

Psychoactive substance consumption by Portuguese population

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Ever since man has sought in nature certain substances as a form of relief or cure of physical suffering, disinhibition or invigoration of energies^[1,2]. Psychoactive substances, licit or illicit, are likely to change the state of consciousness and behavior^[1]. The consumption of psychoactive substances is increasingly evident in our society for different reasons^[1,3,4], generating a great social concern both in Portugal^[3,4] and on a global scale^[1]. **OBJECTIVE:** To investigate the prevalence of psychoactive substances consumption in the Portuguese population throughout the life and in the last 3 months, to know the main reasons for the consumption and to analyze the correlations between the consumption and age and gender. **METHODS:** This correlational and cross-sectional study was based on an online questionnaire, that includes the ASSIST instrument^[5], applied to Portuguese population. It was used descriptive statistics, the qui-square test for nominal variables and the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney and the Kruskal-Wallis tests to compare ordinal scale variables, with a significance level of 5%. **RESULTS:** From 385 participants, 65% were female, with an average age of 25 years old (minimum: 18-maximum: 67; SD=9.90). Concerning the prevalence of psychoactive substances lifetime consumption, it was found that alcohol was the most consumed (86%), followed by xanthines (79%) and tobacco (60%). In the last 3 months, xanthines (49%) were the substances most consumed daily, followed by tobacco (22%), alcohol (9%), anxiolytics (3%) and cannabis (2%). Socializing was the main reason for consumption of alcohol (67%), tobacco (36%) and cannabis (34%). Anxiolytics have been used mostly to sleep (50%) and xanthines to increase cognitive capacity (35%). Tobacco ($p=0.016$), alcohol ($p=0.03$) and illicit substances ($p<0.001$) were more consumed by men throughout their lives, while anxiolytics were mostly consumed by women ($p=0.027$). Alcohol ($p=0.008$), cannabis ($p=0.027$), and xanthines ($p=0.009$) were mostly consumed by young adults aged between 22 and 24 years. **CONCLUSIONS:** The results of this study reveal sporadic and recreational use of illicit substances, and the regular use of alcohol, tobacco and especially xanthines, mostly by young adults and men, while

anxiolytics are preferred by women. Socializing was identified the main reason for the use of the most consumed substances.

Keywords: ASSIST; Psychoactive Substances; Psychoactive Substances Consumption

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