

Estimated lifetime drug use, impulsivity, and psychopathology in recreational ecstasy users

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Abstract

Previous research suggests elevated levels of impulsivity and psychopathology in recreational ecstasy users. However, most recreational ecstasy users tend to be poly-drug users. The present study aimed to investigate impulsivity and psychopathology in a sample of recreational ecstasy polydrug users compared with samples of non-ecstasy users, while statistically controlling for estimated life-time drug usage. Sixty-eight non-drug controls, 79 non-ecstasy poly-drug users, 11 light ecstasy poly-drug users, and 47 heavy ecstasy poly drug users completed the Barratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS-11) and the SCL-90R and a drug history questionnaire. When estimated life-time drug-use was statistically controlled for, heavy ecstasy users exhibited significantly higher levels of non-planning and cognitive impulsivity, and increased obsessive compulsion, anxiety and positive symptom total than non-ecstasy users. This study provides evidence of some elements of elevated impulsivity and psychopathology in heavy ecstasy users, but not in lighter ecstasy users. The results should be seen in the context of the heavy ecstasy group as poly-drug users and should be interpreted with caution.

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