

Prevalence and risk characterization of substance use among university students in the west bank

Students:

Hisham sandouka
Eiad janini
Omar yaish

Supervisor:

Dr. Basma Damiri

Abstract :

Background:

Due to socio-economic-political factors, substance use problem took a place among Palestinians and spread among them in the last decades in an ascending phase. Systematic research on substance use is still lacking in the Palestinian territories especially among university student.

Objectives:

The purpose of this research is to determine the prevalence of substance use and to assess awareness to such issue among students of West Bank universities. Specific objectives include 1) determining the prevalence of substance use among Universities' students 2) identifying the causes (risk factors) of substance use among Universities' students 3) determining current patterns of illicit substance use among Universities' students 4) identifying common types of substances used among West Bank university students.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study had been conducted in 2015. A sample of 1388 students, from the faculty of arts of An-Najah National University, Al-Quds, Birzeit, and Hebron Universities, completed a self-administered questionnaire that included questions regarding the percentage of use of different substances, proposed risk factors for substance use, motivations, and specific patterns of use.

Results:

In context of substance practice, the study showed that around 45% of the participants are currently drinking energy drinks, and the majority (61.1%) drank energy drinks at least once in their lifetime. Around 41.6% of the students are current smokers of tobacco and more than half of them (53.7%) have smoked it at least once in their lifetime. Around 5.4% of the participants are currently drinking alcohol, and 8.8% of them tried alcohol at least once in their lifetime. About 3.0% are current illicit drug users, and 4.2% have used illicit drugs at least once in their lifetime. Escaping from problems was the most frequent motivation for drug and alcohol use (63.3 % and 36.6 %; respectively), hashish was the most frequent illicit drug to be used (3.9%), smoking was the most frequent method of illicit drug use (75.8%), and most of users (57.1%) used illicit drugs with a company of a friend. The median age of starting substance use was before or around the onset of university (16 – 18 years old). In context of knowledge and attitude toward substance use, around 87.4%, 90.6% and 93% of students agreed that smoking, alcohol, and illicit drugs use is harmful; respectively. Only 36.3% are aware of the existence of drug

weaning centers in their country, and about 45.4% agreed that illicit drugs are easy to get in their communities. Male gender, history of violence, students' employment and age equal to 22 years old or more, all were associated with substance use across the various substances in question.

Conclusion:

This study concludes important baseline information about the current status of substance use among the university students in the West Bank. The percentage of substance use is quite substantial and defies local and some international scales. Our efforts signify the necessity for follow up with similar studies in order to further explore and expand on the findings of our study which addresses an important and sensitive issue to the society