

Extended Abstract

Smoking, Alcohol, Drug Use and Risk Factors in Working Youth

Introduction

Currently, the health of young people who are going to form the workforce of the future is becoming more important for a sustainable working life. Although there is a vast amount of literature on smoking, alcohol, and drug or stimulant use concerning young people who continue their education in the world and in Turkey, it seems that the data of the working youth in the risky group are limited, and the results thereof are contradictory.

This research aimed to determine the prevalence of cigarette, alcohol, and drug or stimulant use among young people aged 14-18 who continue an apprenticeship education in the formal sector and to evaluate the relationship between substance use and family characteristics as well as working life.

Methods

Ethical approval was obtained from Mersin University Clinical Research Ethics Committee (08.02.2018/2018/66) before the study was planned as a cross-sectional type of research. Institutional permission was acquired from the Provincial Directorate of National Education, and written consent was obtained from the participants and their families.

The study consisted of 970 working youth, aged 14-18, who attended six vocational education centers located in a city center and its districts. Further, 550 people identified through the stratified proportional sampling method were included in the study. The research was completed with 545 young people by removing inconsistent questionnaires.

The data were collected by the researcher in a classroom environment with a questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 15 questions that included personal information, family characteristics, and work life characteristics. The second part, which had 28 questions, was prepared using the “European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drug Use (ESPAD), 2015.” These questions contained features related to cigarette, alcohol, and drug or stimulant testing and use.

In the data classification, at least one cigarette per day was classified as a “smoker”; those who consumed alcohol at least once in the last 30 days were “alcohol consumers”; those who used drugs or stimulants at least once in the past year were considered “drug / stimulant users.” Drinking five or more drinks at a time at least once in the last 30 days was described as “heavy drinking.”

The data obtained from the research were analyzed by using a computer program from the descriptive statistics using numbers, percentages, arithmetic means, standard deviations, and a chi-square test. Binary Logistic Regression Analysis was applied to determine the risk factors affecting the use of more than one substance in apprentices.

Findings

Of the youth, 82% are male, and 27.5% were 17 years old. Further, 50.5% of working young people had experienced smoking; two of three young people had tried to smoke before, smoke one or more cigarettes a day. Smoking was most common at the age of 14. Moreover, 36% of working youth had tried alcohol, 54.6% had used alcohol in the last month, and the prevalence of heavy drinking was 2.6%. The earliest age of trying alcohol was 16 years old and above. In addition, 6.2% of the youth had tried drugs or stimulants. It was determined that the first trial age decreased to 12 years old, and the most frequent trial age is 16 years old and above. The reason for starting smoking, alcohol, and drugs or stimulants was mostly due to curiosity, peer pressure, and stress. 22.6% of working youth use only one of cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs or stimulants, 14.3% use two of these substances, and 2.9% use all of them. Factors that increase the risk of young people using more than one substance were as follows: dissatisfaction with their mother or no relationship with their mother (5.1 times), smoking in the workplace (5.5 times), having friends who use alcohol (2.5 times), easy access to smoking (7.2 times), easy access to alcohol (2.6 times), and easy access to the drugs or stimulants increased (5.5 times).

Discussion

Daily cigarette use rate of working youth is higher than that of the world average, similar to the average in Turkey; alcohol and substance abuse are higher than their peers who continue normal education in Turkey and similar to their peers in European countries. The sense of curiosity has an important place among the reasons. In particular, the ages of 12–14 and 15–17 are critical ages for encountering the substance. Smoking increases the risk of alcohol and substance abuse. Familial factors are important determinants in substance use. The presence of smoking, alcohol, and drugs or stimulants in the family, workplace, and friends increases the risk of substance use. High-risk groups related to substance use are mostly the 15–16 age group who have a history of substance use in the family and workplace, are dissatisfied with family relationships, and have a fragmented family structure.

Because accessing the substance is an important risk factor in substance use, it is necessary to control the sale and consumption of cigarettes and alcohol. It is recommended that family, school, and workplace-based substance use prevention programs be carried out for working young people and that appropriate treatment be provided for drug users.