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# Juveniles' Perception of Drug Crime Among Young People

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## **Abstract**

Modern society is affected by the problem of drug addiction and drug crime on a global and national level, and the damaging consequences of drug abuse are extremely serious and widespread. The fact that minors are more often than before in the role of perpetrators of criminal acts related to narcotic drugs contributes to the additional seriousness of the overall situation. As the trend of drug crime among young people in the last few years indicates growing of this phenomenon in our society, the focus of our work will be determining the importance of certain factors on the perception of young people about drug crime. In order to achieve this task, we conducted a survey among high school students whose goal was to examine the influence of family environment and school environment factors, and also influence of certain media content on their perception of drug crime. A hundred students participated in this research. The research results show that the socio-demographic characteristics of young people do not have a significant impact on their perception of drug crime. The school environment, on the other hand, has a more dominant influence, due to the existence of convenient places for buying and selling drugs in close proximity to school, as well as the presence of people who "deal" drugs. In addition, minors are strongly influenced by their peers who previously had some experiences with the abuse of narcotic drugs. The research results indicate a high level of liking media content about drug crime among young people, but also an insufficiently developed awareness among them about the impact that such content has on them.

*Keywords:* minors, drug crime, family environment, school environment, media

## **Juveniles' Perception of Drug Crime Among Young People**

According to data of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), expressed in the World Drug Report from 2021, the scale of psychoactive substance abuse is alarming. The Report states that in the previous year 275 million people used narcotic drugs, unlike 226 million users in 2010. During the ten-year period, the number of drug users increased by 22%. The report also estimates that around 36 million people suffer from drug use disorders (World drug report, 2021, p. 48). The Report indicates a high number of cannabis abuse among young people, which causes serious health problems. Surveys conducted among students and young people in the United States and Europe support the fact that cannabis causes numerous mental disorders. The significant piece of information obtained through these surveys is that among the younger population there is no adequate awareness of drug abuse risk (World drug report, 2021, p. 22).

Drug abuse problem among young people is not negligible even at the national level. A worrying circumstance is a noticeable increase in the number of criminal charges and verdicts in the period between 2016 and 2017 for criminal acts of drug abuse in which minors appear as perpetrators. In 2016, the number of criminal charges filed against minors for the criminal offense of unauthorized production and distribution of narcotic drugs, from Article 246 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia, was 145 and in 2020, that number reached 248 criminal charges (Republički zavod za statistiku, 2020, p. 2).

Due to the increased number of crimes committed by minors, which are related to narcotic drugs, it is necessary to conduct research that would refer to juveniles' awareness and attitudes regarding this phenomenon. Bearing in mind this problem, we compiled a survey that analyzed the attitudes of high school students about drug crime. Our research aim is determining factors that contribute to the greatest extent to the perception that young people have about this phenomenon. Also, we found examining respondents' self-assessment of the impact that certain media content has on their perception of drug crime particularly important.

## **Factors That Influence the Awareness of Juveniles About Drug Crime**

The occurrence of a juvenile crime can be influenced by numerous factors, and the division that is most often encountered in the literature is into objective (socio-economic) and subjective factors. By observing objective factors, we get the idea that social conditions lead to the criminal behaviour of minors, while subjective factors of juvenile crime include the psychological characteristics of minors' personalities. Both types of mentioned factors influence the occurrence of juvenile crime, but social factors play a decisive role (Igrački & Ilijić, 2016, pp. 187–188). Individual factors can influence juvenile crime, such as low intelligence, poor school results, insufficient empathy, aggressiveness, hyperactivity, etc., but it is emphasized that the social, family factor plays decisive role. Conflict situations in the family, inconsistent discipline, insufficient supervision of parents over children, as well as non-involvement in their everyday life and psychological state, can be trigger for delinquentbehaviourr of minors (Subotin & Odalović, 2016, p. 46). Certain studies indicate a connection between the age structure of the population and various social and economic disorders that can lead to socio-pathological phenomena. In other words, a larger number of dependent groups, such as children, the unemployed and pensioners, can lead to an increase in deviant behavior (Gajić, 2011, p. 288). Circumstances in minor's family, such as parents' occupation, possible divorce of parents or economic situation can influence them to try their hand in world of drug crime.

The school environment is also a suitable place for the development of the criminal career of minors. Research shows that every second adolescent did not receive any information about drug addiction, either at home or at school (Bjelajac, 2019, p. 239). A factor that can influence the involvement of minors in the crime of drug abuse could be their closest friends, who somehow found themselves in the sphere of illegal. In addition, peer groups play a significant part in manifestation of certain forms of deviant or criminogenic behavior among young people (Radovanović & Spasić, 2019, p.1585). A certain number of researchers even give preference to factors originating from the peer environment over factors from the social environment, such as family. It is to be expected that there is an interaction between school environment factors and family factors, and that the strongest simultaneous influence is coming from both factors (Zapolski et

al., 2019). The great influence that peer groups have on the occurrence of juvenile crime is also indicated by the assertion of a certain group of authors that substance abuse in a peer group is one of the strongest predictors of personal use (Allen et al., 2012). One part of the authors thinks that peer influence is actually group pressure and they explain such pressure as persuasion and encouragement of minors to use drugs. Others, on the other hand, believe that verbal and non-verbal communication play a major role within peer group, emphasizing that minor's perception on behavior of individual members of the group is of the greatest importance for their own behavior. In other words, the perception that friends use drugs is highly correlated with their own use (Radovanović & Spasić, 2019, p. 1586).

Mass media content has a great influence on minors, which is confirmed by the research conducted in Croatia on the subject of impact that mass media content has on life of adolescents. In that research 184 high school students in Zagreb were questioned about the types of media they use, time they spend with them, as well as the ways in which the use of various media affects their lives. The research results shows that the most used mass media among minors is the Internet. The results indicate the necessity of taking into account mass media as significant social factor in adolescents' life, but also draw attention to the necessity of providing guidelines in order to properly use these contents and avoid unwanted effects on minors (Šegregur et. al., 2014, p. 86). Mass media has an extremely large influence as a way of knowing about crime. A significant part of society acquires its knowledge symbolically, that is through media, which justifies the concern of certain authors regarding the contents that are presented to the audience (Surette, 2007, p. 34).

Minors, as group who lack life experience, represent an audience that is suitable for uncritical acceptance of marketed content. The special characteristics of the younger population lead to their susceptibility to media content that is shown on a daily basis. Content depicting crimes is ubiquitous, it can be seen in movies, newspapers, books, magazines, articles on the Internet, television, radio, as well as in ordinary communication with others (Ilić, 2017, p. 47). American research indicates that young people are exposed to the negative influences that come from entertainment programs that promote the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Statistical data indicate the predominance of a positive attitude towards drug use in relation to scenes

with a negative attitude towards the same phenomenon. Research conducted in America which concerns the negative effects of films with such content is also applicable to our society, considering that 90% of television programs are of American origin (Ivanović, 2013, pp.147–148). In last few years several television series about drug crime were shown to our audience. Through general impression that these series had on minors, it is possible to come to a conclusion about the influence that such content had on juveniles' perception of crime related to narcotic drugs. Displaying content involving drug crime is always interesting to watch, but also potentially problematic when you think about the negative impact it can have on minors.

## **Method of Work**

By taking into account a certain group of factors that can influence juveniles' perception about crime, especially that related to drugs, we conducted a survey which aim was determining perception that minors have towards drug crime. The research sample was made by students from high schools in the Belgrade municipality Obrenovac - Gymnasium in Obrenovac, Agricultural and Chemical School in Obrenovac and Technical School in Obrenovac (100 students in total), with 34 students from the Gymnasium, while in the remaining two the school sample consisted of 33 students each. The students who participated in the research were in their third and fourth year of high school. The research was conducted at the beginning of 2021/22 in the territory of the city municipality of Obrenovac.

The survey which was delivered to students consisted of 19 questions, divided into five parts. The first part of the questionnaire consists of questions directed towards obtaining basic data about the respondents, such as information about the gender structure and respondents age, the most common GPA they had during school time and information about the residential place.

The second part of the questionnaire was composed in a way that can provide insight into minors' family circumstances and the economic situation in their family. The questions were related to the respondents' housing conditions, the education their parents have, the marital status of their parents and the assessment of the economic situation that exists in their family.

The next part of the survey is about minors' school environment. Its aim was to determine to what extent school environment represents a suitable place for buying or selling drugs, what kind of perception the respondents have about it, and what kind of influence their environment, more specifically, peers, has on them when it comes to drug abuse. One of the questions in the survey was related to the experience of drug use by their schoolmates and situations in which they persuaded them to use drugs.

The fourth part of the survey represents a special unit and the ultimate goal of the questions asked in this part of the questionnaire is determining how media content affects minors' perception about drug crime. Approach that was used in this work should allow us to find out whether and to what extent new domestic television series about drug crime influence minors to form or change their attitude towards drug crime and the abuse of psychoactive substances. The television series that have been singled out are "Južni vetar", "Klan", "Grupa" and "Besa". Respondents were asked to state whether they had watched any of the mentioned television series, to evaluate the content they had the opportunity to watch, as well as to answer the question of how much influence they think such content has on the perception of minors about drug crime.

The last part of the survey contains questions related to the experiences that minors had with narcotic drugs, how old they were when they first consumed it, and whether the use of drugs happened more than once.

## **Review of Empirical Research Results**

When it comes to the basic data on the people who participated in the research, the total number was 100 students, of which 39 were boys and 61 were girls. In the Gymnasium, 12 boys and 22 girls participated in the survey, while the situation at the other two schools was significantly different. In the Technical School the sample was dominated by boys, while in the Agricultural and Chemical School, girls predominated. All respondents were of legal age at the time of filling out the questionnaire.

Although the question related to the respondents' experiences with narcotic drugs is in the last part of the questionnaire, it is important to draw attention to the answers given by the respondents at the beginning of review

of the research results. The reason for this approach is the comparison that will be made throughout the review of the research results in relation to the factors of influence on minors on their perception of drug crime. The authors believe that through the example of respondents who had experience with narcotic drugs, the factors that have a significant impact on minors can be most adequately determined, so there will be more such comparisons throughout the work.

From the sample that included 100 students, 13 students stated that they had experience with narcotic drugs, 86 gave a negative answer, while one questionnaire had no answer to that question. Ivana Radovanović conducted research on the abuse of narcotic drugs in the population of high school students in Belgrade municipalities on a sample of 1287 respondents, where she came to the data on the prevalence of drug abuse of 20.5% (Radovanović, 2016, p. 412), while our research reached 13% of the total sample.

The GPA that examined students have is mostly very good and excellent, while a small number of them have a good or sufficient average grade. From respondents who had experience with drugs 15.4% had an excellent average, 61.5% of them very good, while 23.1% of the respondents achieved a good average. Based on these data, we cannot say that engaging in drug abuse is related to bad students, or that the GPA they have in school is of particular importance when it comes to their perception of drug crime.

The most of respondents stated that they live in the city (44 students), while a smaller number of students live in the suburbs or in the countryside (28 in both areas). However, when comparing the results of respondents who mentioned their experiences with drugs, it can be noted that these are students who mostly live in the suburbs, 46% of them, or in the countryside, where the same percentage of respondents live.

### ***Family Circumstances Influence on Juveniles' Perception of Drug Crime***

After we gathered some basic information about respondents, following part will refer to their family circumstances. The main reason for collecting this data is determining the impact that minors' family circumstances have on the abuse of narcotic drugs or a different perception of drug crime. The respondents were asked to answer with whom they live

and the most of them answered they live with both parents (83 students). This answer was expected. One part of respondents stated that they live with their mother or father, but those were respondents whose parents are divorced. Of the 13 respondents who consumed narcotic drugs, 84.6% stated that they live with both parents, only 7.7% with their mother and 7.7% chose the option "other".

The education of the respondents' parents is the next examined factor. The research results show that the largest number of their parents have secondary education, that is, 72% have a high school diploma. Only 1% of parents have completed elementary school, 7% have a higher education, while 12% have college education. The purpose of examining respondents' parents' education was finding out if there was a connection between the parents' education, whether it is at a lower or higher level, and the abuse of narcotic drugs by minors. If we take into account the respondents who consumed drugs, we will come to conclusion that the largest number of respondents' parents have a secondary education. The exceptions are two respondents, one whose parents only completed elementary school, and the other whose parents have college education.

Divorce of parents was taken as a special factor influencing minors to try drugs, as a form of dissatisfaction or revolt due to the parents' separation. According to research results, 16 out of 100 questioned students stated that their parents were divorced. Only one respondent stated that his parents were divorced and that he had tried drugs, while for the rest of the respondents there was no connection between parental divorce and the drug use.

The assessment of the respondents' economic situation is a factor that needed to be examined in order to determine the connection between the financial circumstances of the respondents' family and their perception of drugs. The economic situation is an important factor when it comes to the abuse of narcotic drugs among minors, so it is necessary to compare it with those respondents who answered that they had consumed narcotic drugs. From total number of respondents who stated they had tried drugs (13), the economic situation was described as average by 38.5%, as very good by 46.1%, and as excellent by 15.4% of respondents. This situation corresponds to the one shown in the total sample. The majority of students assess their economic situation as average or very good, with a slightly smaller number of those who describe it as excellent.

### ***School Environment Influence on Juveniles' Perception of Drug Crime***

In addition to the influence of the family environment on juveniles' perception of drug crime, it was important to examine the influence of the school environment. In order to establish what kind of idea minors have about the ongoings in their school environment, they were asked if there are places near their school that are suitable for buying or selling drugs. It is specific that only 8 respondents gave negative answer, while the rest believed that such places exist (34 students), and more than half of them stated that they did not notice such places (58 students). In addition to the fact that more than half of the respondents answered that they did not notice places suitable for selling/buying drugs, such answer may also indicate that they have heard of such places but are not sure if they really exist, which makes a large number of respondents who are not aware of the existing risks in their school environment or that they haven't even thought about it.

When it comes to the presence of persons "dealing" drugs in the school environment, whether it is the school yard or a place in the immediate vicinity of the school, half of the respondents stated they did not notice such persons (49 students). The other half of the respondents, on the other hand, stated they noticed the presence of such persons (19 students), while the rest (30 students) did not personally notice their presence, but they heard that was happening. An interesting fact that we came to through research is that out of 13 respondents who had some experiences with drugs, 76.9% gave an affirmative answer to the question regarding the existence of suitable places for buying/selling drugs in the immediate vicinity of the school. When it comes to the presence of persons who sell or offer to sell drugs close to schools, 61.5% of respondents who already had experience with drugs believes that there are such persons in the immediate vicinity of schools. The conclusion that can be drawn is that people who are interested in finding and seeing something, find it, while for others, who are not interested, certain things can easily go unnoticed.

The next part of the question about the school environment refers to the experiences their peers had with drugs, as well as situations in which they were offered drugs to try. In order to make a correlation with the research from 2015, in which 137 drug users were examined, we will list data

that researchers came up with at that time, which concern the readiness of the respondents to provide information about themselves and others. According to research results, a significantly larger number of respondents gave information about other persons who participated in the purchase, sale or possession of drugs (53 persons) or who participated in the commission of some other criminal offense (53 persons), while when they had to share some information about themselves, more precisely about the purchase, sale or possession of drugs by the respondent himself, or the commission of a criminal offense by the respondent, that number was at a significantly lower level (34, i.e. 36 persons) (Lajić & Dickov, 2015, p. 63).

A similar situation exists when it comes to our research results and which refer to other people's experience with drugs and personal drug use. A third of respondents, or 32 of them, gave an affirmative answer to question about the experience their classmates had with narcotic drugs, 27 answered negatively, while 41 respondents answered that they have no information about such experiences. When asked whether their friends had ever persuaded them to sell narcotic drugs, a very small number of respondents admitted that they had (8), an even smaller number that they had experienced such situations more than once (4), and 88 of them stated that they had no such situations. If we look at the data obtained from the answers of respondents who consumed drugs, 53.8% stated that their peers had already had experience with drugs, but that they had not been offered drugs to try.

### ***Media Influences on Juveniles' Perception of Drug Crime***

When it comes to determining media influence on juveniles' perception about drug crime, we selected four TV series whose plot is based on drug crime and we examined students' attitudes about those series. The television series "Južni vetar", "Klan", "Grupa" and "Besa" were singled out. Respondents were asked to rate the above-mentioned series, if they had the opportunity to watch them, and then to give their opinion on the extent to which these series influence juveniles' perception about drug crime. The majority of respondents gave the series the highest rating. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means that did not like it one bit, and 5 means they liked it very much, the series "Južni vetar" was rated 5 by 50% of the respondents. "Klan" was rated the same by 45.2% of the respondents, the series "Grupa"

by 34.4%, and "Besa" liked very much even 67.6% of respondents. If we take into account the fact that a significant number of respondents rated the series with 4, or more precisely stated that they like the series, we can conclude that series of this genre have a positive impression on younger audience.

Assessing the impact that films and series have on minor viewers is of great importance. According to Zdravko and Tatjana Skakavac, today's films attract the attention of underage viewers because of their content that highlights the positive side of violence and crime. If movie contents promote violent resolution of conflicts between individuals, we can ask ourselves in what way will this reflect on thinking and behavior of viewers, especially younger ones, whether such content will have an impact only on the thinking of the viewer or will it lead to the reactions of the viewers like the one seen in the film (Skakavac & Skakavac, 2011, p. 210). One of the examples cited by the authors, which concerns the impact of screen characters on minors, is the case that happened in 2005 in Niš, where two minors first kidnapped and demanded a ransom for the minor Miloš Krinić, and then took his life. The juveniles stated they were inspired by the film "Rane" by Srđan Dragojević and its main characters Pinki and Švaba as the reason and motive for committing the crime of murder. The perpetrators stated that they watched the film over 150 times and used it as a model for committing the murder (2011, p. 211).

The attitude taken by high school students, when it comes to the influence of mentioned TV series, is mostly neutral. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 refers to the attitude that series have no influence on the juveniles' perception about drug crime, and 5 to having an absolute influence, the largest number of respondents answered that the series have a partial influence.

Regarding the partial influence that mentioned TV series have on minors' perception of drug crime, the respondents opted for the following answers: for "Južni vetar" 40.9% of the respondents circled the number 3 on the scale, expressing neutral attitude regarding the influence of this series, for "Klan" 45.2% of students gave the same rating, for the series "Group" 50% of the respondents opted for the same answer, and for the series "Besa" 55.8% of the questioned students. An interesting fact is that the majority of respondents believe that the series "Klan", "Grupa" and "Besa" have no

influence or mostly have no influence on minors when it comes to drug abuse crime, while this is not the case with series "Južni vetar", for which 17% of respondents believe that it has a good influence, and even 23.9% of respondents think that it has an absolute influence on perception of drug crime among minors.

If we take into account the attitudes of respondents who had experience with drugs, the situation is next: the largest number of those respondents expressed liking of recent TV series, with a rating of 4 or 5, stating that they liked or liked the content very much. Series "Južni vetar" was rated 5 by 53.8% of respondents, "Klan" by 57.1%, "Grupa" by 33.3%, while the highest rating on the scale was for "Besa" by 55.5% of the surveyed students. When it comes to the influence of such media content on minors, the mentioned group of respondents is of the opinion that these contents have no influence, mostly have no influence or that they have only a partial influence on perception about drug crime. The majority of these respondents are of the opinion that these series have a partial influence on the perception of the of drug crime: for "Južni vetar" it is 46.2%, for "Klan" 71.4%, for "Grupa" 50% and for "Besa" 44.4% of respondents. A different attitude is noticeable among this group of respondents when it comes to the series "South Wind" because a certain part of the respondents believe that this series has an impact on juveniles' perception of drug crime, which has also been noticed in the total sample. Namely, 23.1% of this group of respondents believe that "Južni vetar" has an absolute influence on the perception about crime in general and the abuse of narcotic drugs.

### ***Juveniles' Experiences With Drugs***

The last part of the questionnaire was about experiences with narcotic drugs. The respondents were asked whether they had ever tried narcotic drugs, how old they were when they had their first encounter with drugs and whether they had used drugs more than once. We have already mentioned that 13 respondents stated they had tried narcotic drugs, 86 of them said that they did not have any experiences with drugs, while one respondent did not answer that question. If we compare this information with the answers given by the respondents to the question of whether their peers have had experience with drugs, we will notice a certain discrepancy. Namely, it was previously stated that 32 respondents gave an affirmative

answer to this question, 27 answered negatively, while 41 respondents answered that they had no knowledge about it. Through these data, we can come to a conclusion that a certain number of respondents did not provide accurate information when it comes to experiences with drugs.

The gender structure of respondents who gave an affirmative answer to the question of whether they had ever tried drugs includes 61.5% boys and 38.5% girls. As for life period in which those respondents were when they tried drugs for the first time, it is most often the period when they were 16 years old, 46.1% of the respondents, or 15 years old, 38.5% of them. At the age of 17 and 18, 7.7% of respondents had experience with psychoactive substances. All respondents who stated that they had tried drugs at some point also stated that they had used drugs more than once. That information can also speak of the fact that among the respondents was a certain number of those who had one-time experience with narcotic drugs, but did not want to declare about it in the questionnaire.

## Discussion

Out of 100 respondents who participated in the research, 13 of them stated that they had experience with narcotic drugs, so the most significant research results will actually represent the impact that certain factors had or could have on that group of respondents.

The influence of respondents' sociodemographic characteristics can be significant for juveniles' perception of drug crime, but it is not dominant. By looking at residential places of respondents who had experience of using narcotic drugs, we have come to the data that 46% of them lives in city, 46% in suburbs and 8% in rural areas. If we look at the number of those who live with both parents and compare it to those who live in a different environment, respondents who live with both parents predominate, and make 84.6% of respondents. When it comes to the education of the respondents' parents, the largest number of students stated that their parents have secondary education, and this information also coincides with the respondents who declared themselves as users of narcotic drugs. Parents of respondents who used drugs mostly have secondary education, 84% of them, 8% have primary education and 8% college education. Certain comparisons can be made with data from the research conducted by Ivana Radovanović. The research was conducted in order to obtain data on the abuse of narcotic drugs in the

population of high school students in Belgrade municipalities with the sample of 1287 students. The research examined, among other things, the influence of sociodemographic characteristics of respondents on engaging in drug abuse and the result was that the place of residence, with whom the students live and the education of the parents have a significant impact on drug use. According to her research results, such behaviors are more often encountered in students who live in the city, who do not live with both parents or do not live with their parents at all, whose parents have higher education and master's or doctoral degrees (Radovanović, 2016, p. 185). During the ten-year period that passed between two researches, we can notice that there are indications which suggest that the urban environment still represents dominant residential place of students who come into contact with drugs, but that now exist more significant differences in relation to the influence of who they live with, as well as the influence of their parents' education.

The connection between parental divorce and drug abuse among the surveyed students was noticed in only one respondent, so we can say that divorce does not represent a significant factor in engaging in drug abuse. Radovanović also found a low correlation between these two variables in her research (Radovanović, 2016, p. 185). By looking at economic situation of respondents with drug use experience, we have come to the same conclusion as Radovanović, that there is more drug abuse in economically better-off families (Radovanović, 2016, p. 185). According to data from our survey, 38.5% of them described the economic situation as average, 46.1% as very good, and 15.4% as excellent, while none of them stated that the economic situation is extremely or partially bad.

The influence of the school environment is more dominant in relation to the previously described influence of the respondents' family circumstances. Respondents who had contact with drugs gave a significant answer to the question about the existence of convenient places for buying or selling drugs near schools, namely, 76.9% of them stated that such places exist in the immediate vicinity of the schools. When it comes to the presence of people who "deal" drugs near schools 61.5% of respondents, from the category of those who had contact with drugs, confirm the presence of "dealers" in their school environment. It was more important determining to what extent peers influence minors on engaging in drug abuse. 32% of

respondents gave an affirmative answer to the question of whether their peers had experience with psychoactive substances, 27% gave a negative answer, while 41% stated that they had no information about it. Answer to the question about offering drugs to try and persuasion to consume drugs by peers led us to the following data: 88% opted for a negative answer, only 8% stated that they had experienced such situations, and 4% that they had been in such situations several times. A little over half of the respondents who had experience with drugs, 53.8% of them, emphasized that their friends had experience with the drug use, but that they did not persuade them to abuse them, which coincides with the answers to this question among the group of respondents who made up the entire sample.

According to the results of Ivana Radovanović's research, which concern the influence of peer groups on drug abuse among minors', use of drugs among boys and girls is dominantly determined by the use of drugs by members of the peer group, and for girls there is also group pressure expressed in "persuasion to take drugs" (Radovanović, Spasić, 2019, p. 1590). Radovanović came to the data that if minors belong to a peer group, 39.23% of them use drugs, and 60.77% do not, while when they do not belong to a group, the percentage of the ones engaged in drug use is 13.34% and 86.66% of those who are not (Radovanović, 2016, p. 186). If the research data from Ivana Radovanović is taken into account and compared to those we came to by examining minors' attitude about the experience their peers had with drugs, which is 32%, the real number of respondents who really had experience with drugs becomes questionable. There are assumptions that number is higher than 13% of respondents who shared their experiences in the questionnaire or that they do not belong to peer groups.

An important part of our research examines the role of media content on juveniles' perception about drug crime. The aim of this part of the work was to determine how the newer TV series, "Južni vetar", "Klan", "Grupa" and "Besa", whose content refers to drug crime, influence the perception that minors have about drugs. The research results show that almost half of the respondents give the highest rating when it comes to liking these series. The majority of respondents expressed a neutral attitude regarding the impact these TV series have on juveniles' perception of drug crime. If we take into account the attitude of respondents who had consumed drugs, more than half of them state that they like or like the series

of that genre very much, and are of the opinion that these contents have no influence, mostly have no influence or that they have only a partial influence on perception about drug crime. The exception is one part of the respondents, more precisely 23.1%, who are of the opinion that the series "Južni vetar" has an absolute influence on minors' perception about drug crime. The impact of media content significantly depends on the society in which that content is presented. Research conducted in Colombian society analyzed the influence of television series with the drug crime theme. The research results of television series indicate that they have great popularity and sympathy of the audience due to the positive presentation of the characters, despite the fact that the reality of the Colombian society was shaken by violence and numerous murders. Such content would not have such a level of appeal in American or our society due to important differences in social reality (Ivanović, 2013, p. 151). By taking into account the level of liking of new TV series about drug crime, as well as the registered increase in the number of crimes among minors related to the abuse of narcotic drugs, we can conclude that our society represents an environment in which drug crime tends to grow, and that certain media content can affirmatively contribute to the acceptance of the drug milieu as everyday occurrences.

Finally, we will look at the total percentage of students involved in drug abuse in research that conducted Ivana Radovanović and compare it to the data collected by our research. Her research resulted in data on the representation of 20.5% of respondents (Radovanović, 2016, p. 412), while our research reached 13% of the total sample. In our research, the gender structure of respondents who used drugs is such that boys predominate with 61.5%, while girls make 38.5%. An interesting piece of information is that all respondents who confirmed their experience with narcotic drugs stated that they did not have such an experience only once.

## Conclusion

The juveniles' perception about crime related to narcotic drugs is conditioned by socio-demographic factors, factors that come from the school environment and influences that come from marketed media content. Social conditions and family circumstances of minors, such as place of residence, economic status, housing conditions, parental divorce and parents' education, have lower impact on minors' perception of drug crime.

According to the results of recent research, it can be pointed out that minors who live in urban areas, and whose parents have at least secondary education and good or excellent economic conditions are more likely to use narcotic drugs than those who have more modest living conditions.

The school environment has a more significant influence on juveniles' perception about drug crime. There are numerous suitable places for buying or selling narcotic drugs within the school environment. In addition, it is noticeable that in the immediate vicinity of the schools you can see people who "deal" drugs. Members of peers group, who have already had experience with the use of narcotic drugs, can have a strong influence on minors to start abusing drugs themselves. A third of the respondents stated that their peers had experience with drug use, which raises the question of the influence they had on them when it comes to drug abuse. The positive research result is that there is no group pressure on minors, or there is a small amount of it, to use drugs, which leads us to the conclusion that drug use is a matter of minors' personal choice and the awareness they have formed about this phenomenon.

The increased influence of media content is also noticeable the sphere of minors and drug crime. The research results indicate that minors very much like content about drug crime, but that they have relatively low level of awareness of the impact that content has on them. In our region, there are many examples of how violent film content has had a negative impact on minors. In our paper we mentioned an event from 2005, when two minors, inspired by the movie "Rane", committed the crime of murder of a minor.

The conclusion that could be drawn based on all the presented data is that minors do not have a sufficiently developed perception of the seriousness of drug crime and the abuse of narcotic drugs. Their characteristics make them more susceptible to certain influences, so in relation to those risk factors, especially those coming from the school environment, it is necessary to implement certain prevention measures, or, when it comes to the role of media content, measures that should expand minors' awareness of negative impacts of drug crime.

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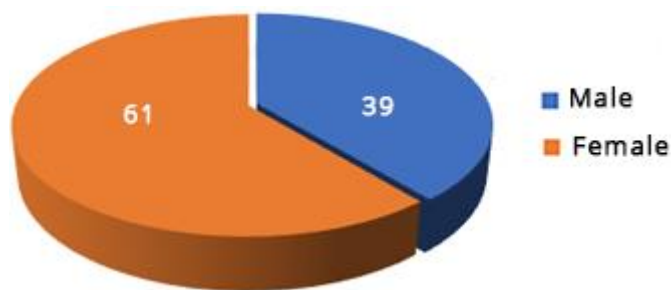
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## Appendix

**Figure 1**

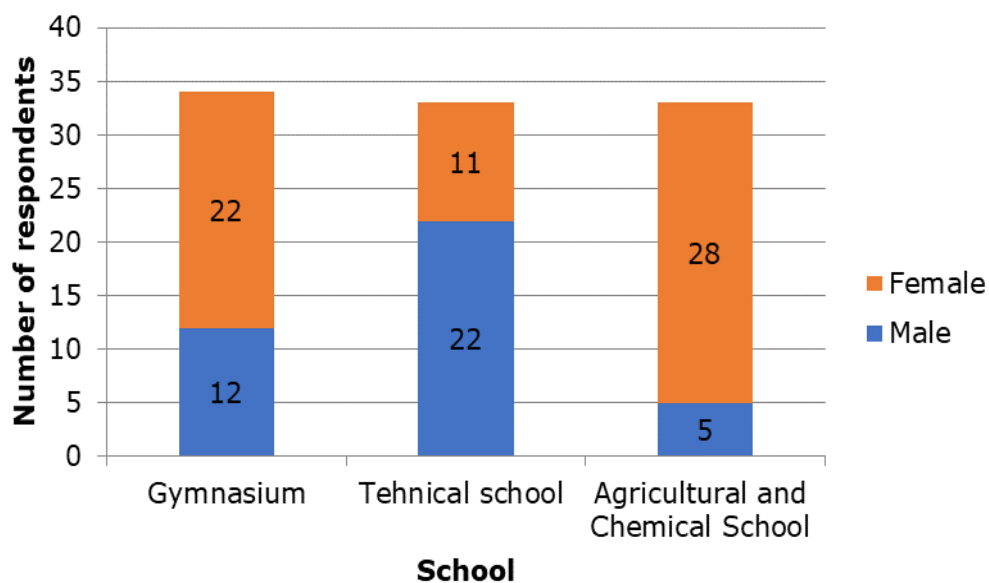
*Gender structure of respondents*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 2**

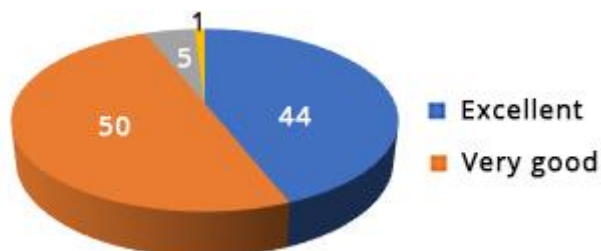
*Gender structure of respondents by school*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 3**

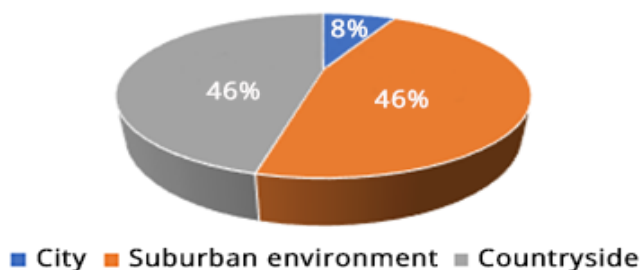
*GPA of the respondents*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 4**

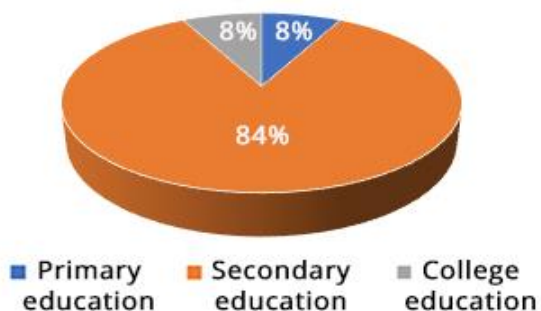
*Place of residence of respondents who had experience with narcotic drugs*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 5**

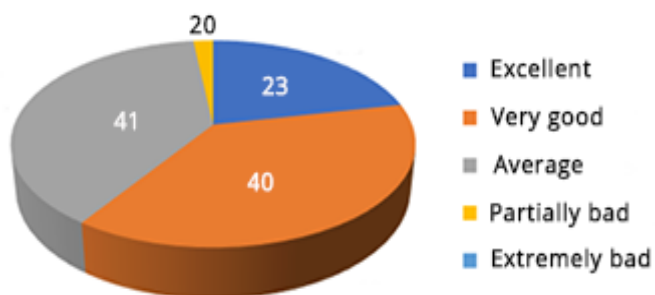
*Education of parents of respondents who abused narcotic drugs*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 6**

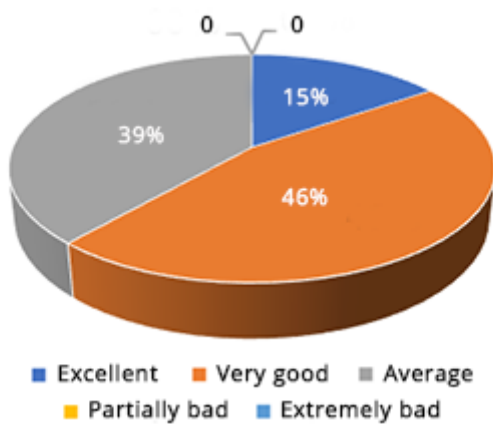
*Economic situation of the respondents*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 7**

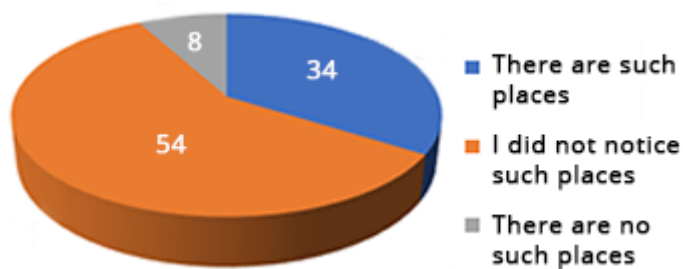
*The economic situation of respondents who had experience with narcotic drugs*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 8**

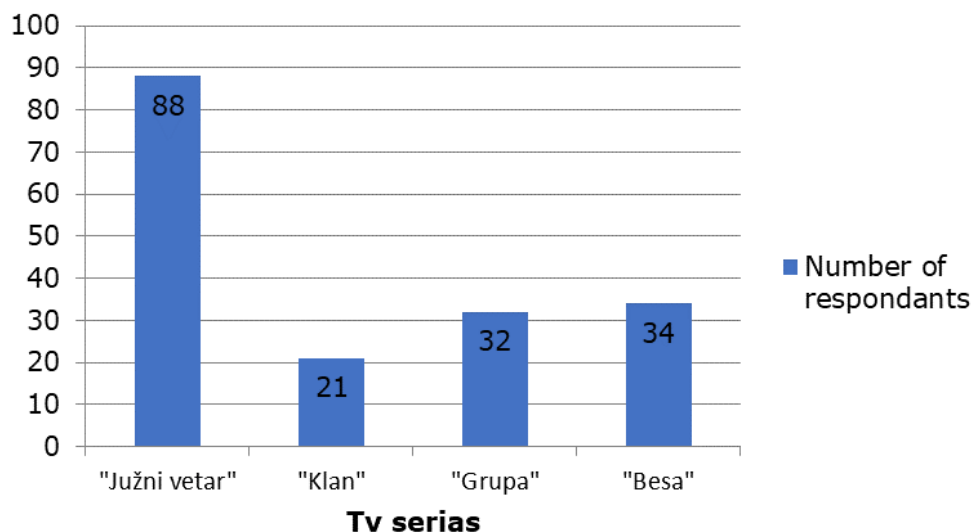
*Respondents' attitudes about the existence of places suitable for buying/selling drugs near their schools*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 9**

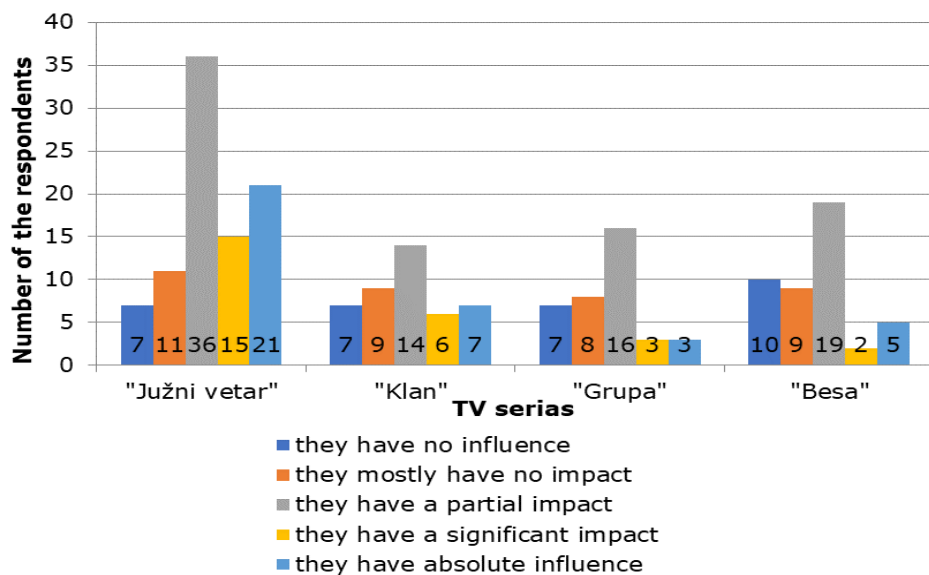
*Number of respondents who watched TV series*



*Note.* The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 10**

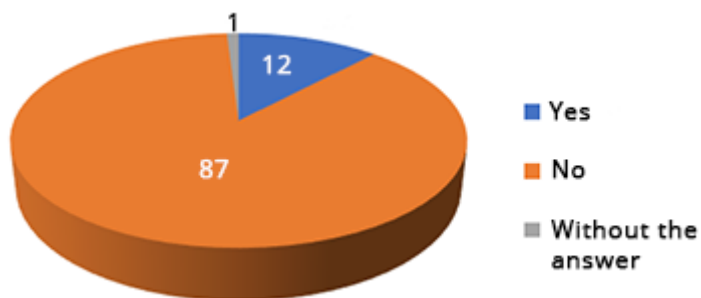
*The influence of TV series on juveniles' perception about drug crime*



Note. The result of the authors' research.

**Figure 11**

*Respondents' experiences with narcotic drugs*



Note. The result of the authors' research.

## Percepcija maloletnika o narkokriminalu među mladima

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### Sažetak

Savremeno društvo pogođeno je problemom narkomanije i narkokriminala na globalnom i nacionalnom nivou, a štetne posledice nastale zloupotrebom opojnih droga su izuzetno ozbiljne i široko rasprostranjene. Dodatnoj ozbiljnosti celokupnog stanja doprinosi i činjenica da se maloletnici češće nego ranije nalaze u ulozi učinilaca krivičnih dela povezanih sa opojnim drogama. Kako tendencija kretanja narkokriminala među mladima poslednjih nekoliko godina ukazuje na trend rasta ovog fenomena u našem društvu, fokus rada biće utvrđivanje značaja određenih faktora na percepciju mladih o narkokriminalu. Radi ostvarivanja ovog zadatka, sprovedi smo istraživanje među učenicima srednjih škola koje je za cilj imalo ispitivanje uticaja faktora porodične sredine, školskog okruženja i pojedinih medijskih sadržaja na njihovu percepciju o narkokriminalu. U istraživanju je učestvovalo 100 učenika. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da sociodemografske karakteristike mladih nemaju značajniji uticaj na njihovu predstavu o narkokriminalu. Školska sredina, pak, ostvaruje dominantniji uticaj, usled postojanja pogodnih mesta za kupovinu i prodaju droge neposrednoj blizini škola, ali i prisustva lica koja droge „diluju“. Pored toga, na maloletnike snažan uticaj ostvaruju i njihovi vršnjaci koji su ranije imali nekih iskustava sa zloupotrebom opojnih droga. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na visok nivo dopadanja medijskih sadržaja o narkokriminalu među mladima, ali i na nedovoljno razvijenu svest među njima o uticaju koji takvi sadržaji ostvaruju na njih.

*Ključne reči:* maloletnici, narkokriminal, porodična sredina, školsko okruženje, mediji