

Abstract

Background: There is currently an upward trend in the availability and use of cocaine within the European Union. Among recreational users, it is consumed mainly in night-life settings where alcohol is traditionally consumed. Alcohol and cocaine are thus often used simultaneously by nightclubbers which carries significant risks. These users also constitute a 'hidden population' whose characteristics and patterns of use have not yet been sufficiently described.

Aims: The aim of the research was to map and describe patterns of concurrent alcohol and cocaine use among selected nightlife participants, providing background information on the context of their use. A sub-objective was to assess the level of risk of alcohol and cocaine use based on respondents' experiences and behaviours in nightlife settings.

Methods: Respondents were recruited through social networks and directly in the nightlife environment. Methodologically, it was a combination of non-probabilistic methods of selecting the research population (self-selection, purposive sampling and snowball sampling). The research sample consisted of 14 respondents with whom semi-structured interviews were conducted by several interviewers (triangulation of researchers). The data were analysed by coding them and then creating so-called clusters and 'gestalts'.

Results: The results show that the use of both substances is highly correlated, and that solitary cocaine use is rare. The simultaneous use of both substances leads to subjective feelings of sobriety and suppression of negative symptoms of drunkenness among users, often leading to the consumption of significantly larger amounts of alcohol. The substances in combination were used exclusively in night-time entertainment settings during all respondents' experiences. Respondents often engaged in riskier than usual behavior while under the influence of alcohol and cocaine. Some experience complications of a somatic, social and rarely also psychological nature.

Conclusion: The study confirmed some of the known findings on patterns of cocaine use and added to them by showing how such use is related to alcohol consumption. Study has mapped the risks and complications faced by alcohol and cocaine users in nightlife settings. The results can contribute to mapping this hidden population and its patterns of use. Alternatively, they can serve as a basis for designing services targeted at this specific group.

Keywords: alcohol, cocaine, cocaethylene, polyvalent use, patterns of drug use, nightlife