

KADA DROGA IMA SVRHU: RAZUMIJEVANJE KONZUMACIJE STIMULANSA IZ PERSPEKTIVE KORISNIKA

WHEN DRUGS HAVE A PURPOSE: UNDERSTANDING STIMULANT USE FROM THE USERS' PERSPECTIVE

¹DIJANA JERKOVIĆ*, ¹TIHANA NOVAK, ¹ANITA JANDRIĆ NIŠEVIĆ

¹University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences,
Department of Criminology, Borongajska cesta 83 f, Zagreb, Croatia

contact: dijana.jerkovic@erf.unizg.hr

Received: 11.08.2025.

Accepted: 04.03.2026.



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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

UDK: 613.83:316.6

<https://doi.org/10.31299/hrri.62.1.5>

Sažetak: Kvalitativna istraživanja koja uključuju perspektivu konzumenata droga u Republici Hrvatskoj izuzetno su rijetka, a prema saznanjima autora, ovo je prvo takvo istraživanje provedeno među konzumentima stimulativnih droga. Cilj istraživanja bio je steći uvid u motive i kontekste uporabe stimulativnih droga polazeći od iskustava samih korisnika. U istraživanju je sudjelovalo 24 punoljetnih sudionika (13 muškaraca i 11 žena), prosječne dobi 39,6 godina (raspon 21–55 godina), koji su u posljednjih 12 mjeseci konzumirali barem jednu od sljedećih stimulativnih droga: MDMA/ecstasy, amfetamin, metamfetamin, kokain ili sintetske katinone. Sudionici su uključeni u istraživanje putem udruge koje pružaju usluge smanjenja šteta, poznanstava istraživača i metodom snježne grude. Podaci su prikupljeni putem polustrukturiranih intervjua i jedne fokusne skupine, a analizirali su se primjenom tematske analize. Sudionici su navodili da su s uporabom stimulansa započeli iz razloga poput znatiželje, zabave, utjecaja vršnjaka i okolnosti povezanih s odrastanjem. Nasuprot tomu, uporaba stimulansa u posljednjih 12 mjeseci pokazala je znatno složeniju i višeslojnu motivacijsku strukturu, uključujući hedonističko-socijalne motive, emocionalnu regulaciju, funkcionalne motive povezane s radnom izdržljivošću i produktivnošću te motive vezane za identitet i društveno pozicioniranje. Identificirano je nekoliko tipičnih razvojnih puteva uporabe, uključujući prijelaze iz rekreativne prema funkcionalnoj ili introspektivnoj uporabi te razvoj učestale uporabe u zahtjevnim radnim uvjetima. Kontekst uporabe pokazao se ključnim za oblikovanje subjektivnih iskustava i percipiranih učinaka stimulansa. Sudionici su izvještavali o uporabi stimulativnih droga u različitim okruženjima, uključujući noćne izlaske i festivalske scene, chemsex kontekste, privatna okruženja i

Abstract: Qualitative research incorporating the perspectives of people who use drugs in the Republic of Croatia remains scarce. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study of its kind conducted among stimulant users in the country. The study explores the motives and contexts related to stimulant use from the perspective of drug users. The study involved 24 adult participants (13 men and 11 women), with a mean age of 39.6 years (range: 21–55 years), who had used at least one of the following stimulant drugs in the past 12 months: MDMA/ecstasy, amphetamine, methamphetamine, cocaine, or synthetic cathinones. Participants were recruited through harm reduction organisations, researcher acquaintances, and snowball sampling methods. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and a focus group, and analysed using thematic analysis. Participants reported initiating stimulant use for reasons such as curiosity, pleasure, peer influence, and upbringing-related circumstances. In contrast, stimulant use within the past 12 months reflected a more complex and layered motivational structure, including hedonic-social motives, emotional regulation, functional motives related to work endurance and productivity, and motives linked to identity and social positioning. Several typical trajectories of use were identified, including shifts from recreational to functional or introspective use and the development of frequent use under demanding working conditions. The context of drug use emerged as central in shaping subjective experiences and the perceived effects of stimulants. Participants reported using stimulants across diverse settings, including nightlife and festival scenes, chemsex environments, private environments, and professional situations, where the same substance assumed different functions depending on the context. These findings

profesionalne situacije, pri čemu ista tvar poprima različite funkcije ovisno o kontekstu. Nalazi upućuju na uporabu stimulansa kao dinamičnu i kontekstualno uvjetovanu praksu te naglašavaju važnost uključivanja korisničke perspektive u razvoj diferenciranih i kontekstualno osjetljivih pristupa prevenciji, smanjenju šteta i javnim politikama.

Ključne riječi: *stimulansi, motivi, konteksti uporabe*

UVOD

Uporaba stimulansa predstavlja složen društveni i javnozdravstveni fenomen koji se ne može adekvatno razumjeti isključivo na temelju podataka o prevalenciji. Populacijska istraživanja u Hrvatskoj pokazuju da je uporaba nedopuštenih droga relativno raširena, dok je uporaba stimulansa rjeđa. Procjenjuje se da je 4–5 % odraslih barem jednom u životu konzumiralo kokain, amfetamin ili ecstasy, dok 1–2 % navodi uporabu u posljednjih 12 mjeseci (Štimac Grbić i Glavak Tkalić, 2020). Među šesnaestogodišnjacima prevalencija uporabe stimulansa u životu iznosi oko dva posto (ESPAD Group, 2020; Markelić i sur., 2021). Iako su takvi podaci važni za praćenje trendova, oni pružaju ograničen uvid u motive, značenja i društvene kontekste koji oblikuju uporabu stimulansa u svakodnevnom životu.

Zbog toga se kvalitativna istraživanja sve češće prepoznaju kao ključna za razumijevanje iskustvenih dimenzija uporabe droga te njihove dinamične i kontekstualno uvjetovane prirode (EMCDDA, 2018; Kalamara i Škařupová, 2022; Rhodes, 2000). Dosadašnja istraživanja upućuju na to da motivi za uporabu stimulansa nisu homogeni, već raznoliki, često višeslojni i međusobno isprepleteni, pri čemu se mijenjaju ovisno o životnoj fazi, socijalnom okruženju i situacijskim zahtjevima. Razumijevanje ovih motiva ima neposredne implikacije za razvoj diferenciranih i kontekstualno osjetljivih intervencija jer se funkcije koje droga ima za korisnike razlikuju među subpopulacijama i obrascima uporabe.

Primjerice, MDMA se konzumira u različitim kontekstima, najčešće u klupskim okruženjima radi postizanja euforije i socijalne energizacije, ali i u privatnijim okruženjima zbog poticanja emocionalne otvorenosti, samouvida i osjećaja

highlight stimulant use as a dynamic, context-dependent practice and underscore the importance of incorporating user perspectives into the development of differentiated, context-sensitive prevention, harm reduction, and policy responses.

Keywords: *stimulants, motives, contexts of use*

INTRODUCTION

The use of stimulants is a complex social and public health issue that cannot be fully understood based on prevalence data alone. Population-based studies in Croatia indicate that illicit drug use is relatively widespread, while stimulant use is comparatively less common. It is estimated that 4–5% of adults have used cocaine, amphetamine, or ecstasy at least once in their lifetime, and 1–2% have used them in the past 12 months (Štimac Grbić & Glavak Tkalić, 2020). Among 16-year-olds, the lifetime prevalence of stimulant use is approximately 2% (ESPAD Group, 2020; Markelić et al., 2021). Although such data are essential for monitoring trends, they provide limited insight into the motives, meanings, and contexts that shape stimulant use in everyday life.

For this reason, qualitative research is increasingly recognised as essential for understanding the experiential aspects of drug use, as well as its dynamic and context-dependent nature (EMCDDA, 2018; Kalamara & Škařupová, 2022; Rhodes, 2000). Existing studies indicate that motives for stimulant use are diverse, often layered and interwoven, and subject to change across life stages, social environments, and situational demands. Understanding these motives has direct implications for developing differentiated and context-sensitive interventions, as the functions that drugs serve vary across subpopulations of users and patterns of use.

For example, MDMA is used in various contexts - in club settings, it is used most commonly to achieve euphoria and social energisation, but in private environments, it can be used to facilitate emotional openness, self-insight, and feelings of connectedness. Research by Elmer et al. (2024) shows that MDMA use occurs in recreational, home-based, and mixed contexts, with motives

ja povezanosti. Istraživanje Elmera i suradnika (2024) pokazuje da se uporaba MDMA-a odvija u zabavnim, kućnim i mješovitim kontekstima te da motivi variraju od euforije i energije do samouvida i kombiniranih razloga. Sudionici motivirani samouvidom češće izvještavaju o dugoročnim socio-emocionalnim dobrobitima, pri čemu većina ispitanika percipira više koristi nego šteta povezanih s uporabom MDMA-a. Ovi nalazi potvrđuju da učinci i značenja tvari nisu određeni isključivo njihovim farmakološkim svojstvima, već su snažno oblikovani kontekstom i očekivanjima korisnika.

Šire gledano, razlozi za početak uporabe stimulansa uključuju pozitivne učinke na raspoloženje, znatiželju, socijalni pritisak, dostupnost i bijeg od stresnih okolnosti (Levy i sur., 2005). S druge strane, prestanak ili smanjenje uporabe često slijede nakon negativnih iskustava, zdravstvenih zabrinutosti ili važnih životnih prijelomnica. Funkcionalni motivi, poput povećanja radne, akademske ili seksualne učinkovitosti te nošenja sa stresom, česti su među različitim skupinama korisnika stimulansa (Addison i sur., 2021; O'Donnell i sur., 2019; Spencer i sur., 2021). Studenti češće navode akademske razloge, dok zaposleni korisnici naglašavaju kognitivnu izvedbu i rekreativne svrhe (Kerley i sur., 2015; Sales i sur., 2019).

Posebnu pozornost u literaturi privlače emocionalno-regulatorni obrasci uporabe. U tim slučajevima stimulansi se konzumiraju kao sredstva smanjenja emocionalne nelagode, napetosti ili stresa. Iako se takvi obrasci mogu doživljavati kao subjektivno funkcionalni i privremeno učinkoviti, istraživanja upozoravaju da oni dugoročno ne zamjenjuju stabilne, nefarmakološke strategije regulacije emocija te mogu povećati ranjivost za ponavljanje uporabe, osobito u kontekstu kumulativnog stresa ili životnih kriza (Baker i sur., 2004). U tom se smislu govori o ograničenoj održivosti ovih strategija kroz vrijeme, bez normativnog vrednovanja njihove svrhovitosti iz perspektive samih korisnika.

Konteksti stigme, mentalnog zdravlja i socijalnih odnosa dodatno oblikuju motive uporabe stimulansa, osobito među seksualnim manjinama (Davis-Ewart i sur., 2023). Istraživanja također

ranging from euphoria and energy to self-insight, or a combination of different reasons. Participants motivated by self-insight frequently reported long-term socio-emotional benefits, and many of them perceived that MDMA use had more benefits than harm associated with it. These findings support the view that the effects and implications of the substances are not determined solely by their pharmacological properties, but are strongly shaped by context and user expectations.

More broadly, the reasons for initiating stimulant use include positive mood effects, curiosity, social pressure, availability, and escape from stressful circumstances (Levy et al., 2005). In contrast, cessation or reduction of use often follows negative experiences, health concerns, or major life transitions. Functional motives, such as enhancing work, academic, or sexual performance, as well as coping with stress, are common across different groups of stimulant users (Addison et al., 2021; O'Donnell et al., 2019; Spencer et al., 2021). Students report academic motives more frequently, whereas employed users emphasise cognitive performance and recreation as their motives for use (Kerley et al., 2015; Sales et al., 2019).

The literature pays particular attention to patterns of use related to emotional regulation, in which stimulants are used to reduce emotional discomfort, tension, or distress. Although such patterns may be experienced as subjectively functional and temporarily effective, research indicates that they do not provide a sustainable substitute for stable, non-pharmacological emotion regulation strategies and that they may increase vulnerability to repeated use, particularly under conditions of cumulative stress or life adversity (Baker et al., 2004). In this sense, their limitation lies in long-term sustainability, rather than in denying their perceived usefulness from the users' perspective.

Stigma, mental health, and social relationships further shape motivations for stimulant use, particularly among sexual minorities (Davis-Ewart et al., 2023). Studies have also shown that young adults use cocaine to enhance self-confidence, sociability, and energy (Boys et al., 2002), while

pokazuju da mladi odrasli konzumiraju koka-in radi povećanja samopouzdanja, društvenosti i energije (Boys i sur., 2002), dok noviji obrasci istodobne uporabe stimulansa i opioda ukazuju na važnost tržišnih uvjeta, funkcionalnih ciljeva i upravljanja kombiniranim učincima različitih tvari (Fredericksen i sur., 2024).

Poseban kontekst uporabe predstavlja *chemsex*, odnosno konzumacija droga prije ili tijekom seksualnih odnosa, osobito među muškarcima koji imaju spolne odnose s muškarcima. Ključni motivi *chemsexa* uključuju seksualno zadovoljstvo, povećani libido, intenzivniji užitak te pojačani osjećaj intimnosti i povezanosti (Leyva-Moral i sur., 2024; Weatherburn i sur., 2017). Istodobno, ovi obrasci uporabe mogu povećati ranjivost u vezi upravljanja rizicima, pregovaranja o granicama i traženja stručne pomoći, pri čemu stigma i nepovjerenje prema institucijama dodatno otežavaju pristup podršci (Bourne i sur., 2015). *Chemsex* se stoga u literaturi često navodi kao primjer konteksta koji zahtijeva posebno dizajnirane, integrirane i neosuđujuće intervencije koje povezuju područja seksualnog zdravlja, mentalnog zdravlja i smanjenja šteta.

Konačno, motivi za konzumaciju novih psihoaktivnih tvari, poput sintetskih katinona, uključuju želju za postizanjem učinaka sličnih klasičnim drogama uz istovremenu legalnost, bolju dostupnost, niže cijene i manjak kvalitetnih ilegalnih stimulansa na tržištu (Van Hout i Brennan, 2011).

Motivi uporabe razlikuju se ovisno o tvari, kontekstu i ciljanoj skupini, odnosno subpopulaciji. Njihovo razumijevanje ima neposredne implikacije za planiranje odgovarajućih intervencija, pri čemu je važno da su intervencije istovremeno učinkovite i prihvatljive korisnicima. Primjerice, intervencije koje ciljaju konzumente koji upotrebljavaju stimulanse radi rekreacijskih, funkcionalnih i emocionalno-regulatornih motiva uključuju edukaciju o sigurnijoj uporabi, prepoznavanje rizika, smanjenje šteta u rekreacijskim okruženjima te dostupnost savjetovanja i podrške. U slučaju *chemsexa*, važno je da intervencije ne djeluju protiv onoga što *chemsex* subjektivno „daje“, nego da se upravo na tim funkcijama užitka, regulacije emocija i osjećaja pripadnosti, grade strategije

emerging patterns of concurrent stimulant and opioid use highlight the importance of market conditions, functional goals, and the management of combined substance effects (Fredericksen et al., 2024).

A specific context of stimulant use is chemsex, defined as the use of drugs before or during sexual activity, particularly among men who have sex with men. Key motivations for chemsex include sexual pleasure, increased libido, intensified enjoyment, and enhanced feelings of intimacy and connection (Leyva-Moral et al., 2024; Weatherburn et al., 2017). At the same time, these patterns of use may increase vulnerability in terms of risk management, boundary negotiation, and help-seeking, while stigma and distrust of institutions further limits access to support (Bourne et al., 2015). Accordingly, chemsex is frequently identified in the literature as a context requiring specifically designed, integrated, and non-judgmental interventions that connect sexual health, mental health, and harm reduction approaches.

Motives for using new psychoactive substances, such as synthetic cathinones, include the desire to achieve effects similar to those experienced when using established illicit drugs, while simultaneously benefiting from legal status, greater availability, lower prices, and reduced access to high-quality illegal stimulants on the market (Van Hout & Brennan, 2011).

Motives for stimulant use vary depending on the substance, context, and target group or subpopulation. Understanding this variability has direct implications for planning appropriate interventions, which must be both effective and acceptable to users. For example, interventions targeting recreational, functional, and emotion regulation-related stimulant use may include education on safer use, risk recognition, harm reduction in recreational settings, and access to counselling and support services. In the case of chemsex, it is crucial that interventions do not undermine the subjective purpose of chemsex, such as pleasure, emotional regulation, and a sense of belonging, but instead develop harm reduction and behaviour change strategies around these perceived functions (Weatherburn et al., 2017).

smanjenja šteta i/ili promjene ponašanja (Weat-herburn i sur., 2017).

Dosadašnja istraživanja ukazuju na izrazitu kompleksnost motiva za konzumaciju stimulativnih droga, što je u skladu s literaturom koja naglašava da se motivacija za uporabu droga ne može objasniti jednim teorijskim okvirom (West, 2013). Zbog heterogenosti individualnih, socijalnih i kontekstualnih čimbenika, u ovom se radu primjenjuje kombinacija triju komplementarnih teorijskih modela koja čini konceptualni okvir za interpretaciju motiva i konteksta uporabe stimulansa: Teorija trijadnog utjecaja (Flay i Petraitis, 1994), Model afektivne obrade negativnog potkrjepljenja (Baker i sur., 2004) i Model droga–set–setting (Zinberg, 1984).

Teorija trijadnog utjecaja naglašava međudjelovanje intrapersonalnih čimbenika (npr. stavova, temperamenta i očekivanja), socijalnih utjecaja (vršnjaci i bliske osobe) te šireg društveno-kontekstualnog okvira (norme, dostupnost, kulturni i ekonomski uvjeti) u objašnjenju inicijacije uporabe droga i usvajanja povezanih normi. Model afektivne obrade negativnog potkrjepljenja upućuje na ulogu stimulansa u regulaciji neugodnih afektivnih stanja, objašnjavajući kako smanjenje napetosti, stresa ili emocionalne neugode povećava vjerojatnost ponavljanja uporabe. Zinbergov model droga–set–setting integrira farmakološka svojstva tvari, psihološka stanja i očekivanja korisnika te društveni i situacijski kontekst uporabe, omogućujući razumijevanje zašto ista osoba može konzumirati različite droge ili istu drogu u različitim okruženjima i s različitim ciljevima.

Razumijevanje motiva za konzumaciju stimulativnih droga posebno je važno u domaćem kontekstu u kojem izostaju kvalitativna istraživanja među korisnicima stimulansa. Ovaj rad nastoji ispuniti tu prazninu i ponuditi dublji uvid u iskustva, motive i kontekstualne uvjete uporabe stimulativnih droga.

CILJ I ISTRAŽIVAČKA PITANJA

Cilj je ovog istraživanja steći uvid u motive i kontekste uporabe stimulativnih droga u Republici Hrvatskoj kako bi se bolje razumjele potrebe

Existing research thus highlights the pronounced complexity of motivations for stimulant use, reinforcing the view that drug use cannot be adequately explained by a single theoretical framework (West, 2013). Given the heterogeneity of individual, social, and contextual influences, this study employs three complementary theoretical models as a conceptual framework for interpreting motives and contexts of stimulant use: the Theory of Triadic Influence (Flay & Petraitis, 1994), the Affective Processing Model of Negative Reinforcement (Baker et al., 2004), and Zinberg's Drug, Set, and Setting model (1984).

The theory of triadic influence emphasises the interaction of intrapersonal factors (such as attitudes, temperament, and expectations), social influences (including peers and significant others), and broader socio-contextual conditions (such as norms, availability, and cultural and economic factors) in explaining the initiation of drug use and the adoption of related norms. The affective processing model of negative reinforcement highlights the role of stimulants in regulating aversive affective states, explaining how reductions in stress, tension, or emotional discomfort can increase the likelihood of repeated use. Zinberg's drug, set, and setting model integrates the pharmacological properties of substances, users' psychological states and expectations, and the social and situational context of use, offering insight into why the same individual may use different substances, or the same substance, in different contexts and for different purposes.

Understanding the motives for stimulant drug use is particularly important in the Croatian context, where qualitative studies among stimulant users are scarce. This study aims to address this gap by providing deeper insight into the experiences, motivations, and contextual conditions of stimulant use from the users' perspective.

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the motives and contexts of stimulants use in the Republic of Croatia in order to better understand the needs of this population and support the develop-

ove populacije te omogućilo planiranje odgovarajućih intervencija. Kako bi se doprinijelo ostvarenju navedenog cilja, postavljena su sljedeća istraživačka pitanja:

1. Koji su motivi za konzumiranje stimulativnih droga?
2. U kojim kontekstima se konzumiraju stimulativne droge?

METODE RADA

Sudionici istraživanja

U istraživanju je sudjelovalo 24 punoljetnih osoba (13 muškaraca, 11 žena) koje su tijekom posljednjih 12 mjeseci barem jednom konzumirale neku od sljedećih droga: MDMA, ecstasy, amfetamin, metamfetamin, kokain ili sintetske katinone. Namjerni uzorak formiran je s ciljem prikupljanja dubinskih podataka o iskustvima konzumacije stimulativnih droga. Sudionici su regrutirani putem Tripsitters programa Udruge Terra (četiri sudionika), putem programa smanjenja šteta koje provode udruge Remar, Help i Institut (deset sudionika), preko proširene mreže poznanstava istraživača (šest sudionika) te metodom snježne grude (četiri sudionika). Sudionici koji su regrutirani putem proširene mreže poznanstava istraživača regrutirani su tako što su istraživači kontaktirali osobe iz svoje društvene mreže koje su, prema njihovom saznanju, imale kontakt s potencijalnim sudionicima te ih zamolili da informacije o istraživanju prosljede dalje. Tako je izbjegnut izravni osobni odnos između istraživača i sudionika, čime se smanjio rizik od osjećaja obveze za sudjelovanje i mogućih pristranosti povezanih s regrutiranjem preko osobnih poznanstava. Sudionici uključeni metodom snježne grude regrutirani su putem sudionika koji su u istraživanje ušli preko proširene mreže poznanstava istraživača. Nadalje, od ukupno 24 sudionika, 20 je sudjelovalo u polustrukturiranim intervjuima, dok su četiri sudionika sudjelovala u jednoj fokusnoj skupini.

Prosječna dob sudionika iznosi 39,6 godina (raspon: 21–55). Prema mjestu stanovanja 11 sudionika živi u Zagrebu, šest u Splitu, četiri u Puli

ment of appropriate interventions. To contribute to this objective, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the motivations for using stimulant drugs?
2. In what contexts are stimulant drugs consumed?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 24 adults participated in the study (13 men and 11 women). All participants had used at least one of the following substances in the past 12 months: MDMA, ecstasy, amphetamine, methamphetamine, cocaine, or synthetic cathinones. A purposive sample strategy was used to obtain in-depth information about the participants' experiences with stimulant use. Participants were recruited through the following: the Tripsitters programme of the Terra Association (4 participants), the harm reduction programmes run by the organisations Remar, Help, and Institut (10 participants), the researchers' extended social networks (6 participants), and snowball sampling (4 participants). Participants recruited through the researchers' extended social networks were reached indirectly: the researchers contacted individuals within their networks who, to their knowledge, had contact with potential participants and asked them to pass on information about the study. This procedure prevented direct personal relationships between researchers and participants, reducing the risk of perceived obligation to participate and potential biases associated with direct recruitment through acquaintances. Participants included through snowball sampling were referred by individuals who had themselves entered the study through the researchers' extended social networks. Of the 24 participants, 20 took part in semi-structured interviews, while 4 participated in a single focus group.

The average age of the participants was 39.6 years (range: 21–55 years). In terms of place of residence, 11 participants lived in Zagreb, six in Split, four in Pula, and three in Rijeka. Differences between urban and rural settings were not exam-

i tri u Rijeci. U istraživanju nisu ispitivane razlike između urbanih i ruralnih sredina, budući da je istraživanje obuhvatilo sudionike samo iz navedenih četiriju gradova. Četrnaest sudionika (58,3 %) procjenjuje svoj socio-ekonomski status kao nizak ili niži srednji, a njih 10 (41,7 %) kao srednji ili viši srednji. Prema obrazovanju, dva sudionika završila su osnovnu školu, 11 srednju, pet preddiplomski, pet diplomski te jedan poslijediplomski studij. Četvero je studiralo u vrijeme istraživanja. Zaposleno je bilo 13 sudionika, a zanimanja uključuju rukovodeće, znanstvene, umjetničke i uslužne poslove. Podaci o prvoj uporabi ilegalnih i stimulativnih droga prikupljeni su kako bi se razumio razvojni kontekst iskustava sudionika. Podjela na prvu uporabu i uporabu u posljednjih 12 mjeseci uvedena je kako bi se razlikovali razvojni i inicijalni motivi od onih koji oblikuju aktualnu, funkcionalnu i kontekstualno uvjetovanu konzumaciju. Razdoblje od 12 mjeseci predstavlja standardni epidemiološki i kvalitativni okvir za procjenu recentnih obrazaca ponašanja (EMCDDA, 2002), što je omogućilo analitičko praćenje transformacije funkcija stimulansa kroz životni tijek. U skladu s tim, prvu ilegalnu drogu sudionici su u prosjeku konzumirali s 15 godina (raspon: 11–24), a prvu stimulativnu drogu s 19 godina (raspon: 13–37). U odnosu na recentnu uporabu, odnosno uporabu u posljednjih 12 mjeseci, četiri sudionika konzumirala su samo stimulativne droge, dok su ostali konzumirali razne stimulativne i nestimulativne droge.

Opisani uzorak omogućio je analitičku dubinu i tematsku raznolikost s obzirom na različite tvari, profile korisnika i kontekste uporabe.

Postupak

Podaci su prikupljeni putem polustrukturiranih intervjua (Gorden, 1992; King i Horrocks, 2010; Kvale i Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin i Rubin, 2012) (prosječno trajanje 45 minuta) i jedne fokusne skupine (90 minuta), provedenih na hrvatskom jeziku u lipnju 2024. Fokusna skupina provedena je s četvero korisnika programa smanjenja šteta zbog tehničkih i organizacijskih razloga. Pri dogovaranju termina vodilo se računa o specifičnim izazovima s kojima se korisnici programa sma-

ined, as the study included participants only from the four cities listed above. Fourteen participants (58.3%) described their socio-economic status as low or lower-middle class, while 10 (41.7%) reported it as middle or upper-middle class. In terms of education, two participants had completed primary school, 11 had completed secondary school, five held a bachelor's degree, five held a master's degree, and one had a postgraduate degree. Four participants were enrolled in higher education at the time of the study. Thirteen participants were employed, with occupations spanning management, science, the arts, and service sectors. Data on the first use of illicit and stimulant drugs were collected to provide a developmental context for the participants' experiences. The distinction between first use and use within the past 12 months was introduced to differentiate initial and developmental motives from those shaping current, functional, and contextually driven patterns of use. The 12-month period was employed as a standard epidemiological and qualitative reference frame for assessing recent behavioural patterns (EMCDDA, 2002), enabling an analytical examination of the transformation of stimulant usage and its functions across the course of life. Accordingly, participants reported having tried their first illicit drug at age 15 years (range: 11-24 years) and their first stimulant drug at age 19 years (range: 13-37). In the past year, four participants had used only stimulant drugs, while the rest reported using both stimulant and non-stimulant substances.

The sample allowed for analytical depth and thematic diversity across different substances, user profiles, and contexts of use.

Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (Gorden, 1992; King & Horrocks, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012), each lasting an average of 45 minutes, and one focus group lasting 90 minutes. All sessions were conducted in Croatian in June 2024. Due to technical and organisational constraints, the focus group included four participants who were enrolled in a harm reduction programme. When scheduling data collection, particular atten-

njenja šteta mogu suočavati zbog problema ovisnosti, uključujući poteškoće s duljim čekanjem ili pridržavanjem unaprijed određenih termina. U prostoru udruge u kojoj se provodilo istraživanje četvero potencijalnih sudionika izrazilo je želju za istovremenim sudjelovanjem. Kako bi se osigurala učinkovita provedba istraživanja, umjesto pojedinačnih intervjuva odlučeno je provesti fokusnu skupinu. U metodološkom smislu, kombiniranje polustrukturiranih intervjuva i fokusne skupine omogućilo je zahvaćanje dviju različitih razina iskustva, odnosno individualnih narativa i grupnih normi. Sudionicima je objašnjena svrha i tijek istraživanja te su informirani o mogućim rizicima i koristima. Prikupljeni su osnovni socio-demografski podaci i informacije o konzumiranju droga. Intervjui i fokusna skupina su, uz pristanak, snimani; u suprotnom su istraživači vodili bilješke. Od 24 sudionika, 19 ih je dalo suglasnost za audiosnimanje, dok su za pet sudionika istraživači, tijekom i neposredno nakon intervjuva, pisali detaljne bilješke.

Prije početka svakog intervjuva sudionicima je uručen ispisan dokument *Informacije za sudionike istraživanja*, uz usmeno objašnjenje svrhe, ciljeva i postupka istraživanja, prava na odustanak u bilo kojem trenutku te načina zaštite povjerljivosti. Nakon što su imali priliku postaviti pitanja, sudionici su dali usmeni pristanak. Provođitelj intervjuva taj je pristanak dokumentirao u pisanom obliku, i to u unaprijed pripremljenom *Obrascu za provođitelje intervjuva*, koji je sadržavao datum, mjesto, šifru sudionika te potpis istraživača, čime je osigurana provjerljivost i odgovarajuća evidencija dobivenog usmenog pristanka. Svi podaci su pseudonimizirani šifrom sudionika koja se sastojala od inicijala provođitelja intervjuva i rednog broja provedenog intervjuva, a transkripti su pohranjeni na računalu glavne istraživačice tijekom pet godina. Svi podaci upotrebljavat će se isključivo u istraživačke svrhe. Sudionici nisu bili izloženi značajnom riziku ni stresu te su mogli odbiti odgovor ili prekinuti sudjelovanje bez posljedica. U istraživanju su primijenjene posebne mjere zaštite sudionika koji pripadaju ranjivim skupinama, uključujući aktivne korisnike droga iz programa smanjenja šteta. S tim sudionici-

tion was given to the specific challenges related to substance use that were faced by harm reduction service users, such as difficulties with prolonged waiting times or adhering to pre-scheduled appointments. At the organisation's premises, four potential participants expressed a preference to participate together. To ensure efficient research procedures, a focus group was held, instead of conducting individual interviews. Methodologically, combining semi-structured interviews and a focus group enabled the exploration of two distinct levels of experience: individual narratives and group norms. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and procedures, as well as its potential risks and benefits. Basic socio-demographic data and information on drug use were collected. After receiving consent from the participants, the interviews and the focus group were audio-recorded; otherwise, detailed notes were taken by the researchers. Of the 24 participants, 19 consented to audio recording, and for the other five participants, detailed notes were taken during and immediately after the interviews.

Before each interview, participants received a printed Participant Information Sheet and a verbal explanation of the study's purpose, aims, and procedures, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. After having the opportunity to ask questions, participants gave informed verbal consent. The interviewer recorded this consent in writing using a pre-prepared Interviewer Consent Form, which included the date, location, participant code, and the researcher's signature, ensuring verifiability and proper documentation of verbal consent. All data were pseudonymised using participant codes comprising the interviewer's initials and the sequential interview number, and the transcripts were stored on the lead researcher's computer for five years. All data will be used exclusively for research purposes. Participants were not exposed to significant risk or distress, and they could refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study without consequences.

Special safeguards were implemented to protect participants from vulnerable groups, including active drug users enrolled in harm reduction programmes. The interviews and the focus group with

ma, intervjui i fokusna skupina provodili su se u *drop-in* centrima organizacija koje pružaju usluge smanjenja šteta, u sigurnom i poznatom okruženju za sudionike. Iako stručnjaci organizacija nisu prisustvovali intervjuima, bili su dostupni u prostoru udruge, a sudionici su unaprijed informirani o mogućnosti da im se obrate za savjetodavnu ili emocionalnu podršku prije ili nakon sudjelovanja.

Tijekom provođenja intervjuja vodilo se računa o dobrobiti sudionika tako da su istraživači pratili znakove emocionalne nelagode, nudili pauzu ili prekid sudjelovanja. Nadalje, pitanja u intervjuu pažljivo su formulirana kako bi se izbjeglo poticanje osjećaja stigme. Sudionicima je naglašeno da nije potrebno dijeliti informacije koje bi im mogle izazvati nelagodu te da mogu preskočiti bilo koje pitanje bez objašnjenja. Time je osigurano da sudjelovanje bude u potpunosti dobrovoljno, sigurno i u skladu s etičkim standardima istraživanja s ranjivim populacijama.

Kao kompenzaciju za sudjelovanje, sudionici su mogli odabrati poklon bon u vrijednosti 30 EUR ili ulaznicu za glazbeni događaj. Istraživanje je odobrilo Etičko povjerenstvo Hrvatskog zavoda za javno zdravstvo (KLASA 641-02/24-12/1, URBROJ: 117-15-24-2, 5. lipnja 2024.).

METODE OBRADE PODATAKA

Za analizu podataka primijenjena je tematska analiza (Braun i Clarke, 2006; 2013), kao fleksibilna metoda identificiranja, organiziranja i opisivanja obrazaca značenja unutar kvalitativnog materijala. Analitički proces slijedio je preporučene faze ove metode, uključujući: (1) upoznavanje s podacima, (2) generiranje inicijalnih kodova, (3) traženje tema, (4) pregled tema, (5) definiranje i imenovanje tema te (6) izradu završnog izvješaja.

Proces analize započeo je upoznavanjem s podacima, odnosno višekratnim čitanjem transkripta intervjuja i bilješki kako bi se ostvarilo detaljno razumijevanje sadržaja. Tijekom transkribiranja uklanjale su se poštapalice i redundancije uz zadržavanje sadržajne vjernosti iskazima sudionika. Za pet intervjuja bez audiozapisa upotrebljavale su se proširene bilješke izrađene neposredno nakon

the above-mentioned participants were conducted in drop-in centres run by organisations providing harm reduction services, ensuring a safe and familiar environment. Although organisational staff did not attend the interviews, they were present on the premises, and participants were informed in advance of the option to seek counselling or emotional support before or after participation.

Throughout the data collection process, researchers closely monitored participants' wellbeing, offering breaks or the option to discontinue participation, in case of discomfort. Interview questions were formulated to minimise the elicitation of feelings of stigma. Participants were reminded that they were not required to answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable and that they could skip questions without providing a reason. These procedures ensured that participation remained voluntary, safe, and aligned with the ethical standards for research involving vulnerable populations.

As compensation, participants could choose between a €30 gift voucher or a ticket to a music event. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Croatian Institute of Public Health (CLASS: 641-02/24-12/1, REG. NO.: 117-15-24-2, 5 June 2024).

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013), a flexible method for identifying, organising, and describing patterns of meaning within qualitative material. The data analysis process followed the recommended phases of this method: (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report.

The analysis began with the "familiarisation" phase involving repeated reading of interview transcripts and notes to gain a detailed understanding of the content. During transcription, filler words and redundancies were removed, while preserving the substantive fidelity of participants' accounts. For the five interviews without audio recordings, expanded notes were written immedi-

provedbe intervjuja, koje su potom strukturirane sukladno analitičkom okviru.

U drugom koraku generirani su inicijalni kodovi. Kodiranje je provedeno ručno, postupkom redak-po-redak, kako bi se identificirale relevantne jedinice značenja. Inicijalni kodovi generirani su induktivno, polazeći od sadržaja podataka, pri čemu su kodirani prvenstveno semantički elementi, uz uključivanje latentnih obilježja kada je to bilo teorijski opravdano. Kodovi nisu predstavljali mehaničko bilježenje jezičnih formulacija, već sustavno označavanje segmenata koji upućuju na potencijalno važna značenja. Metaforički ili idiomatski izrazi sudionika zadržani su kada su jasno i konzistentno doprinosili razumijevanju sadržaja. Primjerice, kod *Kao kofein* svrstan je u kategoriju zabave jer se odnosio na energizirajući učinak koji sudionici povezuju s lakšim sudjelovanjem u druženju i noćnim izlascima, dok su kodovi *Otvora na druženje* i *Stvara toplinu u međuljudskim odnosima* uključeni u kategoriju društveni pritisak jer sudionici opisuju implicitno očekivanje da droga olakšava interakciju i uklapa ih u grupnu dinamiku. Drugim riječima, riječ je o internaliziranoj normi, a ne o farmakološkom učinku samom po sebi.

Materijal su neovisno kodirale dvije istraživačice, pri čemu je cilj bio osigurati dosljednost u analitičkom postupku. Inicijalni kodovi uspoređivali su se i usklađivali tijekom timskih sastanaka, gdje su se razlike u kodiranju razmatrale i rješavale kroz analitički dijalog. Ovakav pristup omogućio je provjeru stabilnosti kodnog sustava i povećanje transparentnosti postupka.

U trećoj fazi inicijalni kodovi grupirani su u kategorije koje su predstavljale organizacijsku razinu i koje su omogućile strukturiranje podataka. Kategorije su potom poslužile kao temelj za razvoj preliminarnih tematskih sklopova. U skladu s načelima tematske analize, ovaj postupak uključivao je prepoznavanje obrazaca unutar podataka te identificiranje središnjih ideja koje povezuju pojedine kategorije.

Ponavljajući obrasci u iskazima sudionika ukazali su na dostatnu tematsku saturaciju u odnosu na analitički fokus istraživanja. Preliminar-

ately after the interviews and subsequently structured according to the analytic framework.

In the second step, initial codes were generated. Coding was conducted manually, using a line-by-line approach to identify relevant units of meaning. Initial codes were generated inductively from the data, with a primary focus on semantic content, while latent features were included when theoretically justified. Codes did not represent a mechanical registration of linguistic expressions, but rather a systematic labelling of data segments indicating potentially meaningful patterns. Metaphorical or idiomatic expressions used by participants were retained when they clearly and consistently contributed to the interpretation of the data. For example, the code '*Like caffeine*' was assigned to the category of pleasure, as it referred to energising effects associated by participants with making socialising and participation in nightlife easier. In contrast, the codes '*Opens up for socialising*' and '*Creates warmth in interpersonal relationships*' were included in the category of social pressure, as participants described implicit expectations that drug use facilitates interaction and enables them to fit into group dynamics. In other words, these codes reflected internalised social norms, rather than direct pharmacological effects.

The material was coded independently by two researchers to ensure consistency during data analysis. Initial codes were compared and aligned during team meetings, where differences in coding were examined and resolved through analytic dialogue. This approach allowed for the verification of the stability of the coding system and enhanced the transparency of the analytic process.

In the third phase, initial codes were grouped into categories, which served as an organisational level and enabled structuring of the data. These categories then formed the basis for the development of preliminary thematic clusters. In line with the principles of thematic analysis, this process involved recognising patterns within the data and identifying central ideas that connected individual categories.

Recurring patterns across interviews indicated sufficient thematic saturation for the analytical fo-

ni tematski sklopovi pregledani su i revidirani u iterativnom procesu u kojem su procjenjivane njihova unutarnja koherentnost i međusobna jasnoća. Preklapajuće ili sadržajno nedovoljno diferencirane jedinice uklonjene su ili reorganizirane. Konačno definirane teme odražavaju dosljedne i prepoznatljive obrasce unutar podataka. Teme su opisane na temelju pripadajućih kategorija i kodova te potkrijepljene relevantnim citatima sudionika, pri čemu je svakom sudioniku dodijeljen broj koji označava broj intervju s tom osobom podijeljen s ukupnim brojem intervju.

Tri istraživača sudjelovala su u različitim fazama analitičkog postupka, uključujući kodiranje, reviziju kodnog okvira i raspravu o preliminarnim temama. Timske rasprave služile su za postizanje metodološke dosljednosti i preciziranja analitičkih odluka, pri čemu su se raspravom razjašnjavale razlike u tumačenju podataka. Ovakav pristup omogućio je stabilnost analitičkog procesa, uz istodobno izbjegavanje formalnih mjera interkoder-pouzdanosti, koje nisu nužne u okviru tematske analize.

Kako bi se umanjio potencijalni utjecaj istraživačkih pretpostavki, tijekom kodiranja i razvoja tema istraživači su vodili kratke bilješke o interpretativnim odlukama, dvojabama i mogućim alternativnim tumačenjima. Ove su bilješke služile kao osnovica za timske rasprave na kojima su istraživači uspoređivali analitičke pristupe kako bi se povećala analitička jasnoća i dosljednost.

Grupni format fokusne skupine omogućio je uvid u zajedničke norme, grupnu dinamiku i međusobno usklađivanje narativa, što nije u potpunosti vidljivo u individualnim intervjuima. Istodobno, fokusna skupina mogla je potaknuti socijalno poželjne iskaze ili suzdržavanje od dijeljenja osobnih iskustava, osobito zbog potencijalnog osjećaja izloženosti u grupnom okruženju. Podaci dobiveni fokusnom skupinom stoga su upotrijebljeni komplementarno, kao izvor za prepoznavanje grupnih obrazaca i provjeru konzistencije tema, dok su individualni intervjui ostali primarni izvor dubinskih osobnih narativa. Ovakva kombinacija metoda povećava širinu uvida, ali istovremeno uvodi ograničenje u pogledu us-

cus. Preliminary thematic clusters were reviewed and revised in an iterative process in which their internal coherence and distinction from one another were assessed. Overlapping or insufficiently differentiated units were removed or reorganised. The final themes reflected coherent and identifiable patterns within the data. Themes were described based on the corresponding categories and codes and were supported by relevant participant quotations. Each participant was assigned a number, indicating the number of interviews with that individual, divided by the total number of interviews.

Three researchers participated in different stages of the analytic process, including coding, revising the coding framework, and discussing preliminary themes. Team discussions were used to enhance methodological consistency and refine analytic decisions, with disagreements in interpretation resolved through deliberation. This approach ensured stability in the analytic process, while avoiding formal measures of inter-coder reliability, which are not required within thematic analyses.

To mitigate the potential influence of researchers' assumptions, brief reflexive notes were kept during coding and theme development, documenting interpretative decisions, uncertainties, and possible alternative interpretations. These notes formed the basis for team discussions, in which researchers compared analytical approaches to enhance clarity and consistency.

The group format of the focus group provided insight into shared norms, group dynamics, and the mutual alignment of narratives that are not fully accessible through individual interviews. However, the focus group setting may have encouraged socially desirable responses or limited the sharing of personal experiences, particularly due to a potential sense of exposure in the group context. Data obtained through the focus group were therefore used in a complementary way, primarily to identify group-level patterns and to check the consistency of themes, while individual interviews remained the main source of in-depth personal narratives. This combination of methods enhances the breadth of insight, but also introduc-

poredivosti dubine podataka između dvaju formata prikupljanja.

Konačno su identificirana tri tematska sklopa koja obuhvaćaju ključne obrasce u podacima: (1) motivi za prvu konzumaciju, (2) motivi recentne konzumacije i (3) konteksti uporabe stimulativnih droga. Ovi tematski sklopovi predstavljaju krajnji analitički ishod, dok kategorije zadržavaju organizacijsku ulogu. Teme identificirane tematskom analizom dodatno su interpretirane u raspravi u odnosu na relevantnu literaturu i teorijske okvire, kako bi se osigurala cjelovitost i teorijska utemeljenost nalaza.

Citati u radu prevedeni su s hrvatskog na engleski jezik radi pripreme rukopisa. Kako bi se osigurala točnost i jasnoća, prijevode su provjerile sve istraživačice.

Primjer kodiranja prikazan je u Tablici 1.

es limitations regarding the comparability of data depth across the two data collection formats.

Ultimately, three thematic clusters were identified, capturing the key patterns in the data: (1) motives for first use, (2) motives for recent use, and (3) contexts of stimulant use. These clusters represent the final analytic outcome, while the categories served an organisational function. The themes identified through thematic analysis were further interpreted in the discussion with reference to relevant literature and theoretical frameworks to ensure a comprehensive and theoretically grounded analysis.

Quotations used in the manuscript were translated from Croatian to English during manuscript preparation. To ensure accuracy and clarity, all translations were reviewed by the three researchers.

Tablica 1. – *Primjer kodiranja* / **Table 1.** *Example of coding*

Text	Code	Category	Theme
It's mostly <u>connected to having a good time</u> . And with a certain group of people I occasionally hang out with who prefer that kind of <u>enhancement of fun</u> . <u>Alongside the usual stuff: going out, clubs, alcohol</u> .	<i>Enhancement of fun</i>	Fun	Motivations for use in the past 12 months
In Croatia, we don't really have gay clubs. It's more about <u>private parties</u> . <u>All sorts of substances are used there</u> .	<i>Chemsex and private parties</i>	Chemsex	Context of use

REZULTATI

Sukladno preporuci koju daje Patton (2002), rezultati su prikazani tako da odgovaraju na postavljena istraživačka pitanja. Teme su opisane pripadajućim kategorijama i potkrijepljene numeriranim izjavama sudionika (broj intervjua pojedinog sudionika / ukupan broj intervjua). Prikaz kodova uključen je isključivo radi ilustracije analitičkog procesa i transparentnosti rada.

Motivi za konzumiranje stimulativnih droga

Razumijevanje motivacije zahtijeva razlikovanje poticaja za prvu konzumaciju od onih koji oblikuju recentnu uporabu. Na temelju analize podataka jasno se izdvajaju različite dinamike pa je tako prva konzumacija najčešće situacijski, razvojno i društveno uvjetovana, dok je recen-

RESULTS

In line with the recommendation provided by Patton (2002), the results are presented in a manner that directly addresses the stated research questions. The themes are described through their corresponding categories and supported with numbered participant quotations (interview number/total number of interviews). The presentation of codes is included solely to illustrate the analytic process and enhance the study's transparency.

Motivations for using stimulant drugs

Understanding the motivations for using stimulant drugs requires distinguishing between the drivers of initial use and those shaping recent patterns of use. Based on the data analysis, distinct dynamics emerge: initial use is most often condi-

tna uporaba funkcionalnija i snažnije povezana s emocionalnom regulacijom, izvedbenim ciljevima i kontekstualnim uvjetima uporabe.

Motivi za prvu konzumaciju stimulativnih droga

Znatiželja

Kodovi: Potraga za novim iskustvima, Želja da se sve proba, Istraživanje nepoznatog, Zabranjeno voće u adolescenciji, Pričali su da je dobro, Neznanje o djelovanju droge, Radoznalost bez obzira na posljedice

Znatiželja je najčešće opisana kao pokretač prvog eksperimentiranja i snažno se isprepliće s razvojnim obilježjima adolescencije. Sedam sudionika opisuje prvu konzumaciju kao dio istraživanja identiteta, prelaska granica i isprobavanja zabranjenog, pri čemu se percipirane norme unutar vršnjačke skupine pokazuju ključnima:

“Radoznalost najviše od svega jer se već proširilo po razredu....”

“Rekli su mi da ne probam. E, sad ću probati kao da vidim zabranjeno voće. Tako je uvijek kad si u toj nekoj adolescentskoj dobi, što te najviše privlači, ono što ne smiješ raditi.” (18/24)

Znatiželja se pojavljuje kao oblik inicijacije, budući da sudionici opisuju da je nužno „prijeći granicu“ kako bi se potvrdili pred sobom ili pred vršnjacima. Prva konzumacija pritom nije nužno planirana, već se ona događa u trenutku u kojem znatiželja i društvena situacija postaju kompatibilni.

Zabava

Kodovi: Drugačija zabava, Oslobađanje i komunikacija, Duža zabava

Motiv zabave pojavljuje se kao želja za pojačavanjem intenziteta društvenog iskustva. Pet sudionika opisuje da je droga u prvim eksperimentima imala funkciju pojačivača energije, društvenosti ili otvorenosti. U tim opisima zabava se ne prikazuje samo kao konzumacija glazbe ili plesa, nego kao dio rituala druženja u kojem droga omogućuje lakši ulazak u zajednički ritam:

tioned by situational, developmental, and social factors, whereas recent use is more functional and more strongly linked to emotional regulation, performance-related goals, and contextual conditions.

Motivations for first-time use of stimulant drugs

Curiosity

Codes: Seeking new experiences, Desire to try everything, Exploring the unknown, Forbidden fruit in adolescence, Heard it was good, Lack of knowledge about the drug's effects, Curiosity regardless of consequences

Curiosity was most often described as the main driver of initial experimentation and it was closely linked to developmental characteristics of adolescence. Seven participants described that the motivations for their first-time use were identity exploration, boundary crossing, and experimentation with the forbidden fruit, with perceived peer group norms emerging as a key influence:

“It was more about curiosity, and then later the effect itself, which actually suited my personality quite well.” (17/24)

“They told me not to try it. So, I did, just to experience forbidden fruit. That's how it always is when you're a teenager, you're most drawn to what you're not allowed to do.” (18/24)

Curiosity emerges as a form of initiation of drug use, as participants described the need to “cross a boundary” in order to prove it to themselves or to their peers. Initial use is not necessarily planned, but occurs when curiosity and the social situation align.

Fun

Codes: A different kind of fun, Disinhibition and communication, Prolonged partying

The motive of pleasure appears as a desire to intensify social experiences. Five participants described their substance use as a means to enhance energy, sociability, or openness during early experimentation. In these accounts, pleasure is not presented simply as enjoying music or dancing, but as part of a social ritual in which the substance enables easier participation in a shared social rhythm:

“Probao sam stimulanse jer sam se htio zabaviti, vidio sam da su svi spaljeni oko mene pa idem i ja probati.” (9/24).

“Meni se svidio efekt, baš me ono nekako oslobodilo i bio sam puno prijemčiv i za komunikaciju i za plesanje i puno duže sam mogao izdržati nego što bi inače izdržao.” (17/24).

Vidljivo je kako motiv zabave uključuje elemente samoosnaživanja te da sudionici konzumiraju drogu kako bi postali verzija sebe koja je društveno poželjnija, izdržljivija ili emocionalno oslobođenija. Prva uporaba se tako predstavlja kao ulazak u „poboljšanu“ verziju društvene interakcije.

Društveni pritisak

Kodovi: Svi su konzumirali, Otvara na druženje, Stvara toplinu u međuljudskim odnosima, Zbog zaljubljenosti / važne osobe

Šest sudionika ističe kako prva konzumacija nije bila rezultat samostalne odluke, već reakcija na implicitne ili eksplicitne norme grupe. Sudionici opisuju prvu konzumaciju kao situacije u kojima je odluka bila uvjetovana vršnjačkim normama, željom za pripadanjem ili utjecajem emocionalno važnih osoba (npr. partnera):

„Stimulanse sam probala jer su mi ponudili na jednom rođendanu. Bilo je hrpa koke, svi su uzeli pa sam probala i ja.“ (8/24)

“Moj razlog je zaljubljenost. Zaljubljen sam bio, zbog te osobe, zbog njega, vidio to i ušao...” (19/24)

“Moje društvo je počelo, svi su krenuli. Postao sam outsajder među njima i jednostavno sam rekao jedan dan: ‘Dobro, ajde, daj mi da vidim u čemu je tolika fora.’” (22/24).

Ovi nalazi pokazuju kako pritisak nije nužno nametnut, nego je često internaliziran. Sudionici žele biti dio zajedničkog trenutka i izbjeći iskustvo isključenosti. Prva konzumacija tako postaje sredstvo uspostavljanja i održavanja bliskih odnosa.

Okolnosti odrastanja

Kodovi: Dijete dilera, Bez podrške obitelji, Roditelji daju bez očekivanja

“I tried stimulants because I wanted to have fun. I saw everyone around me was totally high, so I thought why not try it too.” (9/24).

“I liked the effect, it really made me feel free, and I was much more open to communication and dancing. I could keep going much longer than I normally would.” (17/24)

It is evident that the motive of pleasure includes elements of self-enhancement, with participants using substances to become more socially desirable, more resilient, or emotionally disinhibited versions of themselves. Initial use is, thus, presented as the entry point into an “enhanced” form of social interaction.

Social pressure

Codes: Everyone was using, Facilitates social bonding, Creates warmth in interpersonal relations, Influence of romantic/significant persons

Six participants emphasised that their initial use was not the result of an individual decision, but rather a response to implicit or explicit group norms. Participants described their first use as occurring in situations where decisions were shaped by peer norms, a desire to belong, or the influence of emotionally significant others (e.g., partners):

“I tried stimulants because someone offered them to me at a birthday party. There was a lot of coke, everyone was doing it, so I tried it too.” (8/24)

“My reason was love. I was in love with that person, because of him, I saw it and joined in...” (19/24)

“My group started using, everyone was doing it. I became an outsider among them, and one day I just said, ‘Alright then, let me see what all the fuss is about.’” (22/24)

These findings indicate that pressure is not necessarily imposed, but it is often internalised. The participants sought to be part of shared moments and to avoid exclusion. Initial use, thus, becomes a means of establishing and maintaining close relationships.

Upbringing circumstances

Codes: Child of a dealer, Lack of family support, Parents giving without expectations

U narativima triju sudionika droga se pojavljuje kao dio svakodnevice još prije prve uporabe. Sudionici koji su odrastali u okruženjima u kojima je droga bila prisutna često opisuju početak konzumacije kao nešto što se podrazumijevalo ili nije zahtijevalo posebnu odluku. U tim slučajevima dostupnost i obiteljska dinamika oblikuju kontekst koji normalizira upotrebu:

“Ja sam dijete diler. Tata mi je bio diler kokaina. Obitelj mi nije bila baš podržavajuća i sve što sam vidio doma bilo je to.” (22/24)

“Razlog zato što je imao bogate mamu i tatu, kao i ja, koji su davali. Iz nerada, prvo iz nerada. Iz više razloga, bogatstva, ali i nerada.” (15/24).

Takve okolnosti stvaraju okruženje u kojemu prvi kontakt s drogom često nije rezultat aktivne odluke, nego posljedica dostupnosti, uočenih modela ponašanja i nedostatka zaštitnih čimbenika.

Slika 1. prikazuje kategorije koje strukturiraju temu Motivi za prvu konzumaciju.

In the narratives of three participants, drugs featured as part of everyday life, even before first use. Participants who grew up in environments where drugs were present often described initiation as something that was taken for granted or did not require a deliberate decision to be made. In these cases, availability and family dynamics created a context that normalised drug use:

“I’m a child of a dealer. My dad was a cocaine dealer. My family wasn’t really supportive, and that’s all I ever saw at home.” (22/24)

“The reason was that he had rich parents, just like me, who gave freely. Out of idleness at first. For multiple reasons, wealth also boredom.” (15/24)

Such circumstances create an environment where initial contact with drugs is often not the result of an active decision, but rather a consequence of availability, observed behavioural models, and a lack of protective factors.

Figure 1 illustrates the categories that structure the theme *Motivations for First-Time Use*.

Slika 1. - Kategorije koje strukturiraju temu Motivi za prvu konzumaciju / Figure 1. Categories structuring the theme Motivations for first-time use

MOTIVATIONS FOR FIRST-TIME USE	Curiosity
	Fun
	Social pressure
	Upbringing circumstances

Analiza upućuje na to da se prva uporaba stimulansa ne može razumjeti kao izolirana odluka, već kao rezultat interakcije dostupnosti, identitetskih potreba i dinamika odnosa. Motivacijski obrasci pokazuju kako socijalni i razvojni konteksti oblikuju subjektivno značenje droge, čineći je funkcionalnim odgovorom na specifične emocionalne, socijalne ili situacijske zahtjeve.

The analysis indicates that initial stimulant use cannot be understood as an isolated decision, but rather as the outcome of interactions among availability, identity-related needs, and relational dynamics. Motivational patterns show how social and developmental contexts shape the subjective meaning of substances, making them functional responses to specific emotional, social, or situational demands.

Motivi za konzumaciju stimulativnih droga u posljednjih 12 mjeseci

Za razliku od prve uporabe, recentna konzumacija stimulansa pokazuje znatno raznovrsnije i kompleksnije obrasce motivacije. Sudionici više ne govore samo o isprobavanju i socijalnim prilikama, nego stimulativne droge opisuju kao sredstva koja preuzimaju određene funkcije u njihovom svakodnevnom emocionalnom, socijalnom ili radnom životu. Droge se doživljavaju kao alat s jasno prepoznatim funkcijama, koje se mijenjaju ovisno o zahtjevima konteksta, osobnim izazovima i ciljevima. Pritom mnogi motivi djeluju istovremeno, a sudionici ih često doživljavaju kao isprepletene.

Zabava

Kodovi: Dodatak zabavi, Kao kofein, Poboljšavanje doživljaja, Pomoć u zabavljanju drugih, Kao nagrada

Pet sudionika navodi kako i dalje često konzumiraju stimulanse u svrhu poboljšanja iskustva zabave, ali u recentnoj uporabi taj motiv poprima funkcionalniji karakter nego kod prve konzumacije. Nije riječ samo o želji za energijom ili euforijom, nego o namjeri stvaranja određenog društvenog okvira i održavanjem dinamike izlaska. Droga služi kao alat kojim se regulira razina angažmana, društvenosti i izdržljivosti:

„To je u principu vezano uz neku zabavu. I uz neko društvo s kojim se povremeno družim i koje preferira taj dodatak zabavi. Uz ono standardno, izlazak, klub, alkohol.“ (3/24).

Neki od sudionika koji ističu motiv zabave opisuju važnost interpersonalne dimenzije zabave te navode kako im droga pomaže da djeluju karizmatičnije, zabavnije ili komunikativnije:

“Pomaže mi da budem pričljiv, zabavniji i imam više inspiracije za zabavljati ljude i lupati gluposti, ali to je kontrolirano korištenje.” (22/24).

Motiv zabave u recentnoj uporabi nije shvaćen samo kao hedonizam, nego kao način upravljanja vlastitim društvenim nastupom i održavanja uključenosti u određene grupe. Zabava tako postaje oblik socijalne regulacije.

Motivations for the use of stimulant drugs in the past 12 months

In contrast to initial use, recent stimulant consumption shows significantly more diverse and complex motivational patterns. Participants no longer spoke only of experimentation and social opportunities, but they described stimulant drugs as substances that serve specific functions in their everyday emotional, social, or working lives. Drugs were seen as tools with clearly recognised functions that shift according to contextual demands, personal challenges, and individual goals. Multiple motives often operated simultaneously and they were commonly experienced by the participants as being interconnected.

Fun

Codes: Enhancement of fun, Intensifying experiences, Assisting in entertaining others, Used as a reward

Five participants reported that they continued to use stimulants frequently to enhance recreational experiences; however, the motive for their recent drug use had become more functional than during the initial experimentation phase. Rather than simply seeking energy or euphoria, participants described stimulant use as a way to intentionally create a particular social atmosphere and sustain the dynamics of social outings. In this context, substances served as tools for regulating engagement, sociability, and endurance:

“It’s basically related to partying. And to a group of people I occasionally hang out with, who prefer that extra element of fun. Along with the usual – going out, clubs, alcohol.” (3/24).

Some participants who emphasised the motive of pleasure highlighted the interpersonal dimension of enjoyment, noting that substance use helped them appear more charismatic, entertaining, or communicative:

“It helps me be more talkative, more fun, and gives me more inspiration to entertain people and talk nonsense, but that’s controlled use.” (22/24).

In their recent usage of stimulants, the motive of pleasure was not considered solely as hedonism, but rather as a means of managing social performance and maintaining involvement in par-

Opuštanje i nošenje sa stresom

Kodovi: Kod nervoze, Paše za opuštanje, Sama u stresnim situacijama

Unatoč stimulativnom učinku, sudionici opisuju stimulativne droge i kao sredstva koja im omogućuju emocionalno olakšanje ili privremeno rasterećenje od svakodnevnih obaveza i pritiska. Ova upotreba uključuje subjektivni doživljaj smirenosti ili mentalnog rasterećenja, čak i kada fiziološki pokazatelji ukazuju na suprotno:

„Gle, posao je stresan i zato mi paše da izađem, a kad izađem onda se i opustim.“ (9/24)

U iskazima triju sudionika, stimulans omogućuje odmak od emocionalno preplavljujućih stanja. Sudionici opisuju osjećaj privremene kontrole nad situacijama koje im inače izazivaju tjeskobu ili napetost. Funkcija tvari postaje subjektivno smanjenje opterećenja, neovisno o samom farmakološkom profilu.

Dio sudionika navodi kako učestalije konzumiraju kad se žele opustiti, a jedna sudionica navodi kako stresan posao izdržava opuštanjem pomoću stimulativnih droga:

„Znam uzeti stimulanse, ali uvijek sama u tim (stresnim) situacijama.“ (11/24).

Nošenje s neugodnim emocijama i mentalnim problemima

Kodovi: Loše psihofizičko stanje, Neugodne emocije, Emocionalni nemiri i problemi, Jedini način za osjećaj sreće, Rad na mentalnim problemima

U ovoj kategoriji stimulansi poprimaju jasnu emocionalnu funkciju. Pet sudionika opisuje tjeskobu, potištenost, unutarnje nemire ili osjećaj emocionalne blokade kao izravne pokretače konzumacije. U nekim slučajevima stimulansi predstavljaju jedini način postizanja osjećaja olakšanja ili stabilnosti:

„...ja plačem, raspadam se svaki dan. I ok, ide rješenje stimulansi, to će me izbaciti, dobit ću tu neku energiju, samopouzdanje...“ (4/24)

“Mislim, tu bi prvo istaknula to nekakvo mentalno zdravlje i generalno te neke mentalne

tical groups. Pleasure, thus, becomes a form of social regulation.

Relaxation and coping with stress

Codes: When feeling nervous, Good for relaxation, Alone in stressful situations

Despite their stimulating effects, participants also described stimulant drugs as a means of achieving emotional relief or temporary respite from everyday obligations and pressures. This use involved a subjective experience of calmness or mental release, even when physiological indicators suggested the opposite:

“Look, the job is stressful, and that’s why I like going out, and when I go out, I also relax.” (9/24)

In the accounts of three participants, stimulants enabled them to distance themselves from emotionally overwhelming states. Participants described a sense of temporary control over situations that would otherwise provoke anxiety or tension. The function of the substance, thus, became a subjectively perceived reduction of burden, regardless of its pharmacological profile.

Some participants reported using stimulants more frequently when seeking relaxation, and one participant described coping with a stressful job by using stimulant drugs to unwind:

“I do take stimulants, but always on my own in those (stressful) situations.” (11/24)

Coping with unpleasant emotions and mental health issues

Codes: Poor psychophysical condition, Unpleasant emotions, Emotional turmoil and issues, The only way to feel happiness, Working on mental health issues

Within this category, stimulants serve a clear emotional function. Five participants described anxiety, low mood, inner restlessness, or feelings of emotional blockage as direct drivers of drug use. In some cases, stimulants were perceived as the only means of achieving relief or stability:

“...I cry, I fall apart every day. And okay, the solution is stimulants, they’ll lift me up, I’ll get some energy, confidence...” (4/24)

“I mean, I would first highlight mental health and, generally, some of those mental issues.

probleme. Možda te teškoće s kojima sam se ja nosila.” (20/24)

Sudionici koji konzumiraju stimulativne droge u svrhu nošenja s neugodnim emocijama i mentalnim problemima opisuju drogu kao sredstvo koje nadomještava odsutne mehanizme regulacije ili smanjuje emocionalnu bol. U tim situacijama stimulans ne pruža samo ugodu, nego i privremeni osjećaj normalnosti, što pokazuje da droga dobiva funkciju samoregulacijskog mehanizma.

Povezanost sa sobom

Kodovi: MDMA za uvid u sebe, MDMA za pozitivnije razmišljanje, Povezanost sa sobom i samospoznaja, Kontakt sa sobom

Tri sudionika opisuju da im stimulansi, najčešće MDMA, omogućuju emocionalni uvid, otvaranje prema vlastitim osjećajima ili ponovno povezivanje sa sobom u situacijama emocionalnog preopterećenja ili životnih promjena:

„Kada su bile neke malo teže situacije u životu, tipa gubitak voljene osobe i slično. U tim situacijama sam ga znao koristiti, ne samo zbog opuštanja, nego i zbog te konekcije sam sa sobom.“ (2/24)

„Stimulansi su tu da mi pomognu da osjetim nešto što mi je teže osjetiti kad nisam pod utjecajem, npr. osjećaje dublje osjećam, dodir, samoga sebe bolje osjećam, svoje tijelo bolje osjećam, a sve zahvaljujući MDMA.“ (9/24)

U ovim situacijama stimulans se upotrebljava kao alat za pristup emocionalnom sadržaju koji je inače nedostupan ili pretežak. Sudionici opisuju iskustvo gdje droga otvara prostor za suočavanje s potisnutim emocijama ili refleksiju o vlastitim postupcima. Iz navedenog je vidljivo kako ovaj motiv pokazuje evoluciju od socijalno uvjetovane prvotne uporabe prema intrapsihičkoj funkciji, što ukazuje na kompleksnost motiva.

Povezanost s drugima

Kodovi: Poistovjećivanje s drugima, Bolje međusobno razumijevanje

MDMA i slične droge konzumiraju se i u svrhu povećanja interpersonalne povezanosti. Dva sudionika opisuju dublju emocionalnu otvorenost,

Maybe the difficulties I was dealing with.” (20/24)

Participants who used stimulant drugs to cope with unpleasant emotions and mental health difficulties described these substances as a means of compensating for absent regulatory mechanisms or reducing emotional pain. In such situations, stimulants provided not only pleasure, but also a temporary sense of normality, indicating that the substance assumed a self-regulatory function.

Connection with oneself

Codes: MDMA for self-awareness, MDMA for more positive thinking, Connection with oneself and self-awareness, Contact with oneself

Three participants described stimulants, most commonly MDMA, as enabling emotional insight, openness to their own feelings, or reconnection with the self during periods of emotional overload or life transitions:

“When there were some tougher situations in life, like the loss of a loved one and so on. In those situations, I used it not just to relax but also for that connection with myself.” (2/24)

“Stimulants are here to help me feel things that are harder to feel when I’m not under the influence, for example, I feel emotions and touch more deeply, I feel myself more clearly, I feel my body more clearly, and that’s all thanks to MDMA.” (9/24)

In these situations, stimulants were used as tools to access emotional content that would otherwise be inaccessible or too overwhelming. Participants described experiences in which the substance created space to confront suppressed emotions or reflect on their own actions. This illustrates how such motives evolve from socially conditioned initial experimentation to an intrapsychic function, underscoring the complexity of motivational patterns.

Connection with others

Codes: Identifying with others, Better mutual understanding

MDMA and similar substances were also used to enhance interpersonal connectedness. Two par-

osjećaj razumijevanja i smanjene interpersonalne barijere:

“MDMA mi daje mogućnost da osjetim naj, najveći high koji čovjek može doživjeti, a bome i najveći low... Sad se mogu bolje poistovjetiti s tim ljudima, dobio sam taj raspon i to mi je drago. Puno bolje razgovaramo i razumijemo se. Konekcija je puno bolja, puno bolje se povezujem na taj način.” (19/24)

Povezanost se ovdje pojavljuje kao želja za autentičnijim odnosima, pri čemu droga služi kao privremeni emocionalni nadomjestak koji olakšava ranjivost i međusobno otvaranje.

Automedikacija

Kodovi: Droga kao terapija, Terapeutsko djelovanje MDMA-a, Skidanje s heroina

U narativima triju sudionika stimulansi se upotrebljavaju kao sredstvo samopomoći, osobito za emocionalnu obradu teških iskustava ili za olakšavanje simptoma povezanih s apstinencijom:

„Kao da je to neka terapija o kojoj nitko ne priča.” (1/24)

“...to bi bili jako terapeutski razgovori gdje su se pričale stvari koje se nikad ne bi spomenule.” (19/24)

“...za skidanje sa horsa, to mi olakšava, ali znam da nije idealno.” (21/24)

U narativima sudionika razlikuje se rekreativna i „terapijska“ uporaba, a droga se predstavlja kao alat za emocionalno preživljavanje ili tranziciju iz drugih oblika ovisnosti.

Povećanje fokusa, produktivnosti i fizičke izdržljivosti

Kodovi: Pomaže izdržati i brže obaviti posao, Za susprezanje umora, Speed za održavanje budnosti i kreativnost, Amfetamin daje fokus

Sudionici koji stimulanse konzumiraju zbog obavljanja posla opisuju uporabu kao nužnost. U iskazima petero sudionika droga služi za održavanje radnog ritma, kompenzaciju iscrpljenosti ili povećanje učinkovitosti:

participants described experiences of greater emotional openness, a sense of mutual understanding, and reduced interpersonal barriers:

“MDMA gives me the ability to feel the highest high a person can experience, and also the deepest low... Now I can identify with those people much better, I’ve gained that range and I’m glad for it. We talk and understand each other much better. The connection is much stronger; I connect much better in that way.” (19/24)

Here, connectedness emerged as a desire for more authentic relationships, with the substance acting as a temporary emotional substitute that can enable vulnerability and mutual openness.

Self-medication

Codes: Drugs as therapy, Therapeutic effects of MDMA, Coming off heroin

In the narratives of three participants, stimulants were used as self-help strategies, particularly for processing difficult emotional experiences or alleviating symptoms associated with abstinence:

“It’s like a kind of therapy no one talks about.” (1/24)

“...those were deeply therapeutic conversations where things were said that would never otherwise be mentioned.” (19/24)

“...for coming off heroin, it makes it easier for me, though I know it’s not ideal.” (21/24)

Participants’ narratives distinguished between recreational and “therapeutic” use, with substances framed as tools for emotional survival or for transitioning away from other forms of dependence.

Enhancement of focus, productivity, and physical endurance

Codes: Helps to endure and complete tasks faster, For suppressing fatigue, Speed for staying awake and creativity, Amphetamine increases focus

Participants who used stimulants for work-related reasons described this use as necessary. In the accounts of five participants, substances served to maintain work pace, compensate for exhaustion, or enhance efficiency:

“Speed mi ne radi loše. Ja sam kreativnija, bolja, puno toga napravim, idem vadit krumpire, kosim...” (21/24)

“Zbog posla, za izdržati cijeli dan (fizički sezonski posao).” (24/24)

„Ne mogu reći sad da je to neki hiperfokus, kao što to ljudi zamišljaju. Ali otklanja taj nekakav umor. Ali kod mene je bilo ključno da onda moram sjesti raditi tu stvar za koju sam se odlučila jer dat će mi fokus, ali mi neće dati motivaciju.“ (4/24)

U navedenim narativima stimulans funkcionira kao resurs koji omogućuje ispunjavanje zahtjeva koje sudionici doživljavaju kao prekomjerne. U tim narativima droga postaje dio radne strategije, a ne zabave.

Povećanje seksualnog užitka

Kodovi: Bolji seks, Odlično za partnerski odnos

Stimulansi se upotrebljavaju i za intenziviranje seksualnog iskustva i partnerske bliskosti, o čemu govore četiri sudionika. Pritom se droga konzumira kao sredstvo za produbljivanje bliskosti ili pojačavanje tjelesnih senzacija:

„Seks me isto opušta, a bolji je kad uzmem nešto.” (9/24)

“Za partnerski odnos to je nešto odlično.” (18/24).

Dosada

Kodovi: Jer se ima, a dosadno je

Jedna sudionica navodi kako stimulanse konzumira i zbog dostupnosti i dosade:

„Jednom smo bili stvarno pretjerali, otišli smo na festival tri dana, uzeli smo pet grama speeda i već smo prvi dan navečer ostali bez toga. Nama je u principu bilo kao dosadno taj prvi dan i ono, znamo da imamo, pa svakih pola sata povučemo.“ (4/24)

Životni stil

Kodovi: Ovisničko ponašanje, Konzumiranje je “in”, Kreativni poticaj

Dva sudionika opisuju konzumaciju stimulansa kao dio šireg životnog stila. Navedeno ukazuje na evoluciju motiva prema redovitijim obrascima

“Because of work, to endure the whole day (physical seasonal job).” (24/24)

“I can’t say it’s some kind of hyperfocus like people imagine. But it does remove that kind of fatigue. For me, it was crucial that I then had to sit down and do the task I’d decided on, because it would give me focus, but not motivation.” (4/24)

In these narratives, stimulants functioned as resources that enabled participants to meet demands that they perceived as excessive. The substance, thus, became part of a work strategy, rather than a means of recreation.

Enhancement of sexual pleasure

Codes: Better sex, Great for the relationship

Stimulants were also used to intensify sexual experiences and partner intimacy, as reported by four participants. In these cases, substances served to deepen closeness or enhance bodily sensations:

“Sex relaxes me too, and it’s better when I take something.” (9/24)

“It’s something great for a relationship.” (18/24)

Boredom

Codes: Because it’s available and I’m bored

One participant mentioned using stimulants due to availability and boredom:

“One time we really overdid it, we went to a three-day festival, took five grams of speed, and by the first evening we were already out. Basically, we were bored that first day and, you know, we knew we had it, so we took a line every half hour.” (4/24)

Lifestyle

Codes: Addictive behaviour, Using is “in”, Creative stimulus

Two participants described stimulant use as part of a broader lifestyle. This indicates the evolution of specific motives towards more regular patterns of use, where substances are no longer used for a specific purpose, but instead become part of one’s identity and everyday functioning:

uporabe, gdje se droga više ne konzumira iz specifičnog razloga, već postaje dio identiteta i uobičajenog funkcioniranja.

„Zakaj uopće uzimam to više, al' ne da ti vrag mira, ne...ovisničko ponašanje, kaj bi se reklo.“ (6/24)

„Ti ljudi dosta često organiziraju događanja i radionice i konzumiranje stimulansa uz to je in, odnosno postalo je dio društva. Može se reći da postane životni stil. Meni osobno je to bio kreativni potencijal, što sve mogu izrađivati i raditi.“ (11/24).

Slika 2. prikazuje motive za konzumaciju stimulativnih droga u posljednjih 12 mjeseci.

“Why do I even keep taking it anymore, but the devil won't let me be, you know... addictive behaviour, as they say.” (6/24)

“These people often organise events and workshops, and using stimulants along with that is 'in,' it's become part of hanging out. You could say it can become a lifestyle. For me, it was a source of creative potential, thinking about all the things I could make and do.” (11/24)

Figure 2 shows the participants' motivations for using stimulant drugs in the past 12 months.

Slika 2. – Kategorije koje strukturiraju temu Motivi za konzumaciju u posljednjih 12 mjeseci / **Figure 2.** Categories structuring the theme Motivations for use in the past 12 months

MOTIVATIONS FOR USE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS	Fun
	Relaxation and coping with stress
	Coping with unpleasant emotions and mental health issues
	Connection with oneself
	Connection with others
	Self-medication
	Enhancement of focus, productivity, and physical endurance
	Enhancement of sexual pleasure
	Boredom
	Lifestyle

Recentni motivi ukazuju na to da se stimulan- si upotrebljavaju kao višefunkcionalni resurs koji omogućuje emocionalno, socijalno i radno funkcioniranje u zahtjevnim kontekstima. Ovi motivi nisu statični i kreću se od zabave, prelaze u emocionalnu regulaciju, a mogu se razviti u funkcionalnu ili redovitu uporabu. Nadalje, motivi često djeluju istovremeno pa primjerice, osoba može konzumirati stimulanse kako bi se zabavila, ali i kako bi lakše podnijela tjeskobu. Motivi također mogu biti i kontradiktorni, pa se stimulan- si mogu upotrebljavati i za „podizanje“ i za „smirivanje“. Na temelju odgovora sudionika, može se zaključiti da motivi evoluiraju kroz životne faze, ovisno o psihičkom stanju, kontekstu i dostupnosti.

Recent findings indicate that stimulants are used as multifunctional resources supporting emotional, social, and occupational functioning in demanding contexts. These motives are not static; they may begin with pleasure, shift towards emotional regulation, and develop into functional or regular use. Moreover, motives often operate simultaneously. For example, an individual may use stimulants both for enjoyment, as well as to cope with anxiety better. Motives may also be contradictory, with stimulants used both to “boost” and to “calm”. Based on participants' accounts, it can be concluded that motives evolve across life stages, depending on psychological state, context, and availability.

Konteksti konzumiranja stimulativnih droga

Analiza pokazuje da konteksti u kojima se stimulansi konzumiraju imaju ključnu ulogu u oblikovanju njihove funkcije, doživljaja i načina uporabe. Okruženje nije samo fizičko mjesto, nego prostor socijalnih normi, očekivanja i dinamika koje oblikuju iskustvo sudionika i usmjeravaju motive koji se aktiviraju u određenoj situaciji. Kod većine sudionika, konteksti se tijekom životnog tijeka mijenjaju, a često se i preklapaju, stvarajući fleksibilne i dinamične obrasce uporabe. U nastavku su prikazani konteksti uporabe stimulativnih droga.

Izlasci

Kodovi: U društvu, Pri izlasku, Pokretačka droga, Na koncertima, U kombinaciji s alkoholom, Kokain u posebnim prilikama, Alkohol i kokain ili speed u narodnjačkim klubovima, Plesne droge

Izlasci predstavljaju najčešći kontekst u kojem osam sudionika navodi upotrebu stimulansa. Amfetamin se često opisuje kao tvar koja omogućava dulji boravak vani, ples i održavanje energije: "...amfetamin, naravno, glavna pokretačka droga vani..." (4/24).

Kod kokaina se javlja specifičan ritualiziran obrazac uporabe. Sudionici ga povezuju s posebnim prilikama ili važnim događajima. Međutim, moguć je i sasvim suprotan obrazac, gdje posebne prilike prerastaju u gotovo svaku večer izlaska:

"Kokain koristim stvarno rijetko, i to samo za posebne prilike, kao što su Nova godina, neka veća promocija ili karneval." (19/24)

„Uzimam skoro svaki put kada izađem van, odem na koncert, u klub i tako. Ako se zaredaju izlasci, zareda se i konzumacija, logično." (9/24)

U narodnjačkim klubovima stimulansi dobivaju specifičnu statusnu i identitetsku funkciju, što sudionici opisuju razlikom između „bogatijeg kokaina“ i „siromašnijeg speeda“:

„Kokain da...to isto, statusni simboli i ta cijela cajka propaganda. Ne znam, taj život je da se dođeš pokazati. Ne znam, bogatiji koka-

Contexts of stimulant drug use

The analysis shows that the contexts in which stimulants are consumed play a key role in shaping their functions, subjective experiences, and patterns of use. Context is not merely a physical setting, but a space where social norms, expectations, and other dynamics influence participants' experiences and activate specific motives in particular situations. For most participants, contexts change across the course of their life and these contexts often overlap, creating flexible and dynamic patterns of use. The following section presents the identified contexts of stimulant use.

Going out

Codes: Hanging out, When going out, Energising drug, At concerts, In combination with alcohol, Cocaine on special occasions, Alcohol and cocaine or speed in turbofolk clubs, Party drugs

Cocaine use was associated with a specific ritualised pattern of consumption. Participants linked it to special occasions or significant events. However, an opposing pattern was also observed, in which special occasions gradually expanded to encompass almost every night out:

"I really use cocaine rarely, and only for special occasions, such as New Year's, a big promotion, or carnival." (19/24)

"I take it almost every time I go out, to a concert, a club, and so on. The more I go out, the more I take it, obviously." (9/24)

In folk music clubs, stimulants take on a specific function related to status and identity, which participants described by distinguishing between "wealthier cocaine" and "poorer speed":

"Cocaine, yes... that too, status symbols and the whole turbofolk propaganda. I don't know, that lifestyle is all about showing off. I don't know, the wealthier ones go for cocaine, the less wealthy for speed. It's definitely a thing. Also, there's heavy drinking, at some point when you can't drink anymore, this kind of 'saves' you from puking, dizziness, and that blurry feeling." (4/24)

in, malo siromašniji speed. Ima toga sigurno. Isto, masovno se cuga, to je ono u nekom trenu kad više ne možete cugati, ovo vas, ajmo reći, spasi od riganja i te neke vrtoglavice i mrljavog osjećaja. “ (4/24)

Ovaj kontekst pokazuje kako se motiv zabave isprepliće sa statusnim i identitetskim elementima, potvrđujući da se motivi i konteksti ne mogu promatrati odvojeno.

Glazbeni festivali, party i after party

Kodovi: MDMA i amfetamin za party, Ecstasy za party, Prilagođen način konzumacije

Festivali i party okruženja predstavljaju intenzivniji oblik izlazaka u kojem su vrijeme, prostor i društvena atmosfera usmjereni na dugotrajnu zabavu i pojačanu senzornu stimulaciju. Sudionici spominju MDMA i amfetamin kao party drogu koja omogućuje izdržljivost, ples i emocionalnu uključenost. Na after partyjima se konzumacija često nastavlja u smirenijem, privatnijem okruženju, ali i dalje u grupi. Ti dijelovi večeri opisuju se kao produžetak iskustva, a ne kao nova odvojena konzumacija, pri čemu se funkcija droge mijenja tijekom jednog izlaska, pa se stimulansi upotrebljavaju za energiziranje, ali i za održavanje bliskosti i povezanosti. Nadalje, okolnosti u kojima se održavaju festivali utječu i na način konzumacije stimulansa, pri čemu se prednost daje jednostavnijim načinima i dugotrajnijem djelovanju tvari:

“Većinom, kad sam koristila bombice amfetamina sa speedom, to bi bilo na, npr. festivalima ili na nekim mjestima gdje se pregledavaju torbe na ulazu ili na nekim mjestima gdje mi nije zgodno otići negdje na miru da si složim te crte, pa bi mi onda bilo jednostavnije, napraviti si bombicu i popiti.” (18/24)

Chemsex

Kodovi: MDMA koriste parovi, MDMA, mephedron i ice na gay sceni, Chemsex i privatni partyji, Chemsex: GHB, amfetamin, metamfetamin, ketamin, 4-MMC (mephedron)

Tri sudionika navode uporabu stimulansa u kontekstu chemsexa, odnosno seksualnih aktivnosti pod djelovanjem droga, a u svrhu produljenja seksualne aktivnosti, pojačavanja senzacija te

This context illustrates how the motive of pleasure intertwines with elements related to status and identity, confirming that motives and contexts cannot be examined separately.

Music festivals, parties, and after-parties

Codes: MDMA and amphetamine for parties, Ecstasy for parties, Adjusted method of use

Festivals and party environments represent a more intense form of nightlife, where time, space, and the social atmosphere are oriented towards prolonged enjoyment and heightened sensory stimulation. Participants mentioned MDMA and amphetamines as typical party drugs that enable endurance for dancing and emotional engagement. At after-parties, consumption often continues in a calmer, more private setting, while still taking place in a group setting. These phases of the night were described as an extension of the overall experience, rather than a new, separate episode of stimulant use, with the function of the substance change over the course of the event: stimulants being used both to energise and to maintain closeness and connectedness. Furthermore, the specific circumstances in which festivals occur also influence patterns of stimulant use, with a preference for simpler modes of consumption and substances with longer-lasting effects:

“Most of the time, when I used amphetamine ‘bombs’ with speed, it would be at festivals or in places where bags are checked at the entrance, or somewhere where it’s not convenient to prepare a line in peace, so it was simpler for me to make a ‘bomb’ and swallow it.” (18/24)

Chemsex

Codes: Couples use MDMA, MDMA, Mephedrone and ice in the gay scene, Chemsex and private parties, Chemsex: GHB, amphetamine, methamphetamine, ketamine, 4-MMC (mephedrone)

Three participants reported using stimulants in the context of chemsex, defined as sexual activity under the influence of drugs, with the aim of prolonging sexual encounters, intensifying sensations, and facilitating emotional openness. MDMA, mephedrone, and methamphetamine

olakšavanja emocionalne otvorenosti. Pritom se spominju MDMA, mefedron i metamfetamin kao centralne tvari koje pojačavaju tjelesnu i emocionalnu bliskost:

“MDMA se dosta koristi, parovi ga koriste.”
(2/24)

„Mefedron i MDMA, to je više ljubav, sreća... naravno za seks partyje kod kuće.” (1/24)

Chemsex ima vlastite rituale, norme i dinamiku, pri čemu droga ne funkcionira samo kao pojačivač, nego kao sastavni element supkulture.

Sigurno okruženje

Kodovi: MDMA u uskom krugu

U intimnim, emocionalno sigurnim okruženjima, primjerice kod kuće, u maloj grupi prijatelja ili u partnerskom odnosu, MDMA se konzumira radi povezivanja, refleksije i razgovora:

“MDMA uzimam uglavnom za kućna druženja gdje možemo pričati, povezivati se i provoditi terapijske razgovore s prijateljima ili partnerom.” (19/24)

Ovaj kontekst omogućuje emocionalnu otvorenost i introspekciju, a tri sudionika ga opisuju kao prostor u kojem mogu obraditi teška iskustva ili ojačati bliske odnose. Funkcija stimulansa ovdje se značajno razlikuje od one u klubovima i festivalima.

Poslovno okruženje

Kodovi: Stimulansi i nestandardno radno vrijeme, Kokain za učinkovitost na poslu

U poslovnom kontekstu stimulansi se upotrebljavaju kao alat za povećanje izdržljivosti, koncentracije i fizičke snage, osobito kod sezonskih, fizički napornih ili noćnih poslova. O uporabi stimulansa u kontekstu obavljanja radnih zadataka govori šest sudionika:

„Nemaju radnog vremena, nego se radi otkad se počne dok se ne završi. Onda uvijek netko ima nešto sa sobom pa si povuku i bude im lakše za proći. To sam i ja radio kad sam radio na šanku kad mi je smjena počinjala u ponoć.”
(1/24)

“... vožnja... Mi stanemo kod Macole, odem na WC i ja se razbudim i to je to, ja to iz potrebe.”
(15/24)”

were identified as central substances that enhance both physical and emotional closeness:

“MDMA is used quite a lot, couples use it.”
(2/24)

“Mephedrone and MDMA, that’s more about love, happiness... of course for sex parties at home.” (1/24)

Chemsex has its own rituals, norms, and dynamics, with drugs functioning not only as enhancers, but also as integral elements of a subculture.

Safe environment

Codes: MDMA in a trusted circle

In intimate and emotionally safe settings, such as at home, with a small group of friends, or in a romantic relationship, MDMA was used to facilitate connection, reflection, and conversation:

“I mostly take MDMA for gatherings at home where we can talk, connect, and have therapeutic conversations with friends or a partner.” (19/24)

This context enabled emotional openness and introspection, and three participants described it as a space where they could process difficult experiences or strengthen close relationships. The function of stimulants in these settings differed markedly from their use in clubs and festival environments.

Work environment

Codes: Stimulants and irregular working hours, Cocaine for workplace performance

In work-related contexts, stimulants were used to enhance endurance, concentration, and physical strength, particularly in seasonal, physically demanding, or night-time employment. Six participants reported using stimulants while performing work tasks:

“You don’t have fixed working hours, you work from when you start until it’s done. So someone always has something on them, you take a line and it makes it easier to get through. I did the same when I worked at the bar and my shift started at midnight.” (1/24)

„Za posao mi treba, svaki dan, kad god mogu. To je u sezoni“ (24/24)

Ovdje droga dobiva izrazito funkcionalnu ulogu i postaje način održavanja radnog ritma i nošenja s iscrpljenošću. U tom smislu, konzumacija prelazi iz rekreativne u pretežno instrumentalnu upotrebu.

Slika 3. prikazuje kontekste u kojima se konzumiraju stimulativne droge. Uz navedene kontekste, važno je uzeti u obzir i nepredvidivost prilika za uporabu. Jedna sudionica navodi da se uporaba može dogoditi u bilo kojem kontekstu ako je droga dostupna: „Ali ako se družiš s ljudima koji koriste, onda se i obično druženje, roštilj ili popodnevna kava mogu pretvoriti u konzumaciju droge.“ (4/24). Ovakav narativ upućuje na to da se uporaba droge može premještati između različitih situacija bez specifičnog povoda, pri čemu se kontekst spontano oblikuje oko trenutačne dostupnosti i prevladavajuće društvene dinamike.

Konteksti uporabe stimulansa oblikuju način na koji sudionici doživljavaju, reguliraju i funkcionaliziraju drogu. Ista droga poprima različita

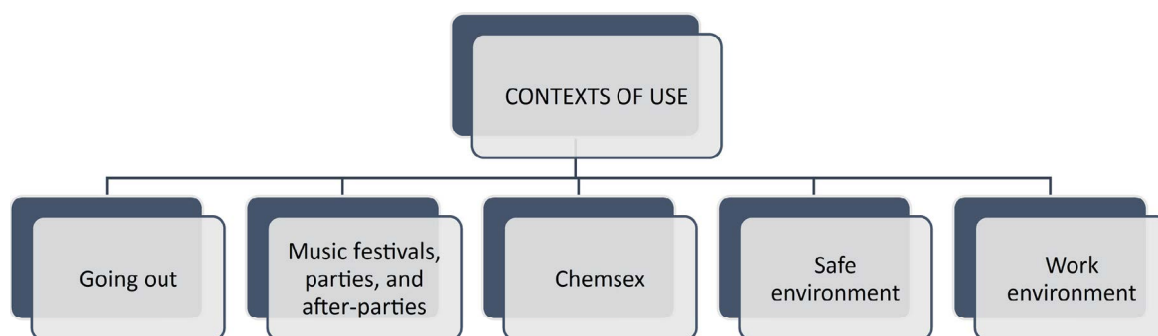
“...driving... We stop at Macola, I go to the toilet, I wake myself up and that's it, I do it out of necessity.” (15/24)

“I need it for work, every day, whenever I can. That's during the season.” (24/24)

Here, substances took on a distinctly functional role, serving to maintain work pace and cope with exhaustion. In this context, consumption shifted from recreational to predominantly instrumental use.

Figure 3 shows the contexts in which stimulant drugs are used. In addition to the listed contexts, it is important to consider the unpredictability of opportunities for use. One participant reported that drug use could occur in any context as long as the substance was available: “But if you spend time with people who use, then even a regular hang-out, a barbecue, or an afternoon coffee can turn into taking drugs.” (4/24). This narrative suggests that drug use may shift across different situations without a specific trigger, with context forming spontaneously around immediate availability and prevailing social dynamics.

Slika 3. - Kategorije koje strukturiraju temu Konteksti konzumiranja / Figure 3. Categories structuring the theme Contexts of use



značenja ovisno o okruženju, pa je tako amfetamin „pokretačka droga“ na festivalima, ali i alat radne izdržljivosti na poslu, dok MDMA u klubovima potiče energiju i socijalnost, a u sigurnom okruženju postaje sredstvo emocionalne otvorenosti. Ovi nalazi pokazuju da je konzumacija situacijski određena i da motivi i konteksti djeluju zajedno, često se mijenjajući kroz životne faze i društvene okolnosti. Nalazi o nepredvidivosti pri-

The contexts in which stimulant usage occurs can shape how participants experience, regulate, and functionalise substances. The same drug assumes different meanings depending on the setting. For example, amphetamine functions as a “driving force” at festivals, while serving as a tool for work-related endurance in occupational contexts, whereas MDMA promotes energy and sociability in clubs, but it becomes a means for

lika za uporabu dodatno potvrđuju da uporaba stimulansa nije uvijek vezana za jasno strukturirana okruženja, već se aktivira kada su droga, društvena dinamika i trenutna emocionalna stanja povoljno usklađeni, čime se naglašava fleksibilnost i situacijska spontanost obrazaca konzumacije.

RASPRAVA

Rezultati ovog istraživanja doprinose razumijevanju motiva i konteksta uporabe stimulativnih droga u hrvatskom kontekstu te potvrđuju da su razlozi za konzumaciju stimulansa višeslojni, razvojno uvjetovani i oblikovani specifičnim socijalnim i situacijskim čimbenicima. Uspoređujući ih s dostupnom literaturom (npr. Addison i sur., 2021; Elmer i sur., 2024; Levy i sur., 2005; O'Donnell i sur., 2019), moguće je uočiti snažnu podudarnost obrazaca uporabe stimulansa, ali i određene posebnosti domaćeg konteksta.

Motivi za prvu konzumaciju stimulansa koje su naveli sudionici, ponajprije znatiželja, utjecaj vršnjaka, želja za isprobavanjem zabranjenog i specifične okolnosti unutar obiteljskog okruženja, u skladu su s teorijom trijadnog utjecaja Flaya i Petraitisa (1994), koja naglašava ulogu međuljudskih i kontekstualnih čimbenika u inicijaciji rizičnih ponašanja. Slične nalaze navode Levy i suradnici (2005), prema kojima adolescenti i mladi odrasli najčešće prvi put posežu za *ecstasyjem* zbog vršnjačkih normi, dostupnosti i očekivanja pozitivnih učinaka. Boys i suradnici (2002) također dokumentiraju isprobavanje kokaina i *ecstasyja* unutar društvenih okruženja u kojima droga cirkulira kao dio prihvaćenog obrasca zabave. Sličnost naših nalaza s navedenim istraživanjima pokazuje da je inicijalna uporaba stimulansa snažno ukorijenjena u razvojnoj fazi i socijalnim uvjetima, dok su lokalne specifičnosti, primjerice odrastanje u kućanstvima u kojima su roditelji konzumirali ili distribuirali drogu, dodatni čimbenik koji može normalizirati prisutnost droga i smanjiti percipiranu barijeru za prvo eksperimentiranje.

Nasuprot inicijalnoj uporabi, recentna uporaba stimulansa prikazuje znatno složeniju motivacijsku strukturu. Sudionici su navodili rekreativne motive (zabava, socijalizacija, energija), emocionalno-regulatorne motive (smanjenje tjeskobe,

emotional openness in safe, intimate settings. These findings demonstrate that stimulant use is situationally determined and that motives and contexts operate in conjunction, often shifting across life stages and social circumstances. The findings on the unpredictability of opportunities for use further confirm that stimulant use is not always linked to clearly structured settings, but it is triggered when substance availability, social dynamics, and current emotional states align, highlighting the flexibility and situational spontaneity of consumption patterns.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study enhance our understanding of the motives and contexts associated with stimulant drug use in Croatia and confirm that the reasons for stimulant use are multi-layered, developmentally contingent, and shaped by specific social and situational factors. Compared to the existing literature (e.g., Addison et al., 2021; Elmer et al., 2024; Levy et al., 2005; O'Donnell et al., 2019), the findings show substantial convergence in patterns of stimulant use, alongside certain characteristics specific to the local context.

The motives for first-time stimulant use reported by participants - primarily curiosity, peer influence, the desire to experiment with prohibited substances, and specific circumstances within the family environment - are consistent with the theory of triadic influence proposed by Flay and Petraitis (1994), which emphasises the role of interpersonal and contextual factors in the initiation of risk behaviours. Similar findings are reported by Levy et al. (2005), who noted that adolescents and young adults often begin experimenting with ecstasy due to peer norms, availability, and the expectations of positive effects. Boys et al. (2002) also documented experimentation with cocaine and ecstasy in social environments where drug use was part of an accepted leisure pattern. The alignment of the present findings with international studies suggests that initial stimulant use is strongly embedded in developmental stages and social conditions. At the same time, local specificities, such as growing up in households where

podizanje raspoloženja, suočavanje sa stresom), funkcionalne motive (povećanje fokusa, izdržljivosti i produktivnosti), kao i motive povezane s introspekcijom i seksualnim zadovoljstvom. Ovakvi nalazi u skladu su s istraživanjem Elmera i suradnika (2024), koji navode kako MDMA korisnicima donosi širok spektar socio-emocionalnih koristi, od euforije i poboljšanog raspoloženja do osjećaja osobnog uvida i interpersonalne povezanosti. O'Donnell i suradnici (2019) te Addison i suradnici (2021) opisuju uporabu stimulansa u različitim funkcionalnim kontekstima, uključujući akademske i radne situacije, gdje pojedinci droge konzumiraju kako bi povećali učinkovitost, koncentraciju i toleranciju na napor. Nalazi Davis-Ewart i suradnika (2023) te Rosenkrantz i suradnika (2019) potvrđuju važnost mentalnog zdravlja u oblikovanju motivacije za uporabu stimulansa, osobito među osobama koje konzumiraju različite droge kao sredstvo privremenog rasterećenja emocionalnog distresa, što je u skladu s modelom afektivne obrade negativnog potkrjepljenja Baker i suradnika (2004). S obzirom na to da dio naših sudionika opisuje upravo takve emocionalno-regulatorne funkcije droga, primjena ovog modela čini se teorijski i empirijski opravdanom.

Kontekst uporabe, odnosno okruženje i situacijske okolnosti u kojima se konzumacija događa, pokazao se ključnim mehanizmom u oblikovanju subjektivnih iskustava i percepcije učinaka stimulansa. Zinbergov model (1984) pružio je analitički okvir za razumijevanje situacijskih razlika u doživljaju istih droga. Sudionici su navodili da MDMA pojačava osjećaj povezanosti i društvene otvorenosti u klupskom okruženju, dok u sigurnom, intimnijem okruženju potiče introspekciju i emocionalnu ranjivost. Slično tomu, kokain je u društvenim situacijama opisan kao sredstvo za povećanje samopouzdanja i komunikativnosti, ali i kao tvar čiji učinak nestaje naglo i ostavlja osjećaj emocionalne „praznine“, osobito kada se konzumira u stresnim ili emocionalno zahtjevnim kontekstima. Ovakve razlike u učinku potvrđuju i nalazi drugih autora (Boys i sur., 2002; Elmer i sur., 2024; Levy i sur., 2005), koji ističu situacijsku uvjetovanost učinaka stimulansa. Iz našeg

parents used or distributed drugs, represent an additional factor that may normalise the presence of drugs and lower perceived barriers to initial experimentation.

In contrast to initial use, recent stimulant use reflects a much more complex motivational structure. Participants reported recreational motives (pleasure, socialisation, energy), motives related to emotional regulation (reducing anxiety, enhancing mood, coping with stress), functional motives (increased focus, endurance, productivity), and motives related to introspection and sexual pleasure. These findings are consistent with the study by Elmer et al. (2024), who noted that MDMA provides users with a wide range of socio-emotional benefits, from euphoria and improved mood to feelings of personal insight and interpersonal connectedness. O'Donnell et al. (2019) and Addison et al. (2021) described stimulant use in various functional contexts, including academic and work-related settings, where substances are used to enhance performance, concentration, and tolerance to exertion. The findings reported by Davis-Ewart et al. (2023) and Rosenkrantz et al. (2019) further underscore the role of mental health in shaping motivations for stimulant use, particularly among individuals who use multiple substances to temporarily alleviate emotional distress. This aligns with the affective processing model of negative reinforcement proposed by Baker et al. (2004). Given that a subset of participants in the present study described precisely these emotional-regulatory functions of stimulant use, the application of this model appears both theoretically and empirically justified.

The context of use, specifically, the environment and situational circumstances in which consumption occurs, emerged as a key mechanism shaping subjective experiences and perceptions of the effects of stimulants. Zinberg's drug, set, and setting model (1984) provided an analytical framework for understanding how situational differences affect the experience of the same substances. Participants reported that MDMA enhanced feelings of connectedness and social openness in club settings, while in safer and more intimate environments, it facilitated introspection and emotional

istraživanja proizlazi da učinci nisu inherentni farmakološkim svojstvima tvari, već se oblikuju u interakciji s psihološkim stanjem korisnika i socijalnim okruženjem. U tom smislu, kontekst ne djeluje samo kao pozadina uporabe, već aktivno usmjerava koje se funkcije droge u određenoj situaciji aktiviraju, a koje ostaju sekundarne.

Posebno je važan kontekst seksualizirane uporabe stimulansa, odnosno *chemsexa*. Sudionici koji su navodili ovakav obrazac ponašanja opisivali su pojačan seksualni užitak, osjećaj slobode, uklanjanje inhibicija i povećanu intimnost. Ovi nalazi podudaraju se s rezultatima drugih autora (Bourne i sur., 2015; Leyva-Moral i sur., 2024) koji navode da motivi *chemsexa* obuhvaćaju želju za intenzivnijim seksualnim iskustvima, smanjenje emocionalne nelagode i povećanje osjećaja povezanosti s partnerima. Međutim, kao i u navedenim istraživanjima, i u našim se rezultatima prepoznaje ambivalencija. Iako *chemsex* sudionicima donosi subjektivno vrijedne učinke, istodobno može povećati ranjivost u vezi pregovaranja o seksualnim praksama, održavanju granica i upravljanju rizicima. Sudionici su rijetko navodili kontakt s formalnim sustavima podrške, što je u skladu s nalazima Bournea i suradnika (2015) o niskoj uključenosti korisnika *chemsexa* u zdravstvene i savjetodavne usluge, ponajprije zbog straha od stigme. Iz toga proizlazi potreba za specifično dizajniranim intervencijama koje integriraju seksualno zdravlje, mentalno zdravlje i pristupe smanjenja šteta, uz priznanje subjektivnih funkcija koje droga ima za korisnike, što je u skladu s preporukama Weatherburn i suradnika (2017).

Radno-kontekstualna uporaba stimulansa predstavlja još jednu relevantnu dimenziju. Konzumiranje stimulansa radi održavanja radnog ritma i ispunjavanja zahtjevnih zadataka vidljivo je i među sudionicima koji dolaze iz programa smanjenja šteta. Riječ je o osobama koje su dugogodišnji konzumenti droga i koje, u pravilu, obavljaju povremene, sezonske, fizički zahtjevne poslove. Ovakva motivacija, kontekst i obrasci razlikuju ove sudionike od sudionika koji konzumiraju stimulanse u druge svrhe te upućuju na manju zabrinutost za štetnost uporabe, što potvrđuju i nalazi drugih istraživanja provedenih

vulnerability. Similarly, cocaine was described in social situations as a means of increasing self-confidence and communicativeness, but also as a substance whose effects dissipate abruptly, leaving a sense of emotional “emptiness”, particularly when used in stressful or emotionally demanding contexts. Such differences in effects are also reported by other researchers (Boys et al., 2002; Elmer et al., 2024; Levy et al., 2005), who highlight the situationally contingent nature of stimulants. Findings from the present study further suggest that these effects are not inherent to the pharmacological properties of the substances alone, but are shaped through interactions with the psychological states and social environments of the users. In this sense, context not only serves as a background for use, but also actively shapes which functions of the drug are activated in a given situation and which remain secondary.

The context of sexualised stimulant use, commonly known as chemsex, is particularly important. Participants who reported this behaviour described enhanced sexual pleasure, a sense of freedom, reduced inhibitions, and increased intimacy. These findings are consistent with previous research (Bourne et al., 2015; Leyva-Moral et al.; 2024) that identified the following motives for engaging in chemsex - the pursuit of more intense sexual experiences, reduction of emotional discomfort, and an increased sense of connection with partners. However, as observed in the above-mentioned studies, ambivalence is also evident in the present findings. While chemsex provides subjectively valued effects, it may simultaneously increase vulnerability in negotiating sexual practices, maintaining boundaries, and managing risks. Participants rarely reported engaging with formal support systems, reflecting the findings of Bourne et al. (2015) on the low uptake of health and counselling services among chemsex users, primarily due to fears of stigma. These findings highlight the need for specifically designed interventions that integrate sexual health, mental health, and harm reduction approaches, while acknowledging the subjective functions that drugs provide to the users, as recommended by Weatherburn et al. (2017).

među redovitim konzumentima droga (Fredericksen i sur., 2024). Međutim, i sudionici koji nisu uključeni u programe smanjenja šteta navodili su uporabu stimulansa radi povećanja radne učinkovitosti, održavanja koncentracije i izdržljivosti tijekom dugih smjena ili intenzivnih radnih zadataka. Ovakvi motivi u skladu su s istraživanjima Addison i suradnika (2021) i O'Donnell i suradnika (2019) koja dokumentiraju uporabu stimulansa među profesionalno aktivnim osobama kao način nošenja sa zahtjevnim radnim uvjetima. Ovaj oblik uporabe problematizira tradicionalne javnozdravstvene pristupe koji stimulativne droge često povezuju isključivo s rekreativnim ili marginaliziranim skupinama, zanemarujući njihovu prisutnost u profesionalnim i visoko zahtjevnim okruženjima. Time se otvara prostor za istraživanje radnih uvjeta koji potiču ovakva ponašanja, a koji su u domaćem kontekstu gotovo neistraženi.

Proturječja i kompleksnosti u narativima sudionika dodatno potvrđuju da uporaba stimulansa ne može biti objašnjena jednostavnim tipologijama. Isti pojedinac može konzumirati drogu kako bi povećao društvenu sigurnost i uklonio inhibicije, ali i kako bi se povukao u introspekciju. Može je konzumirati radi zabave, ali i radi regulacije emocionalne napetosti. Također je može doživljavati kao sredstvo povezivanja, ali i kao uzrok emocionalne nestabilnosti. Ovakva ambivalencija u skladu je s nalazima Fredericksen i suradnika (2024), koji dokumentiraju kako korisnici stimulansa balansiraju između pozitivnih i negativnih učinaka, pritom aktivno upravljajući vlastitim obrascima uporabe kako bi maksimizirali koristi i smanjili štetu. Ovakva fleksibilnost obrazaca također se poklapa s našim nalazima o dinamici motiva kroz životni tijek. Ono što počinje kao eksperiment ili društvena praksa, može se s vremenom transformirati u emocionalno-regulatorni ili funkcionalni alat, ovisno o potrebama pojedinca i njegovim životnim okolnostima, što je u skladu sa Zinbergovim modelom (1984).

Implikacije za intervencije i javne politike proizlaze iz prepoznate heterogenosti motiva i funkcija uporabe stimulansa. Sudionici jasno artikuliraju pozitivno percipirane učinke droga, što sugerira da intervencije usmjerene isključivo na

Work-related and contextual stimulant use emerged as another important dimension. The use of stimulants to maintain work pace and meet demanding tasks was evident among participants recruited through harm reduction programmes. These participants were typically long-term drug users who mainly engaged in irregular, seasonal, and physically demanding work. Their motivations, contexts, and patterns of use distinguish them from participants who used stimulants for other purposes and indicate a lower level of concern regarding potential negative consequences - another finding that supported by studies of regular drug users (Fredericksen et al., 2024).

At the same time, participants who are not involved in harm reduction programmes also reported using stimulants to enhance work performance, maintain concentration, and sustain endurance during long shifts or periods of intensive work. These motives align with the findings reported by Addison et al. (2021) and O'Donnell et al. (2019), who documented stimulant use among professionally active individuals as a strategy for coping with demanding working conditions. This form of use challenges traditional public health approaches that tend to associate stimulant drugs primarily with recreational settings or marginalised populations, while overlooking their presence in professional and high-demand environments. This highlights the need for further research into working conditions that encourage such patterns of use, which remains largely underexplored in the Croatian context.

The contradictions and complexities in participants' narratives further show that stimulant use cannot be adequately explained by simple typologies. The same individual may use a substance to increase social confidence and reduce inhibitions, as well as to withdraw into introspection at another time point. Stimulants may be used for pleasure, as well as for regulating emotional tension, and they can be experienced both as a means of connection and as a source of emotional instability. This ambivalence is consistent with the findings of Fredericksen et al. (2024), who documented how stimulant users balance positive and negative effects, actively managing their patterns

rizike neće biti učinkovite. Intervencije namijenjene osobama koje konzumiraju stimulativne droge u rekreativne svrhe trebaju se fokusirati na smanjenje šteta povezanih s tim praksama, poput anonimnog i besplatnog testiranja uzoraka droga (EMCDDA, 2012, 2021). Introspektivna uporaba MDMA-a naglašava potrebu za informiranjem korisnika o emocionalnim posljedicama, potencijalnoj ranjivosti nakon iskustva te rizicima povezanim s nekontroliranim emocionalnim otvaranjem, uz istovremeno priznavanje da ova iskustva za sudionike imaju subjektivno smislen karakter. U radnim okruženjima potrebno je razvijati programe podrške i prevencije koji adresiraju strukturalne uvjete (duge smjene, sezonski rad, fizički i emocionalni napor) koji potiču funkcionalnu uporabu stimulansa. Ovi programi trebaju uključivati zaštitu na radu, psihosocijalnu podršku i alternativne farmakološkim strategijama suočavanja. Nadalje, u kontekstu *chemsexa* potrebne su ciljane strategije koje adresiraju specifične rizike seksualizirane uporabe droga (npr. kombinacije droga, seksualno zdravlje), uz uvažavanje percipiranih dobiti od takvih praksi (Weatherburn i sur., 2017).

Potrebno je uzeti u obzir nekoliko ograničenja ovog istraživanja. Adekvatnost uzorka procjenjivala se u odnosu na ciljeve istraživanja, a ne u smislu reprezentativnosti. Način regrutiranja mogao je dovesti do pristranosti uzorka, budući da se sudionici koji su pristali sudjelovati mogu sustavno razlikovati od onih koji nisu. Nadalje, relativno visok udio sudionika regrutiranih kroz programe smanjenja štete (10 od 24) znači da nalazi mogu ponajprije odražavati iskustva dugogodišnjih korisnika, čime se potencijalno smanjuje vidljivost obrazaca tipičnih za povremenu uporabu. Podaci temeljeni na samoiskazima također su podložni socijalno poželjnim odgovorima, osobito s obzirom na stigmatu povezanu s uporabom ilegalnih droga, a grupna dinamika fokusne skupine mogla je ograničiti raznolikost perspektiva. Dio sudionika nije pristao na audio snimanje, zbog čega su istraživači vodili detaljne pisane bilješke, što je unatoč pažljivom dokumentiranju moglo rezultirati djelomičnim gubitkom podataka. Kao i kod svih kvalitativnih istraživanja, analiza je inherentno interpretativna i kontekstualno uvjetovana, što ograničava preno-

of use to maximise perceived benefits and minimise harm. Such flexibility in patterns of use also aligns with our findings on the dynamic nature of motives across the course of life. What begins as experimentation or a social practice may, over time, become a tool to address emotional regulation or other functions, depending on the individual's needs and life circumstances, which is consistent with Zinberg's model (1984).

Implications for interventions and public policy stem from the recognised heterogeneity of motives and functions associated with stimulant use. Participants clearly describe the perceived effects of drug use that are positive, indicating that interventions focused solely on risks are unlikely to be effective. Interventions targeting recreational stimulant use should, therefore, prioritise harm reduction related to these practices, such as anonymous and free drug-checking services (EMCDDA, 2012, 2021). Introspective MDMA use highlights the need to inform users about potential emotional consequences, post-use vulnerability, and risks related to unmanaged emotional openness, while also acknowledging the subjective meaningfulness of these experiences for users.

Several limitations of this study should be considered. Sampling adequacy was assessed in relation to the study's aims, rather than its representativeness. The recruitment strategy may have introduced sampling bias, as participants who agreed to take part in the study may differ from those who did not. In addition, the relatively high proportion of participants recruited through harm reduction programmes (10 of 24) suggests that the findings may primarily reflect the experiences of long-term users, potentially limiting insight into patterns that are typical of occasional use. Self-report data are also subject to socially desirable responses, particularly given the stigma surrounding illicit drug use, and the focus group dynamics may have constrained the diversity of perspectives. The sensitivity of the topic may have further limited participants' willingness to discuss illegal or risky behaviours openly. Some participants did not consent to audio recording, resulting in the need for detailed note-taking, which may have resulted in partial data loss despite careful documentation.

sivost nalaza. Konačno, iako je stručna podloga istraživačkog tima iz područja socijalne pedagogije omogućila vrijedno kontekstualno razumijevanje, zahtijevala je i kontinuiranu refleksivnost kako bi se umanjio utjecaj profesionalnih pretpostavki na interpretaciju iskaza sudionika.

Unatoč navedenim ograničenjima, provedeno istraživanje daje važan doprinos ovom području jer donosi prve sustavnije kvalitativne uvide u motive i kontekste uporabe stimulansa iz perspektive samih konzumenata u Hrvatskoj. Tako nadopunjuje postojeća istraživanja koja su uglavnom fokusirana na prevalenciju i epidemiološke pokazatelje, a nedovoljno na osobna iskustva korisnika. Istraživanje potvrđuje kompleksnost motiva i konteksta uporabe stimulativnih droga te pokazuje da se obrasci konzumacije razvijaju kroz životne faze i socijalne uvjete.

Teorijski modeli u ovom radu pokazali su se korisnima za razumijevanje dinamike između individualnih, socijalnih i kontekstualnih čimbenika, pri čemu se njihova kombinacija pokazuje prikladnijom od oslanjanja na jedan teorijski okvir. Ključno je naglasiti važnost uključivanja korisničke perspektive u oblikovanje politika i intervencija. Razumijevanje kako korisnici sami konceptualiziraju funkcije, motive i kontekste uporabe stimulansa omogućuje razvijanje realističnijih, prilagođenijih i učinkovitijih mjera prevencije, tretmana i smanjenja šteta.

ZAKLJUČAK

Istraživanje pokazuje da se uporaba stimulativnih droga među odraslim osobama u Hrvatskoj ne može razumjeti isključivo u terminima rizika, devijantnosti ili hedonizma, već kao kontekstualno uvjetovana i svrhovita praksa koja odgovara na raznolike emocionalne, socijalne i funkcionalne potrebe. Razlikovanje prve i recentne uporabe pokazalo se analitički korisnim jer ukazuje na razvojnu transformaciju funkcije stimulansa: od socijalno uvjetovane inicijacije prema funkcionalnoj, emocionalno-regulatornoj i instrumentalnoj uporabi u odrasloj dobi. Tako nalazi doprinose razumijevanju uporabe droga kao dinamičnog procesa, a ne statičnog obrasca ponašanja.

As with all qualitative research, the analysis is inherently interpretative and context-dependent, thus limiting transferability. Finally, while the research team's background in social pedagogy facilitated contextual understanding, it also required ongoing reflexivity to minimise the influence of professional assumptions.

Despite these limitations, this study makes an important contribution to the field by providing the first systematic qualitative insights into the motives and contexts related to stimulant use from the perspective of users in Croatia. It complements existing research, which has predominantly focused on prevalence and epidemiological indicators, while giving insufficient attention to the personal experiences of users. The study confirms the complexity of the motives and contexts of stimulant drug use and it demonstrates that patterns of use develop across life stages and social conditions.

The theoretical models employed in this study proved useful for understanding the dynamics between individual, social, and contextual factors, with their combined application offering greater explanatory value than reliance on a single theoretical framework. It is crucial to emphasise the importance of incorporating the perspectives of users during the process of designing interventions and developing policies. Understanding how users conceptualise the functions, motives, and contexts of stimulant use enables the development of more realistic, tailored, and effective prevention, treatment, and harm reduction measures.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that stimulant drug use among adults in Croatia cannot be understood solely in terms of risk, deviance, or hedonism, but rather as a contextually conditioned and purposive practice that responds to diverse emotional, social, and functional needs. Distinguishing between initial and recent use proved analytically valuable, as it highlights a developmental transformation in the function of stimulants - from socially driven initiation to functional, emotion-regulatory, and instrumental use in adulthood. The findings, thus,

Rezultati potvrđuju da su motivi i konteksti uporabe usko povezani te zajedno oblikuju subjektivno značenje droga. Ista tvar može poprimiti različite funkcije ovisno o kontekstu, u rasponu od izvora užitka i socijalne energije u noćnim izlascima, preko emocionalne regulacije i introspekcije u sigurnim okruženjima, do sredstva za radnu izdržljivost ili seksualnu povezanost u specifičnim situacijama. Ovi obrasci empirijski potvrđuju relevantnost modela droga-set-setting te ilustriraju kako su intrapersonalni čimbenici, socijalne norme i širi kontekstualni uvjeti u međusobnom djelovanju, što je u skladu s Teorijom triadnog utjecaja.

Motivi emocionalne regulacije dodatno odražavaju mehanizme opisane u Modelu afektivne obrade negativnog potkrjepljenja, prema kojem stimulansi privremeno ublažavaju neugodna afektivna stanja i time mogu povećati vjerojatnost ponavljanja uporabe. Međutim, iz perspektive korisnika takve se prakse ne doživljavaju nužno kao disfunkcionalne, već kao situacijski dostupne strategije nošenja sa zahtjevnim životnim okolnostima.

S praktične strane, nalazi naglašavaju važnost diferenciranih i kontekstualno osjetljivih pristupa prevenciji, smanjenju šteta i savjetovanju. Intervencije koje ne uzimaju u obzir funkcije koje stimulansi imaju za korisnike, bilo da je riječ o nošenju sa stresom, emocionalnim poteškoćama, radnim zahtjevima ili intimnošću, vjerojatno neće biti percipirane kao relevantne ili prihvatljive. To se osobito odnosi na kontekste poput *chemsexa* i radno uvjetovane uporabe stimulansa, koji zahtijevaju integrirane, neosuđujuće i ciljane oblike podrške.

Iako ovo istraživanje ne teži generalizaciji, ono pruža empirijski utemeljen uvid u značenja i logiku uporabe stimulansa iz perspektive samih korisnika. Time doprinosi prevladavanju homogenih i normativnih interpretacija prema razumijevanju uporabe stimulansa kao situacijski, razvojno i kontekstualno utemeljene prakse te predstavlja osnovu za buduća istraživanja i za oblikovanje politika usklađenih sa stvarnim iskustvima i potrebama korisnika.

contribute to understanding drug use as a dynamic process, rather than a static behavioural pattern.

The results confirm that motives and contexts of use are closely interconnected and jointly shape the subjective meaning of drugs. The same substance can assume different functions depending on the context, ranging from enjoyment and social energy in nightlife settings, through emotional regulation and introspection in safe environments, to tools for work endurance or sexual connectedness. These patterns empirically support the relevance of the drug, set, and setting model and illustrate how intrapersonal factors, social norms, and broader contextual conditions interact, as described in the Theory of Triadic Influence.

Emotion-regulatory motives further reflect mechanisms outlined in the affective processing model of negative reinforcement, whereby stimulants temporarily alleviate unpleasant affective states and may increase the likelihood of repeated use. From the users' perspectives, however, such practices are not necessarily experienced as dysfunctional, but rather as situationally available strategies for coping with demanding life circumstances.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the importance of differentiated and context-sensitive approaches to prevention, harm reduction, and counselling. Interventions that do not consider the functions that stimulants provide for users, whether related to stress, emotional difficulties, work demands, or intimacy, are unlikely to be seen as relevant or acceptable. This is particularly evident in contexts such as chemsex and work-related stimulant use, which require integrated, non-judgemental, and targeted forms of support.

Although this study does not aim to generalise, it provides empirically grounded insights into the perceptions and logic of stimulant use from the perspectives of users. In doing so, it contributes to shifting away from homogeneous and normative interpretations towards an understanding of stimulant use as a situationally, developmentally, and contextually embedded practice, offering a foundation for future research and for policies aligned with users' lived experiences and needs.

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