

Survey Results on Student Drug Use in Macao 2014

University of Macau

(ABSTRACT)

The main purpose of the study is to identify level and pattern of substance abuse among students enrolled in Macao schools and colleges and factors related to the addictive behavior. Similar studies have been conducted three times previously in 2001/2002, 2006, and 2010. The 2014 study adopts the basic design of the previous ones. Namely, it collects data from students enrolled in primary schools, middle and high schools, and colleges through paper and pencil survey. The questions included in this survey maintain a high level of consistency with those asked in the previous studies.

In order to increase the validity and reliability of the survey results, this study makes some changes. First, it uses a probability sampling procedure to select students from different types of schools to improve study representativeness. Second, it adds many questions adopted from standardized instruments to measure adolescent psychology, behavior, and attitude. Third, to improve the reliability of students' responses, trained research staff appeared onsite to answer questions from students about the survey and to distribute and collect survey questionnaires.

The 2010 survey asked about the use of four different types of substance, including ketamine, heroine, pills, and marijuana. The results showed that 1.42 percent of the students used drugs in 2010. In other words, 1.42 of 100 students used at least one of the four types of substance. Measured by the same four types of substance, the percent of students who used any drug in 2014 is 1.88. From 2010 to 2014, the rate of drug use increased 0.46 percent, which is almost equivalent to a third of the percent of use in 2010.

In addition to the 2010 measurement, this study employs a more comprehensive measure of drug use, which increases the number of nominated drugs in the questionnaire from 4 to 7, including ketamine, ecstasy, ice, heroin, marijuana, pills, happy, and other. The last category covers all of the substances that are not specifically nominated. Based on this measurement, 2.48 percent of students in Macao used at least one type of substance in 2014.

Among all substances surveyed in the study, marijuana has the highest rate of use (1.15%), followed by ketamine (0.77%), ice (0.67%), and pills (0.72%). Compared to 2010, percent of students who used marijuana or pills increases by 39%, while the rate of ketamine or heroin use does not change significantly. The locations of drug use most frequently mentioned by students are one's own home, karaoke club, friend's home, hotel/motel, disco club/bar, and park/ball field/street. The reasons of drug use most often cited by students include curiosity, having fun, seeking thrill, and relieving pressure.

With regard to gender, the percent of male students who used drugs is higher than that of female students, but the level of increase among female students is higher. Between 2010 and 2014, the percent of students who used ketamine, heroin, pills, or marijuana increases by 46 percent among females but no significant change among males. In terms of class standing, fifth and sixth graders in the elementary schools have the highest rate of drug use, followed by high school students, college students, and middle school students. From 2010, the percent of high school students who used ketamine, heroin, pills, or marijuana increases 49 percent. The other grades do not show significant change.

Many factors are related to substance abuse. Birthplace outside Macao, Hong Kong and mainland China, living alone, parental unemployment, and excessive allowance are positively related to substance abuse. Party going, movie going, cigarette smoking, drinking, truancy, and spending long hours outside home also predict substance abuse. Indulgent and spoiling parenting practices, friend's substance use, and liberal attitude toward drug use increase substance abuse. Finally, participation in drug prevention activities is negatively related to substance abuse.

Macao students generally have positive views of drug prevention education programs. The majority of the students believe that drug education courses and lectures organized in their schools made them less interested in trying drugs. Similarly, the majority of the students believe that drug prevention seminars provided by organizations outside school, antidrug activities organized by government agencies and non-government organizations, and antidrug commercials they received on TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, and bulletin board reduce their interest in using drugs. The younger the students are, the more positive they feel about these programs.

Antidrug education should take a multimodal approach, fully utilizing the strength and resources of family, schools, government, community, and mass media to develop a multichannel and comprehensive educational and promotional network in order to produce optimal results in substance abuse prevention.

The details of the Chinese version of the survey reports can be accessed and downloaded from the website of SWB (www.ias.gov.mo). For enquiries, kindly call the Anti-drug Enquiry Hotline (28781791) during office hours.