Sexual Violence and Its Prevention in Nightlife Venues Through the Lenses of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – A Case Study in Ljubljana

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Sexual violence prevention in nightlife venues aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, promoting patron well-being, reducing inequalities, fostering gender equality, and contributing to peace, justice, and strong institutions through collaborative partnerships. The research on the perception and prevention of sexual violence in nightlife carried out in Ljubljana in 2022 involved stakeholders, nightlife personnel, and patrons. Stakeholders perceive inappropriate comments related to sexuality as the most prevalent form of nightlife sexual violence. In contrast, nightlife personnel identify unwanted physical contact as the most common form and nightlife patrons highlight unwanted advances as a prevalent form. The most commonly observed preventive measures in nightlife venues by stakeholders and patrons were security guards. Stakeholders also emphasised awareness-raising and work with youth, while personnel noted the caution and self-protective behaviour of patrons. Considering urban-specific factors is also crucial when shaping sexual violence prevention strategies.

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SPOLNO NASILJE IN NJEGOVO PREPREČEVANJE V NOČNIH LOKALIH SKOZI OBJEKTIVE CILJEV TRAJNOSTNEGA RAZVOJA ZDRUŽENIH NARODOV – ŠTUDIJA PRIMERA V LJUBLJANI

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Preprečevanje spolnega nasilja na prizoriščih nočnega življenja je usklajeno s cilji trajnostnega razvoja Združenih narodov, spodbujanjem dobrega počutja obiskovalcev, zmanjševanjem neenakosti, spodbujanjem enakosti spolov in prispevanjem k miru, pravičnosti in močnim institucijam prek sodelovanja in partnerstva. Raziskava o zaznavanju in preprečevanju spolnega nasilja v času nočnega življenja v Ljubljani, izvedena v letu 2022, je vključevala deležnike, zaposlene na območjih nočnega življenja in obiskovalce. Deležniki dojemajo neprimerne komentarje, povezane s spolnostjo, kot najbolj razširjeno obliko spolnega nasilja v času nočnega življenja, medtem ko osebje kot najpogostejšo obliko prepoznava neželen fizični stik, obiskovalci pa kot prevladujočo obliko izpostavljajo neželeno osvajanje. Preventivni ukrepi na območjih nočnega življenja, ki so jih najpogosteje opazili deležniki in obiskovalci, so varnostniki. Deležniki so izpostavili tudi ozaveščanje in delo z mladimi, osebje pa je izpostavilo previdnost in samozaščitno vedenje obiskovalcev. Pri oblikovanju strategij za preprečevanje spolnega nasilja je ključnega pomena tudi upoštevanje dejavnikov, specifičnih za urbana okolja.

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1   Introduction

It is well-established that disparities exist in the rates of violence, including sexual violence, between urban and rural areas (Ceccato, 2015). The frequency, types and traits of victimisation are related to various factors, such as social, economic, cultural, and geographic distinctions between urban and rural settings. Sexual violence is a pervasive issue in many societies, often exceeding the awareness levels of the general public (Li et al., 2023). Ruback and Ménard (2001) discovered that while urban areas had higher absolute numbers of reported sexual victimisation cases, rural areas exhibited higher rates of victimisation. Moreover, reporting to the police was more common in urban areas than in rural areas, suggesting that experiencing a stranger assault significantly influenced the likelihood of reporting such incidents. In rural environments, sexual violence tends to remain hidden due to the close relationship between the perpetrator and victim, making it challenging for women to seek or receive appropriate assistance (DeKeseredy et al., 2016; Eman & Bulovec, 2021). Laub (1981) found that in the United States, rates of reporting for crimes like rape and assault did not significantly differ between urban and rural areas, but the motivations for not reporting did. Urban residents often cited a sense of futility or a lack of evidence, while rural residents were more likely to consider it a private or personal issue.

Nightlife plays a significant role in urban, suburban and rural social scenes, contributing to the vibrancy and diversity of their cultural life, enhancing their economic vitality and employment prospects, and even encouraging tourism (Calafat et al., 2011; Košir, 2013; Stuart & Hughes, n.d.). As noted by Shaw (2023), the term 'nightlife' includes a specific segment of nocturnal activity, typically occurring in pubs, bars, and restaurants, involving activities such as alcohol consumption, dancing, dining, and social interactions, from dating to celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, and job promotions, among many more. Due to lifestyle changes, including an increase in working and leisure activities at night, nightlife has gained significant importance in recent years (Song & Siu, 2011). Liu et al. (2023, p. 2) pointed out that urban nightlife areas: "…*have experienced economic growth in conjunction with urban affluence and play an important role in stimulating urban consumption through the promotion of recreational and entertainment activities.*" Furthermore, Liu et al. (2023) underscored the substantial contribution of the urban night-time

environment to urban living, providing essential venues for socialising and recreational activities.

A myriad of external and internal factors shapes the design and development of urban districts. External influences, including economic conditions, climate, and the demographics of the population, all play pivotal roles. Internally, factors such as the types and intricacy of businesses, population density, and pedestrian traffic volume are significant determinants. While the natural landscape remains relatively constant within a given region, there exists spatial variation in economic dynamics. As a result, the architectural diversity observed across different districts within a city is largely influenced by their geographical locations (He et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017). Additionally, the dense (Ritchie et al., 2024) and hyper-diverse urban populations (Vertovec, 2007, 2017), along with specific nightlife trends stemming from the intricacies of city life (Hollands & Chatterton, 2003), are shaping the density and diversity of urban nightlife. Nightlife entertainment venues can, at times, be associated with an increased risk of sexual violence, which constitutes acts against sexual integrity (Fank & Štirn, 2013) and includes any sexual act or attempted acquisition thereof, unwelcome sexually-related comments or advances, human trafficking actions, and other acts targeting a person's sexuality, carried out through coercion, with the perpetrator potentially being anyone, regardless of their relationship to the victim (Krug et al., 2002).

Urban areas, including nightlife spots, may experience weaker informal connections and community familiarity due to the transient and diverse nature of their populations. Abovementioned can shape perceptions of acceptable behaviour, societal attitudes toward sexual violence, and victims' willingness to report incidents (Bardwick, 1971, as cited in Tangri et al., 1982; Heise et al., 1996; Rozée, 1993). Furthermore, Steblay (1987) found a significantly higher likelihood of helping behaviour occurring in nonurban settings than in urban environments. Amato (1993) observed that urban residents typically show less inclination to assist strangers, a phenomenon attributed to the diverse and fragmented nature of large cities. However, large cities cultivate numerous subcultures based on shared interests and lifestyles. Within these subcultures, individuals display levels of social cohesion and willingness to help akin to those in rural communities. In general, a lack of personal acquaintance might influence an individual's hesitation to intervene in potentially harmful situations, a phenomenon discussed by Darley and Latané (1968) as the diffusion of responsibility and bystander effect. This effect can be amplified

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in urban areas where numerous bystanders might lead to a belief that someone else will take action, resulting in overall inaction. The belief that someone else will step in, combined with the presence of many witnesses, often leads to a reduced likelihood of individual intervention. Franklin et al. (2020) and Katz et al. (2015) found that bystanders are more inclined to intervene when the victim is someone they know personally. This inclination is driven by heightened emotions of empathy, responsibility, loyalty, and the ability to assess the situation's urgency. Bennett et al. (2017) and Jacobson & Eaton (2018) observed that bystanders are more inclined to intervene when the severity of sexual violence is higher.

In certain instances, nightlife venues might lack comprehensive and effective prevention strategies, allowing inappropriate behaviour to go unaddressed. As highlighted by Bulovec and Eman (2021b), the responsibility for preventing and addressing sexual violence and harassment in nightlife entertainment spots is shared among various stakeholders, including venue owners, law enforcement, visitors (patrons), staff, and broader community members. Each of these groups has a role in fostering a safe and respectful environment or enabling it to occur. Powers and Leili (2016) highlighted that many staff members in nightlife venues have discussed the importance of environmental design features that aid in identifying situations requiring intervention. They also noted that a lack of knowledge and familiarity with sexual violence can lead to the oversight of potentially dangerous situations. Raising awareness about sexual violence can empower service staff to take more responsibility for intervening. However, Powers and Leili (2016) highlighted a significant issue: the potential lack of strong support from venue owners for the involvement of nightlife venue staff in preventing sexual violence. Additionally, the ambiguity of certain actions can lead to doubts about the necessity for intervention. Still, it remains crucial to encourage witnesses to respond to these incidents, as their intervention can play a pivotal role in preventing more severe consequences (Powers & Leili, 2016). Knowing that nightclub staff are willing to intervene can provide a strong deterrent to customers who might otherwise misbehave. Staff members have a responsibility to adhere to and enforce clear alcohol policies within nightlife venues (Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency, 2021). Responsible alcohol service is about balancing legal requirements with community well-being.

The discussion mentioned above aligns with developing the plan of responsibility for preventing and addressing sexual violence to fit several Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs), reflecting the interconnected nature of social, economic, and cultural factors. The relevant SDGs include Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Reduced Inequality (SDG 10), Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17) (United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). Sexual violence prevention measures are vital across the entire spectrum of nightlife to ensure the safety and well-being of patrons, regardless of the specific type of venue. The inclusive approach to reducing inequalities, promoting gender equality, and fostering partnerships is relevant and beneficial for creating a safer and more equitable environment in all facets of nightlife and entertainment.

The chapter's objective is to shed light on the issue of sexual violence in Ljubljana, Slovenia's most urban area. By examining sexual violence in nightlife venues from an urban perspective, the chapter considers the distinct dynamics, challenges, and opportunities that urban environments offer. In the theoretical section, the focus will be on presenting the unique aspects of sexual violence within a typical urban setting. The authors will present the findings of a study conducted in Ljubljana involving stakeholders employed in nightlife venues and patrons. This presentation will highlight the frequency of sexual violence, the perceived effectiveness of existing preventive measures, and suggestions for reducing and controlling sexual violence in nightlife settings. The discussion will delve into the potential strategies for preventing and controlling sexual violence in nightlife venues.

2   Factors Related to Sexual Violence and Harassment

The persistence of sexual violence and harassment in society at large, as well as in nightlife entertainment spots, can be attributed to a combination of factors. First and foremost, in nightlife entertainment spots, social norms, gender stereotypes, gender inequalities, and power imbalances between men and women contribute to sexual violence and harassment (Becker & Tinkler, 2015; Grazian, 2008; Thompson & Cracco, 2008; Tinkler et al., 2018). As Mellgren et al. (2017) noted, this creates an environment where disrespectful behaviour is tolerated or normalised.

Media and social networks, as highlighted by Baxter and Wilmot (1985), can influence the perception of sexual violence, victims, and perpetrators, thus shaping cultural norms. As discovered by Bulovec and Eman (2021a), sexual violence,

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especially in nightlife areas, is misrepresented in the media. Reporting tends to focus on the most severe forms of sexual violence, which does not accurately reflect the true extent of the phenomenon and suggests that lesser forms of harassment are not forms of violence.

In addition to the acceptance of such disrespectful behaviour, numerous studies (Becker & Tinkler, 2015; Graham et al., 2014b; Hughes et al., 2008; Santos et al., 2015; Watt et al., 2012) have consistently emphasised the strong correlation between alcohol consumption, the use of prohibited drugs, and sexual violence within nightlife entertainment environments. Alcohol consumption, as pointed out by Clodfelter et al. (2008), can impair judgment and decision-making, rendering individuals more vulnerable to unwanted sexual behaviours or risky situations. Furthermore, Sanchez et al. (2018) have highlighted that beyond alcohol consumption, environmental factors within nightlife venues, such as the type of music and crowded conditions, significantly contribute to the occurrence of sexual violence.

In the context of sexual violence and harassment in or near nightlife venues, situational prevention measures – aimed at modifying immediate surroundings to minimise opportunities for criminal activities (e.g., Clarke, 1983) – seek to mitigate the risk factors contributing to such incidents. This approach aims to decrease opportunities for these offences by altering environmental conditions that facilitate them. Methods include physical security measures, surveillance, access control, environmental design, and adjustments to target accessibility and routines (Clarke, 1983). Based on the principles of situational prevention, we can conclude that factors such as crowding, poor lighting, alcohol policies and a lack of control make it easier for perpetrators to go unnoticed and incidents of sexual violence to occur without being noticed by other patrons. Additionally, diminished personal safety measures escalate the risk of victimisation (e.g., if people drink, they are less aware of their surroundings and more likely to put themselves in danger) (Clodfelter et al., 2008).

According to routine activities theory, alcohol consumption or intoxication impairs individuals' ability to protect themselves, particularly in the presence of motivated offenders, thereby increasing the likelihood of them becoming vulnerable targets (Clodfelter et al., 2008). In nightlife areas, alcohol consumption is linked to the occurrence of sexual harassment, where victims, especially women, may feel

pressured to tolerate such behaviours due to a prevailing culture of acceptance (Mellgren et al., 2017). Furthermore, specific gender norms in nightlife settings influence social interactions, particularly for young women, who may find easier access to popular venues by conforming to flirtatious and "attractive" dress codes (Grazian, 2008). These social norms, in conjunction with routine activities theory, underscore the aspect of target suitability.

Within the array of factors contributing to the perpetuation of sexual violence in nightlife venues, it is notable that individuals may exploit the social and intoxicating atmosphere of nightlife to engage in predatory behaviour, specifically targeting vulnerable individuals who might be less vigilant of their surroundings. An example of such behaviour is 'girl hunting', which, as described by Grazian (2007), represents a sort of collective, patriarchal ritual often considered a bonding activity among heterosexual men aimed at achieving sexual encounters. Building on this, we cannot disregard the influence of peer pressure and group dynamics, which can shape and encourage behaviours that might lead to boundary violations or non-consensual actions. Furthermore, patrons of nightlife venues may lack awareness of what constitutes sexual violence. As noted by Tinkler et al. (2018), many young people have encountered situations involving sexual violence but may not classify such experiences as violent. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding about consent (Monique Burr Foundation for Children, n.d.; The Crown Prosecution Service, 2021) and the significance of intervening when witnessing potentially harmful situations (bystander intervention) (Burn, 2019). This inadequate understanding of sexual violence, consent, and respectful behaviour can contribute to inappropriate actions going unaddressed.

Among the factors contributing to sexual violence in nightlife venues, inadequate enforcement of codes of conduct and legal measures is notable. According to Becker and Tinkler (2015), acts of sexual violence are not strictly regulated in nightlife areas. In Slovenia, criminal acts of sexual violence are regulated by the Criminal Code (2012), while the misdemeanour aspect is covered by the Protection of Public Order Act (2006). Despite this legislation, Bulovec & Eman (2021b) have highlighted a particularly grey area in actions that could potentially constitute misdemeanours and felonies. This ambiguity arises due to various forms of sexual violence, their severity, and the feelings of the victim. Victims may fear victim-blaming and social stigma if

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they report incidents of sexual violence or harassment. This fear can deter individuals from coming forward and seeking help (Welsh et al., 2006).

3 Methodology

In this section, we attempt to gain insight into the nature of sexual violence in an urban environment. Consequently, we chose to conduct the research in the City of Ljubljana, the most urban area in Slovenia. This research was carried out between October and November 2022 as part of our involvement in the EU project SHINE (Sexual Harassment in Nightlife Entertainment Spots: Control and Prevention). We used the mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research elements. As pointed out by Brent and Kraska (2010) and Kraska and Neuman (2008), using a mixed methods approach aims to obtain in-depth research. It improves the validity and reliability of the results. The findings from quantitative methods were supplemented with qualitative methods for additional explanation and interpretation of the results.

We conducted research on sexual violence in nightlife venues, utilising round tables, training sessions, and semi-structured interviews. One hundred thirty-five people participated in the research; including 18 stakeholders, 57 nightlife personnel, and 60 nightlife patrons. As this research utilised snowball sampling, it is essential to acknowledge its limitation in terms of representativeness. Initial participants were contacted via email and encouraged to disseminate the invitation further. Engagement was sought from pub managers across Ljubljana and students from diverse faculties, who in turn shared the research invitation with their networks.

All participants, regardless of the type of involvement in the research (round tables, training sessions, or semi-structured interviews), were asked the same questions, with the possibility of adding important observations freely. We gave the participants a paper with a brief introduction to the topic, followed by open-ended questions and ample space to write their answers. Additionally, participants were encouraged to express their thoughts freely at the end of the questionnaire. During semi-structured interviews, we followed the same topics and took notes. We adhered to the grounded theory approach by Glasser and Strauss (1967). All collected answers were transcribed and coded by the research team. We then compiled the texts to which

we attributed the same concept and organised the data into essential concepts and categories (Glaser in Strauss, 1967; Mesec, 1998).

The first part of the questions (during round tables, training sessions, or semi-structured interviews) aimed to gain insight into the perception of sexual violence in nightlife areas, including the types of venues involved and the frequency of such incidents. Respondents were asked whether they had observed any instances of sexual violence in nightlife areas, and if so, how frequently. If their response was affirmative, they were kindly asked to provide a brief description of the incident(s), including details such as the victim's involvement, the perpetrator, and the response from bystanders or others present. In the second part, we focused on the existing preventive activities. Respondents were asked if they had observed any preventive measures addressing sexual violence prevention in nightlife areas and if they answered affirmatively to provide a brief description. The last section was devoted to the proposals aimed at reducing, preventing, and controlling the incidence of sexual violence in nightlife areas. Respondents were asked to propose improvements for the prevention of sexual violence in nightlife areas and describe their suggestions. The following results are presented separately for each group of participants involved – stakeholders, nightlife personnel, and nightlife patrons.

4   Results

The findings regarding the prevalence of observed sexual violence within nightlife venues highlight significant differences in the perceptions of its frequency among stakeholders, nightlife personnel, and patrons (Figure 1). Stakeholders were quite heterogeneous in their views about the frequency of observing sexual violence: about equal proportions (33.3%) acknowledged that they observed sexual violence "rarely", "occasionally", and "very often". In contrast, nightlife personnel and patrons reported observing sexual violence less frequently. The largest share of nightlife patrons reported observing sexual violence in nightlife venues "rarely" (26.7%), followed by "occasionally" (21.7%). Similarly, the largest share of nightlife personnel noted that they observed sexual violence "rarely" (31.6%). However, there are distinctions within these groups, with personnel expressing slightly greater concern than patrons. This is evident in a higher proportion perceiving sexual violence to occur "often" or "very often".
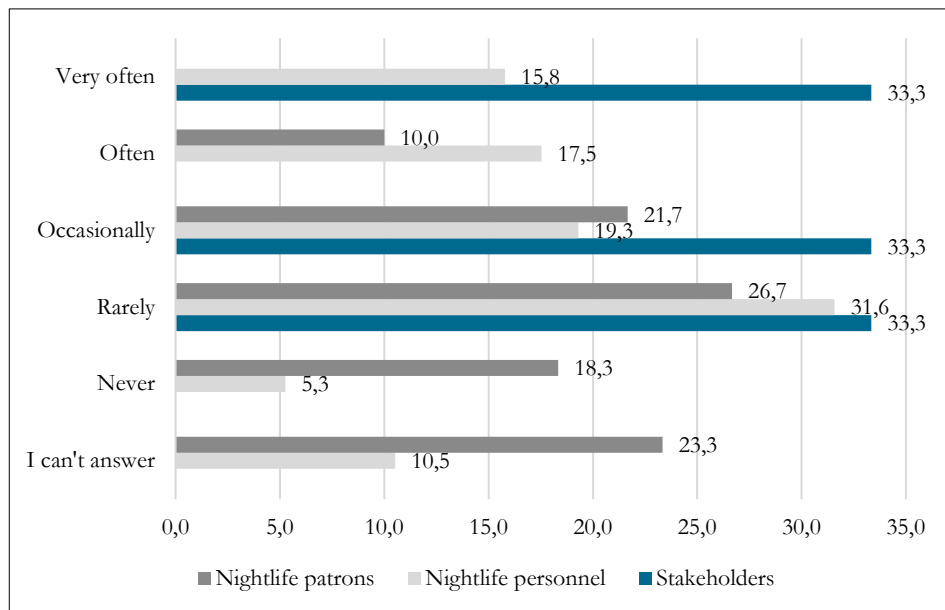
Figure 1: Frequency of Perception of Sexual Violence Incidents in Nightlife Venues (%)

The analysis reveals variations in the perceptions of different forms of sexual violence among stakeholders, nightlife personnel, and nightlife patrons (Figure 2). While some forms, such as unwanted physical contact, are widely recognised across all groups (mentioned by 72.2% of stakeholders, 64.9% of nightlife personnel, and 30% of nightlife patrons), perceptions of other forms depend on the respondent's role and perspective within the nightlife environment. Stakeholders view inappropriate comments related to sexuality as the second most prevalent form (50.0%), while nightlife personnel and nightlife patrons perceive them less frequently (26.3% and 18.3%, respectively). Nightlife personnel consider unwanted advances as the second most prevalent form of nightlife sexual violence (29.8%). Interestingly, stakeholders were also more likely to perceive a strong correlation between sexual violence and alcohol/drugs (38.9%), compared to personnel (12.3%) and patrons (3.3%). Other responses included staring, invading personal space, purchasing drinks, pressuring conversation (e.g., feeling 'obligated' to spend time with someone who bought a drink), stalking, offering rides home, and attempted rape.
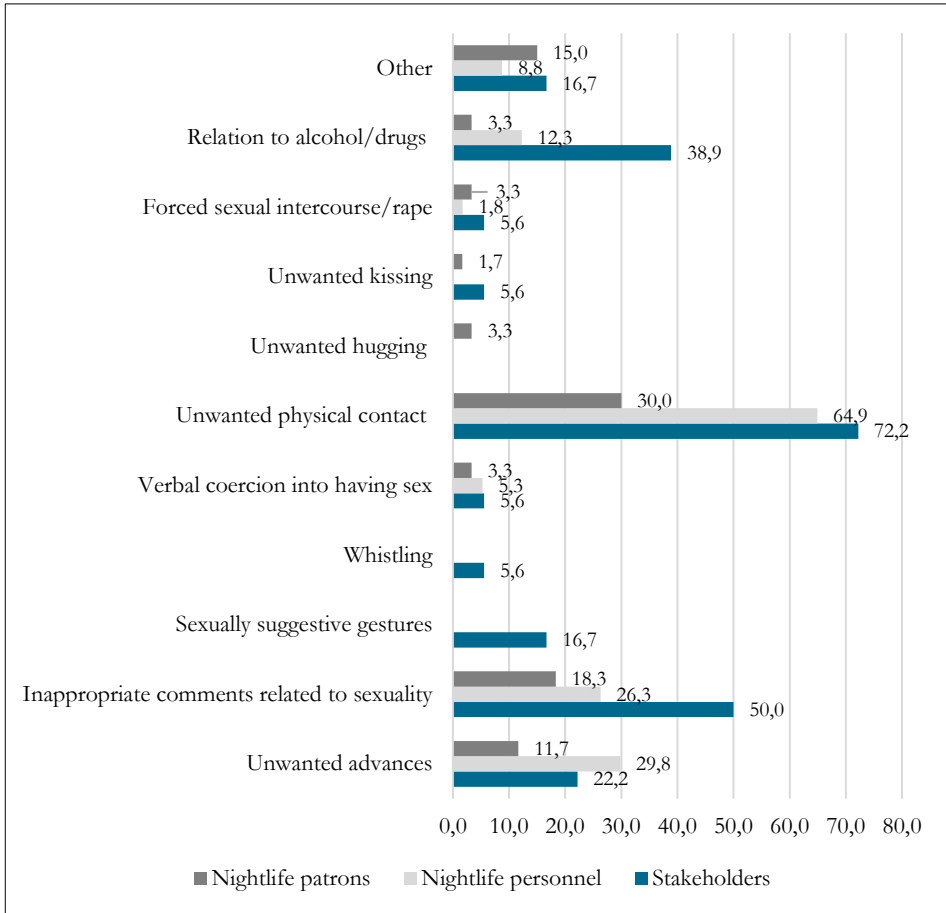
Figure 2: The Most Frequently Perceived Types of Sexual Violence (%)

Only a small percentage of respondents observed preventive activities against sexual violence in nightlife settings. Preventive activities were noted by 22.2% of stakeholders, 29.8% of nightlife personnel, and 21.7% of nightlife patrons. This indicates a potential gap in awareness or implementation of preventive measures within these environments. The responses regarding observed preventive activities in nightlife venues are grounded in the observations and involvement of respondents in the nightlife industry, whether as stakeholders, personnel, or patrons (Figure 3).

Stakeholders who have a vested interest in the management and safety of nightlife venues emphasise various preventive measures, such as the presence of security personnel and efforts to raise awareness (mentioned by 27.8% each), as well as

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initiatives aimed at raising awareness among employees and working with young people (11.1% each).

Nightlife personnel, encompassing employees working within these venues, provide insights based on their experiences. They mention measures such as encouraging patrons to exercise caution and promoting self-protective behaviour (7%), the presence of security guards, posters, and billboards addressing sexual violence and consent, as well as increased police presence (5.3% each). Additionally, they note initiatives like bystander intervention, age restrictions, adequate lighting, limited entry numbers, and prohibition of drug use promotion at parties (3.5% each). These responses indicate a focus on situational preventive measures among nightlife personnel, contrasting with the lack of mention of such measures among nightlife patrons. Among the nightlife personnel who did not observe preventive activities, one response stands out, suggesting that sexual violence is not prioritised in prevention efforts: "No, there are practically no preventive activities against sexual violence in nightlife areas. In recent years, the number of security guards stationed in nightclubs has increased, but they prioritise addressing fights and disorder rather than addressing sexual violence." This underscores a significant gap in prioritising and addressing sexual violence prevention within nightlife venues.

On the other hand, responses from nightlife patrons reflect their observations as venue-goers, with fewer references to specific preventive activities. The variety of preventive activities noticed by patrons was considerably smaller compared to those observed by stakeholders or nightlife personnel, totalling only five observed preventive activities. The most observed preventive measure was the presence of security guards (15%), as they are the most visible in nightlife settings compared to other measures. One nightlife patron observed that among the preventive measures, only security guards were noticed and pointed out that: "…*security guards do not necessarily carry out preventive activities directly related to the prevention of sexual violence*." Some other respondents agreed with this statement, noting that security guards are "not a reliable source for help" or that "they do not fulfil their duties properly". Conversely, there were comments regarding the proper functioning of security guards and their intervention in cases of sexual violence in certain nightclubs. While some patrons (3.3%) mentioned warnings about being cautious with drinks, overall, their responses suggest a lower awareness of preventive measures than stakeholders and personnel. Only 1.7% in each category mentioned observing initiatives such as

employee awareness campaigns, posters and billboards addressing sexual violence and consent, and displays of care for others.
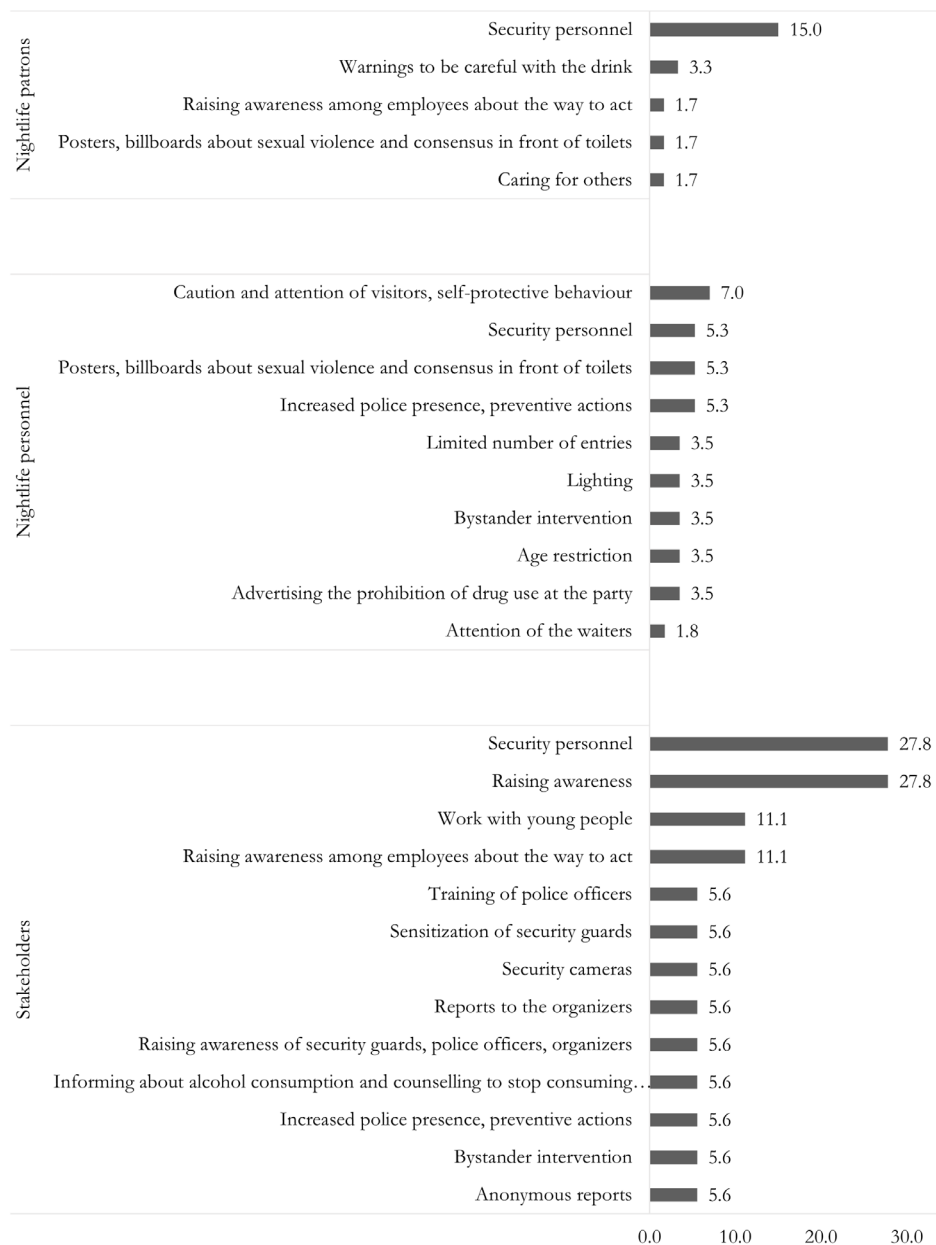

Figure 3: Areas Where Prevention Activities Were Observed (%)

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Below, we present areas where stakeholders, nightlife personnel, and nightlife patrons have recognised the importance of improving preventive activities (Figure 4). Stakeholders' responses regarding propositions for preventing sexual violence in nightlife venues spanned various categories. The highest percentage (44.4%) emphasised the importance of raising awareness about sexual violence prevention. Close behind, 33.3% of stakeholders highlighted the significance of trained security guards in these venues. Additionally, 22.2% of stakeholders underscored the role of society in fostering cultural changes and promoting respect and consent.

Meanwhile, 16.7% advocated for involving the police in effectively addressing sexual violence. Similarly, another 16.7% recognised the responsibility of managers and owners of bars to create safe environments and implement preventive measures. Within stakeholder responses, 11.1% each underscored the importance of educational initiatives, enforcement of sanctions, and active involvement of venue employees in sexual violence prevention efforts. An additional 5.6% of respondents mentioned the significance of addressing alcohol's role, implementing situational prevention measures, and providing comprehensive support services for both victims and perpetrators in combating sexual violence. These responses collectively underscore the multi-faceted approach required to effectively combat sexual violence in nightlife venues, with stakeholders recognising the importance of awareness, security, societal change, education, enforcement, and support mechanisms. As highlighted by the Ljubljana city manager, who participated in our survey: "*The collaborative efforts of local government and the community, facilitated by a city manager responsible for communication between bars and the city, further ensure the promotion of safety in nightlife venues. Besides the abovementioned collaboration with nightlife managers, local governments should work with state entities, especially the Police and NGOs, to battle the phenomenon of sexual violence in nightlife venues*".

The highest percentage of nightlife personnel (38.6%) proposed security guards as a preventive measure against sexual violence, highlighting significant reliance on trained personnel to ensure the safety of nightlife venues and respond to incidents effectively. Following closely, 26.3% of personnel suggested raising awareness about sexual violence prevention, indicating an acknowledgement of the role of education and information dissemination in fostering safer environments. Alcohol emerged as a notable concern, with 19.3% of respondents recognising its role in facilitating

sexual violence. This underscores the importance of implementing responsible alcohol service and management practices to mitigate risks. Additionally, 14.0% of personnel identified society as needing improvement in preventing sexual violence, signalling a broader societal responsibility in addressing cultural norms and attitudes contributing to such incidents. A smaller proportion, accounting for 12.3%, advocated for enhancing legal regulations and modifying sanctions as preventive measures. Similarly, the same percentage acknowledged the significance of providing support for both victims and perpetrators of sexual violence. Transportation and zero-tolerance policies each received responses from 10.5% and 8.8% of personnel, respectively, indicating considerations for ensuring safe transportation options and implementing strict policies against sexual misconduct.

Moreover, 8.8% of respondents emphasised the importance of empowering employees to play an active role in preventing sexual violence, suggesting a need for training and support for venue staff. A minority of personnel, at 7.0%, mentioned involving the police and promoting self-protective behaviours and situational prevention measures. Other factors, such as drugs, school-based initiatives, age verification, and control measures, received lower percentages, suggesting they are perceived as less significant contributors to sexual violence prevention in nightlife venues. Interestingly, none of the nightlife personnel respondents mentioned the role of managers or owners of bars, indicating a potential gap in awareness or acknowledgement of their responsibility in creating safe environments.

Among the propositions for prevention improvements, nightlife patrons prioritise the presence of trained security personnel to ensure their safety and prevent incidents of sexual violence, with security guards receiving the highest percentage response at 50.0%. Situational prevention measures were also deemed essential to improve, with 38.3% of patrons acknowledging their effectiveness in reducing the likelihood of sexual violence by modifying the environment or circumstances. Awareness campaigns were mentioned by 21.7% of patrons, indicating a recognition of the role of education and information dissemination in promoting safer behaviours and attitudes. Improvements in addressing alcohol's role in facilitating sexual violence were acknowledged by 18.3% of respondents, suggesting a need for responsible alcohol service and consumption practices within nightlife venues. Society was identified as needing improvements by 16.7% of patrons, highlighting the broader societal attitudes and norms that influence behaviours and perceptions

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related to sexual violence. A smaller percentage, at 13.3%, emphasised the importance of empowering venue employees to play an active role in preventing and responding to incidents of sexual violence. Control measures received responses from 8.3% of patrons, indicating considerations for implementing policies and regulations to maintain a safe environment. Other factors, such as drugs, transportation options, police involvement, age verification, school-based initiatives, sanctions, and self-protective behaviours, were mentioned by smaller percentages of patrons, suggesting varying degrees of awareness or perceived relevance. Interestingly, none of the patrons mentioned the need to improve the role of managers or owners of bars, like the responses from nightlife personnel. This could indicate a gap in awareness or acknowledgement of their responsibility among patrons.

Upon closer examination of the results presented in Figure 4, a list of suggestions emerges for enhancing preventive activities targeted at mitigating sexual violence in nightlife areas, encompassing contributions from all participants involved in the research.

Regarding proposed preventive activities related to security personnel, respondents emphasised the need for more trained security staff, visible security presence, an increased number of security personnel mingling among visitors, training on response methods, and encouragement for intervention in observed incidents of sexual violence.

Within observed awareness-raising activities, participants highlighted educating young individuals, displaying warnings at entrances, signposts indicating help locations, labelling establishments with a zero-tolerance policy (e.g., LGBT-friendly), involving volunteers and NGOs, and conducting awareness campaigns at venues and enhancing awareness of the unacceptability of sexual violence responses, consent, safe alcohol consumption, and self-protective behaviour. An on-site awareness team was also suggested.
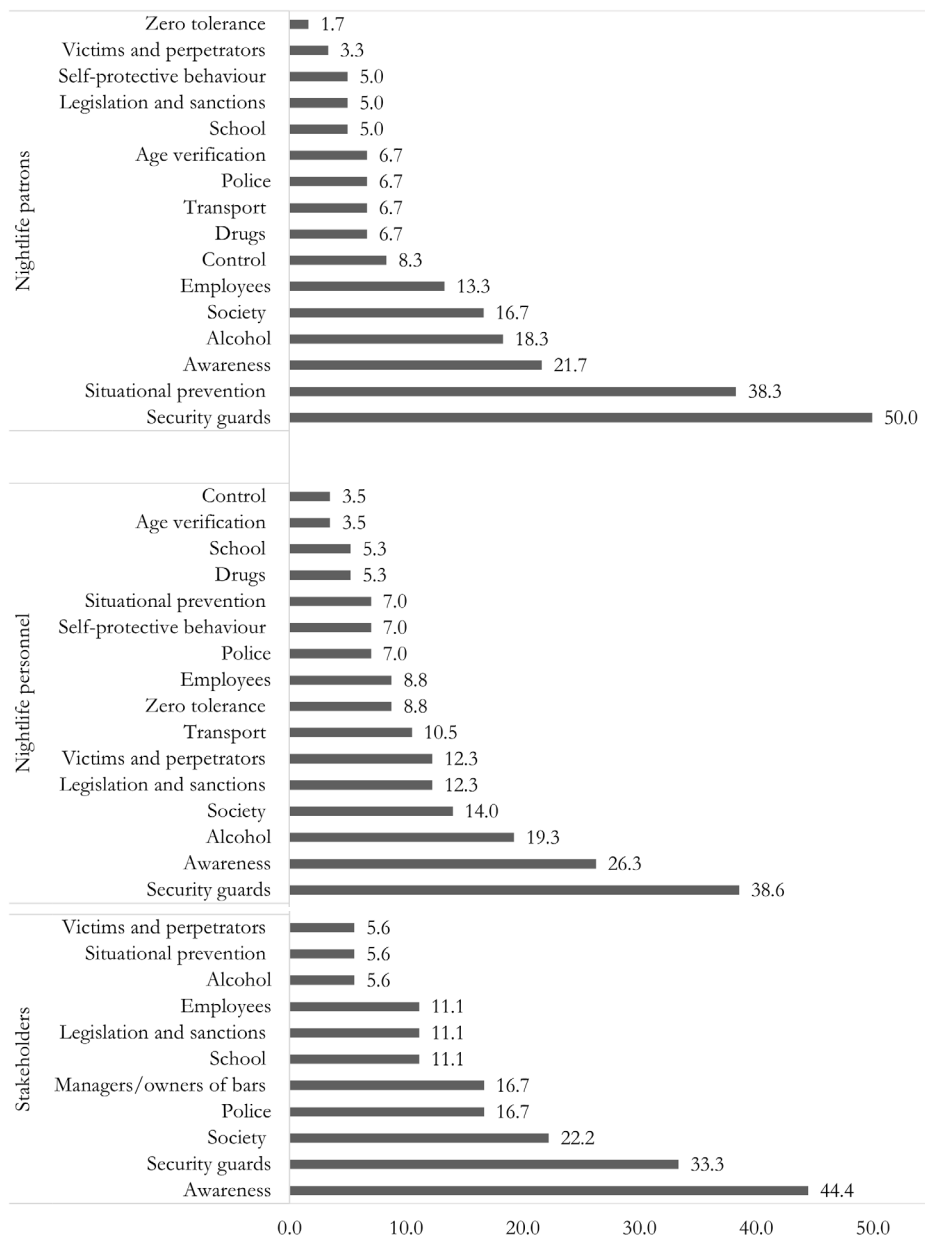
Nightlife patrons

Category	Value
Zero tolerance	1.7
Victims and perpetrators	3.3
Self-protective behaviour	5.0
Legislation and sanctions	5.0
School	5.0
Age verification	6.7
Police	6.7
Transport	6.7
Drugs	6.7
Control	8.3
Employees	13.3
Society	16.7
Alcohol	18.3
Awareness	21.7
Situational prevention	38.3
Security guards	50.0

Nightlife personnel

Category	Value
Control	3.5
Age verification	3.5
School	5.3
Drugs	5.3
Situational prevention	7.0
Self-protective behaviour	7.0
Police	7.0
Employees	8.8
Zero tolerance	8.8
Transport	10.5
Victims and perpetrators	12.3
Legislation and sanctions	12.3
Society	14.0
Alcohol	19.3
Awareness	26.3
Security guards	38.6

Stakeholders

Category	Value
Victims and perpetrators	5.6
Situational prevention	5.6
Alcohol	5.6
Employees	11.1
Legislation and sanctions	11.1
School	11.1
Managers/owners of bars	16.7
Police	16.7
Society	22.2
Security guards	33.3
Awareness	44.4

Figure 4: Areas Where Prevention Activities Were Proposed (%)

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Situational prevention measures proposed by study participants included video surveillance, improved indoor and outdoor lighting, enhanced space visibility, minimising blind spots, controlling visitor numbers, implementing entry controls, and providing separate restroom entrances. Suggestions to prevent risks of sexual violence due to alcohol consumption included overseeing drink preparation and service, video surveillance of bars, restricting alcohol intake, adhering to alcohol policies and regulations, providing safe areas for sobering up, using glass covers, refraining from accepting drinks from strangers, implementing indicators for drug presence incorporated in straws and glasses.

Regarding societal-focused proposals, participants highlighted mutual assistance, informal interpersonal supervising, active involvement in nightlife with encouragement for bystander intervention, and sensitising visitors to the unacceptability of sexual violence. Employee-related preventive actions involved educating and training staff about recognition and response, increasing staff numbers, and protecting serving staff from visitor violence. Within the sanctions category, potential solutions included consistently enforcing sanctions, promoting reporting to the police and notifying staff, stricter penalties, and penalties for even "milder" forms of sexual violence.

Apart from participation in nightlife itself, suggestions regarding safe transportation emerged due to the potential for sexual violence after participating in nightlife. These proposals involved organised safe transportation from nightlife areas, modelled after "Mon Cheperon" in France – verified drivers and traceability, and facilitating safe transportation home for visibly intoxicated individuals.

Improvements in police work were suggested, encompassing increased police presence, officer training, preventive actions, and the use of modern investigative methods to identify perpetrators and detect prohibited substances, primarily drugs used for assault. Measures concerning victims included safely removing them, immediately removing perpetrators from the scene and offering the "angel shot" or asking for Angela (a signal for help). They also underscored the need for stricter substance control upon entry to nightlife areas and the development of techniques to identify drug content in drinks.

Opportunities for enhancing the situation were also identified in the education sphere, particularly in terms of conducting awareness training focused on recognising sexual violence, understanding consent, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Less frequently mentioned as prevention possibilities were actions such as age verification and other measures directed at operators or venue owners who might otherwise tolerate sexual harassment and violence. These include creating a venue policy on zero tolerance for sexual violence, sensitising operators to the problem of sexual violence, and encouraging nightlife providers to respond appropriately if the potential for violence is suspected.

5   Discussion

Our survey revealed varying reports from stakeholders, personnel, and patrons regarding observed sexual violence in nightlife venues. Prevalent forms included unwanted physical contact, inappropriate comments, unwanted advances, and incidents related to alcohol or drugs. These findings highlight differences in awareness and perspectives, underscoring the necessity for targeted interventions to prevent sexual violence effectively.

Comparing our findings with those of a US survey (Kearl, 2014) involving 2,000 individuals aged 18 and older, roughly divided by gender, we observe a concerning prevalence of street harassment. Their survey revealed that a significant portion of women, approximately 65%, reported experiencing street sexual harassment. This harassment primarily involved verbal and physical forms, including aggressive behaviours like sexual touching, stalking, and exhibitionism. Additionally, a smaller percentage of women reported coercion into sexual acts. In comparison, men experienced street sexual harassment at a lower rate, with verbal and physical harassment being less prevalent. In our research, we observed various forms of sexual violence to a lesser extent, ranging from actions like whistling and unwanted hugging to more severe instances such as coercion into sexual acts or forced intercourse. Despite their varying degrees, each of these forms constitutes a serious violation of human dignity and undermines the safety of nightlife venues. Collective action from owners, nightlife employees, patrons, police, and the community is necessary to prevent such incidents (Bulovec & Eman, 2021b).

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The goal is to establish nightlife venues where harmful behaviours are intolerable, allowing individuals to socialise without fear. These spaces should promote respect, consent, and safety. Preventing sexual violence aligns with SDG 3, promoting good health and well-being. Sexual violence prevention contributes to the well-being of individuals attending nightlife entertainment spots. Creating safer environments enhances mental and physical health, fostering a safer and healthier society. Effective prevention measures not only reduce the incidence of sexual violence but also foster an environment conducive to the well-being of all individuals, thus creating a safer and healthier society.

Our findings underscore the importance of considering the perspectives and experiences of different participants within the nightlife ecosystem when implementing and evaluating preventive strategies to ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals involved. Security guards were identified as the most observed preventive measure, noted by stakeholders, nightlife patrons, and personnel to varying extents. Additionally, suggestions for enhancing prevention often emphasised the importance of well-trained security staff. These findings highlight the critical role of security personnel in ensuring safety within nightlife venues. Furthermore, recommendations were made to enhance the visibility of security personnel to deter potential offenders and help when needed. Among the commonly observed preventive measures among stakeholders were awareness-raising initiatives, youth outreach programs, and training sessions for nightlife personnel regarding responding to sexual violence incidents in nightlife venues. Conversely, nightlife personnel, including security guards, emphasised the importance of promoting caution and self-protective behaviours among patrons, displaying posters and billboards about sexual violence and consent, and increasing police presence. Overall, responses from nightlife patrons suggest lower awareness of preventive measures compared to stakeholders and personnel. Specifically, our research highlights the need for enhanced awareness-raising initiatives concerning all nightlife participants. Implementing such initiatives can bridge the awareness gap and empower individuals to recognise and address instances of sexual violence effectively. It is essential to consistently raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of sexual violence and harassment through campaigns, workshops, and informative materials.

Additionally, participants emphasised the necessity for enhanced activities within educational systems. The significance of public education was also mentioned in the context of general preventive measures (Nevisi, 2019). Education is key in helping individuals identify such behaviours and take preventive action (Storer et al., 2016). This involves promoting awareness campaigns that educate patrons on the issue, the negative impact on the victim, and the importance of bystander intervention (Banyard et al., 2004). Banyard et al. (2004, p. 65) noted that: "*full community perspective demands that we not stop here but that we continue to build individual and community competence in the face of sexual violence and more fully engage all community members in the process of sexual violence prevention.*" McMahon (2015) explored the influence of contextual factors on bystander intervention across various emergency scenarios. Social norms, community cohesion, prosocial role modelling, implementation of policies and accountability measures, and the physical environment were identified as significant factors shaping bystander response. As pointed out by Koss and Harvey (1991, p. 280) we must "…*combine educational activities to build individual competence with action strategies to create new social supports for those at risk.*" Hence, nightlife venues should be viewed as key and strategic locations within a community where education about and prevention of sexual violence can diffuse through the larger community, creating even greater benefits. While specifics may vary, training programs typically encompass several common components, including education on sexual violence awareness, techniques to identify markers of sexual risk, instruction on bystander responsibility when encountering risky situations, and discussions or simulations regarding interventions in such scenarios (Storer et al., 2016). Nightlife venues are pivotal and strategic locations within communities for disseminating education about and preventing sexual violence. This is especially pertinent considering that alcohol intoxication is a prevalent factor in over half of sexual assaults (Abbey, 2002; Testa et al., 2000), and bystanders frequently encounter increased barriers to intervention when the potential victim is intoxicated (Pugh et al., 2016). According to Leone et al. (2018), a primary objective of bystander training programs is to heighten awareness regarding the potential progression from less severe forms of sexual violence to more serious acts. They further emphasise that the presence of alcohol intensifies the ambiguity in sexual risk situations, making intervention more challenging.

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In general prevention efforts, implementing and enforcing explicit codes of conduct against sexual violence and harassment are crucial. Our research also emphasises the need for improvements in legal regulations and sanctions, as supported by participants. Strengthening legal measures and penalties for such offences can enhance deterrence. Nevisi (2019) underscores the significance of factors such as deterrence, intimidation, and public education in prevention measures. Specific regulations addressing these concerns already exist in Ljubljana, a city where nightlife is significant for tourism. The Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Municipality of Ljubljana and the Social Welfare Development Strategy in the Municipality of Ljubljana define strategies for violence prevention, including sexual violence (Mestna občina Ljubljana, 2019, 2021).

Gender equality, encompassed in SDG 5, addresses sexual violence in nightlife venues rooted in gender-based discrimination and power imbalances. This initiative aligns with Goal 5 by challenging societal norms perpetuating violence and promoting an inclusive nightlife culture where all genders feel safe. Bulovec and Eman (2021b) emphasise that successful prevention efforts rely heavily on collaboration among stakeholders. The initiative also aligns with Goal 17 by fostering partnerships and coordinated measures, emphasising collective action for community safety, well-being, and equality.

Building upon our discourse concerning preventive measures, it is pertinent to underscore the discernible inclination among nightlife patrons towards prioritising the enhancement of situational preventive measures, particularly when contrasted with the perspectives of nightlife personnel and stakeholders. Situational prevention methods, including physical security measures and environmental design (Clarke, 1983), aim to reduce factors like crowding and poor lighting, making it harder for perpetrators to go unnoticed and incidents of sexual violence to occur (Clodfelter et al., 2008). Regarding potential venue alterations, well-lit areas enhance visibility and discourage potential offenders from engaging in inappropriate behaviours. Additionally, strategically placed security cameras can monitor activities and serve as evidence in case of incidents. Furthermore, our research has highlighted restrooms as critical locations for sexual violence incidents. Ensuring well-maintained, secure, and monitored restrooms can help prevent occurrences in secluded areas. Diminished personal safety measures, such as alcohol consumption leading to decreased awareness, also escalate the risk of victimisation (Clodfelter et al., 2008).

In our research, the proposed measures include the establishment of safe spaces within venues where patrons can seek assistance or take a break. Defined pathways and exits also diminish opportunities for offenders to isolate victims. In line with routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), sexual violence in nightlife areas can be interpreted because of a motivated offender, a potential victim without capable guardianship, and a specific time and location (Ceccato, 2014). Visible and well-trained security personnel can deter potential offenders and respond promptly to incidents (Johnson et al., 2016).

To effectively recognise and respond to incidents of sexual violence, comprehensive training should be provided to all staff members, including security personnel. Our study found that stakeholders, nightlife personnel, and nightlife patrons stressed the significance of empowering nightlife personnel through training initiatives. Powers and Leili (2016) emphasised that a lack of knowledge and familiarity with sexual violence may result in overlooking potentially dangerous situations. Increasing awareness about sexual violence can empower service staff to take greater responsibility for intervening. However, they also highlighted a significant issue: the potential lack of strong support from venue owners for the involvement of nightlife venue staff in preventing sexual violence. They added that: "*bar managers need to be made to feel responsible as well*" (Powers & Leili, 2016, p. 703). Johnson et al. (2016, p. 29) find out that: "*…proactive security efforts appear to increase return customers might motivate managers to implement better security policies*". Powers and Leili (2016, p. 703) pointed out that "*Bar owners/managers may be more open to bystander prevention if they perceive it as a means of positive promotion. Their participation can help bars develop and maintain a positive image in the community, which may in turn make them more profitable*".

Combating sexual violence in nightlife venues contributes to promoting peace and justice (SDG 16) by establishing strong institutions capable of enforcing laws and protecting individuals from harm. This involves implementing measures to hold perpetrators accountable, ensuring a just response to incidents, and fostering trust in responsible institutions. Providing comprehensive support services is essential for survivors, aligning with SDG 3 by addressing mental and physical health impacts and contributing to public health. Access to counselling, medical assistance, and legal guidance helps victims cope and navigate the aftermath. Making information about these services readily available within venues is crucial, and law enforcement's prompt and thorough response to incidents is also vital.

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In our study, suggestions were made regarding societal measures aimed at enhancing sexual violence prevention in nightlife venues. These included promoting mutual assistance, informal interpersonal monitoring, actively engaging and encouraging bystander intervention, and sensitising visitors to the unacceptability of sexual violence. Bystander intervention training is crucial, empowering individuals to intervene and prevent incidents. Encouraging patrons to intervene and providing them with tools can create a culture of responsibility (Burn, 2019). Byrnes et al. (2016) found that groups with strong social bonds and lower expectations for alcohol consumption among their members were more inclined to intervene. Leone et al. (2018) also highlighted how intoxication narrows bystanders' focus, exacerbating the diffusion of responsibility and hindering intervention. Alcohol can also shift focus towards perceived norms regarding sexual behaviour, such as judgments about the victim's "worthiness", rather than towards the risk of sexual violence.

Furthermore, extant research found that alcohol is a significant contributing factor to sexual violence (Becker & Tinkler, 2015; Clodfelter et al., 2008; Graham et al., 2014b; Hughes et al., 2008; Sanchez et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2015; Watt et al., 2012). Respondents in our study proposed preventive measures related to alcohol consumption. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate both encouraging bystander intervention and implementing alcohol-related measures as integral components of comprehensive prevention strategies. Ensuring that alcohol policies are in place and followed can help mitigate this risk and create a safer environment for patrons (Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency, 2021).

Kavanaugh's (2013) research highlights how women inadvertently reinforce attitudes that enable sexual violence. Often, women mentioned their own alcohol or other psychoactive substance consumption during their time at nightlife venues or interactions with potential perpetrators in nightlife venues. This unintentional reinforcement can normalise unwanted behaviours and uphold gender-related social norms. Preventive activities should address traditional gender norms and environments that perpetuate sexism and objectification (Graham et al., 2014a). Sexual violence prevention efforts should be inclusive, aligning with SDG 10, to ensure nightlife venues are safe for all individuals, regardless of their background or identity. By actively considering and addressing the needs of various groups, such as LGBTQ+ communities or marginalised individuals, the initiative contributes to the

reduction of inequalities within the community. It fosters a more equitable and just social environment. Challenging and changing cultural attitudes that might suggest the acceptability of sexual violence or harassment in any context, including nightlife settings, is crucial.

6   Conclusion

Combining situational and general prevention strategies offers a comprehensive approach to combatting sexual violence and harassment in nightlife entertainment venues. These strategies should be customised to suit the unique context of each venue and regularly assessed for their effectiveness. Achieving progress requires a proactive and holistic approach to addressing and preventing these issues. This effort demands collaboration among venue owners, staff, patrons, community members, and authorities, especially the police. As emphasised by Fileborn (2016), tackling unwanted sexual attention in entertainment areas necessitates a multifaceted prevention approach. This involves implementing measures such as staff training to respond effectively to incidents, establishing venue-specific policies, and implementing broader educational initiatives aimed at cultivating ethical behaviours among young individuals. The effectiveness of these strategies hinges on their flexibility, as venues may respond differently to unwanted sexual attention and exhibit distinct cultural and environmental factors.

Consequently, adapting preventive actions to suit the characteristics of each entertainment venue is imperative. Creating a secure nightlife environment entails a fusion of preventative measures and active participation from all stakeholders associated with the nightlife scene. Through a collaborative and adaptable approach, we can work towards fostering an atmosphere free from sexual violence and harassment.

Carefully crafted crime prevention strategies not only discourage criminal activities and victimisation but also contribute to sustainable development. Prevention is instrumental in achieving the SDGs (United Nations. Office on Drugs and Crime, n.d.). Efforts to prevent sexual violence in nightlife venues align with key SDGs, reflecting a holistic approach to societal well-being. In addressing Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), the initiative aims to create safer environments within entertainment venues, promoting patrons' mental and physical health by mitigating

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the risks of harassment and sexual violence. The emphasis on Goal 5 (Gender Equality) underscores the commitment to challenging discriminatory gender norms and fostering an inclusive nightlife culture where individuals of all genders can participate without fear. Additionally, the initiative contributes to Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality) by recognising and addressing the diverse populations affected, ensuring that nightlife activities are accessible and safe for everyone. As part of Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), combatting sexual violence involves implementing measures that hold perpetrators accountable, contributing to a sense of justice and security in various nightlife venues. Lastly, the collaborative nature of addressing sexual violence aligns with Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), emphasising the importance of collective efforts involving venue owners, law enforcement, community organisations, and patrons to create safer and more equitable nightlife venues.

The current study aims to provide insights into sexual violence within an urban setting, specifically in Ljubljana. The presented research has certain limitations, primarily stemming from the methodology employed, such as the utilisation of the snowball sampling technique. This approach may introduce measurement biases and potential inaccuracies in the gathered data. Moreover, the study was conducted with a relatively small sample size that lacks representativeness. Consequently, caution should be exercised when attempting to generalise the findings to broader populations or contexts. However, further research is warranted in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon and to develop more effective prevention measures that consider the diversity of norms and values found in different types of urban and rural communities.

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