

Ada Beselia¹, David Otiashvili¹, Lika Kutelia¹, Tamar Mgebrishvili¹, Mzia Tabatadze^{1,2}, Irina Vardanashvili³, Irma Kirtadze^{1,3}

¹Addiction Research Center, Alternative Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia. ²School of Business, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

³School of Arts and Sciences, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Background

Visitors of electronic dance music (EDM) events are under the increased risk of use of psychoactive drugs. Nightlife industry has been dynamically developing in Georgia. There has been no research investigating the scale and nature of drug consumption in local nightclub setting. The aim of the study was to assess the psychoactive drug use and related behaviour among frequent nightclub/festival goers in Georgia.

Methods

Online survey among EDM attendees was conducted in November-December 2018. Targeted recruitment was done through closed (ravers') facebook groups. Structured questionnaire in Georgian language (18 items) covered socio demographics, drug use and club/festival attendance. Uni and bivariate analysis was done using SPSS.

Results

Figure 1. Participants' flow chart

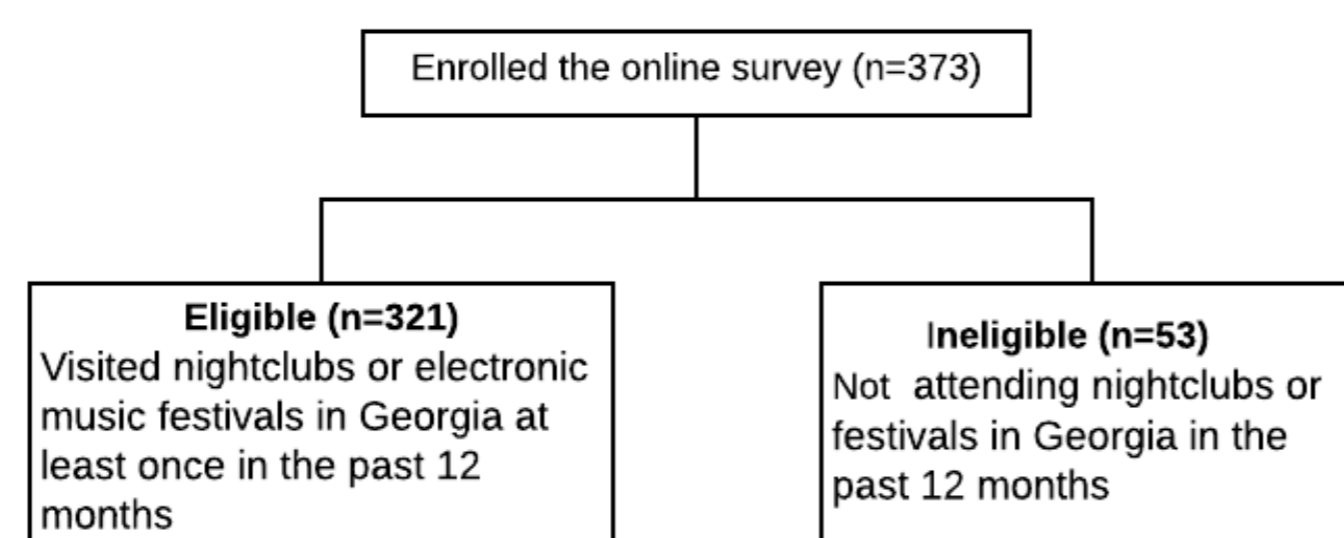


Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

| Variable | Did not use drugs in the past 12 months (unexposed) n (%) | | | | | Used drugs in the past 12 months (exposed) n (%) | | | | |
|--|---|------------|----------|----------|------------|--|------------|------------|----------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Other | Refuse | Total | Male | Female | Other | Refuse | Total |
| Gender | 23 (32.9) | 45 (64.3) | 1 (1.4) | 1 (1.4) | 100% | 147 (60.5) | 90 (37) | 3 (1.2) | 3 (1.4) | 100% |
| Age, mean (SD) | 24.5 (6.7) | 22.1 (3.6) | 25.0 (-) | 19.0 (-) | 22.9 (4.9) | 25.3 (6.0) | 24.4 (5.1) | 23.7 (3.8) | 28.0 (7) | 25.0 (5.7) |
| How many times have you visited a club/festival in the past 12 months? | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1-5 | 8 (34.8) | 17 (37.8) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 (35.7) | 15 (10.2) | 15 (16.7) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 30 (12.3) |
| 6-10 | 4 (17.4) | 7 (15.6) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 11 (15.7) | 22 (15) | 16 (17.8) | 1 (33.3) | 0 (0) | 39 (16) |
| 11-20 | 5 (21.7) | 12 (26.7) | 1 (100) | 0 (0) | 18 (25.7) | 40 (27.2) | 19 (21.1) | 0 (0) | 1 (33.3) | 60 (24.7) |
| 21 and more | 6 (26.1) | 9 (20) | 0 (0) | 1 (100) | 16 (22.9) | 70 (47.6) | 40 (44.4) | 2 (66.7) | 2 (66.7) | 114 (46.9) |
| Never | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |
| Don't know | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |
| How long have you been visiting clubs/festivals? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Less than 1 year | 4 (17.4) | 11 (24.4) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 15 (21.4) | 13 (8.8) | 10 (11.1) | 1 (33.3) | 0 (0) | 24 (9.9) |
| 1-3 years | 8 (34.8) | 16 (35.6) | 1 (100) | 1 (100) | 26 (37.1) | 55 (37.4) | 33 (36.7) | 0 (0) | 2 (66.7) | 90 (37) |
| More than 3 years | 7 (30.4) | 16 (35.6) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 23 (32.9) | 73 (49.7) | 42 (46.7) | 2 (66.7) | 1 (33.3) | 118 (48.6) |
| Don't remember | 3 (13) | 2 (4.4) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 5 (7.1) | 6 (4.1) | 5 (5.6) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 11 (4.5) |

Three quarters used illicit drugs in the last 12 months, out of that 80% reported using drugs in the last 30 days. Of those who used drugs in last month, 81.5% used cannabis, 70% used MDMA/ecstasy. Use of dissociative, hallucinogens, amphetamines and NPS was also reported. Main drugs used during the last episode in a club/festival setting were MDMA/ecstasy (66.7%), cannabis (53.9%) and ketamine (10.3%). The majority reported taking drugs prior to club/festival visit and/or bringing drugs with them during the last episode. Half of those who were under the influence of drugs in nightlife settings reported using alcohol as well. Of those, slightly more than half reported consuming alcohol to mix with a drug (for the desired effect) or to deal with drug hangover.

Results (continued)

Table 2. Drug and alcohol use and ways of obtaining drugs during the last episode of drug use in a club/festival

| Variable | N | % |
|--|-----|------|
| During the past 12 months have you been under the influence of drugs in a club/festival? | | |
| No | 6 | 2.5 |
| Rarely | 41 | 16.9 |
| Sometimes | 61 | 25.1 |
| Often | 88 | 36.2 |
| Always | 44 | 18.1 |
| Refuse to answer | 3 | 1.2 |
| During the last episode, when obtaining drugs in club/festival you... | | |
| Purchased drug | 6 | 12.2 |
| Was given by a friend for free | 38 | 77.6 |
| Was given by an unknown person for free | 4 | 8.2 |
| Refuse to answer | 1 | 2.0 |
| During that episode you*... | | |
| Used drug at home prior to visiting club/festival | 69 | 28.4 |
| Brought drug to club/festival and used there | 152 | 62.6 |
| Obtained drug inside club/festival and used there | 49 | 20.2 |
| Refuse to answer | 30 | 12.3 |
| During that episode you... | | |
| Did not use alcohol | 111 | 45.7 |
| Used alcohol, but not in connection with the drug | 63 | 25.9 |
| Used alcohol to mix it with the drug for desired effect | 34 | 14.0 |
| Used alcohol to deal with side effects of the drug | 23 | 9.5 |
| Don't remember | 8 | 3.3 |
| Refuse to answer | 4 | 1.6 |

* - Exceeds 100% due to the option to select more than one response

About 10% of participants (25/243) who used drugs during the last year reported experiencing drug overdose in the last 12 months, and 61% claimed they know how to provide first aid. In a bivariate analysis males ($p=.0$) and frequent club goers ($p=.0$) were more likely to use drugs in the last 12 months. A frequency of attendance was associated with regular personal income ($p=.001$). Drug use in clubs was associated with using fewer different drugs if compared with using in other settings ($p=.0$).

Conclusions

The survey recruited a self-selected sample of mostly young frequent nightclub/festival visitors. Illicit drug use including in EDM setting was prevalent. Cannabis and MDMA/ecstasy were most often used drugs and were followed by dissociatives and hallucinogens, including new psychoactive substances. The majority used drugs prior to visiting clubs/festivals or brought the drug with them in club settings. One in five obtained drugs inside a club/festival venue. Mixing drugs with alcohol was prevalent. Results of the survey provide useful initial data related to psychoactive drug use among frequent club/festival goers in Georgia and suggest the need for in-depth investigation of risks associated with this phenomenon.

Disclosure statement

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Contact

Ada Beselia MA

Addiction Research Center Alternative Georgia

14a Nutsbidze str. office #2. 0177 Tbilisi, Georgia

Email: ada@altgeorgia.ge

Website: www.altgeorgia.ge

Phone: +995598414221