

# Knowledge and attitudes that nursing students have regarding the consumption of psychoactive substances

## Abstract

**Objective:** To determine the knowledge and attitudes that nursing students have about psychoactive substances from a private university in Barranquilla 2019 – 2020.

**Methodology:** Cross-sectional descriptive study, the sample was 29 underage nursing students, located in the first three semesters, applying a survey type Likert scale.

**Results:** The entire population belonged to the female gender, 86.21% were 16 years old, located mostly in the second semester, 55.17% belonged to strata 1 and 2, the 26.7% said they had knowledge about psychoactive substances, 48% had a positive attitude of not consuming.

**Conclusion:** It will be concluded that students have knowledge about the consumption of psychoactive substances, that there is a generalized rejection of consumption, to which is added a refusal against consumption.

**Keywords:** knowledge, student attitude, psychotropic drugs, harmful substances

Volume 6 Issue 6 - 2022

Lastre-Amell Gloria,<sup>1</sup> Carmen-Isabel-Mackenzie-Constante,<sup>2</sup> Sandra Prada Reyes,<sup>3</sup> María-Alejandra Andueza-Vergara,<sup>4</sup> Heydis-Paola Atencia-Meza,<sup>5</sup> Natalya-Vanessa-Charris-Padilla,<sup>4</sup> Norlis-Del amparo-Tamara-Olaya<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Enfermera, Magister en Salud Pública, Especialización auditoria en salud, Universidad Metropolitana. Barranquilla, Colombia

<sup>2</sup>Enfermera, Maestría en Salud Mental y psicopatología, especialización en gerencia en salud y seguridad social, Universidad Metropolitana, Barranquilla/Colombia

<sup>3</sup>Enfermera, Mg en Educacion, Universidad Metropolitana, Barranquilla/Colombia

<sup>4</sup>Estudiante de enfermería de octavo semestre, Universidad Metropolitana, Barranquilla, Colombia

**Correspondence:** Lastre-Amell Gloria, Enfermera, Magister en Salud Pública, Especialización auditoria en salud, Universidad Metropolitana, Barranquilla, Colombia, Tel +5730026 35201, Fax (57) (5) 369 700 0, Email glastre@unimetro.edu.co, gloria.lastr@unisimon.edu.co

**Received:** October 03, 2022 | **Published:** November 02, 2022

## Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO),<sup>1</sup> (sf) defines “drug” as that substance that, when ingested by any route of administration in the body, will produce a change that has the effect of altering the natural functioning of the central nervous system of the body. Subject, in addition to its effect can cause a dependency which can be psychological, physical or both (Cited in Sagñay, 2012). Legal drugs like those substances that the norm or law and some organizations authorize their commercialization and sale under certain requirements, within this group of substances we find alcohol, tobacco. As for illegal substances, they are those that are not allowed to be sold or marketed, In this group of illegal substances we find: inhalants, amphetamines, heroin, cocaine, among others.<sup>2</sup> The WHO (2004) refers that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates “that psychoactive drugs are a great threat to public health” and considers “that some 205 million individuals consume some type of illicit substance. The most frequent is cannabis, followed by amphetamines, cocaine and opioids, and those who use these illicit substances more are men than women, much more than smoking and alcohol consumption” United Nations Office on Human Rights Drug and Crime (2018).

This indicates that substance use is more prevalent among young people than in groups of older people, which affects the health of all consumers, so these can lead the affected population to unfavorable behaviors; which can influence their psychosocial environment, as well as having the intense need to consume drugs, wanting or wanting a higher dose, continuing to use these substances despite the fact that it is known that it causes physical or psychological damage, when

carrying out activities harmful when under hallucinogenic effects such as (theft, rape, physical or verbal abuse, homicide, among others). National Council against Addictions (2008), brain among others.<sup>3</sup>

In Colombia, cited by Gálvez (2009). “The latest National Survey of Mental Health (ENSM), carried out in collaboration with the Department of Social Security, the World Health Organization and Harvard University in the United States, describes that 12.7% of medicines are for sale. free, 10.8% of marijuana and cocaine, while the consumption of legal and socially accepted substances predominates, around 9.3% of alcohol and 8.1% of cigarettes. According to Drug Observatory (2017), I indicate that 13.0% of the people surveyed have used some illicit drugs.

Likewise, in the study carried out in Colombia on the knowledge and practices of students on psychoactive substances at a university in Barranquilla, its results expressed that 81% of the students were female and their ages were between 17 and 21 years old, the 99.6% considered the use of psychoactive substances harmful, while 95% believe that alcohol is not an antidepressant. Regarding knowledge, 61% indicated that alcohol is a stimulant, 91% stated that psychoactive substances are harmful to health, 38% of the most consumed substance was alcohol, followed by tobacco with 5%. and finally marijuana with 2% Barraza and Lastre (2018). However, the national government has implemented different strategies that seek to prevent in time the severities that this consumption can bring. Within these strategies, prevention programs have been designed in the school environment, such as: My life program, Let's resume program, Strong families program: Love and limits. Prevention programs at the community level: Preventive system: Communities that take care of themselves.

## Min finance and Min health (2013) (Ministry of Health (2016))

Therefore, it is important that young people have the knowledge, Given the risk of use and abuse of licit and illicit psychoactive substance consumption found in adolescents and underage students; The realization of this research is of the utmost importance to identify the different concepts, beliefs and attitudes about any ignorance, implications or intensity of the damages that are generated in the life of the one who consumes any type of licit and illicit psychoactive substance in order to address them in an appropriate way, prevention at the different levels of intervention and so, power determine the knowledge and attitudes that nursing students have about legal and illegal psychoactive substances of a private university in Barranquilla 2019 – 2020.

## Materials and methods

A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out during the months of March to April 2020 of the nursing program of a private university in Barranquilla. The institution and the population was selected at the convenience of the researchers. Permission was obtained from the authorities of the higher education institution, as well as the consent of the parents or guardians of the students and their informed consent individually before completing the survey. The population consisted of 142 students, with a convenience sample of 29 underage nursing students, distributed So: I semester: 10; Semester II: 18 and Semester III: 1. The inclusion criteria were students between the ages of 15 and 17 who were enrolled in the nursing program, and the exclusion criteria were students who use some type of psychoactive substance.

The instrument used was a survey “Attitudes towards the consumption of psychoactive substances and mentalities of the user in high school adolescents”. This consisted of 69 questions in total, Likert scale type, in which its measurement levels range from one to five, where one agreed, two totally agreed, three neither agreed nor disagreed, four disagreed, and five totally agreed, disagreement, measuring the significant variables. The collected data was entered and analyzed in an Excel matrix where all sociodemographic, knowledge and attitude variables were described in absolute frequency distribution, where each variable had an ordered score in its respective category and its analysis is presented in percentages. The ethical considerations taken into account were Resolution 8430 of 1993 of the Ministry of Health of Colombia, in article eleven: which establishes the category of research without risk. Ministry of Health (1993) guaranteeing the confidentiality and anonymity of the data provided. In addition, the investigation had administrative act 018 of March 11, 2016, a report issued by the committee of the higher education institution.

## Results

The sociodemographic variables evaluated in the research show that the whole of the population studied. It was female, most were 16 years old, from stratum 2, single, and the semester placement is in semester II (Table 1). Table 2 the majority of the population studied stated that they fully agree that illegal drugs are generally offered by an unknown adult; they also agree that these illegal drugs start easily in those who already use legal drugs, they also neither agree nor disagree that drug addicted people have an abnormal disturbed personality. On the other hand, those surveyed agreed and strongly disagreed that most alcoholics come from lower social classes. Finally, it was evidenced that the great proportion of the students agree that the drug produces long-term unhappiness.

**Table 1** Sociodemographic variable n=29

Criteria	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	29	100
Male	0	0
<b>Age</b>		
16 years	25	86,21
17 years	4	13,79
<b>Socioeconomic</b>		
Stratum 1	6	20,69
Stratum 2	16	55,17
Stratum 3	5	17,24
Stratum 4	2	6,9
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	29	100
Married	0	0
Free Union	0	0
<b>Semester</b>		
First	10	34,5
Second	18	62
Third	1	3,4

Source: Attitudes towards the consumption of psychoactive substances and mentalities of the user in high school adolescents

**Table 2** Variable of knowledge regarding the consumption of legal and illegal drugs N= 29

Criteria	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Are illegal drugs usually offered by an unknown adult?</b>		
Criteria	Frequency	percentages
Strongly disagree	4	14
Disagreement	3	10
Neither agree nor disagree	5	17
Totally agree	8	28
In agreement	9	31
<b>Does illegal drug use start more easily in those who already use legal drugs?</b>		
strongly disagree	4	14
Disagreement	1	3
Neither agree nor disagree	7	24
Totally agree	4	14
In agreement	13	45
<b>Do all drug addicts have a disturbed, abnormal personality?</b>		
strongly disagree	5	17
Disagreement	4	14
Neither agree nor disagree	15	52
Totally agree	2	7
In agreement	3	10
<b>Do most alcoholics come from lower social classes?</b>		
strongly disagree	10	34
Neither agree nor disagree	5	17
Totally agree	4	14
In agreement	10	34

Table Continued...

<b>Does the drug produce long-term unhappiness?</b>		
strongly disagree	1	3
Neither agree nor disagree	10	34
Totally agree	3	10
In agreement	15	52

Source: Attitudes towards the consumption of psychoactive substances and mentalities of the user in high school adolescents

Table 3 the largest proportion agree that the drug prevents a good understanding between people, they also neither agree nor disagree that they would argue with someone who was in favor of the drug. On the other hand, a large percentage of students express neither agreement nor disagreement with respect to changing friends if they used drugs, they also expressed agreement that they would not be willing to take any type of drug. Finally, it is observed that the majority of the students surveyed agree to resist the insistence of a group of friends to consume drugs.

**Table 3** Attitude variable towards legal and illegal drugs n=29

Criteria	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Does the drug prevent a good understanding between people?</b>		
strongly disagree	2	7
Disagreement	4	14
Neither agree nor disagree	6	21
Totally agree	5	17
In agreement	12	41
<b>Will he argue with someone who was in favor of the drug?</b>		
strongly disagree	9	31
Disagreement	2	7
Neither agree nor disagree	16	55
Totally agree	1	3
In agreement	1	3
<b>Would I change friends if mine took drugs?</b>		
strongly disagree	10	34
Disagreement	1	3
Neither agree nor disagree	11	38
Totally agree	2	7
In agreement	5	17
<b>Wouldn't you be willing to take any type of drug?</b>		
Disagreement	1	3
Neither agree nor disagree	3	10
Totally agree	5	17
In agreement	20	69
<b>Would you be willing to resist the insistence of a group of friends that you take drugs?</b>		
strongly disagree	6	21
Disagreement	5	17
Neither agree nor disagree	3	10
Totally agree	3	10
In agreement	12	41

Source: "Attitudes towards the consumption of psychoactive substances and mentalities of the user in secondary school adolescents

## Discussion

The knowledge and attitudes that nursing students possessed about legal and illegal psychoactive substances of a private University of Barranquilla 2019 -2020 were determined, it was evidenced that 100%

of the population were female, single Y of socioeconomic stratum 2 with 55.17%, and to a lesser extent stratum 4 with 6.9%, these results coinciding with Barraza and Lastre (2018) where the predominant gender in the nursing students of the University of Barranquilla was female with 59% considering that this profession since its history in greater percentage is studied by women, 96% of the students surveyed are single and 34% belonged to socioeconomic stratum 2.

Regarding the knowledge variable, it was evidenced that 31% of the students agree that illegal drugs are offered by an unknown adult anywhere; 45% agree that illegal drug use begins more easily in those who already use legal drugs; 34% agree and strongly agree that most alcoholics come from lower social classes. Coinciding with the study by Moral and Ovejero<sup>4</sup> where 51.4% found that illegal drugs are usually offered by an unknown adult, the 58.8% use illegal drugs and it starts more easily in those who already use legal drugs, 18.4% means that most alcoholics come from lower social classes, while 61.8% think it is fake. In addition, it was observed in the variable knowledge about illegal drugs that 52% of the students neither agree nor disagree that drug addicts are because they have a disturbed personality, while 17% answered that they totally agree; inferring in the study by Moral and Ovejero<sup>4</sup> where 18.1% found it to be true, while 56.6% considered it to be false.

In the variable of attitude about drug use, 52% of the student population agrees that the drug produces long-term unhappiness, 3% reasons that they totally disagree; 41% agreed and 14% totally disagree that drug use prevents a good understanding between people. On the other hand, 55% of the students expressed that they neither agree nor disagree with arguing with someone who is in favor of drugs. Also, 38% said they neither agreed nor disagreed with respect to changing friends if they used drugs. Comparing these results with the study by Moral and Ovejero (2018) where he 53.9% strongly agreed that the drug produces long-term unhappiness, while 4.2% strongly disagreed; in 38.6% agree that the drug prevents a good understanding between people, while 5.6% say they strongly disagree; and 26.7% strongly agree that they would change friends if they used drugs, while 13.6% strongly disagree. According to drug use, 41% of the students totally agree that tobacco in small amounts is harmful, 62% neither agree nor disagree that they dislike that they consume tobacco. Data similar to the study by Moral and Ovejero (2018), where 19.7% reflected that they strongly agree that tobacco in small amounts is harmful, while 8.6% do not disagree; 20.8% do not strongly agree that they consume tobacco and 14.3%. They disagree.<sup>5-13</sup>

## Conclusion

By determining the knowledge and attitudes that nursing students have about legal or illegal psychoactive substances at the private university of Barranquilla, it is concluded that all participants are informed about drugs and believe that they produce negative effects on the individual, family and in society; and their attitude is one of indifference, that is to say, it does not matter to them or not about this scourge of drugs. Considering that adolescence is a period of vital restructuring, in which the search for a personal identity, the establishment of autonomy and the making of vital decisions, characterize this moment of human development. Adolescence is also considered a risk factor in the initiation and consumption of addictive substances. Similarly, in relation to attitudes towards illegal and legal drugs, the students responded that legal drugs are socially accepted and with a higher percentage of consumption in our participants. A possible explanation could lie in the idea that the group of adolescents has information on this subject, which would lead to having more positive attitudes towards its consumption.

## Acknowledgments

None.

## Financing

The authors state that they have not had external sources of funding.

## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article.

## References

1. World Health Organization. *Glossary of alcohol and drug terms*. Consultation date: March 21, 2019.
2. Barreto Bedoya P, M Pérez Prada, G Roa Robayo. Use of Legal and Illegal Psychoactive Substances, Protection and Risk Factors: Current Status. *Health Research Journal University of Boyacá*. 2015;2(1):31–50.
3. Córdoba EG, Betancourt S, Tacan LE. Consumption of psychoactive substances in a private university in Pasto, Colombia. *Psychogent*. 2016;20(38):308319.
4. Moral M, Ovejero A. *Attitudes towards the consumption of psychoactive substances and mentalities of the user in high school adolescents*. 2018.
5. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *World Drug Report 2019*. United Nations, 2019.
6. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *UNODC World Drug Report 2020: Global consumption on the rise despite COVID-19 having far-reaching impact on global drug markets*. 2020.
7. Pérez A, Mejía J, Reyes M, et al. *Alcohol consumption in children under 18 years of age in Colombia: 2015*. Second Study in seven capital cities and two small municipalities. 2015.
8. Pérez-Gómez A, Lanziano C, Reyes-Rodríguez MF, et al. Profiles Associated with Alcohol Consumption in Colombian Adolescents. *Colombian Act of Psychology*. 2018;21(2):258–269.
9. Berrocal Narváez Neila Esther, Ocampo Rivero Mónica, Herrera Guerra Eugenia. Social determinants in the consumption of psychoactive substances in university students in 2016. *Nursing (Montevideo)*. 2018;7(2):12–35.
10. Barraza D, Ballast G. Knowledge and practices of students about psychoactive substances at a university in Barranquilla. *Rev Investigated Andin*. 2018;20(36).
11. Law 1616 of January 21, 2013. *Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Justice and Law*. Bogota. 2013. p. 5.
12. Ministry of Health. *ABECÉ of the prevention and attention to the consumption of psychoactive substances*. 2016.
13. Resolution number 8430 OF 1993. *Ministry of Health, Republic of Colombia*. 2019.