



Original Article

The risk of addictive antisocial behavior in the context of information sources

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Abstract

Drug trafficking and illicit drug use are a major global problem, due to their multiple negative effects, particularly in medical, criminological and national security terms. This article presents the risks of developing addictive antisocial behavior in the context of problematic information source management. Insufficient education regarding the risks of accessing unfiltered information sources, the ease of interacting with a much larger set of information than the user can control, and the indiscriminate receptivity of the value systems of the group of affiliation represent risk factors for developing antisocial behavior in multiple forms, including addictive antisocial behavior.

Keywords: *illicit drugs, deviance, delinquency, criminality, antisocial behavior, sources of information.*

Introduction

Of all the deviant, delinquent or criminal social phenomena, antisocial acts in the area of illicit drug trafficking and consumption are at the top of the statistics regarding the severity and complex, multidisciplinary effects that hit any society that is confronted with this dramatic reality. The multiple effects of illicit drug trafficking target the criminality associated with this phenomenon as well as the use of financial resources resulting from illicit drug trafficking to finance cross-border organized crime networks that commit other crimes. Illicit drug consumption also has multiple effects, such as health problems for consumers, the risk of antisocial behavior (especially through crimes associated with consumption), risks regarding national security, economic problems, both for the consumer and for society.

Activities to prevent and combat illicit drug trafficking are correlated with activities to prevent and combat illicit drug consumption, within complex, multidisciplinary

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interventions, regulated by regulatory acts and organized according to the vision of national and international strategies in this field.

In recent times, new methods have been added to the specific operating methods, both in terms of trafficking and consumption. Technological progress and the shift of many criminal activities to the virtual environment have also significantly influenced the field of illicit drug trafficking and consumption, especially by facilitating access to orders, by ensuring anonymity on a large scale, and by new payment methods.

In this context, the sources of information that can be accessed and the typology of communication to the profiled individuals configure a new field of operation in the area of organized crime associated with drug trafficking and illicit consumption. Education and prevention related to accessing information sources, the ability to choose and filter them, and the development of a personality strongly built on prosocial values become very important, so that there is a rapid identification of the risks related to information from unreliable sources, which transmit antisocial behavior patterns and a resistance to their effects, the user accessing the information maintaining his prosocial behavior.

1. A brief overview of the main types of illicit drugs and their effects on social behavior

Both the concept of drugs and drug use have existed since ancient times, in most societies, over time, having numerous names and the same euphoric, narcosis effect, under different forms of administration, but also of complex impact on the human body, constituting the basis for which individuals resort to such behavior.

In the past, some societies, especially traditional ones, were quite tolerant regarding substance use, compared to contemporary society, where various methods of condemnation were tried to counteract the entire phenomenon, which is still growing today. "The public reaction to the drug, but also religious beliefs are the ones that, at different stages of history, defined the drug as good or bad. Thus, the drug was accepted, or not, depending on the public reaction to it and its definition by society" (Rădoi 2015: p. 9).

The illicit nature associated with the notion of "drug" is determined by the legislative framework of each state. Substance trafficking and their consumption are analyzed worldwide as a dynamic process, having numerous influences in several sectors of social life.

The phenomenon of illicit drug trafficking and use is studied from numerous perspectives, the most common being the public health perspective and the criminological perspective.

"Approached from a public health perspective, illicit drug use, especially addiction, is defined as a pathology that significantly affects the health of individuals, communities, regions or society as a whole, with subsequent repercussions on the fields of education, the labor market, etc." (National Drug Strategy 2022-2026). Studies reveal both strictly medical aspects and the complex palette of effects and risks that extend to other areas. "From a criminological perspective, drug consumption and trafficking are deviant social behaviors, often associated with other types of crime, emerging from the specific way of organizing and functioning of society, multifactorially determined by a series of threats, risks and vulnerabilities located at the level of the global external environment or originating in structural or functional deficiencies of the social body. Seen in this way, the drug phenomenon can be approached with specific tools for controlling organized crime

or risk management tactics available to specialized national and international law enforcement structures" (National Strategy on Drugs 2022-2026).

According to 2025 statistics by EUDA (European Union Drugs Agency), the drug market indicates the availability and much wider variety of offers for all categories of substances (including new ones), which can increase the risks to the individual's health through their effects.

The availability of drugs on the European market has also benefited from the particularities of globalization, which has significantly impacted consumption, as perpetrators optimize the opportunities to expand the trafficking of illicit substances provided by interconnected communication networks, more precisely trade, but also transport.

A classification of the main types of illicit drugs is carried out through the wide variety of consumption criteria, the dual effects they have on the human body, the social availability, but also the legislation of drugs. Thus, we can list several categories of illicit drugs:

Cannabis - known since the early dynasties, under the name hemp, with two branches: cannabis indica, whose seeds, flowers and leaves are rich in cannabinol, which produce an exciting and euphoric effect on the consumer, and cannabis sativa, which has a textile purpose, cultivated in the Carpathian-Danubian area and used by the Thracians in making clothes (Oișteanu, 2014).

It is currently the best-known illicit drug in Europe, being cultivated, traded and transported across the globe, with derivatives obtained from it such as marijuana and hashish, but also a psychoactive component known today as THC-tetrahydrocannabinol (Prelipceanu, 2018).

"Consumption of cannabis (marijuana) under different conditions acts differently: it can be a stimulant, sedative, analgesic or moderate hallucinogen. Although it does not directly cause mental disorders, it can aggravate existing ones" (Rădoi 2015: p. 17).

According to the National Report on the Drug Situation in Romania, from 2024, for the year 2023, at the national level, cannabis use (single or polyconsumption) "was mentioned in 1127 cases out of the total cases of medical emergencies due to drug use. In the overall case history recorded in specialized units at the national level, cannabis was mentioned in 36.5% of the cases" (National Report on the Drug Situation in Romania 2024: p. 39).

Cocaine – is considered the second most consumed and frequented drug in Europe (EUDA, 2025), being part of the stimulant group along with amphetamine-derived substances (methamphetamine, MDMA/Ecstasy), with addictive use which, consumed in relatively high doses, produce the same effect as amphetamine (Prelipceanu, 2018). For Europe, the use of MDMA, a synthetic drug similar in chemical structure to amphetamine, has been associated with episodic use, particularly in bars, nightclubs, entertainment venues and occasional use (European Drug Report, 2025).

The availability of cocaine in Europe is found in two main categories, the most well-known is in the form of cocaine powder, and the second, less available form is crack cocaine (a free form that can be smoked), produced from the coca plant, cultivated mainly in South America.

The effects of cocaine after consumption in large doses can cause the individual hallucinations, depression, but also paranoid crises, which is why it is consumed more occasionally.

Synthetic stimulants – previously mentioned as amphetamine, methamphetamine, but also synthetic cathinones are considered to be synthetic stimulants for the nervous system, more precisely the central nervous system, having availability on the illicit drug market, especially in the European one.

Regarding the history of synthetic stimulants, amphetamine has always been the most frequently used illicit drug, followed by methamphetamine and synthetic cathinones, with a limited prevalence of use in most countries with a predisposition to use, in contradiction with the current moment where the predisposition to use has increased, more precisely of synthetic cathinones, a wide range of stimulants, with a much greater availability in Europe, with unprecedented seizures and imports being recorded according to the European Union Drugs Agency.

Opioids and related drugs

- The set of opiates that includes natural substances such as opium, codeine and morphine.
- The set of opioids that includes semi-synthetic drugs such as oxycodone and heroin, but also synthetic drugs such as methadone, meperidine, demerol and other related substances (Prelipceanu, 2018).

New psychoactive substances (NPS)

Currently, the characterization of new substances that have appeared on the drug market is provided by the large number of substances appearing from year to year, detecting new components of them (semisynthetic/synthetic cannabinoids, plants with psychoactive effects, stimulants, etc.), and the term NPS is due to the wide range and typology that are not under the classic international regulations of drug trafficking and control.

Other drug categories

In addition to the drugs mentioned above, there are substances with increased availability on the illicit drug market in Europe, which are based on stimulant, anesthetic, hallucinogenic, depressive or dissociative properties and effects, these being khat leaves, LSD which is known as lysergic acid diethylamide, hallucinogenic mushrooms, GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) and ketamine, quite well known in certain countries and cities, but having a relatively low prevalence compared to other much better known illicit drugs. Psychedelic substances, which are now recognized as hallucinogens that impair consciousness and generate confusion, both auditory and visual hallucinations in the consumer, inducing risks regarding potential violent behavior, can cause acute intoxication, perceptual disorders, dysfunctional behavior. Overdose can cause various medical complications (stroke, coma, hyperthermia, cerebral edema, etc.) (Prelipceanu, 2018).

Specialized institutions aim to prevent and combat addictive risk situations, which are increasingly common, especially for adolescent groups. Their sources of information are the media, their social environment, social networks or other online platforms, which often influence their conduct, leading to antisocial behaviors. “The factors that determine juvenile delinquency can be divided into two large categories: internal, individual factors and external, social factors. The first category of factors includes the neuropsychic particularities and structure, particularities of the personality in formation. The second category includes the socio-cultural, economic, socio-affective and educational factors within the micro and macro human groups into which the child and young person must gradually integrate, starting with the family” (Rădulescu, Banciu 1990: p. 59, apud Rădoi 2015: p. 89).

It is worrying that the number of consumers among young people is very high, with numerous risks such as: intoxications, deaths caused by substance use and the adoption of criminal behavior in society.

2. The risk of forming illicit addictive social behavior in the context of the negative effects of information sources

The use of illicit drugs is determined by multiple motivations, an increasingly important role in recent times being played by accessing more and more information sources that promote and facilitate integration into the addictive universe generating antisocial behavior. The elements on which such a marketization of illicit substances and addictive behavior is based are multiple, targeting the most important motivational resources specific to social groups.

There is sometimes a risk of antisocial behavior promoted as an element of customary social values within different social typologies. "In societies characterized by a varied structure of intersecting socio-cultural typologies, there is often a difficulty in managing different social behaviors, formed according to different socio-cultural models" (Fîrțală, Cristea 2023 : p.299).

The imperative of respecting legal norms is the common element to which it is necessary to align the social conduct of members of social communities on the territory of the same state, regardless of the specific social customs to which members of society may relate. However, if in classical societies this ideal was not always easy to achieve, currently the situation is even more complicated, in the context of access to unfiltered sources of information that do not always relate to prosocial principles and values. So, currently there is a risk that people on the territory of a state will move from different socio-cultural models to a common model, but which represents a vector of influence for antisocial conduct.

This risk factor becomes all the more serious since in some social environments the integration of different social values into a harmony of prosocial conduct does not represent a primary objective, the social attitudinal reaction being on the contrary, negative, antisocial, focused more on stigmatization, labeling, marginalization.

"So it seems that marginalization of groups of any nature, and in particular of the emigrant communities, can lead to an increased risk of radicalization." (Ilie Goga, 2019).

In such a social context, the sources of information accessed by non-integrated members of society are often motivational towards antisocial responses, in the form of criminal acts, addictive behavior, radicalization with increased risk regarding social order and national security.

Some works also refer to the behavioral perspective of addiction, which claims that some people become addicted not to a chemical substance, but to an experience (Ilie, Șerban, Dan, 2024). In these situations, the dissociation between the substance and group membership is very difficult to achieve, the two components mutually supporting each other and also determining increased risks of associative antisocial behavior. The sources of information are predominantly those agreed upon by the entire membership group, the social behavior promoted by these information channels being selected including on the criterion of validating a certain social behavior, including the marketization of addictive behavior.

An important component in the mechanism of accessing information sources and receiving messages that promote antisocial behavior, including addictive behavior, is the ability of the information receiver to choose, select and correctly interpret the information.

”A special problem related to understanding the fake news issue is related to the comparison with previously used concepts: political propaganda, rumour, etc. Of course, new digital and global media have left their mark on the concept, but the content is not far from the other two mentioned. Which brings us to another problem, classic in substance but extremely current in the era of fakenews: fakenews through the eyes of the sender vs. fakenews through the eyes of the receiver. Of course, it is not only important what the sender does in the media, but, nowadays, especially what the receiver does. There is now a huge paradox of the receiver: if the receiver of classical propaganda or rumour did not have access to knowledge (and information was at stake in the plunge into a dubious cognitive environment), nowadays, anyone with a smartphone is flooded with information. It is not receiving information that is at stake today, but analysing it and, right from the start, selecting relevant information” (Cristea, Fîrțală 2023 : p.291).

Capturing the attention of the user of social platforms (through priority and allocated time) represents the initial element of the construction of a true "partnership" in communication and social interaction between the sender and the receiver, the adhesion and maintenance of this partnership becoming the fundamental motivational element, by virtue of which the receiver ends up executing exactly the recommendations for social conduct received from the sender. Gradually, these recommendations, suggestions or even imperatives can deviate towards incitement to antisocial acts of deviance, delinquency or criminality.

Regarding awareness of particularities, in the context of assimilating the digital environment as merged with everyday life, it was found that ” high participation in social networks is related to a lower level of privacy awareness, which is connected to the cultivation of concern with human-readable presentation of self rather than machine-readable personal data flows, and also through the paradox of control”(Rughiniș, Rughiniș, Vulpe, Rosner 2021: p.11).

Most of the time, the projection related to the multitude of personal information provided through social networks is that it will be analyzed by a human factor, who will use it in a specifically human management way. Currently, the analysis of the information flow by AI tools radically changes the perspective of using information, with various possibilities of profiling, manipulation and control, including by transmitting ideas that can determine antisocial behavior, to target groups.

The use of algorithmic profiling tools through AI technologies can change the perspective of the person's interaction with the digital environment. For example, elements related to the valorization of performance, success, which are emerging as characteristics in the profiling of the person, can be used to send him offers to purchase substances such as illicit substances, doping substances, etc. The search for information in the online environment is increasingly competing with the search for the person in the target group by vectors of dissemination of information in the online environment. Thus, along with the need for good preparation in order to select quality, filtered, safe information sources, the user of the online environment must be prepared and know how to manage the information that comes to him from the online environment, sometimes these being random, but increasingly, these being sent to people from well-selected target groups. The interaction between the user and the databases, in the form of query-response, presupposes the possibility of mutual knowledge, with easy possibilities of profiling.

The need for group membership (an essential element, especially during adolescence) prioritizes alignment with the specificity and value system of the group of affiliation. Even if initially the group of affiliation was centered on prosocial or neutral values, the gradual and sometimes imperceptible departure from it towards another value system does not significantly influence the structure and membership of the group, this being more important than changing the value system of the group, even if it can be substantially modified, including regarding the promotion of addictive antisocial behavior.

Conclusions

In the field of antisocial behavior in the form of illicit drug trafficking and consumption, alongside the classic ways in which the consumer sought the prohibited substance or through which traffickers brought illicit drugs to the consumer, an increasingly important component is currently the one related to accessing online information sources. The path to accessing illicit substances can be direct or gradually built through motivational narratives coming from various unfiltered information sources and which are not approached with critical thinking. Experiencing sensational experiences, acquiring superpowers or escaping from everyday life are just a few of the narratives marketed in information sources that promote the consumption of illicit substances to achieve these goals. In order to increase the effects of these messages, undesirable elements related to the effects of illicit substance consumption are avoided, fake news motivational narratives are constructed and easy ways to procure illicit substances are presented. The composition of the message to the target group is based on profiling the person, the message having forms that are as well-structured as possible to be accepted. Messages that promote the consumption of illicit substances are more effective if the person accessing such messages imitates the addictive behavior of other members of the group, the imperative of belonging to the group being a stronger motivation than the risk of slipping into the world of addictions. Good education regarding the criteria for accessing information sources, their filtering and their approach with critical thinking are essential elements for effective resistance to information that promotes addictive, deviant, delinquent or criminal antisocial behavior.

Authors contributions

V.F. was involved in the literature review, wrote the second paragraph, and drafted the conclusions. V.D.I. was involved in the literature review and wrote the first paragraph.

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