

ADDITIONAL HARMS OF ILLICIT DRUG USE OVER ALCOHOL USE IN THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY? A PROPENSITY-SCORE MATCHED CASE-CONTROL STUDY.

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Introduction and Aims:

Categorising participants by their alcohol and illicit drug use is common when assessing risk for harm, yet can fail to account for systematic differences in risk propensity. This study aimed to statistically minimise this bias, determining differences in harm outcomes across individuals whom share similar risk propensities.

Design and Methods:

Interviews were conducted with licensed venue patrons as part of the Patron Offending and Intoxication in Night-Time Entertainment Districts (POINTED) and Drug and Alcohol intoxication and Subsequent Harm in night-time Entertainment District (DASHED) projects (N=5542). Using propensity score matching (PSM) techniques, different user groups were matched across risk covariates (e.g., patron's sex, volume of alcohol consumed) to determine differences in experiences of aggression (victim/perpetrator in the previous 3 months).

Results:

Traditional analyses with control for covariates uniformly overestimated rates of aggression among illicit drug consumers, although this still remained elevated in comparison to alcohol-only consumers following PSM ($z=3.59$ using regression methods; $z=2.68$ using PSM). Illicit substance consumers (methamphetamine, cocaine, cannabis) were no more likely than propensity matched alcohol consumers to experience elevated physical aggression (as a victim or perpetrator), with the exception of ecstasy consumers ($z=2.94$). Similarly, rates of experience of verbal aggression were elevated among ecstasy consumers ($z=2.12$) compared to alcohol consumers, with no significant difference in rates amongst methamphetamine, cocaine or cannabis consumers.

Discussions and Conclusions:

These analyses do not disentangle causation nor whether the individual was the victim or persecutor. However, they do demonstrate the importance of careful control for confounds when examining risk factors for aggression in the night time environment.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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