

Background

Despite extensive research on risk behaviours among adolescents in general epidemiological school-based settings, the research surveying girls and boys living in institutionalized residential settings is very scarce. In this study, we present results of relationships between illicit substance use among high risk boys and girls living in residential settings in the Czech Republic.

The high prevalence of drug use in adolescence in residential settings has a highly adverse impact on their health, social environment and education. Most adolescent boys and girls are highly vulnerable and prone to drug use, due to a number of psychosocial problems, risky behavior or early trauma and an unfavorable family environment (Dolezalova, 2018, 2019). These adolescents are placed in institutional care on the basis of a court decision.

Methods

Aims: The focus of this paper is to determine the prevalence of substance use among adolescent girls and boys living in residential settings and compare it with the general Czech adolescent population.

Methods: We conducted a quantitative survey among boys and girls living in residential settings. The prevalence estimates were calculated utilizing the ESPAD (2016) questionnaire that was modified to address selected items related to drug prevalence and other aspects using SPSS statistics (ex. T-test). The gender differences were compared.

Target group: A total of 204 respondents, girls (121) and boys (83) aged 15-18 living in 15 residential setting were included. The target group is generally characterized by high vulnerability, risk behaviour and illicit substance use. The ESPAD group included more than 3000 adolescents.

Table 1

Prevalence of substance use, study group vs. reference group.

Boys Substance use	% prevalence last month		Odds Ratio	P>z
	ESPAD	Study group		
Nicotine	30.2	91.1	23.8	<0.001
Alcohol	72.1	68.6	0.8	0.515
Cannabis	16.8	63.1	8.5	<0.001
Meth-amphetamine	1.5	21.1	17.7	<0.001

Table 2

Prevalence of substance use, study group vs. reference group.

Girls Substance use	% prevalence last month		Odds Ratio	P>z
	ESPAD	Study group		
Nicotine	33	90.8	19,9	<0.001
Alcohol	68.7	55.1	0,6	0.003
Cannabis	12	46.1	6.3	<0.001
Meth-amphetamine	0.5	25.9	70.9	<0.001

Results

The prevalence of drug use among girls and boys living in residential settings was found to be several times higher as compared to the general Czech adolescent population.

Prevalence figures for one month were as follows: smoking (institutional boys 91%, girls 91%) versus common school adolescents (boys 30%, girls 33%); cannabis use (institutional boys 63%, girls 46%) versus with common school adolescents (boys 17%, girls 12%); alcohol use (institutional boys 67%, girls 55%) in comparison to common school adolescents (boys 72%, girls 69%); methamphetamine use (institutional boys 21%, girls 26%) in comparison with common school adolescents (boys 2%, girls 0,5%)

The prevalence of drug use among girls and boys in residential settings is statistically significant (T-test) compared to the general school population.



Conclusions

From the mental health and special education perspective, the study points to the specific vulnerability of the examined group of adolescents in institutional settings.

Highly vulnerable adolescents require a conceptual change of approaches and methods applied in the system of institutional education. Such a change would require the strengthening of multidisciplinary teams and supporting capacity development as well as introducing comprehensive interventions.

Systematic collection of further mental health data among these adolescents is therefore recommended.

References:

- Dolezalova, P. (2018) Relationship between Attachment and Aspects of Mental Health of Adolescent Girls in Institutional Educational Care. Theses, Department of Special Education at Faculty of Education, Charles University, Praha.
Dolezalova, P. (2019). Bad girls" or vulnerable girls? How do we see girls in special education programmes? *E-Pedagogium*, 19(3), 60-71. doi: 10.5507/epd.2019.023.
European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (2016). ESPAD Report 2015. Results from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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