

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NICOTINE ADDICTION AMONG PATIENTS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

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Introduction: Nicotine addiction is common among people with schizophrenia and is associated with significant morbidity and mortality. This rate is a much higher than among the general population, where the percentage of smokers varies between 25-47%.

Aims: This study aims to characterize nicotine dependence in schizophrenics compared to smokers not having mental health problems. The research was also to determine whether the affective psychological factors (anxiety and depression) and the level of distress are important predictors of smoking in a group of psychotic patients.

Methods: 204 smokers participated in the research, including 104 people with schizophrenia and 100 healthy persons. Participants were interviewed and asked to complete five questionnaires: Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence, Test of Motivation for Smoking Cessation, Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale and Distress Thermometer.

Results: The study has shown that the schizophrenics smoked more, took a greater number of puffs, showed a higher level of dependence and were less motivated to give up smoking than the mentally healthy persons. The results show the important role of affective factors and feeling of distress in nicotine dependence. The study also confirmed a significant relationship between distress and the number of cigarettes smoked. Affective factors and distress explain 34% of variance of the number of cigarettes in the group of schizophrenics and 56% in the control group.

Conclusions: This study showed that psychological treatment should be implemented into programs for nicotine dependence to improve the functioning schizophrenics in terms of coping with stress and maintaining good mood.