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ARAMIS

Motivations and perceptions associated with drug use in adolescents

Before they reach the end of their teenage years, the majority of French young people have already experimented with alcohol, tobacco and, often, cannabis as well. A significant number are already regular users of one or more of these substances. Such use is particularly harmful to health since it occurs at an age when the brain has not yet fully matured. Why do adolescents use psychoactive substances? Why do some of them become regular users while others manage to stay away from them? Although these issues are a priority for public authorities, they remain poorly documented in France, apart from a few, rare fragmented studies concerning adolescent perceptions.

To address the urgent need identified by the 2013-2017 French Government Plan for Combating Drugs and Addictive Behaviours to develop effective drug use prevention strategies and meet the recommendations of the collective expert report of the INSERM on adolescent addictive behaviours (INSERM 2014), this study project aims to explore use trajectories during adolescence, by examining the motivations behind their use and the perceptions associated with various psychoactive substances (alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, other illegal drugs).

By focusing on the intentions of substance users and the reasons for their actions, in relation to their lifestyles and personal situations, it aims to illustrate what contribution social sciences can make to improving our understanding of addictive behaviour during adolescence in order, ultimately, to improve the effectiveness of prevention strategies.

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