

Emotionally significant life details of Novel Psychoactive Substance users

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Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) pose new challenges for treatment-providing institutions. Initially, studies concentrated mainly on the types of substances, their effects, and the new contexts of use. Recently, qualitative studies conducted on small samples have emerged, focusing on substance users' lived experiences. This research explores the demographic data and emotionally significant life events of 77 NPS users who just started therapy. Substance use was confirmed by laboratory tests, avoiding the usual biases associated with self-reporting. Persons with substance use disorder in this sample were polydrug users. The drug of choice is an important component of the self-medication theory. NPS use as polydrug use is challenging this notion. After conducting the Hungarian adaptation of the Foley Life Interview, we examined emotionally valenced episodes of the interviews using thematic content analysis. Among the 77 respondents, 70 reported one or more traumatic experiences, such as severe parental neglect, physical or sexual abuse, complicated grief related to the death of a close relative, substance use-related death, criminalization accompanying substance use, homelessness, and victimization (e.g., as sex workers), severe illness, and suicide attempts. Our results indicate that while NPS does indeed significantly reshape the picture of substance use disorder (SUD), the significance of two important factors, parental substance use and prior traumatization, remain unchanged. NPS-use related traumatization was severe - these findings indicate the potential role of repetition compulsion.

Are you currently an Early Career Researcher?

Yes, I am within 6 years of receiving my Ph.D.

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