

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was in the form of an auditorial survey. 322 students of second, third and fourth forms of eight secondary schools in Lublin, chosen at random, participated in it.

The study was conducted in February and March 2000. The statistical analysis was performed with the use of the programme (software) SPSS for Windows. The obtained results were analysed in relation to the sex of the students, status of their families (complete or incomplete), form and type of school they attended. The questions evaluating the students' knowledge were also analysed, depending on whether the students took drugs or not.

Girls constituted 61.8% of the examined group, boys – 38.2%. 81.4% of the examined students were brought up in complete families, 19.2% were brought up either by mother or father, or by distant relatives. 29.5% of the examined students were learning in general secondary schools, 37% – in technical schools, and 33.5% in vocational (trade) schools. The main part of the examined young people were third-formers (53.4%), second-formers were 26.7%, and 19.9 % of the inquired students were fourth-formers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

38.5% of the students admitted having taken drugs at least once in their lives. 31.1% defined their age at the moment of “drug initiation” (entering into contact with drugs). It varied from 11 to 19 years, on average it was 15.6 years. Sierosławski (7), when examining a group of drug addicts in Poznań, established a similar age of adolescents' first contact with drugs. The analysis of the answer to this question in consideration of sex reveals that boys, significantly more frequently than girls admitted to having taken a drug at least once in their lives ($p < 0.001$). 57.7% of boys and 26.6 girls have had some experience with drugs. This behaviour was also significantly influenced by the condition

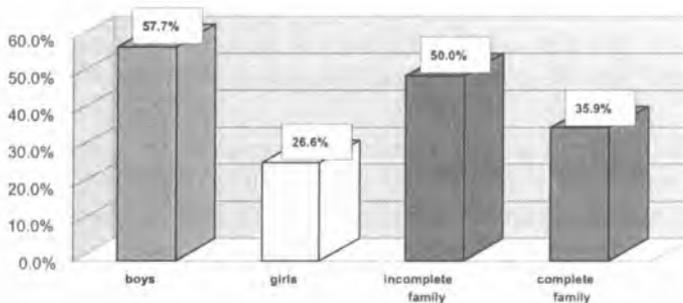


Fig. 1. Percentage of students who admitted having taken a drug at least once in their lives

of the students' families. 35.9% of the students brought up in complete families took drugs, compared with 50% of the students from incomplete families ($p < 0.05$). However, no statistical differences depending on form and type of school were shown in this respect. In our opinion the obtained data are slightly lowered. Some of the inquired students might not admit taking drugs, because they might not believe our assurances that the questionnaire they were to fill in would in fact be used only for scientific purposes.

The studies on fourth-formers and fifth-formers of general secondary schools and technical vocational schools in Lublin, carried out by Kulik (4) in 1995 revealed much lower percentage of students experimenting with drugs. In her studies only 20.5% of adolescents had certain experiences with drugs. Kulik's studies also show that boys more often took part in taking drugs than girls.

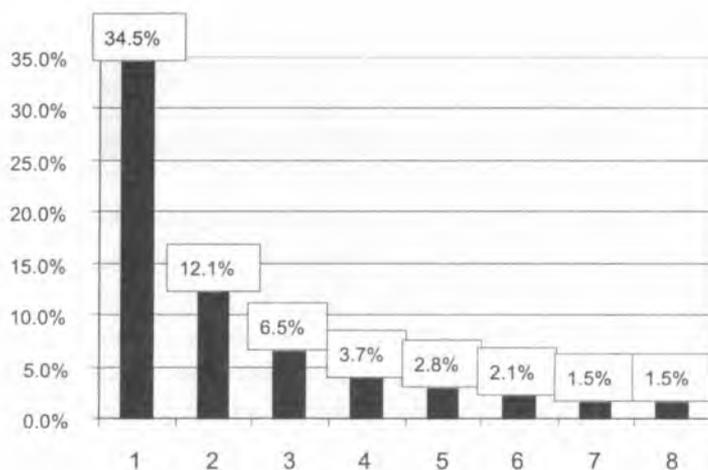


Fig. 2. How many secondary school students have taken this drug at least once in their lives; 1) marijuana, 2) amphetamine, 3) hallucinogens, e. g. LSD, 4) glues and chemical dissolvents, 5) ecstasy, 6) cocaine, 7) opiates (heroin, morphine), 8) other drugs

Figure 2 illustrates frequency of taking particular kinds of drugs. The most popular drug among the secondary school students in Lublin turned out to be marijuana. 34.5% of the students have taken it at least once in their lives, and 14% took it at least once last month. 12.1% of inquired young people have tried amphetamine, including 3.7% last month; LSD – 6.5%, including 2.8% last month. These drugs were taken significantly more often by boys and by students brought up in incomplete families ($p < 0.05$).

Also in the population of third-formers of state secondary schools in Warsaw, Town Centre district, studied by Bobrowski and co-workers (2) in 1998, the most frequently used narcotic substances were *Cannabis indica*, amphetamine and hallucinogens. In War-

saw boys also narcotized themselves more often than girls. However, the studies carried out in 1995 by the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology (8) on all-Polish random trial of third-form students of secondary schools revealed slightly smaller spread of the use of cannabis and amphetamine derivatives, and more frequent use of inhalants among adolescents. Thus, the pattern according to which the young people in Lublin experiment with drugs is that of a great city, and it is true to all-European tendencies (3, 10).

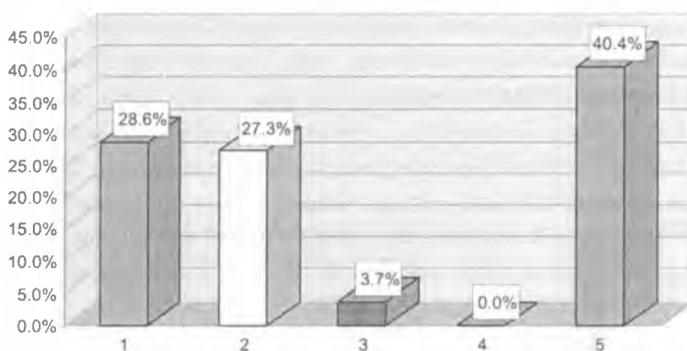


Fig. 3. Availability of drugs estimated by young people; 1) getting drugs is very easy, 2) getting drugs is easy, 3) getting drugs is difficult, 4) getting drugs is very difficult, 5) I have never been interested in it

In the next question of the questionnaire the students were asked how difficult it is for them to get drugs. The inquired adolescents defined getting drugs as very easy (28.6 %) and easy (27.3%). 40.4% of students chose the answer “I have never been interested in getting drugs, because I don’t need them”. Getting drugs is difficult for 3.7% of students, none of the examined subjects defined getting drugs as “very difficult”. Some of them spontaneously added that although they have never tried to get drugs, they were convinced that if they had ever been in need of them, it would be very easy for them. Girls and students brought up by both parents more often declared that they were uninterested in the possibility of getting drugs than boys and students coming from incomplete families.

The results obtained in the above-mentioned all-Polish study of third-formers of secondary schools in 1995 (8) were slightly different. At that time as many as 45.8% of the inquired young people defined getting the most accessible derivatives of cannabis as impossible, very difficult or difficult, and the percentage of students reporting difficulties in this respect increased as far as other narcotic substances were concerned.

24.8% of secondary school students from Lublin confirmed that they have bought drugs (at least once). Boys (39.8%) owned up to it more than twice more often than girls (15.6%). Considering the division of students in respect to the status of their families, it is apparent that drugs are more often bought by children from incomplete families

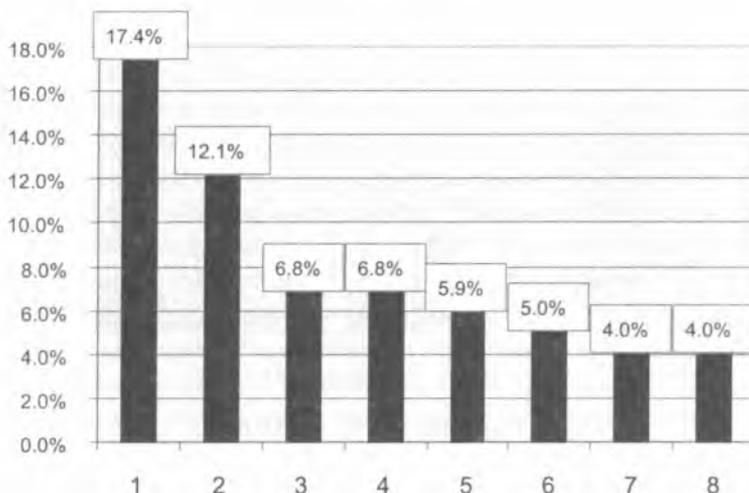


Fig. 4. Places where drugs can be bought; 1) through the mediation of one's acquaintances, colleagues; 2) in housing estates, in appointed places, 3) discos, 4) "hops"(young people's dancing parties), 5) school and surroundings, 6) concerts of young people's music, 7) pubs, cafes and beerhouses, 8) "by phone"

(36.7%) than children who are brought up by both parents (22.1%). However, no differences were found in relation to the type of school and form.

Next, the students were asked where they usually bought drugs. That was a multiple choice question. Adolescents usually buy drugs through the mediation of their acquaintances, colleagues (17.4%) and in housing estates, in appointed places (12.2%), e.g. in staircases, on playgrounds. Other places of drug-trafficking are: discos, "hops" (young people's dancing parties); school and its surroundings; concerts of young people's music; pubs, cafes and beerhouses, where young people gather. 4% of students admitted that they had happened to order a drug by phone. The fact that drugs are easily available for adolescents is confirmed by a spontaneous comment of one of the inquired students: "In my housing estate you can get what you want (i.e. any kind of drug you want) and as much as you want". When analysing the places of the purchase of drugs mentioned by students depending on their sex, we could see that boys, nearly twice more often than girls, bought drugs in all the places listed above ($p < 0.01$). Students coming from incomplete families, twice more often than the remaining ones, purchase drugs through colleagues, on the premises of the school and during concerts.

The next group of questions concerned the students' knowledge about drugs. At the beginning the students were asked how they understood the term "drug addiction". 64.9% of the inquired adolescents chose the correct answer: "addiction means loss of control over taking drugs. The remaining students identified addiction with frequent use of drugs, e.g. at least once a day (23.3%), and only very small percentage of them (3.4%)

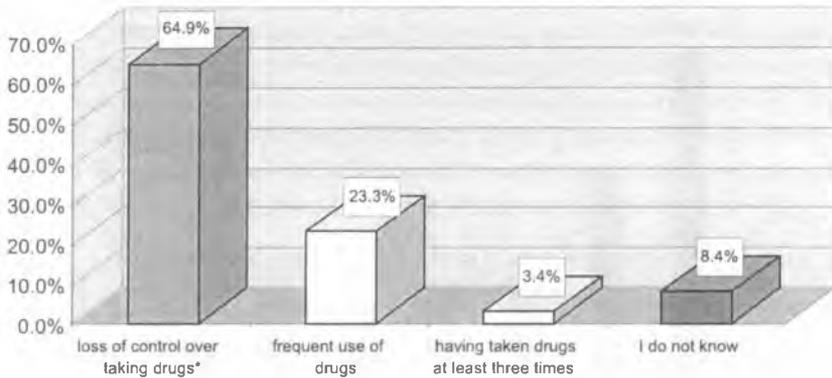


Fig. 5. According to you addiction is...

*Correct answer

identified it with having taken drugs at least three times. 8.4% of the examined subjects were unable to answer this question. The comparison of students' answers according to the type of school reveals that more students of general secondary schools gave the correct answer, while vocational school students chose the variant "I don't know" nearly five times more often than general secondary school students. Similar results were obtained by Pęczar (6), who studied the knowledge about addictions among secondary school students in Strzyżów, a small town in Carpathian Foothills (Podkarpacie).

The next question concerned the possibility of development of addiction. Vast majority of adolescents (84.2%) were aware that using drugs can lead anybody to addiction against one's will. A small number of the inquired subjects expressed the opinion that strong persons can take drugs and control it (5.6%), or that only taking drugs for many years leads to addiction (4.3%). 5.9% of student's could not decide which answer to choose. Vocational school students admitted lack of knowledge on this subject twice as often as general secondary school students.

The subsequent question of the questionnaire concerned the nature of the drug craving (craving for narcotics). Also in this case the vast majority of the inquired students (87.3%) pointed to the correct answer: "A person in the state of drug craving is able to commit any crime, put their own life at risk in order to get the desired dose of drug". The opinion that a person in the state of drug craving could forget about the drug if they were occupied with some other things was represented by 4.3% of young people, and 8.4 % of students did not know how to answer this question. Girls revealed significantly a higher level of knowledge about drug craving ($p < 0.01$).

However, the inquired students had difficulties in giving the correct definition of tolerance, which occurs in the course of drug addiction. Only 28% of them stated correctly that tolerance was the necessity of taking higher and higher doses of drug to obtain the same effect on one's psyche. 16.8% of students acknowledged that tolerance was the ne-

cessity for replacing a drug with another one, occurring after a certain period of using it. More than half of the examined population did not know which answer to choose. No significant differences were revealed in relation to the studied features of the population.

Then the students were asked how they evaluated the chances of curing the advanced drug addiction. In that case the correct answer (this chance equals 2 to 10%) was given only by 29.2% of the students. More frequently this answer was chosen by technical school students and fourth-formers.

Another question concerned the legal aspects of drug addiction. The students were asked if a person who possessed a small amount of drugs for their own use was liable to the penalty of imprisonment. The correct answer, that such a person was not liable to any penalty, was chosen by 44.4% of adolescents (Article 45 of the Law on counteracting / preventing/ drug addiction (11). Men and persons who had taken a drug at least once were aware of it significantly more often ($p < 0.01$).

Then 5 narcotic substances were enumerated and the students were asked which of them were the so-called hard drugs. About three fourth of students rightly indicated heroin and cocaine, almost half of the students also counted LSD as one of them. Wrong answers "marijuana" and "hashish" were chosen respectively by 17.7% and 15.2% of adolescents. General secondary and technical school students gave correct answers significantly more often than vocational school students, e.g. heroin was rightly regarded as a hard drug by 83.2% of general secondary school students, 79% of technical school students and merely 55.6% of vocational school students ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, significantly higher percentage of correct answers was observed among fourth-formers and people who admitted having taken a drug. Vocational school students, second-formers and drug abstainers could not answer this question significantly more often ($p < 0.05$).

Another task for the students was to define, which of the drugs mentioned in the question was obtained from poppy. The question turned out to be quite difficult for the students, only 47.7% of them correctly recognized opium, 30.1% heroin and 15.2% morphine as drugs obtained from poppy. 34.5% of the inquired adolescents did not know how to answer this question. Considering the classification according to type of school and form, significantly higher level of knowledge was presented by general secondary and technical school students, than vocational school students, and students of senior forms in comparison to second-formers. For example, 20.4% of vocational school students, 10.9% of technical school students and 4.2% of general secondary school students gave a wrong opinion that cocaine was obtained from poppy ($p < 0.02$).

Then the students were asked to estimate whether the statements about marijuana given in the questionnaire were true. 59.3% of students estimated the opinion that using marijuana creates the danger of addiction as true. Women and persons who had nothing to do with drugs ($p < 0.001$) regarded this opinion as true significantly more often. About half of the students were aware of the fact that smoking marijuana increases the probability of using other drugs. Similar number of adolescents regarded the following statement as true.

“Prolonged use of marijuana leads to laziness, apathy, and lack of motivation to undertake any activity”. Significantly better knowledge of symptoms of long-term use of marijuana was revealed by general secondary school students and those, who had already tried drugs. Wrong answers: “Smoking marijuana is a harmless play” and “Prolonged use of marijuana does not have any negative influence on one’s health, because marijuana is the least harmful drug” were given respectively by 10.2% and 7.1% of the inquired adolescents. The students who had already had experiences with drugs ($p < 0.001$) chose this answer significantly more often. 10.2% of students could not make up their minds on how to answer this question.

The inquired adolescents were also to evaluate statements concerning amphetamine. Three fourths of students chose the correct answer, that long-term use of amphetamine could cause serious sleep disorders and mental diseases. General secondary school students were aware of it significantly more frequently ($p < 0.02$). About one fourth of the inquired subjects had a wrong opinion, that using amphetamine is an easy and harmless way of improving the results of studying. This opinion was expressed significantly more often by vocational school students and those who had already had their “drug initiation” ($p < 0.01$).

81.1% of the adolescents confirmed that long-term intoxication with glues and chemical dissolvents led to damage of large numbers of nerve cells and decrease in intellectual abilities, 5.2% of students stated that prolonged intoxication with glues and dissolvents did not have negative influence on health, and 13.7% of students could not answer this question.

The next task for the students, included in this questionnaire, was to define the type of symptoms occurring after the use of LSD (lyserginamide). About half of the examined population gave the correct answer: these are: hallucinations, coloured visions, disturbances of perception of time passage and space. False answers were chosen by 12.7% of students and 38.5% of them could not make up their minds which answer to choose. Substantially better knowledge of the subject of symptoms occurring after use of LSD was revealed by general secondary school students and persons who had already tried drugs.

The inquired adolescents were also asked how long it took to become addicted to heroin if it was used regularly. The correct answer, i.e. “after a few weeks” was indicated by 74.2% of the examined group. Longer time span – a few months or a few years – was indicated respectively by 7.1% and 1.9% of the students. 16.8% of them chose the variant “I don’t know”.

The last question concerned the age, when people who had got addicted to opiates as teenagers died. The correct answer, i.e. “people who got addicted to opiates as teenagers usually don’t reach the age of 30, die prematurely due to cachexia or drug overdose” was chosen by half of the inquired students. One fourth of the examined adolescents did not know how to answer this question. Others were of the opinion that persons in the advanced stage of morphine-type addiction had got a chance to live longer.

CONCLUSIONS

1. 57.7% of male and 26.6% of female students of secondary schools in Lublin admitted having taken drugs at least once in their lives. Children from incomplete families take drugs more often. However, no differences were revealed in relation to type of school and form level.

2. The most popular drugs among adolescents attending schools in Lublin are marijuana and amphetamine.

3. The inquired young people defined their access to drugs as very easy or easy. Drugs are most often purchased through acquaintances and colleagues, and in housing estates, in appointed places.

4. Students of general secondary schools and technical schools revealed a considerably higher level of knowledge on drugs than vocational school students. The same could be said about fourth-formers as compared to students of lower (younger) forms.

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STRESZCZENIE

Celem pracy była próba oceny rozpowszechnienia narkomanii w lubelskich szkołach ponadpodstawowych i poznanie, w jaki sposób uczniowie wchodzi w posiadanie narkotyków. Zamierzano też zbadać poziom wiedzy uczniów na temat narkotyków.

Badaniem w formie ankiety audytoryjnej objęto 322 uczniów klas drugich, trzecich i czwartych, na terenie ośmiu losowo wybranych szkół ponadpodstawowych Lublina. Badanie zostało przeprowadzone w lutym i marcu 2000 roku.

Wyniki analizy wskazują na to, że 57,7% uczniów i 26,6% uczennic szkół średnich Lublina przyznało się do zażycia narkotyku przynajmniej raz w życiu. Narkotyki częściej zażywają dzieci z rodzin niepełnych. Nie wykazano natomiast różnic w częstości przyjmowania narkotyków w zależności od rodzaju szkoły i poziomu klasy. Najpopularniejszymi narkotykami wśród lubelskiej młodzieży szkolnej są marihuana i amfetamina. Badana młodzież określiła swój dostęp do narkotyków jako bardzo łatwy lub łatwy. Narkotyki najczęściej nabywane są za pośrednictwem znajomych, kolegów oraz na osiedlach mieszkaniowych w umówionych miejscach.

Znamiennie wyższym poziomem wiedzy na temat narkotyków niż uczniowie szkoły zawodowej wykazali się uczniowie liceum i technikum, a czwartoklasiści górowali pod tym względem nad uczniami klas młodszych.