

SELECTED ASPECTS OF DUAL ALCOHOL AND MARIJUANA USAGE

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ABSTRACT

Background: Patterns of use of alcohol as well as motivations for alcohol use are well described in the addiction research and theory. What is not clear is whether the increasing availability and consumption of marijuana has any effects towards one's relationship to alcohol. It is clear however, that at least part of marijuana users must also be alcohol users. In theory, there are two options: Increasing use of marijuana may have a substitution (substituting alcohol with marijuana) or complementary (increasing the usage of) effects on alcohol consumption. A group of poly-drug substance users who combine alcohol and marijuana are also more commonly associated with risky behaviour by various studies. One way or the other, the poly drug use of alcohol and marijuana (also called cross-fading) is the subject of increasing interest by the researchers.

Aims: The aims of this work is to provide an overview of the current theory regarding both drugs, as well as a description of use motivations, consumption patterns, effects of combining of both drugs and risks related to such behaviour. The practical part of this work introduces a survey, which aims to identify sub-groups of marijuana users by their relationship to alcohol, trying to differentiate their motivations, usage patterns and to see if there are any substitution or complementary effects or an association with risk-seeking behaviour.

Methods: Selected hypotheses were studied based on a survey and consequently analysed with descriptive statistics. There were 88 participants in this survey who were equally distributed among frequent, occasional and non-marijuana smokers.

Conclusions: Two subgroups of frequent marijuana users were identified. One of the groups is characterized by lower than average alcohol use, social and conformity motives towards alcohol use. The second group combines the drugs frequently and identifies more with mood-enhancement motives of alcohol use, which is similar in nature to heavy drinkers who do not use marijuana. This group of users also declares lower aversion towards risky behaviour such as drunk driving, while the first group has a risk-attitude more or less similar to regular alcohol users.

keywords: alcohol, marijuana, cross-fading, dual usage, poly-drug substance use