

ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO USAGE AND DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Introduction: Substance abuse and mental health problems have been increasing among young population.

Aims: To find out the prevalence of alcohol and tobacco usage and their association with depressive symptoms among university students.

Methods: Web-based questionnaire was sent to all 13397 university students of Oulu University, Finland in November 2011. 2167 (16,2%) replied, 31,5% were males and 68,5% females. The questionnaire included Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-C), questions concerning tobacco, and Symptom Check List-90 (SCL-90). We analyzed the prevalence of alcohol and tobacco usage and their association with depressive symptoms by gender.

Results: Among males 46,0% had hazardous drinking habits (AUDIT-C score 4-7) and 21,3% had very hazardous drinking habits (AUDIT-C score 8-12). Among females 63,2% had hazardous drinking habits (AUDIT-C score 3-7) and 4,8% had very hazardous drinking habits (AUDIT-C score 8-12). 14,8% of males and 12,1% of females were smoking tobacco irregularly and 4,8% of males and 4,4% of females smoked regularly. There was no statistically significant association between usage of alcohol and symptoms of depression among males or females. Among males, but not among females, there was statistically significant positive association between tobacco smoking and depressive symptoms ($p=0,001$).

Conclusions: The prevalence of hazardous drinking habits in our sample was very high compared to earlier studies conducted among university students. Contrary to earlier studies there was no association between hazardous drinking habits and depressive symptoms. In the future factors associating to hazardous drinking and the prevention of this phenomenon should be studied in more detail.