

Abstract:

Background: The republic of Kazakhstan is located on the “Northern Route” by which opiates are smuggled from Afghanistan to the Russian Federation and further into the European Union. For this reason, the state is under constant high risk of the drugs leaking to the local market, leading to drug abuse and related issues within the population. The drug situation in Kazakhstan is further complicated by the internal factor of the Chuy Valley which features the largest area of wild-growing cannabis in the world.

The aim of this thesis is to estimate the consumption of cannabis-derived drugs and heroin in Kazakhstan based on the latest national and international reports and research. In terms of research, the thesis examines which organisations collect statistical information on users of illegal drugs and what methods are used to do so.

Methods: the data analysis consisted of a secondary analysis of existing collected data through quantitative descriptive statistics and a qualitative analysis of individual international and national reports. Drug consumption was estimated based on demand.

Results: According to estimates, there were 127,800 problem drug users in Kazakhstan in 2014; the total volume of consumed heroin was estimated to more than 46 tonnes. The estimated consumption of cannabis drugs in 2011 was 6.4–7.2 tonnes, corresponding to an average of 41.6–46.8 grams per person per year.

Conclusion: There is currently a lack of good studies that would reveal the true extent of the issue in Kazakhstan, evaluate the dynamics of drug use and provide an adequate assessment of the drug situation. The authorities mainly focus on how to reduce the supply side rather than the demand side. In the conclusion, the thesis proposes possibilities for further research in this area. It would also be beneficial to verify or refute the results through further research and gain a deeper insight into the issue.

Keywords: illicit drug, Kazakhstan, heroin, cannabis, drug consumption