

Biographic Burden and Initiation into the Use of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants from the Perspective of Users: The Qualitative Arm of the ATTUNE Research Study in the Czech Republic

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BACKGROUND: The Czech Republic has a long tradition of methamphetamine use. Less is known about the circumstances of initiation into its use at the level of individual users. The aim of the research was to analyse the biographic burden prior to initiation into the use of amphetamines. Another aim was to describe initiation into the use of amphetamines from the perspective of users in various groups. **METHODS:** Qualitative analysis of 25 full transcripts of biographical interviews was conducted. The thematic analysis and coding framework were based on the biopsychosocial model focusing on selected periods of users' lifespans within five different user groups in the Ústí nad Labem

region of the Czech Republic. **RESULTS:** The groups of remitted and dependent users are characterized by methamphetamine use, a more severe biographic burden, and by the use of amphetamines in the context of coping with previous experiences and their current difficult situation. **DISCUSSION:** The results support the notion that there is a difference between the user groups which were identified in a previous analysis within the ATTUNE project. **CONCLUSIONS:** We identified multiple differences between the user groups and their life stories. The remitted and dependent users shared similar and more severe biographic burdens in comparison to the other groups.

Keywords | Amphetamines – Methamphetamine – Qualitative Research – Biography – Initiation – ATTUNE

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● 1 INTRODUCTION

The Czech Republic is well known for having a long tradition of methamphetamine use (Zábranský, 2007). Other amphetamine-type stimulants (amphetamines) include amphetamine (“speed”), methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (“MDMA”, “ecstasy”), and illicitly used amphetamine-type prescription drugs. The use of other amphetamines in the Czech Republic is related to parties and dance parties (Kubů et al., 2006; Novotná et al., 2015). Methamphetamine use is part of a larger drug-related public health issue as it is often associated with high-risk use patterns, including injecting use, and increased risk of some infectious diseases (Gibson et al., 2002). Methamphetamine users make up a large proportion of the client base of addiction services in the Czech Republic (Nechanská, 2019). The extent of the methamphetamine issue is frequently described by using quantitative data supplied by addiction services (Nechanská, 2019; Mravčík et al., 2020). A significant part of the evidence is based on expert opinions and assumptions, as the administrative data often only covers clients of addiction services. Qualitative interviews offer a unique opportunity to study the biographies of individual users and introduce their points of view, which are gaining more attention both in addiction services and in drug policymaking (Bröring & Schatz, 2008). Qualitative research does not allow for a wide generalization in contrast with quantitative research, but it allows researchers to focus on the informants’ experience, which is often missing in quantitative surveys.

As mentioned above, the issue of methamphetamine use in the Czech Republic is addressed in this research and the geographical scope of the research was limited to the Ústí nad Labem region, which is one of what are termed the old industrial regions of the Czech Republic. It is currently facing many economic and social problems and can be considered a typical example of a structurally disadvantaged Central European region, distinguished by unfavourable health, economic, and social indicators (for details see e.g. Koutský et al., 2012; Petruželka et al., 2020). Regarding individual biographies, this means that the region’s inhabitants face such experiences or burdens to a relatively greater extent.

Initiation into the use of amphetamines has been explored by several qualitative studies, some of which were reviewed by O’Donnell et al. (2019), who distinguished three types of factors influencing initiation into amphetamines: individual (curiosity and a propensity for experimentation, a recreational setting and hedonistic attitudes, enhancement of sex, self-management of mental health and trauma, early traumatic experiences, management of mood and loneliness, and a boost of energy), social (family, friendship, intimate relationships, enhancement of workplace performance, social networks as mediators of availability), and environmental (exposure, accessibility, availability). Similarly, Addison et al. (2020) identified various factors related to initiation into the use of amphetamines on the basis of qualitative interviews conducted in the United Kingdom: individual factors (hedonistic, functional, and self-medicating), social factors (members of social networks actively involved in use, establishing new social networks, a sense of inclusion), and en-

vironmental factors (spatial location coupled with parties, festivals, and networking, repeated exposure, low cost of the substances). Individuals’ experience of initiation into the use of methamphetamine was studied by Sheridan et al. (2009). It was usually described in terms of a positive experience, increased energy, confidence, rush, and feelings of euphoria. Interestingly, the informants in the study of Sheridan et al. (2009) were relatively uninformed about the effects of methamphetamine.

This study is focused on a further exploration of the data gathered in the qualitative arm of the ATTUNE research study in the Czech Republic. Specifically, two significant periods of the drug-using career are investigated: the period before initiation into use and the period of initiation itself. According to the review of O’Donnell et al. (2019), the events before the initiation into the use of amphetamines are discussed in the literature as individual factors involved in initiation, for example traumatic experiences. We separate these two periods analytically because it allows us to study them separately in greater depth. In addition to these two periods, we focus on the differences between groups of amphetamine users. The previous explorative analysis of the data from the qualitative arm of the ATTUNE research study (Petruželka et al., 2020) identified similarities among various pre-defined user groups. Specifically, the groups of remitted and dependent users were similar in certain aspects, and the same holds for the groups of frequent users and ex-users. The dependent and remitted users most frequently used only methamphetamine. The frequent and non-frequent users have different consumption patterns from other groups; MDMA and amphetamine are also prevalent among the most frequently used amphetamines. Furthermore, compared to the other groups, the majority of the dependent and remitted users had experienced some form of addiction treatment, had scored high on the Severity of Dependence Scale, and reported the daily use of amphetamines.

This article has two aims. The first aim is to analyse the biographic burden prior to the initiation into the use of amphetamines as it was described by the users in the different groups. The second aim is to show the phase of the initiation into the use of amphetamines from the perspective of users in different groups.

● 2 METHODS

2.1 Design and participants

The design and the description of the sample were provided in detail by Petruželka et al. (2020) in a previous article. The core technique of this study was a semi-structured interview. Six different groups of informants were predefined to ensure that a sufficient variety of amphetamine use patterns and trajectories is included: dependent, remitted, and frequent users, frequent ex-users, non-frequent users, and non-users. This approach provides a stratified sample, in which each group representing an amphetamine use pattern serves as a stratum (Rosenkranz et al., 2019). Furthermore, this approach allows the researcher to focus on different groups and compare them.

In this study, we used the full transcripts of 25 qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with individuals from the groups of dependent users, remitted users, frequent users, frequent ex-users, and non-frequent users. A basic description of the sample is provided in *Table 1*. We focused on selected periods of the interviewees' lifespan (the period before initiation into use and the period of initiation) within five different user groups (dependent users, remitted users, frequent users, frequent ex-users, and non-frequent users).

2.2 Data analysis

The transcribed qualitative interviews were coded in the NVIVO software for qualitative data analysis. The coding approach was thematic analysis, and the coding framework was based on the biopsychosocial model and on the amphetamine consumption periods. In this study, we only focus on selected periods and the respective codes: the period before initiation into use and the period of initiation. Furthermore, the analysis focused on the differences between user groups; for a detailed description of these groups, see *Table 1* and Petruželka et al. (2020). In analysing the biographies, we were aware of the effect of subjective interpretation and retrospective "highlighting" of past life phases and breaks, i.e. the connection between

	Dependent users	Remitted users	Frequent users	Frequent ex-users	Non-frequent users
Number of informants in the group	6	5	5	5	4
Gender (male)	4	3	5	4	2
Gender (female)	2	2	0	1	2
Current age (mean)	27	38	35	28	30
Age at initiation into amphetamine use (mean)	18	27	23	18	20
Daily use of amphetamines	5	5	1	1	0
Ever in drug treatment	4	5	2	2	0
Mean maximum SDS score	7.7	9.4	0.6	0.6	0

Table 1 | Descriptive characteristics of the sample adapted from Petruželka et al. (2020)

	Dependent users	Remitted users	Frequent users	Frequent ex-users	Non-frequent users
Number of informants in the group	6	5	5	5	4
Number of informants with any biographic burden	6	5	4	3	4
Specific burdens					
Death or illness of a close person	0	1	0	1	2
Divorce or separation of parents	2	4	2	2	2
Domestic violence	2	1	0	0	0
Drug dependence of parents	3	1	2	0	1
Early delinquency	4	1	0	1	1
Own early mental illness	1	1	0	0	1
Own early physical condition	1	0	0	0	1
Foster care or youth institution	3	0	0	1	0
Treatment in psychiatric hospital	1	0	0	0	0
Relocation at an early age	2	3	1	0	0
Sexual or emotional abuse	1	0	2	0	0
Social isolation	0	1	0	0	0

Table 2 | Biographic burden among different groups of amphetamine users (number of informants with such experience)

the past and the present (Vaněk, 2013). “Individual events and experiences only make sense when they become part of a story” (Sedláková, 2014, p. 228). The analysis is not a search for “truth”, but rather a more detailed insight into the inner thinking of the informants. The key context for interpretation was the current severity of use (de facto belonging to a group of users); for details see Petruželka et al. (2020). We used two approaches to analyse the coded transcripts. First, we used a thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2019) approach to analyse the coded transcripts; for an overview of the project and instruments see Rosenkranz et al. (2019). Further, we selected the codes related to the biographic burden (the events described as negative by the informants) and used the NVIVO quantification functions to find out how many informants reported any biographic burden and in which specific categories. This quasi-quantification was used to provide an overview of the distribution of events.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Biographic burden

Although most of the informants reported a biographic burden prior to their initiation into the use of amphetamines, we can observe some differences between the user groups (see *Table 1*). The dependent and remitted users reported a relatively high number of experiences related to the biographic burden. In other groups, the number of such experiences was lower, although a large portion of the informants reported some burden (14 out of 19 informants). We can observe the difference between the user groups according to how much of a burden we can identify in each group. The dependent and remitted informants reported three burdens per informant on average, while in the other groups the informants reported 1.4 burdens per informant on average (*Table 2*).

Furthermore, the differences between the groups are more apparent when one considers the fact that more severe forms of burdens were reported by the dependent and remitted users. Domestic violence was reported by three informants in the first two groups. Further severe burdens were more frequent among the dependent and remitted users compared to the other groups: drug/alcohol dependence of parents (36% compared to 16%), early delinquency (45% compared to 11%), early mental health issues (18% compared to 5%), living in a children’s home (27% compared to 5%), relocation at an early age – informants had left home in their teens because they had been kicked out by their parents, moved to their grandparents, or ran away from home (45% compared to 5%).

The accounts of the biographic burden differed between the informants who initiated their use later in life (after reaching the age of 30) and earlier (before reaching 30). The lives of three informants who started to use in their thirties were characterized by sudden and big changes (“breakdown”) in their already-established lives in terms of their family life and employment. The informants who started using before the age of 30 reported a biographic burden that was mostly related to the institutions that were significant in the earlier stages of their lives, such as parents and school.

Coping with a biographic burden might be another factor that differs between the dependent and remitted users and the other groups of users. The biographic burden might not have had that strong an impact on the informants from the other groups because it was managed as a result of the users’ ability to deal with it. This can be illustrated through two examples, one of a remitted user, the other of a non-frequent user. The remitted user identifies his parents’ divorce as the starting point of his problems. He describes his experience as follows. His parents found new partners and without giving a proper explanation of the situation, they left him more or less by himself in the family home. As a result, he began to use marijuana and “went off the rails”. After some time had passed, his father threw him out of the family home, and he became homeless. The non-frequent user reported that his parents talked to him about their divorce and explained the whole situation to him, which might have helped him to deal with it.

Informant: *“I was about ten when my parents got a divorce. I knew why it happened and understood the reasons behind this. It was not like I was looking for some explanation of what caused it or something like that. My parents explained it to me and were not giving each other a hard time.”* (male, non-frequent user, no. A406)

3.2 Initiation

Expectations and individual motivations

The informants’ accounts of expectations related to amphetamine use varied. Some informants reported no clear expectation, which was related to curiosity in some accounts:

Informant: *“I just did not know what to expect, so I tried it.”* (male, frequent ex-user, no. A404)

In contrast, some informants had clearer expectations; for instance, one informant expected to lose weight and another had learned about the pleasurable effects of its use from the internet.

The accounts of the informants’ individual motivations can be divided into two major groups. One group was named hedonistic, the other one dealing and coping with difficult situations. Among hedonistic motivations, we identified curiosity and pleasure-seeking. The importance of curiosity, which was the most frequently mentioned hedonistic motivation and which was brought up by informants in all the groups, might be explained by the above-described lack of specific expectations. The majority of accounts of pleasure-seeking as motivation were given by the informants from the groups of frequent users and ex-users.

Informant: *“On the basis of my observation, I liked the fact that the other boys were functioning on it all night and they did not need any alcohol. For me the issue was that when I was drinking alcohol, I was already tired before midnight, and they were still able to go on. I actually liked the fact that they could be social until the morning.”* (male, frequent ex-user, no. A406)

The motivation of dealing and coping was brought up by several informants. The informants had been coping with numerous issues before their initiation into use – relationships, body weight, fatigue, boredom in life – and with a hopeless and miserable situation in life. Dealing with a situation described as hopeless and miserable was characteristic for the initiation of dependent and remitted users. The situation was typically associated with homelessness.

Informant: *“First of all, I was offered it for free. Second, there was nothing left to mess up any more when it was messed up like that, you know? My dad kicked me out of the house, and this, and that. I had nowhere to go. There was nothing left to mess up any more. So I just tried it and that was the crucial mistake [...] When I was on the street, I had to get the energy somehow. When you’re sleeping in the ditch, you get me?”* (male, remitted user, no. A403)

Other informants described relationship difficulties such as living with a person dependent on drugs, the breakdown of a relationship, or an abusive father as the issue that needed coping with. In these cases, they tried to cope with these issues by using amphetamines.

Informant: *“[...] I just wanted to tune in to that person, because it was really psychologically difficult to live with a dependent person, and that was the easiest way.”* (female, non-frequent user, no. A888)

Informant: *“Just when I divorced. And I was devastated by this and... mainly for my daughter; my daughter, my daughter. I didn’t see much of her that month. And that’s what I... I wanted, I just wanted to, not think about it, no. And he just offered me the first try. It did not help.”* (male, frequent user, no. A402)

Social and environment-related motivations

Informants described motivations related to different aspects of social life, such as their partner and family, peers, and work. Work-related motivation was described by a dependent user working in a non-stop bar in a socially excluded locality.

Informant: *“Well, I was a bartender, actually, in [name of socially excluded locality] in the bar and... people who used methamphetamine came to the bar, they take methamphetamine, they offered it to me, and I was just tired because I had had a twenty-four hour shift so I just did it, I said, I’ll try.”* (female, dependent user, no. A413)

Partner- and peer-related motivations were described in all the user groups. The examples of partner-related motivations have been described above because they are related to coping with relationship issues. The partner-related motivations had an apparent gender dimension. One man was initiated into use after a breakup, while four women were initiated into use while in romantic relationships with partners who had been using amphetamines. The influence of peers was mentioned in all the groups. It is important to note that non-frequent users who had been using amphetamines with individuals who left their social network after some time subsequently stopped using.

Surprisingly, dependency or the drug use of family members was not mentioned frequently. Disputes and conflicts with

parents or other types of burden (divorce, death, violence; see above) were mentioned much more frequently than parents’ dependency. The dependency or drug use of family members was more common in the groups of dependent users and frequent users, and the informants usually reported the alcohol dependency of parents or siblings. The informants did not report that the drug was used in the family during their childhood or that the drug was supplied by the family. The using parent was usually absent, or the dependency was hidden from the children at the time. If informants found out about their parents’ use, they distanced themselves from their parents and reported an associated sense of betrayal and disappointment. Informant: *“I know now that my mother had been taking methamphetamine for 17 years. I’ve put two and two together.”* (male, dependent user, no. A415)

Considering the environmental level, only one of the informants mentioned the availability of drugs (at a party) as a motivation to commence amphetamine use. However, most of the informants reported that it was their friends who had given the drugs to them, usually for free.

3.3 Setting of use

Differences between the groups of users were observed in sub-cultural aspects of use and the places related to their initiation into amphetamine use. Frequent users and ex-users described the relation of their initiation to techno parties, music festivals, and clubs, while the informants from the other groups reported a different set of places: on the street, while hanging around outside, festivals, pubs, and the workplace. The frequent users and frequent ex-users describe their relation to techno parties, music festivals, and clubs in the following manner:

Informant: *“I went to a sound system party a couple of times, and there I met a friend who owed me some money, and since he had no money with him, he offered me some methamphetamine he had as compensation.”* (male, frequent ex-user, no. A404)

Informant: *“So I first took amphetamine when I was seventeen. It was at a party that was associated with music, dance techno music. We went there with a friend who had a sound system at the time, so I actually got into that subculture there and that was the situation.”* (male, frequent ex-user, no. A406)

3.4 Effects of amphetamine use in the initiation period

The majority of the informants (17 out of 25 informants) described the effects of amphetamines at the time of their initiation as positive. Dependent and remitted users described the effects as strong, energetic, and positive. According to their own accounts, informants would spend two or more days *“high on the drug”* and *“just flying around”*.

Compared to the dependent and remitted users, informants from the other user groups reported that the effects of amphetamines helped them to socialize and to have contact with other

people. The effects were described as feeling connected, emotional, and talkative.

Informant: *“At the beginning, when I tried it for the first time, it was something new for me, just boom, right? It changed my perception, I had a lot of energy, I was very social. It was fun.”* (male, frequent ex-user, no. A404)

The non-frequent users were the only ones who tended to describe the effects as negative or neutral. For example, one informant describes feeling too hyped up, while another one did not like the state.

Informant: *“I did not like methamphetamine at all. Somehow, I did not really like the state at all. ... I just remember that I was running out of time. Otherwise, I saw the time ... and otherwise just ... otherwise nothing else.”* (female, non-frequent user, no. 888)

Informant: *“I actually tried methamphetamine once and at that time it was actually completely useless because it did not give me anything.”* (male, non-frequent user, no. A430)

● 4 DISCUSSION

The study focused on two periods of the drug-using career: prior to the informants' initiation into amphetamine use and their initiation into the use of amphetamines. The results support the notion that there is a difference between the groups of users which were identified in the previous analysis of the data from the qualitative arm of the ATTUNE research study in the Czech Republic. The groups of remitted and dependent users are characterized by methamphetamine use, a more severe biographic burden, and using amphetamines in the context of coping with previous experiences and a current difficult life situation. Frequent users and ex-users complement the use of methamphetamine by using other substances, such as MDMA, and by the use of amphetamines, which is related to the subculture, parties, music, and festivals. The non-frequent users were the only group that tended to describe the effects of amphetamines as negative or neutral.

The biographic burdens of the informants that occurred prior to their initiation into the use of amphetamines varied in the different user groups. The biographies of the remitted and dependent users are in many aspects similar and share a more severe biographic burden than those of the informants in other groups, such as domestic violence, parents' dependence, early delinquency, early mental health issues, living in children's homes, or relocations at an early age – there were informants who had left home in their teens because they had been kicked out by their parents, moved to their grandparents, or run away from home. This is in line with the finding of the review that initiation into the use of methamphetamine is influenced by self-management of mental health and of early trauma (O'Donnell et al., 2019). Trauma is plausibly a more important factor in the groups with multiple associated issues, such as female prison inmates (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2012) and street-entrenched adults (Fast et al., 2014). The burden by itself might have influenced the informants' initiation into the

use of amphetamines; however, how such issues are dealt with and how the informants are able to cope with them is also important. This was illustrated by the issue of divorce. In one case, the parents of a former frequent user explained the situation to him, while in another case a remitted user perceived the situation of his parents' divorce as unexplained and the problems in his life, including his initiation into the use of amphetamines, escalated after the divorce. The accounts of their biographic burdens differed between those informants who started to use later in life (after the age of thirty) and those who started earlier (before that). The first were characterized by sudden major changes (“breakdown”) of an already established life, while the biographic burdens of the latter related mostly to their parents and school as important actors in their socialization, taken as having failed in their lives. The age of initiation varies among the groups, as is shown in *Table 1*. The dependent users, frequent ex-users, and non-frequent users started to use before reaching their twenties, while the remitted and frequent users did so later.

The results presented in this study demonstrated the complexity of the circumstances under which individuals started to use amphetamines. In line with other studies, we identified factors such as curiosity, partners, and peers (O'Donnell et al., 2019; Addison et al., 2020) which were mentioned across the user groups. Curiosity is plausibly related to the lack of knowledge and expectations about the effects and use of amphetamines. This finding is in line with other studies that show how relatively uninformed users are about amphetamines (Sheridan, 2009; Addison et al., 2020). The factors of partners and peers were described in all user groups, similarly to the findings in the literature (O'Donnell et al., 2019). Partner-related motivations had an apparent gender dimension. One man started to use after a breakup, while four women did so while in romantic relationships with partners who were using amphetamines. It is plausible to interpret this as a result of gendered socialization, which is more relation-oriented for females, and drug-using partners play a more important role in their initiation into drug use (e.g. Arpa, 2017). The other issue is probability – it is not only in the Czech population that there is a larger proportion of male substance users (Mravčík et al., 2020, United Nations, 2020), so it is less likely to meet a female dependent user as a partner; this is projected in the sample. Focusing on peers and the availability of amphetamines, only one of the informants mentioned the availability of drugs (at a party) as a motivation to start to use amphetamines. However, most of the informants reported that the drugs were given to them by their friends and usually for free. This is in line with the findings of other studies that relate initiation into use to the accessibility and availability of amphetamines, for example at house parties or nightclubs (O'Donnell et al., 2019).

One of the differences between the user groups is in their motivation and the context of their initiation. The initiation period of the dependent and remitted users is related to coping, however, not only with a past biographic burden but also with their situation in life at the time of their initiation. This situation was described as hopeless and miserable by a considerable number of the dependent and remitted users. In addition to that, one dependent user described her initiation as having taken place

at work in a non-stop bar in a socially excluded locality. The factor of workplace performance at the time of initiation was identified by the review of O'Donnell et al. (2019). This might be related to poor working conditions, as was described in the case of deported Mexicans working long hours (Ojeda et al., 2011). The initiation of frequent users and ex-users was related, in their own words, to the subculture, music festivals, techno music, and parties, which distinguished them from the other user groups. Furthermore, the accounts of pleasure-seeking as motivation were given only by informants from the groups of frequent users and ex-users.

The non-frequent users typically provided accounts of non-positive judgement of the effects of amphetamines; this distinguished them from the other groups. Plausibly and partially, this judgement of the effects explains why the non-frequent users did not use amphetamines more frequently. The dependent and remitted users in our sample described the effects as strong, energetic, and positive, while informants from the other user groups reported that the effects of amphetamines helped them to socialize and to have contact with other people. The different effects might be based on the fact that the dependent and remitted users almost exclusively used methamphetamine. Sheridan et al. (2009) noted that methamphetamine users who were mostly recruited in a treatment setting described a positive experience, increased energy, confidence, a rush, and a feeling of euphoria.

From the perspective of a holistic biographical model and three distinct categories of analysis – individual, social, and environmental (O'Donnell et al., 2019, Addison et al., 2020) – all were identified as important. As for the individual motives for initiation, the most frequent was hedonistic motivation connected with curiosity and an effort to intensify experiences and capabilities. On the other hand, using methamphetamines was identified by some informants as a way to cope or to “overcome” a serious situation in life that was perceived as miserable and hopeless. In accordance with the above-described model, the social factor in the biographies can be seen in the failed families of orientation (or not functioning, or with drug-using members), broken partnerships, or, less likely, demanding jobs. Social factors also appear among the factors identified as biographic burdens, and they relate to significant others, with the character depending on the age of exposure.

Furthermore, the peer group as a social factor is mentioned by informants, especially in relation to techno and electronic music. This is in line with Vuolo et al. (2014), whose study based on the analysis of three different robust datasets notes that the relationship between the type of music and the abuse of certain substances is complex and traditional. The environmental category is represented mostly by the accessibility and availability of methamphetamines (given for free by friends), which is also related to the peer group and parties. The environment of the Ústí nad Labem region might cause a greater probability of a burden, higher exposure to drug use, and better availability of the drug. No interviewee mentioned legislation or policy topics in relation to their initiation phase.

The limitation of this study is the generalizability of the results, which is unclear beyond the sample. However, this is typical of qualitative studies and an exploratory qualitative study does not require generalization on the level of the population. The exploratory character of the research also allows us to work with a comparison of the small sample size within the groups of informants. This character of the study is its strength because it allowed us to focus on an in-depth understanding and description of the user groups. Furthermore, for the interpretation of the results it is important to consider that the study was conducted in a structurally disadvantaged area (Koutský et al., 2012) characterized by high prevalence of illegal drug use (Mravčík et al., 2018; Mravčík et al., 2020) and poor socio-demographic and economic characteristics (Anděl, Balej, & Bobr, 2019). These regional characteristics might be associated with a higher biographic burden and this might increase the differences between the user groups. As previous research in the region suggested, the differences between forms of substance use might be influenced by the differences in the socio-economic status to a greater extent than in more affluent regions (Petruželka et al., 2019). Furthermore, the dependent and remitted users face greater biographic burdens and may be influenced by other social factors. For example, the high number of incomplete families might contribute to the biographic burden among the population of the region. Another limitation of the research is that informants provide researchers with their life stories, which do not provide objective descriptions of the events, and with their understanding of them.

● 5 CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we identified multiple differences between the user groups and their life stories. The remitted and dependent users shared similar and more severe biographic burdens in comparison to the other groups. These results point to the fact that the initiation of more serious forms of the use of amphetamines was associated with more severe biographic burdens among our informants and their life situation was described as worse at the time of their initiation. Individuals who currently find themselves in a difficult situation or have a severe biographic burden should be targeted by specific prevention activities because this situation might lead to their initiation into amphetamine use. In comparison to the dependent and remitted users, the initiation of the frequent users and ex-users was related to parties, music, and festivals. These user groups should be targeted by specific night-life prevention activities and harm reduction programmes adapted to identified subcultures. Furthermore, the prevention activities should focus on providing information about the use of amphetamines as the informants had reported having insufficient information on this topic. The biographies of amphetamine users focused on individual stages of use also opened up relevant questions to be examined in the field of specific research on the Czech user population (e.g. qualitative research into the role of gender(s) among adult users, etc.).

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Ethics approval and consent to participation: The article adheres to the Farmington Consensus 2.1.

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