

Substance Use and Rave Parties – Global Scenario

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Abstract

Across the country, teens and young adults enjoy all-night dance parties known as “raves”. Following the craze in the Western countries, rave parties have in recent years become trendy amongst youngsters. Dangerous substances known collectively as club drugs-including Ecstasy, GHB, and Rohypnol are gaining popularity. Although users may think these substances are harmless, research has shown that club drugs can produce a range of unwanted effects, including hallucinations, paranoia, amnesia, and, in some cases death. Apart from causing health hazards to the users concerned, the associated physiological and psychological effects manifested upon taking the drug(s) often induce abnormal behaviour, which in turn poses a threat to other people at the party. It is known that triads have been making their presence at a number of raves and criminal activities such as selling drugs at the venue, bringing weapons into the venue and sex crimes have become major concerns. These substances whether taken voluntarily or by deceit leave women vulnerable to sexual assault and rape. As protectors of public health and safety, Governmental bodies, notably the Narcotics Division are taking effective measures to help solve the problem.

Keywords: *Substance use, rave party, club drugs, drug trafficking, drug policy.*

Introduction

A rave is an organized dance party at a nightclub, outdoor festival, warehouse, or other private property typically featuring performances by DJs, playing a seamless flow of electronic dance music. The music is amplified with a large, powerful sound reinforcement system, typically with large subwoofers to produce a deep bass sound.¹ The most common drugs taken and distributed at rave parties are called club drugs or party drugs. Club drugs can be tasteless and odorless, which makes them easy to slip into a person’s drink.²

Party Drugs: The term party (or club) drug refers to a variety of drugs found at dance clubs and house parties. The substances are typically produced in illegal laboratories, using a variety of chemicals. These drugs can pose serious risks to young people’s health and safety.³

Different types of party drugs

- 1. Ecstasy:** Ecstasy is a recreational drug, most popular among teenagers and young adults. It is produced in illegal laboratories and can often be contaminated by substances such as caffeine or ephedrine or other toxic drugs. It is usually taken by mouth in capsules or tablets, it may also be a powder that is sniffed.
- 2. Rohypnol:** Rohypnol is the manufacturer’s trade name for a drug that belongs to the same family of sedative drugs that includes drugs such as Valium (trade name). The person may experience lack of memory, impaired judgment, dizziness, and periods of blackout. Sedation begins in about 30 minutes, peaks within 2 hours and lasts for about 8 hours.
- 3. Ketamine:** Ketamine is also a drug that is available at clubs and raves. It has been used as an anesthetic in medical and veterinary practice. The drug is found in the form of capsules, powder, crystals and solutions. Effects include temporary amnesia and hallucinations.
- 4. GHB (Gamma- Hydroxy Butyrate):** GHB, (gamma hydroxy butyrate) has surfaced as a drug at clubs and rave parties. It is quickly absorbed in the body and peaks in 20-60 minutes. At low doses, the person may feel sociable and less inhibited. At

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higher doses, the person may experience loss of consciousness, seizures, depressed breathing and coma.

5. **Hallucinogens:** The term “hallucinogens” refers to a class of drugs that have the effect of changing the user’s perception of reality. These drugs can make people hear or see things that aren’t really there (“hallucinate”), change the way they feel time is passing, distort colours and sounds, and make people feel their minds are separated from their bodies.
6. **Psylocybin/Mushrooms:** This drug usually comes in a form of dried mushrooms which are swallowed. However, it also can come as a powder in capsules. The powder can be sniffed, smoked, injected or mixed with liquid, such as juice, and swallowed.
7. **LSD (Lysergic acid Diethylamide):** LSD is a white, odourless, crystalline powder made in illegal laboratories. It is usually taken by mouth. To be sold on the streets it is packaged in tablets, capsules, gelatin sheets or pieces of blotting paper, often with cartoon drawings on them.
8. **Mescaline:** Mescaline is derived from “buttons” of the peyote cactus, which are chopped or ground and sold in capsules or prepared chemically.³
9. **Alcohol:** Alcohol is one of the most frequently used and abused drugs. In 2015, almost 27% of people over the age of 18 reported that they engaged in binge drinking at least once in the previous month. More than 15 million people in the United States struggle with alcohol use, yet less than 7% receive treatment.
10. **Marijuana:** Marijuana is a drug from the Cannabis sativa plant that can be smoked to give users a feeling of relaxation and mellowness. Although some states in the United States have legalized its use, it is still illegal federally. Marijuana can be addictive and lead to memory problems.
11. **Inhalants:** Inhalants are chemicals that are breathed in to create a short-lived high. People sometimes spray the chemical on fabric and then “huff” it, or spray the fumes into a bag and then breathe it in to “bag” it. Inhalants are often otherwise legal and inexpensive household items, including air dusters, permanent markers, glue, household cleaners and paint etc.

12. Stimulants: Because of their capacity to increase energy and focus, stimulants are popular among partygoers. These drugs work by quickly speeding up the parts of the brain that are involved with alertness, causing a rush. Because stimulants speed up the brain and central nervous system, overdosing can be deadly.

13. Ritalin: Ritalin is the brand name for methylphenidate. Like Adderall, Ritalin is a controlled substance used to treat ADHD. Also, like Adderall, it is consumed orally and is often used illegally to increase energy.

14. Caffeine: Caffeine is a legal and widely available drug that is usually considered safe. However, caffeine can be dangerous when it’s mixed with alcohol or other drugs. Some people mix alcohol with high-caffeine beverages like energy drinks. The problem is that caffeine blocks the receptors in the brain that tell people that they are drunk.

15. Cocaine: Cocaine is a drug from plants grown in South America. Cocaine has some medical use in the United States but its street use is illegal. Cocaine is usually snorted or injected. Signs of cocaine use include bursts of energy and talkativeness.⁴

Date Rape Drugs

Some party drugs are used to incapacitate a victim and facilitate sexual assault. These drugs can be easily mixed into an unsuspecting person’s drink at a party.⁴ Common date rape drugs include Rohypnol, Ketamine, Gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid, or GHB etc. This drugs takes effect on the central nervous system. Date rape drugs make a sexual assault, including rape easier in one or more ways, such as:

- making a victim more compliant and less able to say no
- weakening a victim so they are unable to resist or fight back
- weakening a victim’s inhibitions, so they consent to sexual activity they may otherwise decline

Any drug that changes a potential victim’s state of mind, including some prescription drugs, street drugs such as heroin, and popular drugs such as marijuana, can be a date rape drug.⁵

Club Drugs and HIV/STD Infection

An exploratory study was conducted by Chen et al⁶ in China where it was found that the prevalence of HIV, syphilis, and herpes simplex virus 2 infections were higher among drug users compared with non-users. The positive rate of HIV among drug users and non-users was 18.6% and 10.6%. The prevalence of syphilis was 12.4% and 6.0% respectively. The prevalence of HSV-2 among drug users and non-users was 16.9% and 12.8% respectively. 19.8% of drug users and 10.3% of non-users had self-reported STD-related symptoms during their lifetime.

Indian Scenario

Drug addiction causes immense human distress and the illegal production and distribution of drugs have spawned crime and violence worldwide. According to a UN report, One million heroin addicts are registered in India, and unofficially there are as many as five million.⁷

The first nationwide survey to obtain information on extent, pattern and magnitude of substance abuse in the country indicated new emerging trend of substance use in India with amphetamine like substances (ATS) are being more used in regions like Goa and Ahmedabad. With technological advancement and particularly the information technology sector coming up in a big way in India (often as outsourcing for overseas-based multinational companies), suddenly there is a neo-rich young generation. This is often coupled with the need to escape temporarily from the severe work pressure and social isolation created by this lifestyle. With drug licensing and controlling authorities focusing more on licit and traditional illicit drugs (e.g., opioid, cannabis), club drugs have caught the fancy of this neo-rich young generation.⁸

The rave parties of Goa are said to be started by the Hippies. The bars organizing such parties sell Ecstasy or LSD. In last few years upper-class Indians have massively taken to Ecstasy and clubbing and there are more women amongst them. Later on, with government interventions and regulatory norms, drug abuse came down as these were declared illegal by law.⁸

In Pune, 280 people were arrested during a pre-dawn raid on a rave party in March 2007. The ravers were allegedly using California drops. A California drop is acid that is put on a stamp, which is then chewed; the cost of each drop is put between INR 350 and 500.⁸

With an average of 7 suicides every day, drug addiction and drug abuse accounts for 3.3% of all the suicides in the country. This number is much higher than the suicides caused due to poverty (1.9%), bankruptcy (2%) and dowry (1.6%). According to the data furnished by the Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment, India is home to over 3 million drug abuse victims. Over the past 4 years, more than 100 million kilogram of drugs has been seized from various parts of the country, with Punjab accounting for almost 60% of them.⁹

Drug trafficking in India: Over the past decade or so, the drug trafficking patterns in India have seen a major change. Drugs entering India from Nepal and Bhutan now constitute the major proportion of drugs coming to India illegally. The open borders in UP and Bihar witness a major import of brown sugar, marijuana (ganja) and hashish from Nepal and Bhutan. Afghanistan, a part of the Golden Crescent, accounts for more than 90% of world's illicit opium. The country is also the biggest producer of hashish in the world. Local production of low grade heroin in India due to an increasing demand has further added to the existing drug problem in the country. The Samjhauta express, between Amritsar and Lahore, has also been known to be used for drug trafficking from Pakistan to India on a frequent basis. This has made Amritsar a major heroine centre in Punjab.⁹

Drug policy in India

The major drug laws of India are the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1985) and the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1985).

Under one of the provisions of the act, the Narcotics Control Bureau was set up with effect from March 1986.

Narcotics Control Bureau: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) is the chief law enforcement and intelligence agency of India responsible for fighting drug trafficking and the abuse of illegal substances. It was created on 17 March 1986 to enable the full implementation of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1985) and fight its violation through the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1988).

Punishment under this act: Anyone who contravenes the NDPS Act will face punishment based on the quantity of the banned substance.

- where the contravention involves small quantity (<1 kg), with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to 6 months, or with fine which may extend to Rs.10,000 or with both.
 - where the contravention involves quantity lesser than commercial quantity but greater than small quantity, with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years and with fine which may extend to Rs.1 lakh.
 - where the contravention involves commercial quantity, with rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than 10 years but which may extend to 20 years and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than Rs.1 lakh but which may extend to Rs.2 lakh.¹⁰
- a. For all discos and rave sites, safety measures including fire alarm & exits, freely available water fountains, first aid stations etc. should be provided under licensing conditions.
 - b. Bold warning signs against chasing drugs with alcoholic beverages, sharing of unknown substances (in liquid or solid forms) and against “unwanted” or “unprotected” sex should be prominently posted and displayed on the spot. Condoms for either sex should be made easily available.
 - c. Wherever women’s free entry is advertised, young women need to be warned against its possible sex trap and advised not to enter the premises alone nor in the company of strangers or non-trust-worthy companions.¹¹

Strategies to Control Drug Abuse

1. Supply Reductions

- a. Enhancing border check points to minimize the smuggling of trendy party drugs including Ecstasy, Ketamine, GHB, etc. Smugglers should be prosecuted promptly without excuses on their “soft drug” image.
- b. Intensify the surveillance of Discos, Rave sites and know copping areas to reduce drug transactions there. Owners and organizers of such establishments should be warned or fined for allowing drug sales on their premises. In case of repeated offenses, their licenses should be suspended or invalidated.
- c. Young people caught in possession or sharing of small quantities of such drugs for the first time, should be placed under police supervision or referred for professional counseling to discourage further involvement with illicit drugs supplies.

2. Demand Reductions

- a. Promoting a healthy youth culture with pro-social values and a sense of community identification.
- b. Developing out-reaching teams with youth workers and peer counselors to provide timely intervention with marginal youth and nocturnal street roamers.
- c. Family life education and conjoint counselling involving both parents and their off springs at risks should be promoted to bridge the widening generation gaps and demystify “party drugs”.

3. Harm Reductions

Conclusion

In conclusion, although India has made attempts to control this problem by adopting strategies of reduction of drug supply and demand, it needs to act on a much higher scale involving a 3 tier approach: firstly, strengthening of existing laws and possibly creation of new ones, secondly increasing security at the borders; and lastly actively co-operating with neighbouring countries and other members of the international community. Nevertheless it is high time to act now before the problem snowballs out of control. If we can combat the risk factors associated with drug abuse, the incidence of crime and rape cases also will go down. The mentality of rave will be abolished from youngster’s mind.

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