

# Determining motivations in teenage drug abuse



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Drug-prevention and counseling interventions often focus on changing cognitions of the clients as these relate to drug use. This study examined the cognitive reasons or motivations for alcohol and cannabis use among adolescents. Four factors were found to reflect 15 reasons for drug use, Enhance Positive Affect and Creativity, Reduce Negative Affect, Social Cohesion, and Addiction. These factors were found to reflect second-order latent factors of Alcohol Motivations as well as Cannabis Motivations and to be invariant by sex.

Boys had higher motivations to use alcohol and cannabis for Social Cohesion motivations and cannabis for Enhancing Positive Affect and Creativity than girls. The importance of using drugs to Reduce Negative Affect was more prevalent among older than younger teenagers. All Alcohol and Cannabis Motivation scales were significantly correlated with actual use of alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, and hard drugs. In both bivariate and latent variable longitudinal analyses over a 1-year period, motivations for alcohol use increased actual use of alcohol, whereas motivations for cannabis use increased all types of drug use.

Very similar patterns of effects were noted for boys and girls. We conclude that self-acknowledged cognitive motivations or reasons for drug use are important etiological factors in understanding actual drug-use behavior and discuss the counseling and prevention implications of these results. Determining Motivations in Teenage Drug Abuse Fighting drug abuse has always been a grave concern in the recent years. Despite numerous declarations of a "war on drugs" over the past decades, Americans continue to produce, use and sell illegal narcotics.

Illegal drugs are both a symptom and a cause of some of American society's most intractable problems, including high crime rates, homelessness and juvenile delinquency. Not to mention, the government is spending millions of dollars to thwart America's drug problems. Thus, Newcomb Chou, Bentler and Huba (1988) sought to answer the cognitive motivations of drug use among adolescents. This landmark study aimed to understand cognitive motivational processes because these are critical for developing adequate and appropriate prevention and counseling programs.

Although a wide diversity of potential influences may generate drug use, as suggested in the risk-factor research, many of these predisposing factors are mediated by cognitive and motivational processes. Thus, although many of these risk factors may not be alterable by prevention or counseling (e. g. , parent divorce), how these influences are integrated and responded to can be addressed from a cognitive perspective.

According to National Survey on Drug Use and Health survey data that were released in 2003, an estimated 19.5 million Americans aged 12 and older were current users of illicit drugs in 2002, meaning that they used an illicit drug at least once during the 30 days prior to being interviewed. Marijuana, the most commonly used illicit drug in 2002, was used by 75% of those reporting drug use. Approximately 55% of illicit drug users consumed only marijuana, 20% used marijuana and another illicit drug, and the remaining 25% used an illicit drug but not marijuana in the past month. Hence, overall, about 45% of current illicit drug users in 2002 (an estimated 8.8 million Americans) were users of illicit drugs other than marijuana and hashish, with or without the use of marijuana (See Figure 1).

Thus, to explore America's drug culture is to examine the criminal justice system, the health care system, economic system and even the educational system (NIH Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program, 2003). As in previous National NSDUH surveys, the 2002 survey found that substance-abuse rates remain highly correlated with educational status.

Among young adults 18 years and older, those who have not completed high school have the highest rate of abuse (9.1%), whereas college graduates have the lowest rate of abuse (5.8%). This is despite the fact that adults who had completed four years of college were more likely to have tried illicit drugs in their lifetime than adults who had not completed high school (50.5% versus 37.1%). Hence, the more education a person receives, the more likely that person is to discontinue using drugs with age.