

Some Psychological and Behavioural Disturbances in Late Adolescence.

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Abstract

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 443 first year university students to enlight some psychological & behavioral disturbances that may affect this phase. Middlesex hospital questionnaire, the depression-anxiety scale as well as a structured questionnaire for substance abuse & suicide were used. Results showed that the studied neurotic subscales were above average in 29.9 - 46.5 % of students. Moreover, 7.6 - 20.6% of the group reached a pathological level in subscales. Smoking was ever tried by nearly half the students, while 9.3% mentioned that they are using drugs & 3.7% have attempted suicide. High scores of depression, anxiety & hysteria were found to have a significant effect on suicidal tendency. There was also a significant relation between- depression & anxiety- and substance abuse. Smoking was also significantly related to depression. Therefore, a proper mental health program is suggested for adolescence at an earlier stage -during school-. Institutional & familial support and supervision should be intermingled in order to help adolescents in their struggle towards adulthood and to minimize their vulnerability to psychological and behavioral disturbances.

Introduction

Adolescence is a period of intensified preparation for the coming role of young adulthood. Massive sociocultural changes increase adolescents' exposure to threatening situations. Beginning university life is a transitional & stressful period where relationships move to a wider horizon. Health care for adolescence presents something of a paradox. In terms of physical morbidity and mortality, young people are among the healthiest groups in all societies. Adolescence is a period, which is associated with a prolonged and confused struggle to attain an independent adult status. Risk taking behavior varies during this period. Massive changes in sociocultural and demographic condition increase their exposure to threatening situations.

Beginning university life leads candidates to a transitional period

where social relationships move to a wider horizon in which peers and adults, other than parents, come to play a more significant role. Young people may be puzzled by the behavior of their adult role models who consume tobacco or alcohol despite the clear warning of the health risks associated. Smoking, drug and alcohol use is vividly portrayed to young people as aspects of adult world (Warrburten et al, 1991).

The neighborhood and especially the peer group can have a powerful influence on whether young people start to use drugs (Messerei & Brunswick, 1987). Some types of use can be thought of as progression, beginning with experimental and occasional use and going on to regular and then heavy use, multiple drug use and then other modes of consumption (Farrel & Taylor, 1997).