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The summary of doctoral thesis

**The Socio-cultural Determinants of Drug Addiction Phenomenon
(A Sociological Study of the Youth in the Podkarpace Region)**

Over the past few decades, researchers of drug addiction have drawn attention to the unprecedented dynamics in the positions on drugs and a growing number of people who admit to the use of such substances for hedonistic and recreational purposes. With the escalation of the drug addiction phenomenon, there have been identified a large number of problems associated with the use of drugs which occur on individual, social and global levels. The last decade has abounded in seemingly uncontrollable, numerous events linked mainly to the spread of 'legal highs'. These events included: the legal trade in those products in Poland, two waves of numerous deaths associated with their use, the extremely unscrupulous distribution of 'legal highs' through websites, and particularly the liberalisation of attitudes towards those new designer drugs. The considerable importance in creating positions in favour of drug use should also be attributed to the popularity of marijuana, which is gaining ever increasing status of recreational drug.

"The Socio-cultural Determinants of the Drug Addiction Phenomenon (A Sociological Study of the Youth in the Podkarpace Region)" is a dissertation the aim of which is to identify the current reasons why the youth begin to use potential drugs. The research issues focused on obtaining reliable data allowing to diagnose the phenomenon of drug use by the young people in Podkarpace Province and to determine factors contributing to drug initiation among this segment of population.

The dissertation consists of three parts, the first being theoretical, the second methodological and the third empirical one. The theoretical part forms the first three chapters. In the first chapter the conception behind the considerations undertaken in this doctoral thesis is presented: the topic is specified and the arguments in favour of undertaking this research initiative are proposed, the main terms used in the thesis are defined, the population is determined from which the study sample was selected and finally the used sources which confirm the identification of dynamic changes regarding drug addiction are indicated. Then, the role of mass culture as a platform responsible for transformations identified in the examined phenomenon is underlined. The second chapter presents the theoretical

framework of the dissertation and in order to include a multi-dimensional view of the phenomenon of drug addiction the reference is made to a number of paradigms thus adopting an eclectic research perspective. The third chapter being an exemplification of the dynamics of drug addiction presents both new populations deciding to use drugs together with the novel methods of achieving narcotic sensations as well as the examples of drug use promoting content occurring in the products of modern mass culture.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation forms its methodological part, in which the objectives and the scope of empirical studies are specified, the main concepts are operationalized, problems and research hypotheses are formulated. For a more exhaustive exploration of drug addiction, a triangulation of research methods was applied: the analysis of existing data, qualitative research, as well as extensive quantitative research among a random population of young people. Within the first method, the secondary analysis of data reports presenting tendencies in the drug addiction phenomenon during the past two decades was undertaken. As part of the qualitative research, survey interviews with twenty people admitting to drug use were held. In the quantitative research, the empirical data were collected through a specially designed questionnaire from a random sample of the young people from secondary schools in Podkarpacie Province (N=2237), out of which 712 students (31 percent) admitted to drug use.

The conclusions of this dissertation reached by applying the triangulation of research methods are complementary and allow to specify current determinants of the phenomenon of drug abuse among secondary school students in the analysed province.

An important factor in commencing drug use is a family in which a given young person grows. The analysis of the existing data indicates that drug use is observed most frequently in adolescents whose parents declare liberal attitudes towards those substances and in adolescents deprived of adequate parental control. Additionally, what is conducive to drug use is low parental involvement in a child's life, lack of support from parents, parents' long-term absences caused by working abroad and growing up in dysfunctional families. The data from the qualitative research obtained through the survey interviews with actual drug users confirm the results of the analysis of the existing data. The results obtained in the quantitative research are also complimentary as it was established that the majority

of young people who more often begin to use drugs are not adequately controlled by their parents.

Environmental determinants seem to be equally important in drug initiations. The risk factors in the respondents' environment which were identified in the analysis of the existing data are primarily associating with drug users in school or peer environment. These observations were fully confirmed by the data collected in the qualitative research where every surveyed person mentioned the presence of many drug users in their environment and pointed out that the first instances of their drug use occurred due to the prompts from such users. The interview participants are the residents of both towns and smaller communities located in the analysed region, which confirms the expansion of drug abuse from urban to rural areas. The findings of the quantitative research are complementary to the above; the respondents who significantly more often start to use drugs are those in whose peer environment there are the adolescents who have already passed the drug initiation.

An important role in the liberalization of attitudes towards drugs and consequently the attitudes towards the use of those substances should be attributed to cultural factors. The results of the secondary analysis of empirical data indicate that the individuals who turn to drugs more often also tend to neglect religious practices. Their existing standards of behaviour may have been subject to change due to the peer pressure or they created new standards under the influence of the messages in favour of drug use which appeared in the mass media. The data obtained through the qualitative research also emphasize the importance of the mass media in creating the liberal image of psychoactive substances. They also indicate a crucial role of the messages promoting drugs which appear in products of popular culture and simultaneously the strengthening of the opinion that drug use is hardly harmful. The findings of the quantitative research supplement the above observations. As it was established in the sample group, the cultural factors conducive to drug taking are: a liberal attitude to those substances created by the media, the use of popular culture products which promote drugs, lack of religious commitment and normative chaos.

Social determinants also appear to be of certain significance for the development of this analysed phenomenon. As it was established through the analysis of the existing data, the circumstances conducive to the escalation of drug

abuse include: unemployment and a difficult economic situation, educational failures of school environment, increasing attractiveness of the drug offer on the market and their greater availability, drug trading via the Internet, well organized drug-related crime and lack of knowledge about the consequences of drug use leading to the conviction that drugs are hardly harmful. The social factors established in the qualitative research fostering drug use include a growing number of new drug offers and their increased availability, exposure to the proposals to use drugs present on the Internet and lack of education about the consequences of drug use. The data obtained in the quantitative research are complementary as they recognize the greater availability of drugs and exposure to the proposals to use drugs appearing on websites as key causes of drug initiation.

The research material presented in this dissertation can be successfully used by practitioners in the field including sociologists, educators and psychologists and by institutions aimed at social prevention. It can also form the starting point for the further exploration of this important social phenomenon in Podkarpace Province.