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Dissociations between “wanting” and “liking” in addiction

Abstract:

Incentive Sensitization Theory (IST; e.g., Robinson & Berridge, 1993) suggests that drug “wanting” (incentive salience) and not drug “liking” (the hedonic experience when one consumes drugs) plays an essential role in the development and maintenance of drug addiction. Many researchers have aimed at examining this hypothesized dissociation between “wanting” and “liking” using behavioural (implicit) measures. We will first discuss the different ways in which “wanting” and “liking” are defined within IST, and the different ways these concepts have been proceduralized. Subsequently, we will critically discuss the evidence for dissociations between “wanting” and “liking”. Furthermore, we will point out the major methodological and theoretical problems that prevent us from drawing clear conclusions regarding this topic. Finally, we will make some recommendations to advance the study of “wanting” and “liking” in the context of addiction.