substances with a double number of male consumers compared to women (The European Drug Report, Trends, and Trends, 2016).

However, most of the students who participated in the study have misunderstood that they have never consumed or have never been close to consuming an illegal drug, especially because they have no consuming entourage.

To the question: ***What do you think are the most common places where you could consume an illegal drug?***

some answers were:

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Secluded from the eyes of the world."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"The most common places for drug use are places, clubs, pubs, etc."*

Female student, 20 years old: *"In the parks (at night), in the train station or on the beach."*

Student, female, 21: *"Clubs, friends' houses, parks, parties."*

Student, female, 19 years old: *"Clubs, parties, normally any place with a bad entourage."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"Clubs, parks, abandoned houses, behind the block."*

Student, male, 20 years old: *"There are places, rather than occasions, namely at parties. If I consume it would be at my home or at friends'."*

Student, male, 21: *"Illegal drugs can be easily consumed in nightclubs, bars or places where consumption cannot be seen (eg parking lots)."*

Male student, 21 years old: *"Now, in Romania, there is no smoking in closed doors, so I could not say bars, cafes, clubs. So I think about entourage, blocks or more secluded spaces, etc."*

Romania was initially a transit country, but soon it became one of the most profitable areas of drug trafficking. During the communist regime, illicit drug trafficking did not particularly affect our country, but after 1989 the drugs began to be sold and then be consumed in student hostels, bars, discos or even street corners (National Report on drug situation 2016-Romania-New Trends and Trends, 2016).

Students interviewed believed that places, where illegal drugs might be consumed, are those who are quite withdrawn, unenlightened, as opposed to others, at parties, clubs or in parks and car parks, during the night.

The following question: ***Do you think the fact that if you consume an illegal drug, it could it affect your professional or personal life?***

the answers below will be presented:

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Yes, because addiction and other side effects could affect my thinking and possibly my personality."*

Female student, 20 (who has consumed marijuana a few times): *"It depends on the drug. In the case of marijuana, it has not affected my life in any way so far, and probably will not in the future."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"Yes, because there is a lack of concentration, in the sense that the person only thinks about the ways to get the drug. Frustration and depression occur in your personal life."*

Student, female, 21 years old: *"I am confident that if I were to use drugs, my personal and professional life would change radically in the wrong."*

Student, female, 21 years old: *"I think yes because addiction occurs."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"If I used once or twice I do not think it would affect my personal and professional life, at least not in the long run. But if it became a habit, it would definitely affect my family and my career."*

Student, male, 22: *"It is possible, depending on the effects of drugs."*

Student, male, 21 years old: *"If alcohol affects personal and professional life (and not being an illegal drug), then illegal drugs would do more damage."*

Some students have found that occasional consumption of marijuana does not have a negative effect on health or family or professional relationships. Most people have found that, as a result of repeated drug use, you become addicted, with medical and psycho-social consequences of the individual, of the family from which the drug user comes, and these the effects are influencing school and workplace.

Question: ***Do you consider that if you become an illegal drug user, could this affect the lives of your loved ones in your family?***

it had the answers:

Female student, 20 years old: *"Yes, drugs can change your attitude and behavior towards others. Also, drugs have a fairly high price and financial problems can arise and affect the situation of others."*

Student, female, 20 years: *"Yes, because I would cause sorrow in my family. Drug use does not have any positive effects on health, and withdrawal is terrible. It is extremely difficult for a person to recover after having been an illegal drug user for a long time."*

Arab Student: *"Certainly yes (you spend money, lose time, etc.)."*

Student, female, 20 years: *"Yes, I think I would not act and react normally."*

Student, female, 21: *"Certainly. Drug use affects both the consumer and those close to him."*

Student, female, 21: *"Yes. Both emotionally and materially."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"If it is not accidental consumption, and it becomes an addiction, then yes."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"Yes, because those people love me and would suffer seeing that my life is not normal."*

Student, 22 years old: *"Yes, especially children and their perception of life."*

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Yes, because of the drug-induced aggression and the obsession to get it. It could make me isolate myself from the others."*

Student, male, 21: *"It depends on the behavior induced by those substances (violence, molestation etc.), but most likely, yes."*

The interviewed students considered that drug addiction among young people affects socio-economically and emotionally the lives of close people, especially the family.

Recreational drugs have very serious biological and mental effects, resulting in irreversible lesions in various organs (brain, liver, heart, blood vessels, lung, ovary, testes, etc.). They also affect the behavior, memory, and concentration, and induces similar pathologies like dementia. In the social sphere, the worst negative consequences are manifested, because the consumer is no longer able to exercise his profession, becoming a burden for society, and sometimes an extremely dangerous individual (Bălăceanu Stolnici et al., 2012).

**Question: *To what extent could you associate illicit drug use with an anthropological phenomenon, that is, a tendency that is born and transforms with the evolution of human society?***

was accompanied by such responses:

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Drug use has always existed, and with the evolution of man more drugs have appeared, adapted to the needs of the people at that time."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"I think this habit of consuming drugs is not nearly done, and it is in a continuous development."*

Arab Student: *"Drug use is a strictly anthropological phenomenon because it is proportional to some inherited values of society."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *«I think this growing drug use is an anthropological phenomenon, as it is noticed, without too much effort, that young people want more and more independence, and drug use may be perceived by them as a "fashionable" thing.»*

Student, female, 21 years old: *"I think it can be linked because if there is a tendency to be inherited, it will be considered normal in time."*

Student, female, 20 years old: *"Yes, I think they can be linked, the individual imitating the group's behavior."*

Female student, 22 years old: *"It will be consumed more and more, until (up to 50 years) will fall greatly or will not consume at all. In about 30 years drug use will begin to decrease."*

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Yes, drug use is an anthropological phenomenon because it appears in different social classes from time to time, from lower to higher."*

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Drug use and anthropology are linked together because at first drugs were consumed only for pleasure, such as alcohol and tobacco, then became a*

*necessity to get rid of the family, social, emotional problems that arose with time - This has also prompted the emergence of hybrid drugs that have far more powerful effects."*

Student, male, 20 years old: *"Drug use is influenced (as a phenomenon) by cultural evolution, by socio-economic conditions, etc. so it can be associated with an anthropological phenomenon."*

Student, male, 21 years old: *«I think that influential people want it: used. This is the reason why in the countries that have not forbidden consumption and traffic, the local population uses very little, most of the consumers being tourists who come to enjoy this "privilege".»*

The students considered that the phenomenon of drug use was an anthropological one, especially due to the evolution of man and human society, which developed as a mechanism for adaptation, escape from the problems raised by contemporary society. Most people considered that drug use has always been present in society since they were not declared illegal, but the intensification of stress, technology, the decline in human interaction, and the move from rural areas to urban areas often the continuous increase in consumption.

The history of drugs overlaps perhaps with that of humanity, and such substances have been discovered and consumed since ancient times. All ancient peoples knew toxic, lethal concoctions with different effects on human physique and psyche. For example, the Greeks and Romans used opium to ease the pain. Likewise, every people or ethnic group keeps in their tradition so-called "magic potions" for rituals (Ciornei, 2010). In antiquity, the qualities of plants often called "divinators", were known: poppies cultivated by Egyptians, from which sedative healing drinks were prepared (Porot A. and Porot M., 1999).

## Conclusions

Starting from Carl Gustav Jung's next statement: "The body that captures the soul that is crying for help, this is an addiction. I'm addicted when I know I'm doing my own bad, but I can not give up what makes me sick. Whether the object of addiction is alcohol, chocolate, cocaine, morphine or idealism, dependence remains the common entity and shows its ugliest faces in every moment of life of those who are in its net", we can conclude that the addiction is specific to humans because they are the only beings who consciously harm themselves and who will continue to consume even if they know the physical, mental, medical, and social problems they face with the use of drugs. These are also shows by the criteria of DSM-IV-TR for dependence on alcohol or other substances, which also include the persistent desire and failed efforts to reduce or control the use of the substance and the reduction or abandonment of social, occupational or recreational in the cause of drug abuse, which we do not encounter in the animal world.

The tendency of modern society to be stressed is growing in a century in which we are constantly moving and wanting to learn, to know and to do as much in as little time. This can lead to drug use even more.

In conclusion, illicit drug use, as an anthropological phenomenon influenced by cultural development and socio-economic conditions, has no benefit on health, family, and society. Students participating in the study were fairly well informed about the use of illegal drugs but was found to be a permanent activity required information because it has been observed that few students can recognize a drug.

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## NELEGALNA UPOTREBA DROGE - ANTROPOLOŠKI FENOMEN DROGE

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### Sažetak.

Cilj ovog rada je da predstavi uzroke koji doprinose povećanoj zloupotrebi nelegalnih droga u Evropi i Rumuniji, kao i pojedine aspekte načina na koji mladi doživljavaju medicinske i psihosocijalne efekte ove zloupotrebe. Takođe, ova studija će predstaviti niz argumenata zbog kojih se konzumiranje nelegalnih droga dovodi u vezu sa antropološkim fenomenom. Ukupno 30 studenata Medicinskog fakulteta učestvovalo je u ovoj kvalitativnoj studiji, sprovedenoj između aprila i juna 2017. godine. Studenti su bili ženskog i muškog pola, rumunske i drugih nacionalnosti. Uzorak je odabran nasumično na dobrovoljnoj bazi. Korišćena je metoda strukturisanog intervjua. Povećana učestalost zloupotrebe droge može se javiti kao posledica buntovničke prirode i radoznalosti adolescenata, ali takođe i kao posledica povećanog stresa, kao i posledica potrage za zadovoljstvom i ekstazom koju konzumiranje droge pruža. Većina ispitanih studenata rekla je da bi prilično teško prepoznala nelegalnu drogu, da su bili u prilici da je konzumiraju, ali da su ili odbili ili probali nekoliko puta. Većina je rekla da bi zloupotreba droge drastično promenila njihove lične i profesionalne živote i da bi porodici zadala patnju. Smatra se da je zloupotreba nelegalnih droga antropološki fenomen jer se može posmatrati kao nešto što je „moderno” od strane omalidine koja želi više nezavisnosti. Zloupotreba nelegalne droge, kao antropološki fenomen pod uticajem kulturne evolucije i socioekonomskih uslova, nema nikakvih pogodnosti za zdravlje, porodicu i društvo.

**Ključne reči:** studenti, nelegalna upotreba droge, antropologija.