RESEARCHING THE MOTIVATIONS OF USING AND NOT USING NOVEL PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES IN INTERNET-BASED INTERVIEWS

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BACKGROUND

• Werse & Müller, 2010:
  • Qualitative study on synthetic cannabinoid users

• Deluca et al, 2012:
  • Psychonaut study of internet forums

• Other qualitative studies on specific novel substances
  • Claire & Hout, 2014;
  • Kjellgren & Jonsson, 2013

• Online-Surveys on the motivations for using NPS:
  • Werse & Morgenstern, 2012
  • Soussan & Kjellgren, 2016

• Current study aims to look into the motivations of users and NON users of NPS
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• What are the motivations for taking established substances or NPS?
• What are the risks and harms perceived in taking established substances and NPS? How are they counteracted? How should they be counteracted?
• What are the perceptions of the drug market and of drug users?
• Are there preferences in substance type regardless of safety and legality?
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• What are the motivations for taking established substances or NPS?
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• Are there preferences in substance type regardless of safety and legality?

Do they differ by preferred substance?
METHODS

- 10-20 semi-structured interviews
- regular drug users:
  - regular NPS users
  - users that are particularly opposed to the use of NPS
  - across Germany
- online chats
- incentive
- qualitative content analysis
RECRUITMENT

- Via Preliminary Studies
- Network
  - Phar-Mon NPS since 2015
  - Network of stakeholders in NPS: research, treatment, harm reduction
  - Partners that are in contact with regular NPS users were asked to promote study
- Facebook Advertisment
PRELIMINARY STUDIES

• Thread posted in a drug-user forum
  • What are the reasons you use NPS?
  • Land der Träume
  • Research Chemicals
• Moderated for 3 days (until no new answers were posted)
• Inform questions for interviews
• Particularly discussed topics:
  • Curiosity, new perceptive experiences, and the convenience of buying NPS from online retailers were named as reasons for using
  • Reasons against using NPS were the anxiety around the unknown effects and little established research around the substances
  • Additionaly frustrations with the current legal status of most psychoactive substances as well as the lack of control on the purity and dosage of established substances were discussed
• A general distrust in my intentions was voiced
PROBLEMS WITH RECRUITMENT

• Initially 3 contacts from preliminary study
  • When contacted outside of the forum, only 2 replied
  • Both voiced their concern on the “intentions” of the study
  • “…even if you say this is all anonymous, all you need is a screenshot, that you show the police, and you can bust me”
  • General distrust?

• In the network
  • General distrust from users
  • Wanted something to fill out rather than an interview

• Forum also seemed distrusting and hostile towards non-users
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS & IMPLICATIONS

• Try new forums
  • Studies not well received, adverstizing even less
  • Suggestions?

• Face to face interviews?
  • Could have the opposite effect
  • Less flexible in terms of time and place (recruitment)
  • Snowball

• Try different population
  • NPS users intially in contact with the treatment system
  • Different population = different core question = different results
SUMMARY

• Naiveté
  • qualitative research is completely different from quantitative research
  • recruitment more difficult than initially expected
  • finding my voice in the population more difficult than initially expected

• Distrust in researchers
  • Convincing someone you have no agenda other than research?
  • Convincing someone you are probably on their side
Thank you!

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REFERENCES

QUESTION MAP

Why have you never consumed NPS?

What reasons do you have not to consume NPS now?

What advantages do established substances pose to you (compared to NPS)?

What disadvantages do established substances pose to you (compared to NPS)?

What do you do to counteract these disadvantages?
QUESTION MAP

What do you do to counteract these disadvantages?

Do you check information on a substance before you consume them?

Do you think that something needs to be done to minimize the risks and harms of NPS?

How many people in your group of friends consume NPS? How many people (what percentage) your age group in the general population consume NPS?

In your opinion, what should be done to minimize the risks and harms of NPS?
In your opinion, in what way will the drug market change, with respect to NPS and the new NPS law?

If all substances, established and/or NPS were legal and safe from tomorrow on, would you tend towards one type of substance?

Which one and why?

yes

no