A Study of Adults Ages 15-30 Pertaining the Use of LSD in the Rave Setting in Western Countries

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Introduction

During the 1980's electronic dance music (EDM) raves gained popularity and transformed into various scenes and different forms of EDM (Palamar et al., 2015, p. 24). In the early 1990's rave parties and clubs were present in most metropolitan areas in the United States. Since then, rave parties and clubs have spread to major cities across the globe. It is important that this research paper defines what a "rave" is in order to continue studying the more specific demographics and reasons for use of the psychedelic drug LSD. A "rave" is a dance party with loud EDM, often accompanied by lights and visual effects. Within recent years young adults, ages 15-30 years old, have been consuming more and more party drugs in social settings such as concerts, festivals, and raves in Western countries around the world. Throughout this paper Western countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and the United States will be mentioned as these have specific data studies on the effects of party drugs. These party drugs include hallucinogens, stimulants, and amphetamines, as mentioned in some of the primary articles of research. The main classification of drugs which will be researched throughout this paper will be LSD, also known as Lysergic acid diethylamide, or acid. This topic is relevant and valuable for us to further study because EDM parties are dangerous because festival and concert deaths are on the rise (Hunt et al., 2008, p. 601). Throughout this research paper the reasoning for use of LSD in these social environments will be carefully studied. Some of these reasons may include accessibility, social norms, and proximity to the substance in these social environments.

Keywords: LSD, environmental cues, proximity, use of hallucinogens, rave

Why Do Adults Ages 15-30 In Western Countries Use LSD in the Rave Setting?

Prevalence

The research report "Raves, drugs and experience: drug use by a sample of people who attend raves in Western Australia" by Lenton et al. (1997) states the use of LSD has become increasingly mainstream in certain groups in Australia (p. 1328). LSD is one of the most notable drugs of all of the 'dance drugs' associated with the rave scene. This research study discovered 90% of participants had used LSD in their lifetime. The 83 participants of this Western Australia research study had all reported attending a rave within the past 6 months. Furthermore, LSD was more likely to have been used in a dance setting than elsewhere. It is not surprising that on average, "Across the last two raves attended, nine out of ten respondents consumed a psychoactive substance shortly, before, during, or after the event" (p. 1335). When studying the demographics of LSD prevalence in the rave setting it is important to note that the majority of attendees at dance events are young adults, both male and female (Hunt et al., 2008, p. 602). In terms of ethnic characteristics, national studies suggest there is a predominance of white users in both the United States and United Kingdom. This same study mentions that the use of club drugs have "increased dramatically in the United States since 1998 and with this has grown an escalation in concern and interest in their use" (Hunt et al., 2008, p. 601). This increasing prevalence is becoming a major problem for the specific demographics who attend these raves, outdoor festivals, and club parties. Finally, McCaughan (2009) mentions in the study "From 'Candy Kids' to 'Chemi-Kids': A Typology of Young Adults Who Attend Raves in the Midwestern United States" that the young adults who attend these raves are not part of a homogenous group in terms of their drug use practices. This research study is from the journal *Substance Use & Misuse* and also collected data based from focus groups and qualitative

interviews. The prevalence of most drugs tended to be significantly higher among more-frequent attendees of raves, than those who do not frequently attend raves (p. 1503).

Environmental Uses: Rave Setting

The environment is a very important factor in studying the use of LSD among adults ages 15 through 30. The research report, "Raves, drugs and experience: drug use by a sample of people who attend raves in Western Australia" found, "LSD [as] more likely to have been used in a dance setting than elsewhere" (Lenton et al., 1997, p. 1328). These highly anticipated events offer a break from normal life and are an occasion to use drugs and alcohol. As noted in a research report conducted by Ella Dilkes-Frayne (2015), LSD has longer-lasting effects, rather than immediate effects. Furthermore, LSD "might be taken at the campsite after breakfast and tooth brushing, before venturing into the festival grounds" (p. 32). This circumstance would be for longer lasting festivals, which would occur over an entire weekend. The environment of being able to camp in a tent at a festival during the day allows for individuals to take drugs and not worry about any responsibilities. Another factor as to why young adults aged 15-30 may be inclined to use LSD in the rave setting is due to the "increasing sponsorship and promotion of raves by multinational corporations, such as soft drink companies, that have contributed to the growth of the subculture, as well as to its popularization among groups that could be considered 'mainstream' – in opposition to the formerly 'underground' or 'counter cultural' identification of traditional rave participants" (McCaughan et al., 2009, p. 1505). It is not surprising that LSD use peaked during the college ages (18-22 years old) because of the environment being away from home including more freedom (Schorling et al., 1994, p. 105).

Societal Norms Pertaining to LSD Use

A reason people may be influenced to take LSD at a rave is because societal or cultural norms in this party setting. A limitation of this study is that the data is collected from surveys and interviews. These surveys and interviews may not be 100% accurate as the respondents may not be completely truthful in their answers. This may occur because the resondents are embarrassed or nervous to be truthful in their answers. According to Ella Dilkes-Frayne (2015), music festivals are becoming increasingly popular internationally among young people because of enjoyment, entertainment, and the social scene. When individuals attend these rave festivals outside, they "begin to relax into the vibe of the festival" (p. 27). These young adults ages 15-30 are also inclined to take high doses of LSD to achieve the goal of inducing a "transpersonal, mystical experience that would have long-lasting transformative effects on behavior" (Lerner et al., 2006, p. 143).

Demographics Relating to Proximity of LSD Use in the Rave Setting

Proximity seems to be a leading factor as to why adults ages 15 through 30 use LSD in the rave environment. The Journal "Drug and Alcohol Dependence" includes the primary article "Illicit drug use among rave attendees in a nationally representative sample of US high school seniors" by authors Joseph J. Palamar, Marybec Griffin-Tomas, and Danielle C. Ompad. In this particular study, the authors examined the relationships between rave attendance and recent use of various drugs in a sample of US high school seniors. This study used methods of collecting data by the survey "Monitoring the Future (MTF)" which is a nationally representative study of US high school students. It is interesting because the study is "among the first national study to example the relationship between rave attendance and the use of various drugs in the US" (Palamar et al., 2015, p. 26). Palamar concluded that females and highly religious students were

less likely to attend raves, and Hispanics, students residing in cities, students with higher income, and those who go out for fun multiple times per week were more likely to attend. At these rave parties, these students are in close proximity to psychedelic drugs, specifically LSD. According to this same study, "frequent attendees were at the highest risk of use of 'club drugs'" (p. 26). Specifically, in the midwestern United States, attendance at raves has been most commonly associated with young people raised in suburban areas surrounding larger urban centers (McCaughan et al., 2009, p. 1506).

Conclusions and Future Study

In conclusion, it is important that we study the use of LSD in adults ages 15 to 30 because it is a harmful substance in Western countries around the world. The media is paying more and more attention to the rave subculture since some people who attend these raves will overdose, and even die from the effects of drugs.

According to the research report, "Raves, drugs and experience: drug use by a sample of people who attend raves in Western Australia," there have been many types of interventions to reduce the harm of LSD and other party drugs in the rave setting. These interventions include informing and educating users of these hallucinogens, implementing guidelines for rave promoters to "minimize the potential harm attributable to the environment," and finally support for those individuals experiencing problems with drugs at these rave parties (Lenton et al., 1997, p. 1336). Another harm reduction measure could be having "safe houses" for people to have their drugs tested and checked against a register of previously tested drugs. Drug testing to check the purity and potency may also help with the harm reduction of the use of hallucinogens, stimulants, and amphetamines, at rave events. Implementing these harm reduction strategies will decrease overdose deaths and other early deaths among people who use and abuse these harmful

substances. In addition, it is imperative that health education specialists educate young people and work toward restrictions that limit the accessibility of LSD and other psychedelic drugs at these rave and party settings. Banning or restricting raves altogether would result in events being driven more underground rather than reducing the drug use (Dilkes-Frayne, 2015, p. 34). Future studies should examine more quantitative studies of the use of these drugs to analyze data. The majority of the data used throughout this paper is qualitative research and epidemiological culture studies. Finally, researching the use of LSD and other party drugs is important today because of the increased popularity of the EDM culture within recent years in Western countries. This increased popularity in the news is a direct result of the fatal effects this environment has had on EDM concert goers. Future lives are at stake and health education specialists should put forth great effort to alleviate this risk.

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