



Chapter 6

Characterization of the use of psychoactive substances used by truck drivers traveling on a section of BR-010, in the state of Maranhão, Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Truck drivers play a fundamental role in the economic development of the entire country by transporting essential elements to supply cities, such as food. As a result, these drivers suffer a lot of pressure and stress for the arrival of these loads and therefore feel the need

to drive without stopping or resting, being led to use psychoactive drugs to stay awake and endure the long workday. In view of this, this work aims to identify the consumption of licit and illicit drugs among truck drivers who travel along the BR-010 stretch in municipalities in the Tocantina region and to investigate the drugs most used by truck drivers. For this, a descriptive and exploratory research was used, a field research with the application of a form with semi-structured questions, carried out in two gas stations located in the city of Imperatriz-MA. Twenty (100%) male truck drivers were analyzed, with an average age of 22 to 70 years, working in this profession for 18.34 years and driving about 16.3 hours a day. Among the drugs, the most used was alcohol, being ingested by 95% (19) of those analyzed, followed by rivet with 55% (11), cocaine 50% (10) and marijuana 35% (7), ecstasy 20% (4), morphine 10% (2) and heroin 10% (2). The main reason for consuming these substances was to stay awake 40% (8). With this, there is a need to implement public policies with a multidisciplinary team to make truck drivers aware of the risks that the use of these drugs can cause to their health and, even, put the lives of other people in danger through traffic accidents.

Keywords: Truck drivers, psychoactive drugs, licit drugs

1 INTRODUCTION

The truck driver profession is of fundamental importance for the economic development of the country, as it moves the economy by transporting essential elements to supply the communities. According to data from the National Land Transport Agency – ANTT, the national cargo fleet is made up of 695,593 registered self-employed carriers. Of this total, 209,529 vehicles belong to cargo transport companies and vehicles linked to cooperatives¹.

It is important to note that professional truck drivers, in the course of their work, face numerous challenges in meeting the needs and expectations of carriers. Consequently, many of these professionals,

in the interest of reducing the occupational stress generated by horns, arguments in traffic, traffic jams, physical/mental exhaustion, excessive workload, among others, opt for the use of licit and illicit drugs, because according to the survey carried out by the National Department of Traffic and the National Registry of Traffic Offenses - RENAINF between 2016 and 2020, more than 700,000 drivers confirmed using some type of drug².

Legal and illegal drugs (Depresora (psycholeptic): barbiturates, benzodiazepines, opiates, ethanol, inhalants; Stimulants (psychoanaleptics): cocaine, amphetamines and derivatives, Ecstasy, cannabinoids, marijuana, inhalants/solvents, cocaine, crack, among others, correspond to the set of substances that cause changes in the individual's behavior, by actively acting on the Central Nervous System, which causes excitement, euphoria, increased motor activity, paranoia, pupil dilation and increased number of heartbeats, among other complications³. , they also confirm that these drugs have a high prevalence of causing pleasant sensations, which increases the desire to continue using them.

Despite encouraging drivers not to sleep during work routes, the use of psychoactive drugs can cause deleterious, acute or chronic effects. Among these classifications, there are signs and symptoms such as insomnia, hallucinations, sweating, tachycardia, tremors, aggressiveness, lack of appetite and even sudden death, which makes this practice a life-threatening exposure not only for truck drivers, but for the entire population who are in transit⁴.

According to research carried out by⁵, around 28.26% of the 107 drivers on Rodovia PR 182, Km – 76 interviewees use rivets, or better known as amphetamine, where the commercial name of the drug cited by truck drivers was Desobesi® .

With this, the present research aims to identify the consumption of licit and illicit drugs among truck drivers who travel on the stretch of BR-010 in a municipality in the Tocantina region, during their night stop; to ascertain the main reasons that drive the use of these substances among truck drivers and the relevance of pharmaceutical assistance in providing guidance on the use of licit and illicit drugs.

2 METHOD

This is a qualitative descriptive and exploratory research carried out in the municipality of Imperatriz. The municipality is divided by the BR-010 highway, at the entrance to the city towards the state of Pará and at the exit towards the state of Tocantins.

According to the Federal Government⁶, BR-010 is approximately 1,959 kilometers long and passes through Goiás, Tocantins, Maranhão and the Federal District. The research took place more specifically in two Gas Stations, one towards Imperatriz-MA/Belém-PA (station A) and the other located at the exit of the municipality to Brasília-DF (station B), since there is a great movement of truck drivers in the local due to the need for drivers to stop in the municipality to rest and spend the night. A field survey was used as an analysis instrument, with the application of a form with semi-structured questions and with the consent of the Ethics Committee.

These questions investigated socioeconomic variables, use of licit and illicit drugs used by drivers who traveled and stayed overnight at gas stations along the BR-010 highway, and what were the possible reasons that led them to use these drugs and what was the frequency of use.

The field research took place in September 2022 and obtained a sample of 20 male drivers, due to the difficulty of accessing these professionals and also the resistance to accept answering the questionnaire. The research participants are aged between 22 and 70 years old and travel and spend the night on the BR-010, with their rest stop at two gas stations in the city of Imperatriz-MA.

As inclusion criteria, the participants were truck drivers who were traveling and staying overnight at two gas stations, located at the entrance from Imperatriz-MA to Belém-PA (station A) and the other at the exit to Brasília-DF (station B). and who stayed on the sidelines of BR-010 at the time of data collection and who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research by signing the Free and Informed Consent Term – TCLE and who answered the questionnaire.

Drivers who reported some psychotic disorder and/or already use psychotropic drugs on medical advice and who, for some voluntary reason, were absent from the survey were excluded. About nine truck drivers refused to answer the questionnaire and two did not complete the questionnaire, which were discarded from the analyzes and results. For the organization and analysis of the data, the Microsoft Excel 2011 program was used.

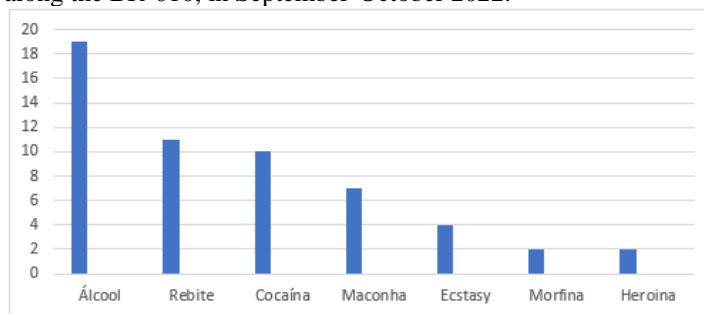
3 RESULTS

All 20 (100%) drivers were male, with an average age of 22 to 70 years and working in this profession for an average of 18.34 years. These drivers drive about 16.3 hours a day and 50% (10) of them are from Maranhão, 5% (1) from Ceará, 10% (2) from Tocantins, 10% (2) from São Paulo, 5% (1) Piauí, 5% (1) Pará, 5% (1) Amazonas, 5% (1) Goiás and 5% (1) Rio de Janeiro.

Regarding education, 15% (3) had completed Elementary School, 25% (5) Completed Elementary School, 30% (6) Incomplete High School and 25% (5) Completed High School and 5% (1) Higher Education.

Among the psychoactive drugs, the most used among this population was alcohol, considered a drug of legal use, being ingested by 95% (19) of those analyzed, followed by rivet with 55% (11), cocaine 50% (10), marijuana 35% (7), ecstasy 20% (4), morphine 10% (2) and heroin 10% (2), shown in Graph 01. Another very important factor to be reported is that among the 20 respondents, 50% (10) use the rivet together with alcohol.

Graph 01: Illicit and licit substances consumed by truck drivers who traveled in the urban perimeter of Imperatriz-Ma, and who stayed overnight at gas stations along the BR-010, in September-October 2022.

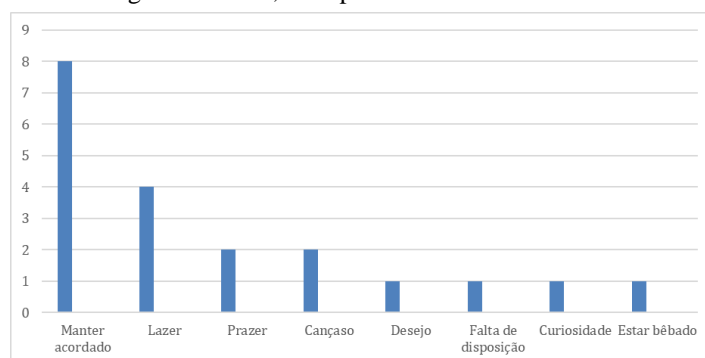


Source: Prepared by the author, 2022.

Subtitle: Alcohol/ Rivet/= Cocaine/ Marijuana/ Ecstasy/ Morphine/ Heroin

About 50% (10) use drugs daily, 25% (5) 1 to 2 times a week, 15% (3) 3 to 4 days a week and 10% (2) more than 5 days a week. The reason for consuming these substances was reported as being mostly to stay awake 40% (8), 20% (4) leisure, 10% (2) pleasure, 10% (2) tiredness, 5% (1) desire, 5% (1) lack of disposition, 5% (1) curiosity and 5% (1) the fact of being drunk, shown in graph 02.

Graph 02: Demonstration of the reasons that drive drug use by truck drivers who traveled in the urban perimeter of Imperatriz-Ma, and who stayed overnight at gas stations along the BR-010, in September-October 2022.

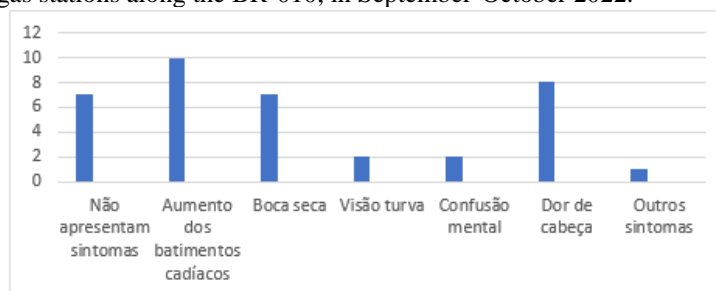


Source: Prepared by the author, 2022.

Subtitle: Keeping awake / Leisure / Pleasure / Fatigue / Desire / Lack of mood / Curiosity / Being drunk

Among the symptoms that arise after the use of these drugs, 35% (7) reported that they have no symptoms, 50% (10) feel increased heartbeat, 35% (7) have dry mouth, 10% (2) blurred vision, 10% (2) had mental confusion and 40% (8) headache and 5% (1) had other symptoms, as shown in graph 03.

Graph 03: Symptoms after the use of substances used by truck drivers who traveled in the urban perimeter of Imperatriz-Ma, and who stayed overnight at gas stations along the BR-010, in September-October 2022.



Source: Prepared by the author, 2022.

Subtitle: No symptoms/ Increased heart rate/ Dry mouth/ Blurred vision/ Mental confusion/ headache/ other symptoms

These drugs can cause serious health problems, where 70% (14) of drivers knew about the risks and 30% (6) had no knowledge about the harm they can cause. To better advise these workers, awareness campaigns about the risks of drug use are common, however 40% (8) of drivers have never participated in these campaigns, 15% (3) participate sometimes and 45% (9) participate in all that are known to you.

Most truck drivers work more than eight hours a day (16.3 hours), disrespecting Law No. 13,103, of March 2, 20157, which aims at working hours for drivers of 8 hours, with a mandatory rest stop. About 3 of the interviewees reported that some companies pay an extra fee if the goods are delivered before the estimated deadline, which is an impulse to hurry to reach the destination and therefore not sleep or stop to rest and thus increase their time en route, which leads them to take drastic measures, such as the use of illicit substances.

According to 8, the use of alcoholic beverages and illicit drugs by truck drivers is common, but this practice can directly interfere with their ability to drive, favoring traffic accidents that may even involve other citizens.

In the survey carried out by 5 on the BR-153, around 91% of the interviewees confessed that they drank alcoholic beverages during their working hours, with 24% of them using them daily. This research is similar to ours, where the prevalence was the use of alcohol in 95% of truck drivers, a worrying factor and far from being a good traffic behavior.

As 9 state, the profession of truck drivers is exposed to risks and work on roads with excessive fatigue, deadlines, competitiveness, productivity requirements, minimal hygiene conditions and inadequate nutrition is associated with the use of drugs and alcohol by these drivers. The use of these substances makes individuals more susceptible to manifestations of excitability and inhibition with the use mainly of amphetamines and alcohol.

The studies show that there was a second prevalence in the use of rivets, which did not occur with the survey of 10, where only 10.8% of those analyzed used amphetamines, the drug that rivets are derived from. His analysis was carried out using the urine of these workers and he guarantees that this is a worrying factor because the excessive use of amphetamines can cause the opposite effect, which worsens driving performance and puts lives at risk.

On the other hand, in the study by 5 the second prevalence was already in line with our research, as 32.9% of the interviewed population used rivets. This shows how much these drivers are exposed to risks in traffic due to the irrational use of these drugs that put their lives at risk.

11 conducted a survey reporting on the experience of truck drivers regarding the use of psychoactive substances, where respondents reported the consequences of using these drugs. The most common symptoms were tachycardia, increased blood pressure, depression, sleep, hallucinations, tremors, tachycardia, symptoms that are more comprehensive and worrying. It is similar to the present study, as the majority reported tachycardia and mental confusion (hallucinations), but it differs in the symptoms of

headache, blurred vision, dry mouth and even 35% did not have any symptoms. These symptoms are indications of how these drugs are used in an uncontrolled way and that they bring harm to your health.

The association of rivets with alcohol, which affects 50% of those analyzed, according to 11, causes great concern, as they cause a rebound effect and when the effect is over, the body goes into a state of exhaustion, that is, a sudden sleep and a traffic hazard. This fact can occur with 95% of those analyzed due to their high consumption of alcohol associated with the rivet.

According to 12, truck drivers reported that the use of drugs was a necessity, in order to comply with cargo delivery schedules, especially perishable food loads.

The purpose of using these substances is to reduce sleep, which is in accordance with our research, since the prevalent result was to stay awake, with 40% (8) of the responses and also tiredness with 10% (2). Thus, it is noted that these drivers are making constant and indiscriminate use of stimulants to reduce sleep during long working hours, a wrong conduct that can lead to traffic accidents.

In view of the results obtained regarding the high prevalence of licit and illicit drug use by truck drivers, there is the importance of Pharmaceutical Assistance in providing guidance on the rational use of drugs, where 13 state that Pharmaceutical Assistance is essentially guidance on the proper use of drugs. substances and pharmacovigilance in order to guarantee the health and well-being of the population.

4 CONCLUSION

It is perceived that he sought to address this relevant issue and its multiplicity of factors; epidemiological, biochemical, organizational and social, is centered on actions that require studies that cross the spheres of health, given that the truck drivers in this study were mostly not afraid to report the use of drugs, but also in venting to the act of being criticized and not heard for the reasons that lead them to such an attitude.

It is evident, however, the need to implement public policy actions aimed at truck drivers at strategic stopping points at gas stations where they have a high flow of this public, through health education on the part of a multidisciplinary team that is sensitized and capable of providing services in the field of physical and mental health of these professionals who work in the supply of large centers.

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