Chapter 8

Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Substance Addiction: A Detailed Look

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Abstract

Substance abuse and addiction indicate significant public-health challenges with far-reaching consequences. This chapter focuses on examining the data gathered from emergency hotline to understand substance addiction trends among individuals in Northern Cyprus to increase intervention strategies and policy formulation. The data was collected from probation program participants and emergency call records, focused on the cruciality of "nationality" as a factor that is associated with the high risk of substance use. Furthermore, the evaluation highlights gender and age disparities in substance abuse, with males and younger individuals being particularly susceptible and at higher risk than other groups. In addition, in the recommendations section, the cruciality of tailored intervention programs explained briefly as such program not only enhances data collection methods but also enhance policy developments to effectively address substance abuse and addiction. Implementing these recommendations can lead to achieve more successful outcomes in combating substance abuse and addiction in Northern Cyprus.

Keywords: Substance abuse, socio demographic factors, addiction, emergency calls, intervention strategies, policy development

8.1. Introduction

Substance abuse and addiction leads to significant health issues that have severe and often detrimental consequences for individuals and society (Galea, 2004; Simon et al., 2023). By examining emergency calls, particularly those related to addiction crises and rising substance use trends, essential information can be obtained. This information is critical for enhancing the effectiveness of interventions, allocating resources appropriately, and shaping policies to combat addiction.

Analysing emergency call data and substance addiction trends among individuals registered in the probation program by nationality, collected by the Anti-Drug Commission of the Prime Minister's Office of Northern Cyprus (ADC), is vital. Nationality has been identified as a crucial factor in the fight against substance addiction (Soto et al., 2022), addressing the challenges faced by individuals from various nationalities and the interventions aimed at these challenges. Additionally, a comprehensive analysis of substance use trends by nationality over time was conducted. The ADC's assessment aims to improve the effectiveness of emergency responses in the fight against substance addiction. This study aimed to understand how it can enhance the strategies against drug addiction by considering the diversity of nationalities.

8.2. Literature Review

Substance abuse is a complex phenomenon with far-reaching consequences for individuals and society. Substance abuse and addiction represent significant public health concerns, with notable implications for both individual well-being and societal functioning (Nagar & Hamed, 2018). The consumption of alcohol in excess, the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and prescription drugs all contribute significantly to the burden of disease by affecting different organs and systems in the body (Charuni, 2024). The provision of primary medical care in addiction treatment programmes has

been demonstrated to exert a significant influence on patients' severity of addiction and medical outcomes (Friedmann et al., 2003).

Substance use and addiction are closely associated with social issues such as dysfunctional family structures, unemployment and criminal activity (Pedro, 2000). The analysis of emergency calls pertaining to addiction crises and substance use trends is of paramount importance for the enhancement of interventions, the optimal allocation of resources and the advancement of policy development (Nagar & Hamed, 2018). Addiction is defined as a psychological and physical inability to cease substance consumption despite its deleterious effects (Li et al., 2020).

It is of great importance to understand the impact of demographic factors, such as age, gender and nationality, on substance abuse in order to develop effective interventions and policies. Substance abuse rates typically reach their highest point during adolescence and subsequently decline in subsequent years (Pickard, 2012). Harerimana et al. (2021) demonstrate that early substance use in youth can result in the development of severe symptoms that persist into adulthood. Additionally, they illustrate that certain symptoms may begin in adolescence but improve in adulthood, while others emerge later and manifest with varying levels of severity and persistence. The necessity for early intervention and screening for substance use among adolescents is underscored in order to forestall the progression to abuse and dependence (Howlett et al., 2012).

While nationality has been identified as a crucial factor in addressing substance abuse issues, an understanding of substance use trends by nationality can increase the effectiveness of interventions and emergency responses. This was demonstrated by the North Cyprus Anti-Drug Commission (Li et al., 2020).

The role of gender in substance abuse is an important factor that requires further investigation. Research indicates that women and men are predisposed to substance use disorders in different ways. For instance, Fattore et al. (2008) suggest that women may exhibit distinct patterns of substance

abuse compared to men. Additionally, Cheng et al. (2021) found that addiction pathways may differ between the genders.

Considering the damages caused by addiction, which is a biopsychosocial disease, there are some differences between genders. It is known that the problems caused by addiction are more intense in women than in men. Studies (Jarvis, 1992; Pektaş et al., 2001) revealed that although women started to use alcohol later than men, they applied to treatment earlier than men. From this point of view, it is possible to think that cultural teachings do not take place in women's initiation of alcohol use, but that they turn to treatment earlier because they are physically and socioculturally damaged by alcohol addiction much faster than men (Doğancı, 2024).

As evidenced by the literature review, a single variable cannot be used to explain addiction. The objective of this study was to examine individuals applying to probation services in terms of their socio-demographic variables.

8.3. Methodology

8.3.1. Research Aim and Questions

The objective of this quantitative research is to gain insight into the socio-demographic characteristics and nationality of individuals applying to probation services. The research intends to thoroughly investigate substance use trends and emergency call applications among individuals of diverse nationalities.

8.3.2. Research Design and Data Collection Tools

Report of Northern Cyprus Prime Ministry's Office of Anti-Drug Commission (ADC) is developed by the aforementioned Commission and emergency call data of the report is officially provided to the author for academic use.

Also, emergency call records related to drug use. These data were collected and analysed for the years 2021-2023. Both data sets include

information on the nationalities of the individuals, details of substance use, call dates, and other demographic details.

Probation programme participants who contacted the hotline within the specified time frame were included in the study. The researchers analysed the entire data set without using a random sampling method.

Descriptive analysis was used in the data analysis process. The demographic information, nationalities, substance use histories of the applicants were analysed using frequencies and percentages and their distributions were determined.

8.3.3. Ethical Considerations

Protecting confidentiality and anonymity of participants was one of the crucial principles of this research methodology thus the researchers strictly adhered to achieve these principles. When it comes to data analysis, all the personal information was completely de-identified, containing no information that could reveal the identity of participants. In this section, a detailed explanation of the methodological approach and analysis process was provided to allow readers to understand how the research was conducted and to evaluate the validity and reliability of the results.

8.4. Findings

8.4.1. Nationality Profile Analysis

Individuals from various nationalities applied for the probation program in 2023. A total of 57 individuals were evaluated in this category, with the highest number of participants coming from individuals with Northern Cyprus nationality (15 people). Following these results, second higher participants were Nigerian (11 People), Türkiye (9 People), England (4 People), and Syria and Saudi Arabia (3 people each). Furthermore, participants were received from various countries such as Cameroon,

Zimbabwe and Palestine (2 people each), as well as fewer participants from Sudan, Turkmenistan, Tunisia, Eswatini, and Kazakhstan (1 person each).

In 2022, the number of people who applied to the Prime Ministry Anti-Drug Commission was 121. Of this number, 86% (104 people) were male and 14% (17 people) were female. 95% (99 people) of the men are Northern Cyprus citizens and 5% (5 people) are foreign nationals. All of the women are Northern Cyprus citizens.

The probation results indicate that participant holding dual citizenship of Türkiye and Northern Cyprus have also applied to the program. The diversity indicates that Northern Cyprus is an appealing destination especially for international student and other individuals from different countries. The distribution of nationalities suggests a global perspective about substance use and addiction, enabling the researcher (us) to better understand the unique challenges faced by different communities.

8.4.2. The Most Commonly Used Substance

According to the data from probation program in 2023, cannabis found to be the most frequently used substance among participants, with ta total number of 6 individuals reporting its use. Methamphetamine was found to be second most frequently used substance, with the total number of 3 individuals reporting its use and 2 individuals reported the use of synthetic cannabinoids. Following these results, opioids, Indian hemp, and heroin were also among the used substances by participants, with one individual each reporting their use. In 2022, people who applied to the Prime Ministry Anti-Drug Commission gave the answer of Cannabis as their first choice substance with 54%. This was followed by Alcohol with 16% and Synthetic Cannabinoids with 15%. Cocaine and Amphetamine Derivatives are preferred by 4% of the applicants. The rate of those who chose Other (LSD, GHB) is 3%. Heroin, Crack, Volatile Substances and Miscellaneous Drugs (Akinetum, Xanax etc.) have the same rate with 1%. No one chose ecstasy and pills such as Rohipnol and Rivotril. These findings may indicate that a various range of substance use patterns

among individuals from different nationalities and highlight the varying availability if these substances in their respective regions.

8.4.3. Age and Substance Use

Significant number of participants were applied to the probation program in the year 2023. Majority of the individuals who applied to the program was consist of younger and middle-aged population as the majority of the participants were comprised of individuals between 26 and 30 years old, followed closely by those between 31 and 35 years old and 41 and 45 years old. These findings may suggest that substance use is particularly prevalent among these age groups.

The findings gathered form emergency hotline calls in 2023 made by individuals and families seeking help reveals the necessity for support for those dealing with substance use issues.

8.4.4. Gender and substance use

In 2023, the number of people applying to the Anti-Drug Commission is 165. This data is 121 people in 2022 and 292 people in 2021. In 2023, 75% of the clients were male and 25% were female. These rates differed in previous years, with 86% male and 14% female in 2022 and 90% male and 10% female in 2021. In 2023, the highest number of female clients was 42.

The gender distribution of these calls showed that men are more likely to seek assistance of substance use challenges than women.

8.4.5. Analysis of Emergency Hotline Data

The findings gathered from the evaluation of the emergency calls made to the Prime Minister's Anti-Drug Commission's hotline has yielded significant insights about the obstacles faced by the society in the realm of substance abuse and addiction. These emergency calls are considered as valuable resources in the battle against substance use and the data gathered from the

emergency hotline provides valuable information about drug use patterns and the requirements of the society.

According to the gender distribution findings, it has been revealed that the calls are predominantly made by male individuals as the number of calls received from men was twice that of women. These findings support the notion that men are more frequently faced with substance use issues and/or are more proactive when it comes to seek help.

After evaluating the monthly distribution of the emergency hotline calls, a significant upsurge in calls was observed in March, April and May. Although, the reason behind this spike during these months may be distinct, it may indicate a rise in substance-related issues that occur at particular times of the year. Among the substances most frequently reported in calls were alcohol, methamphetamine, and synthetic cannabinoids. Furthermore, there has been a notable increase in calls related to technology addiction. This suggests that in addition to traditional substance addictions, emerging forms of addiction, such as those related to technology, have become a pressing societal concern.

The examination of emergency hotline calls offers essential data on the difficulties and requirements faced by society in dealing with substance addiction and use. This information serves as a valuable asset for formulating and executing intervention and support schemes. Such analyses can aid pertinent organizations and policymakers in devising more efficient strategies to combat substance addiction and assist society in grappling with this significant issue.

8.5. Conclusion

It has revealed the effects of various demographic factors such as gender, age, educational status and nationality on substance use and dependence in Northern Cyprus. Among these factors, it was observed that young adults and men are particularly vulnerable to substance abuse. The research findings are in line with the findings of the literature.

In addition, although the substance abuse admission rates of women are low, there is a need for more research on this issue and gender-sensitive treatment programmes and emphasises the need for special intervention strategies for these groups.

To conclude, recommendations are presented under five headings in line with the research findings. These titles are respectively Intervention Programmes and Educational Institutions, Research and Data Collection, Policy and Programme Development, Social Awareness, Probation Processes.

Intervention Programmes and Educational Institutions

Many institutions, especially educational institutions, have a responsibility in the fight against addiction. Special intervention programmes targeting especially young adults and men should be developed and disseminated. In addition, educational institutions should organise informative programmes on the harms of drug use.

Research and Data Collection

Studies should be conducted on larger sample groups by using more objective data collection methods.

A detailed examination of the factors affecting drug use may contribute to the development of intervention strategies.

Policy and Programme Development

The government of Northern Cyprus and relevant institutions should use the findings for policy and programme development. Effective strategies should be developed to combat drug use.

Social Awareness

Awareness should be raised in all segments of society about drug use and addiction. The media, NGOs and educators can play an important role in this endeavour.

Probation Processes

Increase the accessibility of the probation programme and develop special support mechanisms for women. Special measures should be implemented at the end of the year by evaluating the monthly participation distribution of the programme.

Implementation of these recommendations can facilitate more positive results in the fight against substance use and addiction. Moreover, continuous examination and monitoring of the data will enable the progressive development of interventions and tactics, resulting in more significant achievements in the field of combating substance abuse.

8.6.   Challenges and Limitations of the Study

The data of nationality is critical to better understand the callers of the hotline and improve the effectiveness of interventions and resource allocation by the Northern Cyprus Prime Ministry's Anti-Drug Commission.

8.7.   Acknowledgement

Tables of Report of Northern Cyprus Prime Ministry's Office of Anti-Drug Commission (ADC), which are developed by the aforementioned Commission, are officially provided to the author for academic use. The author would like to thank to Northern Cyprus Prime Ministry's Office of Anti-Drug Commission (ADC).

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