

# Exploring Prescription Stimulant Use in Diverse Populations Through Social Media Analysis: Motivations, Experiences, and Harm Reduction

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**Introduction / Issues:** Prescription stimulants are pharmaceutical drugs that stimulate the central nervous system. Prescribed primarily for the treatment of ADHD, these substances have also gained significant attention from media and scientific communities for their potential as cognitive enhancers. However, despite this, research into experiences with these substances has been significantly limited in scope, restricted to individuals from university contexts.

**Method / Approach:** This study aimed to broaden our understanding of prescription stimulant use by examining user discussions on Reddit, a popular forum website. Primarily, we aimed to explore users' motivations, experiences, and harm-reduction strategies. A multisite qualitative analysis approach was employed, analysing discussions from four subreddits (r/ADHD, r/Nootropics, r/Stims, and r/Drugs).

**Key Findings OR Results:** Our study revealed the diverse motivations for stimulant use and how this influences their substance use behaviour. These substances were beneficial for individuals instrumentally, especially for increasing motivation and productivity. However, the regular use of these substances came with complications such as tolerance, dependence, and physical and psychological side effects, especially on the comedown of the substances. These complications would increase with dosage and subsequent hours of taking the substance. Individuals who found the trade-off worthwhile actively sought to reduce their harm by regularly engaging in and discussing various harm-reduction practices.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Our findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of prescription stimulant use outside the university context. It also emphasises the importance of considering social media data in future research to develop a nuanced understanding of substance use behaviour.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** *N/A*

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