

Personality profile of adolescents with substance use disorders

Substance use disorders are among the most acute problems of the contemporary world. The onset of the drug use is predominantly associated with the period of adolescence. Numerous factors relate to the development of substance use disorders. Amongst these are personality characteristics of people prone to abuse or people who have become addicted to alcohol and/or drugs. Therefore, the purpose of the present dissertation is to attempt to explore the personality profile of adolescents with such disorders.

The literature review revealed variety of studies on personality traits of adolescents with substance use disorders. Two of these studies identified models that precisely reflect the complicated nature of personality profile of this cohort - the model of Veltri and colleagues (2009) and the model of Kalchev (2008). The theoretical model of the research presented, integrates these two models into a broader understanding of the interdependence between the personality and the milieu.

The main purpose of the research is to identify the personality profile of adolescents with substance use disorders and the relation of the personality traits with socio-demographic factors and the characteristics of substance use.

The methods used. For the purposes of the study MMPI-A was adapted for Bulgaria and a questionnaire that collects data about factors related to substance use in adolescents was developed.

Participants in the study. 603 adolescents were analyzed for the purposes of the adaptation of the MMPI-A and another 62 were studied for the purposes of the identification of personality profile of adolescents with substance use disorders.

Statistical methods used for the analysis of the results: Descriptive analysis, Correlation analysis, Factor analysis, Cronbach's Alpha, Cluster analysis (K-means Cluster) and One-way ANOVA.

Results and conclusions:

- The personality profile of adolescents with substance use disorders in this study consists entirely of externalizing characteristics. This profile is characterized by acting-out symptomatology and is related with substance abuse, impulsivity and problem behavior.
- Within the identified profile the following subgroups were observed:
 - Adolescents with impulsive, acting-out type personality, with inflated sensitivity and perceptions, impatience and superficiality;
 - Adolescents with broad spectrum and high intensity of emotional problems;

- Adolescents without any clinically significant elevations.
- The profile of the girls in the study reveals significantly expressed psychopathological symptomatology (externalizing and atypical characteristics – impulsivity, low self-control, problem behavior, unrealistic experiences, bizarre thinking) in comparison to the profile of the boys.
- Among the adolescents included in the study the following problems related to the social functioning have been observed: school problems, family problems (increased results on these scales are influenced by girls' results) and presence of friends with substance use disorders.
- The following interrelations between the personality traits and the characteristics of substance use have been found:
 - The adolescents who have member/s of their family with substance use disorder have shown significantly higher rates of externalizing characteristics in comparison to the other adolescents included in the study;
 - The adolescents with early onset of drug/alcohol use have shown significantly higher rates of externalizing characteristics in comparison to the other adolescents included in the study;
 - The adolescents using more than one substance do not show increased levels of externalizing, internalizing and atypical personality traits in comparison to those using one substance.

Contributions:

- A multidimensional theoretical model, which presents the profile of adolescents with substance use disorder as a combination of personality traits, socio-demographic factors and characteristics of drug use, has been proposed.
- The empirical results are the first attempt in Bulgaria to identify the personality profile of adolescents with substance use disorders and subgroups and gender specifics within this profile have been distinguished.
- For the purposes of the research a Bulgarian adaptation and standardization (in co-authorship) of the most popular and widely used instrument for measurement of adolescents' personality in the world was made – MMPI-A.
- The identified characteristics of the profile of the Bulgarian adolescents with substance use disorders have a specific practical value – they provide opportunities to plan and realize interventions in the areas of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of this target group.