

The influence of personal networks on the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs

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Abstract

Party networks of young people are very important for socialization, but can also influence their involvement in risk behaviours or they can be protective. The influence of nightlife network of friends in using alcohol/ drugs is investigated through a survey. We explore the individual-centred networks (7.360 friends) of 1.363 recreational nightlife users in 9 European cities in 2006, through 22 friend characteristics. Statistical analysis utilised factorial analysis with varimax rotation and analysis of variance. The 69% of the sample had been drunk during the last month and more than half of them had used illicit drugs. Most of the respondents use to have a stable group of friends with whom to go out. Networks main characteristics were being more or less deviant and/or prosocial. Having not network or a less prosocial network is related to be low consumers. Having a non deviant, but prosocial network is related to being a person who gets drunk without using illegal drugs. Users of illegal drugs have a deviant and prosocial network. Finally ex users have less deviant networks, but at the same time a helper and prosocial network. Males drug use patterns appear to be less affected by the characteristics of their networks. Some preventive consequences coming from these results are already known as the importance of having less deviant friends. But some other issues are

less known: to enhance certain prosocial skills may have counter preventive effects among recreational users and to influence the network for preventative purposes may be more effective among females.

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