

Extended Abstract

Cigarette Smoking and Determination of Nicotine Dependence Levels in University Students

Introduction

Early diagnosis and treatment of smoking addiction is considered as one of the most cost-effective prevention methods. Nicotine addiction is one of the most common types of addiction because of factors such as easy accessibility of tobacco and tobacco products and higher social acceptability than other addictive substances. Moreover, the most widely used tobacco products in the world is cigarette. Approximately 50% of those who are addicted to cigarettes mostly started smoking between the ages of 15–19 and continue to smoke for an additional 15–20 years. The early recognition and treatment of cigarette addiction plays a key role in the prevention of many chronic diseases. It is also considered as one of the most cost-effective conservation methods. In this context, it is necessary to reveal the current situation on addiction in young people who are an important risk group. This study aims to determine nicotine addiction levels and some related features of university students who regularly smoke.

Methods

The target population of this descriptive study composed of 30,147 public university students. In the sample calculation, it was determined that at least 453 people should be reached. Volunteer students who smoke regularly were included in the study. A 17-item questionnaire developed by researchers and the Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence Score were administered to the participants. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences program was used for statistical analysis of the survey data. and statistical significance tests were performed. Statistical significance level was accepted as $p < 0.05$ for all tests.

Findings

The mean age of the participants is 21 ± 2.9 years; and 58.2% are female. On an average, they smoke 15 (10–20) cigarettes a day. The father of 54.3% and close friends of 62.3% were smokers. The frequency of students who want to quit smoking was 19.5%. The frequency of those who tried quitting at least once is 52.8% and attempts to quit smoking are 2 (1-3) times. The median score of all students was calculated as 3 (0–5) according to nicotine addiction test. While the median score of females was 2 (0-5), it was 4 (1–5) for males, and statistically the nicotine addiction score was significantly higher for males ($p:0.02$). When addiction levels were evaluated according to the cutting point, 55.2% of the students were low, 31.4% are medium, and 13.4% were highly addicted. When addiction levels were evaluated by gender, low (63.5%) and middle (52.4%) level

addictions were more frequently in females. Moreover, high level addiction was found in the same ratio in both genders and there was a statistically significant difference between the genders ($p=0.03$). However, there was no significant difference between nicotine addiction levels in terms of age, class, and place of residence ($p=0.91$, $p:0.24$, and $p:0.23$, respectively). When evaluated in terms of other features, such as in the group with high nicotine addiction, father's smoking ($p<0.001$) and close friends smoking ($p=0.004$) were statistically significantly higher than other groups. Additionally, in the group with high dependence it was determined that the age of consuming the first cigarette was smaller than the other groups ($p: 0.02$). The daily amount of cigarettes smoked was the highest (20 branches of cigarettes) in the highly dependent group, while it was lower in the low and moderate groups (12 and 15 branches of cigarettes, respectively) and the difference between the groups is significant ($p<0.001$).

Discussion

The evaluations showed that the amount of cigarettes that university students smoke daily is relatively high; about half of them are addicted to medium and high levels of nicotine, and male students get higher dependency scores than females. These findings are similar to other studies. It is thought that gender, socio-economic situation, and cultural characteristics affect high frequency of smoking and addiction among men when compared with women. In the study, it has been determined that nicotine addiction level and the age of starting to smoke are inversely proportional. In the literature, the earlier the cigarettes are started, the higher the dependency will be, and the amount of cigarettes smoked will increase daily and cumulatively. In this study, the amount of cigarettes consumed daily is highest in the group with high dependency. It has been reported that young people who start at an early age and who consume a higher amount of cigarettes have a higher probability of addiction, with a longer period of smoking, and face more serious health problems compared with late starters. It is viewed as an inevitable result that these young individuals will lead an unhealthy life in the future. Although few people tried to quit smoking in the group with high nicotine addiction, these students perform more than three experiments on average. In the light of these findings, it was thought that the desire to quit smoking, trying to quit, and success in quitting were related to the level of nicotine addiction. It is stated that the elimination of cigarette addiction has changed depending on many factors such as the success of smoking-cessation treatments, the desire to quit smoking, attitude toward being determined, degree of addiction, and psychological and emotional states. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the willingness and efforts of university students to quit smoking before the level of dependence increases and health problems occur. To keep young people away from harmful environments that encourages smoking, it is recommended that the support they need should be provided by their families, peers, and university community.