

Oral Communication 9

Drug use among the student population of the University of Porto: Analysis of prevalence patterns

Helena Rafaela Garcia ¹, Rita Roque-Bravo ^{2,3,*} and Diana Dias-da-Silva ^{2,3,4,5,6,*}

¹ ICBAS – Biomedical Sciences Institute, University of Porto, Rua Jorge Viterbo Ferreira 228, 4050-303 Porto, Portugal

² UCIBIO, Laboratory of Toxicology, Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Porto, Rua Jorge Viterbo Ferreira 228, 4050-303 Porto, Portugal

³ Associated Laboratory i4HB – Institute for Health and Bioeconomy, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Porto, Rua Jorge Viterbo Ferreira 228, 4050-303 Porto, Portugal

⁴ LAQV/REQUIMTE, ESS, Polytechnic of Porto, Rua Dr. António Bernardino de Almeida, 400 4200 - 072, Porto, Portugal

⁵ Associate Laboratory i4HB – Institute for Health and Bioeconomy, University Institute of Health Sciences – CESPU, 4585-116 Gandra, Portugal

⁶ UCIBIO – Applied Molecular Biosciences Unit, Forensics and Biomedical Sciences Research Laboratory, University Institute of Health Sciences (1H-TOXRUN, IUCS-CESPU), 4585-116 Gandra, Portugal

* Correspondence: rita.rdsb@gmail.com (RRB); dds@ess.ipp.pt (DDS)

Abstract

Background: Alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs use by university students is a complex issue that has garnered concern and interest from public health officials, educators, and scientific community [1]. This concern is driven by various factors, including the potential to affect academic performance and mental and physical health. **Objective:** This study was designed to determine the prevalence and patterns of psychotropic drug use among students at the University of Porto (UP). **Methods:** This was an observational, transversal, and descriptive study approved by the Ethics Committee of CHUP/ICBAS (2021/CE/P006[P346/CETI/ICBAS]). Voluntary participants (n=4,052) from the student body of UP enrolled in the academic year 2021/2022 completed a web-based questionnaire assessing self-reported drug use across a range of specified psychoactive substances, between February and April of 2022. Gender, age, living situation, economic status, drug use patterns and intent were also collected and used as stratification and association variables. **Results:** The three most consumed substances were alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis and its derivatives (CAD). Notably, 23.0% of respondents declared smoking cigarettes every day, while only 1.8% of alcohol users drank every day (36.8% drank it 2-4 times per month). “Nightclubs and bars” and “other people’s homes” were the most cited locations for alcohol and cigarette use. Illicit drugs have more variety when it comes to settings depending on their usual context and motive for use. “Having fun” was reported by half of the students as the reason for drinking alcohol, while curiosity was the main drive for smoking tobacco and CAD. **Conclusions:** Students have access to and consume different (il)licit drugs. These results confirm the importance of this type of research, tracing a more defined image of the drug use prevalence patterns of this population, which in turn can aid health officials and other institutions when constructing and enforcing population-specific prevention and drug treatment measures.

Keywords: drug use prevalence; illicit drugs; alcohol; tobacco

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by FCT—Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (projects UIDP/04378/2020 and UIDB/04378/2020 of the Applied Molecular Biosciences—UCIBIO), the project LA/P/0140/2020 of the Associate Laboratory Institute for Health and Bioeconomy—i4HBM and the PhD grant 2020.04493.BD. The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

References

1. Welsh, J.W.; Shentu, Y.; Sarvey, B.D. Substance Use Among College Students. *Focus (Am Psychiatr Publ)* 2019, *17*(2), 117–127.



In *Scientific Letters*, works are published under a CC-BY license (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), the most open license available. The users can share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially), as long as they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made (read the full text of the license terms and conditions of use at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>).