

## PERCEPTION OF NEW DRUGS ADDICTION IN TWO GROUPS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENT FROM PALERMO AND FREIBURG

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*[Rappresentazione delle nuove droghe in due gruppi di studenti dell'Università di Palermo e di Freiburg]*

### SUMMARY

Results were reported of an investigation which was carried out in two groups of university students of Palermo, Italy and Freiburg, Germany aimed to understand the knowledge and perception of new drug addiction.

The need was stressed for preventive action and educational intervention.

### RIASSUNTO

*E' stata condotta un'indagine empirica su due gruppi di giovani nelle città di Palermo (Italia) e Freiburg (Germania), allo scopo di comprendere la rappresentazione e la conoscenza del fenomeno delle nuove droghe presso tali giovani.*

*Confrontare due campioni di nazionalità differente, ha permesso di comprendere se le variabili socio-economico e storico-culturali proprie di uno stato sono influenti rispetto il modo di percepire i cambiamenti avvenuti nel mondo delle droghe.*

**Key words:** New drugs, perception, prevention

**Parole chiave:** Nuove droghe, percezione, prevenzione

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### Introduction

Drugs are a tool to evaluate the anthropologic and cultural changes. It is a symptom of something which changes (Martignoni G., 1986)

Nowadays there are new drugs as the world of drugs has changed (Gatti R., 1998). What is particularly new compared with the recent past, is that the context and the consumers' style, are more and more associated with the entertainment places and the rhythm of the production activities which focus on the free time but alter the forms and the contents.

It is a growing, widespread phenomenon which is not related to a particular social class. The drug addictions were traditionally limited to criminal contexts or small elitist groups, nowadays they do not depend on the social conditions (Malizia E., 1996). The young consumers do not feel "addicted", maladjusted and do not tend to get emarginated. They are young people with adequate personal and social resources and integrated into the produc-

tive world (Di Blasi M., 2003). They do not associate any symbolic meaning to the use of drugs; it is only a means to reach quickly empathy with the others and to feel comfortable with the context. The use of new drugs expresses the desire to carry out the best performance, to enjoy fully the party's atmosphere and the entertainment (Crispi M., Mangia E., 2000). The phenomenon is characterized by new ways of taking drugs, new styles of use (Gatti R., 1998). In fact, it is a type defined as 'controlled.'

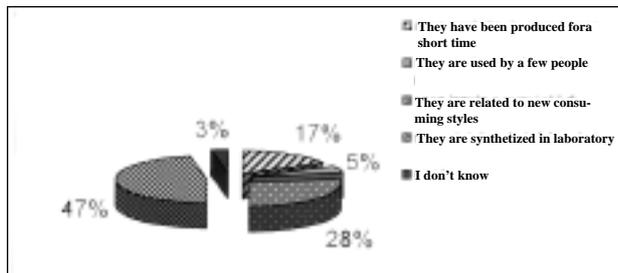
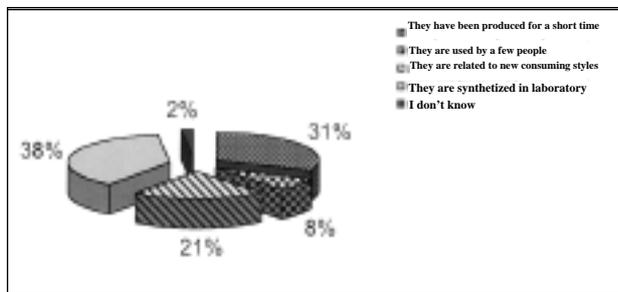
It is associated with the entertainment moments and the use of other substances at the same time. The elements which have allowed the diffusion of new drugs are the relation to the amusing contexts, the image of clean drugs, the quick and easy way of use, the low-medium cost, the low perception of risk and the easy way to find them. The aim of the research is to understand the representation and the knowledge of this phenomenon in two groups of young Italians and Germans.

**Materials and methods**

A questionnaire of 12 multiple-choice-answer items was handed out to two groups of university students in Palermo, Italy, and Freiburg, Germany; the group of Palermo is composed of 150 students, 92 males and 58 females, the German group of 150, of which 81 males and 69 females both between 18 and 25 years.

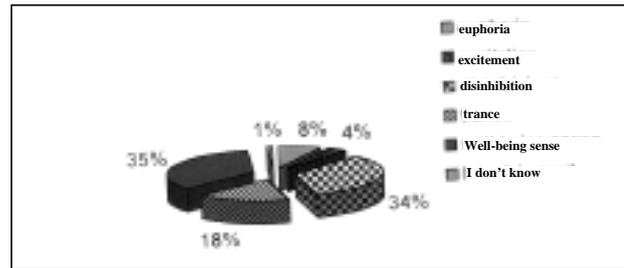
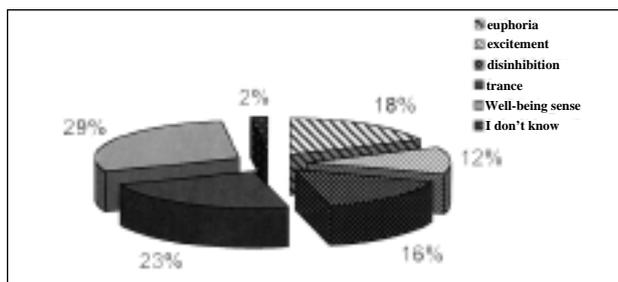
**Results**

*1. Why are they called new?*



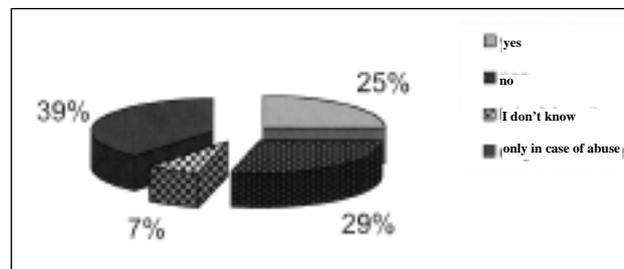
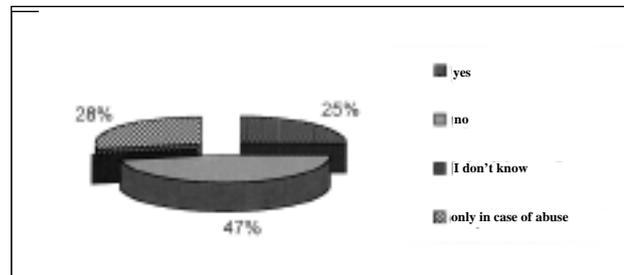
To the question “why are they called new?” both groups answer because they are synthesized in laboratory; the Italian sample with the percentage of 38% whereas the German sample with the percentage of 47%. Actually, the right answer is that they are related to the new consuming styles, but only 21% of the first sample and 28% of the other group answer correctly.

*2. In your opinion, which pleasant effects do they cause? (you can choose more answers)*



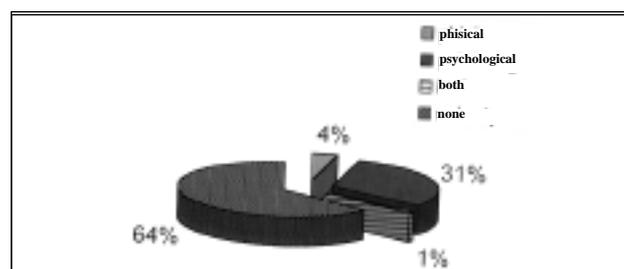
The highest percentage of answers to the second question “in your opinion, which pleasant effects do they cause?”, is of excitement (29% for the Italian sample and 35% for the German sample), followed by trance for the first sample and disinhibition for the second. All the answers are correct, in fact all these effects may occur.

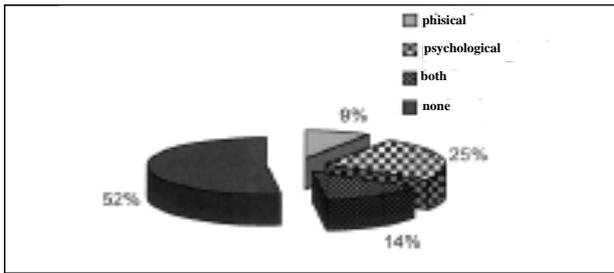
*3. In your opinion, can they damage the health?*



The answers to the third question “in your opinion, can they damage the health?” are different; the Italians answer mostly ‘no’ (47%), the Germans state ‘only in case of abuse’(39%). The Italian sample seems to ignore that the new drugs are dangerous and that their use is compromising. On the contrary, the German sample makes a distinction between use and abuse but it ignores that even the single consumption of a new drug may damage the health.

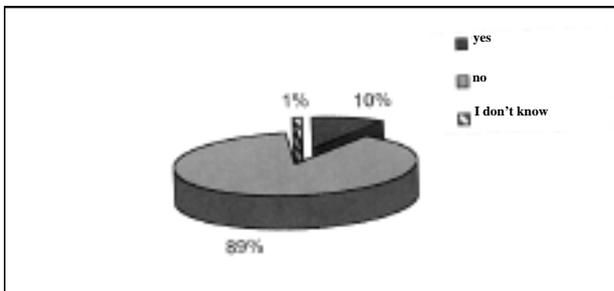
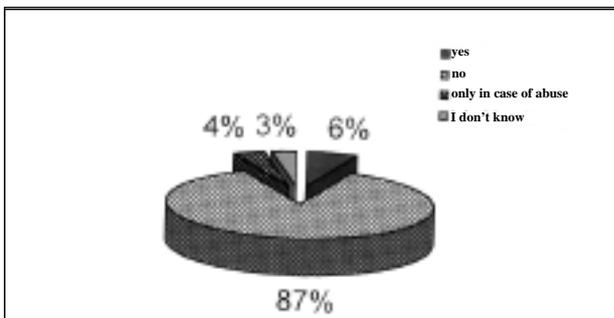
*4. In your opinion, do they cause addiction?*





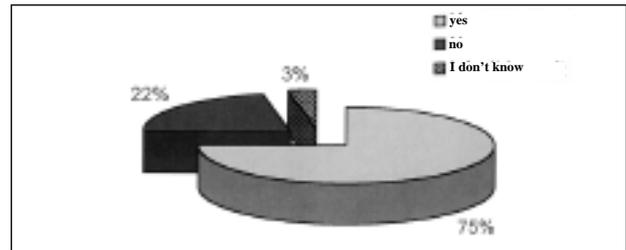
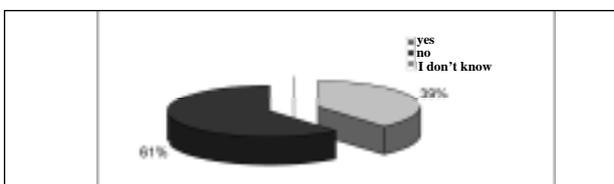
To the fourth question “in your opinion, do they cause addiction?”, the Italian sample answers none with 64% and the German sample with 52%. It follows the psychological addiction with 31% for the first sample and with 14% for the second. A low percentage thinks that they cause physical addiction, 4% in the Italian group and 9% in the German sample.

**5. Is it a drug addict who uses them?**



The fifth question “Is it a drug addict who uses them?” is the most meaningful item. It gives us information about how the young people consider the new drugs addicts. The highest percentage of answers for both groups is no. The Italian group states 87% and the German group 89%. This answer shows that the new drugs are not even considered drugs, they do not cause problems and it is inferred by the previous question’s answer.

**6 In your opinion, is prevention to these substances important?**



To the sixth question the answers are completely different for the groups. The Italians answer that prevention is not important (61%) whereas the Germans answer yes (75%).

**Further answers to the questionnaire**

The item asks “From whom have you heard about the new drugs”. Among the answers there are mass media, friends, family, teachers, something else. The Italian group answers with 46% mass media and friends, the German group mass media with 38% and friends 36%, the other percentages are secondary.

To the question: “ in your opinion, under the effect of the new drugs, is it more probable that the following acts are performed: sex without protection, dangerous driving, violent actions, vandalism actions, something else”, the first answer has the highest percentage with 69% for the Italian group and 38% for the German sample.

The question: “Do you think that the use of drugs taken at the same time increases: pleasant effects, damage, sex performances, risky behaviours, something else” has most of answers for both groups for the first option.

To the question: “In your opinion, is there a relation between the sexually transmitted diseases and the new drugs”, the first sample answers no with 48% and the German group yes with 60%.

The last question asks: “what would you like to know better about this phenomenon” proposes among the answers, causes, cure, risks, damage, laws, cases, something else . The Italian group answers damage with 24% and the German sample with 27%.

**Conclusions**

From the research it comes out that for both groups the representation of the phenomenon is homogeneous and positive.

In fact they think that the new drugs cause especially pleasant effects, do not generate addiction, or cause damage to the health, unless in case

of abuse and the user is not a drug addict as both groups answered. Moreover they think that the use of more substances increases the pleasant effects produced by the single elements.

Furthermore, the Italian group thinks that there is no relationships between sexually transmitted diseases and the use of new drugs, whereas the German sample does not. Comparing the answers given to items 2 and 4 it is clear that both samples state that under the effect of new drugs it is more likely to have sex without protection, but the Italian group answers later on that there is no relationship between the use of substances and the sexually transmitted diseases, whereas the German sample affirm the contrary.

We can also point out that the phenomenon is widely known, a lot of new drugs are not familiar and they think that the new drugs are such because they are synthesized in laboratory. It may be inferred from the research a necessary preventive intervention of education and information. The phenomenon of new drugs is spreading and despite the information it is still superficially given perceived.

The sanitary education is useful to involve large groups of young people.

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