

What Happens at Underground Raves? Risk, Research and Harm Reduction

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Underground raves first appeared in the late 80s in the United Kingdom, since then they have spread up to be strongly established throughout many different countries and continents [1]. Opposite to mainstream raves or other recreational contexts (with commercial purpose and publicly advertised), underground raves could be considered the most risky context for their participants' health. On the one hand, substances and polysubstance use in underground raves is higher than the one it can be found at mainstream raves or other recreational contexts [2,3]. Polysubstance use is usual in this kind of raves, with a high use of stimulant/hallucinogenic substances [4,5]. On the other hand, the fact that this kind of parties are self-organized, far away or held in places difficult to get, and that they are not often prepared to attend health emergency situations, could lead to serious consequences to the health of ravers in the case of they should have severe health problems.

In spite of above, taking into account the number of publications within this context, it could be considered that it has received limited attention from researchers. Most of the studies carried out on raves and their associated risks have focused on mainstream raves and the consumption of a single drug (MDMA) more than polysubstance use [6]. Nonetheless, research on underground raves and their characteristic polysubstance use has been neglected. This must be related to its hidden nature and the difficult access to underground raves for people outside of the rave culture.

The characteristic features of this contexts and people involved must lead to consider them as a key objective for preventive actions. It's necessary to boost measures aimed at helping to decrease associated risk to drug consume between underground ravers, providing them with tools which allow them to handle risks and pleasures. In this sense, the risk and harm reduction paradigm has been considered an effective approach. From this paradigm it is intended to enable consumers to make responsible and informed decisions whereby reduce risks associated to their drug use [8]. Thus, this kind of actions are well accepted and appreciated for drug consumers in general and for ravers in particular [9].

It is considered to be necessary to develop empiric researches that study in depth drug consumption patterns of underground ravers, what

types of risky behaviors they have, what they do to avoid these risks, etc., with the aim to design preventive and harm reduction strategies. According to Mc Caughan et al. [10] "creating persuasive prevention and risk-reduction messages requires an understanding of the target audiences' self-perception, beliefs, attitudes, and practices" [10].

The dissemination of this kind of knowledge through open access resources in this field is especially valuable in a two ways. On the one hand, for the scientific community and institutions in charge to design preventive strategies aimed at reducing risks in this population. On the other hand, for drug consumers themselves, enabling them to make responsible and informed decisions which allow them to handle the risks and pleasures associated to their drug use.

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