Abstract

This book presents the findings of a study examining behavioral patterns and substance use among nightclub attendees, conducted as part of the project *Nightlife: A Study in Real and Virtual Context (REAL NIGHTS)*, funded by *NextGenerationEU*. The primary aim of the study was to collect data on behavioral patterns and substance use among nightclub attendees in the context of nightlife. The study employed an *in situ* design, with data collected through a survey conducted in nightclub settings using a non-probability sample of nightclub attendees. Data were collected in nightclubs across the City of Zagreb that differed in the types of music and programs they offered. A structured questionnaire administered using tablets covered nightlife habits; the use of tobacco products, alcohol, illicit drugs, sedatives, and new psychoactive substances; substance use-related symptoms; willingness to analyse drug samples to determine their contents (drug checking); and participants' sociodemographic characteristics. The study examined lifetime and past-month substance use, use during the evening of data collection, and intentions to use substances later that same evening. A particular methodological strength of the study was the combination of self-reported data with objective measurements of breath alcohol concentration. The results indicated that alcohol, tobacco products, and illicit drugs were widely used among participants, both over their lifetime and in the month preceding the study, as well as during the evening of data collection. Cannabis was the most commonly used illicit drug during the study evening, followed by amphetamines, cocaine, and ecstasy. The use of new psychoactive substances in general, as well as ketamine and GHB, was also reported. Differences in substance use patterns were identified by sex and age, particularly in the use of specific stimulants. On average, participants estimated their breath alcohol concentration to be slightly higher than the objectively measured concentration. An important public health aspect of the findings

concerns polysubstance use, including the concurrent use of alcohol with illicit drugs and new psychoactive substances, as well as the use of multiple illicit drugs. Differences in these patterns were observed by sex and age. Participants also reported experiencing physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive symptoms associated with their drug use. Among participants who reported using drugs, a substantial proportion expressed willingness to undergo anonymous, free-of-charge, and voluntary drug checking of the substance they intended to use. These findings underscore the importance of monitoring patterns of polysubstance use and acute health risks, as well as the need to develop appropriate harm reduction interventions. The results presented in this publication contribute to a better understanding of substance use patterns among nightclub attendees and provide an empirical basis for further research and the development of preventive and public health initiatives tailored to this specific setting. This publication is intended for researchers, professionals, policymakers, as well as organizations working in substance use prevention and harm reduction.

Keywords: nightlife, nightclubs, *in situ* research, substance use, illicit drugs, polysubstance use, breath alcohol concentration, harm reduction