

CIGARETTE USE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS STAYING IN DORMITORY AND FACTORS AFFECTING IT: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

YURLARDA KALAN ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİ ARASINDA SİGARA KULLANIMI VE ETKİLEYEN FAKTÖRLER: TANIMLAYICI BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Abstract

Introduction: The most common reason for starting to smoke is peer influence, and university students may try smoking under the influence of their peers to cope with stress during their adaptation process.

Objective: This study aims to determine the factors influencing smoking among university students residing in dormitories and to develop a perspective to ensure that smoking and non-smoking students do not share the same room.

Material and Method: The population of this cross-sectional descriptive study consisted of all students at a public university in a certain province. The sample included 645 students who participated in the study between June 6 and July 6, 2024, and fully completed the survey created using Google Forms.

Results: The participating students' 32.2% currently smoke, and 28% started smoking when they began university. The primary reason for starting smoking was peer influence, cited by 85.6% of the students, and 63.2% preferred to have a non-smoking roommate in the dormitory.

Conclusion: In this study, it was found that 1/3 of the students were smokers, 1/4 of them were already smokers when they started university, the first reason for starting smoking was the circle of friends, and the majority of the students stated that they would prefer their roommate in the dormitory to be a non-smoker. It is recommended that university students should be monitored regularly in terms of smoking addiction, counselling services should be provided, and necessary measures should be taken in student dormitories to prevent negative health behaviours that may develop in direct relation with the environment.

Key Words: Addiction, cigarette use, dormitories, university students

Özet

Giriş: Sigara içmeye başlamanın en yaygın nedeni akran etkisi olup üniversite öğrencileri, uyum süreçlerinde stresle başa çıkmak için akranlarından etkilenerek sigara içmeyi deneyebilirler.

Amaç: Bu çalışmanın amacı, yurtlarda kalan üniversite öğrencileri arasında sigara içmeyi etkileyen faktörleri belirlemek ve sigara içen ve sigara içmeyen öğrencilerin aynı odayı paylaşmamasını sağlamak için bir bakış açısı geliştirmektir.

Gereç ve Yöntem: Bu kesitsel tanımlayıcı çalışmanın evrenini, belirli bir ildeki bir devlet üniversitesindeki tüm öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Örnekleme, 6 Haziran - 6 Temmuz 2024 tarihleri arasında çalışmaya katılan ve Google Forms kullanılarak oluşturulan anketi eksiksiz tamamlayan 645 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır.

Bulgular: Katılımcı öğrencilerin %32,2'sinin şu anda sigara kullandığı ve %28'inin üniversiteye başladığında sigara kullanıyor olduğu görülmüştür. Sigara içmeye başlamanın birincil nedeni, öğrencilerin %85,6'sı sigara kullanmaya başlama nedeni olarak arkadaş çevresinin olduğunu belirtmiş ve %63,2'si seçme hakkı olsaydı, yurttaki arkadaşının sigara içmeyen biri olmasını tercih edeceğini bildirmiştir.

Sonuç: Bu çalışma da öğrencilerin 1/3'ünün sigara içtiği, 1/4'ünün üniversiteye başladığında zaten sigara içtiği, sigaraya başlamada ilk nedenin arkadaş çevresi olduğu, öğrencilerin çoğunluğunun yurttaki oda arkadaşlarının sigara içmeyen olmasını tercih edeceğini belirttiği saptanmıştır. Üniversite öğrencilerinin sigara bağımlılığı açısından düzenli olarak izlenmesi, danışmanlık hizmeti verilmesi ve öğrenci yurtlarında çevre ile doğrudan ilişkili olarak gelişebilecek olumsuz sağlık davranışlarının önlenmesi için gerekli önlemlerin alınması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bağımlılık, sigara kullanımı, yurt, üniversite öğrencisi

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INTRODUCTION

Cigarette use is a growing addiction among young people worldwide due to their legal availability (1). According to an the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD) inspection on health indicators, Türkiye has the highest "daily tobacco use rate" at 28% (2,3). According to the results of the Global Tobacco Survey, 21.4% of individuals aged 15 and over in Türkiye were tobacco users in 2012 and 30.2% in 2016 (4). According to the results of the study conducted by the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Türkiye (TEPAV), this rate was reported as 31.2% in 2022 (5). When compared to prior years' data from the Global Tobacco Survey, there is an increase in the number of people who use tobacco on a daily basis (4, 5).

It is seen that smoking mostly starts between the ages of 15-19, and approximately 50% of those who start smoking in this period continue to smoke for 15-20 years, that is, they become addicted (6,7). Adolescence, when physiological and psychological changes change rapidly, is a critical period for substance addiction. In this process, identity development along with environmental factors can be effective in the addiction of smoking (8,9). Since university students, especially in their youth, go through many important changes such as separation from family, encountering a different environment, becoming a candidate for a profession, etc., it is common for them to turn to negative behaviors such as smoking during this period. It is observed that smoking rates of university students in Türkiye vary between 12.9% and 45.4% (1). The smoking rates among 19,298 university students aged 17-30 from 23 nations were found to be similar to our country, with rates ranging from 2% to 46% for women and 14% to 47% for males (10). A cross-sectional study of 2452 students in the Western Balkan countries (Republic of Slovenia, Republic of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Republic of North Macedonia, and Republic of Serbia)

during the 2019-2020 academic year found that 22.1% smoked (11).

Studies suggests that university students are motivated to start smoking for various reasons, including a friendly environment, curiosity, emulation, and stress (12,13). Peer influence is the most common reason for starting smoking in those over the age of 15 (14,15). According to Sarısoy (16) and Seven and Günay (14), university students may choose to gain different experiences during their adaptation process, such as being away from their families, feeling like adults and free, seeing smoking as an easier way to cope with stress, and being inexperienced in choosing friends. Young people who wish to change their appearance and draw attention can use cigarettes as a symbol of their new individuality and independence. According to Sağar (17) and Sarısoy (16), using cigarettes for the sake of showing off can quickly lead to addiction.

Cigarettes, which are among the most universally used harmful substances, have gained normality thanks to their widespread use, and this prevalence has distorted the perception of smoking as a problem. Considering that exposure to smoking usually begins at an early age and that these individuals become addicted to cigarettes in the future, it is important to take precautions for young people (18,19). Many studies are being carried out to combat tobacco products, especially in developed and developing countries, in order to reduce diseases and deaths caused by smoking (20). With the "Smoke-Free Air Zone" practice, which was initiated jointly with other relevant units, the Ministry of Health increased its control activities by limiting the use of tobacco products with the regulations and established many support mechanisms for people who want to quit smoking (21). According to Baştürk et al. (12), Sağar (17) and Kekliktepe et al. (22), university students' circle of friends has a significant influence on their smoking habits. Therefore, there should be legal and

administrative regulations in place to promote smoke-free environments on university campuses, particularly in dormitories. Studies on university students (12,14,16,17,22,23,24) found no conclusive evidence on the impact of circle of friends of university students living in dormitories on smoking addiction. In this context, it is expected that this study, which was conducted to determine the smoking habits of university students living in dormitories and the factors that influence them, will serve as a guide in developing a perspective on preventing students who smoke and students who do not smoke from sharing a room.

Study Questions

- 1) What are the smoking statistics among university students?
- 2) What factors influence students' smoking behavior?
- 3) Is there a link between students' gender and current smoking addiction, their belief that residing in a dormitory has an impact on their smoking, their preference for a non-smoking roommate in the dormitory, and their belief that having friends who smoke influences their smoking habits?

MATERIAL and METHODS

Type of the Study

This present paper is a cross-sectional and descriptive study.

Study Population and Sample

The study was conducted at a public university in a province in Central Anatolia Region. The study had a population comprised of all university students, and data was collected via a Google form. Students were contacted via deliberate sampling and the snowball sampling method. The study sample consisted of 645 students that participated in the study and completed all of the questions.

Data Collection Tool

The data was collected using the online survey method created on Google Forms between 06 June and 06 July 2024. The survey form includes questions to determine students' gender, smoking status and some factors affecting their smoking status. The questions of the study consisted of 17 questions prepared

by the researchers in line with expert opinions. This form covers items questioning students' gender, current smoking status and smoking status when they started university, reasons for starting smoking, whether their roommate smokes in the dormitory, whether they think that living in the dormitory has an impact on their smoking, whether they prefer their roommate to be a non-smoker in the dormitory, whether they think that living in the dormitory affects their smoking, whether they think it affects their smoking habit and whether there are times when they want to change/quit their smoking habit.

Ethical Aspects of Research

The research was conducted with institutional consent and approval from the university's non-invasive research ethics council (05.06.2024/2024-13). Students who decided to participate in the study were informed about it and provided their consent via an informed consent form.

Data Evaluation

The data were analyzed with the SPSS (Version 22.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). In the analysis of the data, frequency (%), mean, standard deviation (\pm SD), highest and lowest values were used for descriptive statistics, and chi-square tests were used for categorical data for comparison of groups. $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the distribution of data by gender, smoking status, reasons for starting smoking, and discomfort with second-hand smoke among university students participating in the study. University students living in dormitories range in age from 18 to 50 years old ($X \pm SD: 22.25 \pm 4.71$), with 66.9% ($n=432$) being female and 33.1% ($n=213$) being male. It was discovered that 32.2% of the students who chose to participate in the survey were current smokers, whereas 28% were smokers when they first began university. 85.6% of students said their circle of friends was the reason they started smoking, while 52.8% of 437 nonsmoking students said they felt

uncomfortable being around smokers (Table 1).

Table 1. The distribution of data by gender, smoking status, reasons for starting smoking, and discomfort with second-hand smoke (N = 645)

Gender	n	%
Female	432	66.9
Male	213	33.1
Avg. Age ($\bar{X} \pm SS$) (min-max)	22.25 \pm 4.71 (18-50)	
Current Smoking Status		
Smoker	208	32.2
Non-smoker	437	67.8
Table 1 continued		
Smoking Status at University Admission		
Smoker	181	28.0
Non-smoker	464	72.0
Reasons for starting smoking *		
Circle of friends	195	85.6
Family members	23	10.1
Magazine/social media/internet/tv	10	4.3
Non-smokers and those irritated by second-hand smoke (n=437)		
Irritated	341	52.8
Not irritated	304	47.2

*Multiple responses.

When the students started university, 54.1% reported that their roommate smoked in the dormitory they stayed in, 25.4% thought that living in the dormitory had an effect on their smoking, and 63.2% reported that if they had the choice, they would prefer their roommate to be a non-smoker. 92.7% of the students reported that they had friends who smoked and 30.4% reported that having friends who smoked affected their smoking habits (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of findings regarding whether the roommate smokes, thinking that living in a dormitory affects smoking, preferring roommate to be a non-smoker, having friends who smoke, thinking that having smoker friends affects smoking habit (N = 645)

Smoking status of the roommate	n	%
Smoker	349	54.1
Non-smoker	296	45.9
Staying in dormitory play role in starting smoking		
Yes	164	25.4
No	481	74.6
Preferring a non-smoker roommate		
Yes	407	63.2
No	238	36.8
Having a smoker friend		
Yes	598	92.7
No	46	7.3
Having smoker friends plays a role in smoking habit		
Yes	196	30.4
No	449	69.6

32.2% of the 645 students who took part in the study expressed a desire to alter or quit smoking. Of the 208 students who smoke, 49.5% said they were thinking about getting help to quit or reduce smoking, while 77.9% said they had tried to quit or reduce smoking in the previous year. 45.6% of the 645 students in the study wanted to participate in smoking awareness-raising activities, 48.7% didn't know where to obtain help if they wanted additional information/support regarding smoking, and 54.6% didn't know where to acquire it. They stated that they were unaware of the university's information and support services for its use, and 40.8% were unaware of the YEDAM-Green Crescent Consultancy Center, which provides service via the Alo 115 phone number (Table 3).

Table 3. Distributions of findings as to students' desire to change/quit their smoking habit, smokers but considering getting support to quit or reduce smoking, making an attempt to quit/reduce smoking in the last year, willing to participate in awareness-raising activities about smoking, becoming more aware of smoking cessation centers, being aware of the information and support services offered by the university regarding smoking, and acknowledging the YEDAM-Green Crescent Counseling Center, which provides service via the Alo 115 phone number (N = 645).

Desire to change/quit their smoking habit at times		
Yes	208	32.2
No	437	67.8
Considering getting support to quit or reduce smoking (n=208)		
Yes	103	49.5
No	105	50.5
Making an attempt to quit/reduce smoking in the last year (n=208)		
Yes	162	77.9
No	46	22.1
Willing to participate in awareness-raising activities about smoking		
Willing	294	45.6
Unwilling	351	54.4
*Smoking Cessation Centers		
Do not know	242	48.7
YEDAM	98	19.7
psychological counseling center	76	15.3
internet resources	49	9.9
Family doctor	18	3.6
School health services	14	2.8
Table 3 continued		
Being aware of the information and support services offered by the university		
Aware	293	45.4
Unaware	352	54.6
Acknowledging the YEDAM-Green Crescent Counseling Center		
Yes	382	59.2
No	263	40.8

*Multiple responses

A statistically significant link was found when the gender of the students was compared

with their current smoking status, preferring their roommate to be a non-smoker if given the right to choose, and believing that having smoking friends affected their smoking habit ($p < 0.001$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.001$, respectively). No statistically significant link was found when the students' gender and belief that staying in a dormitory affected their smoking were analyzed ($p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

In this study conducted with 645 students, examining the smoking use of university students living in dormitories and the factors affecting this use, it was determined that 32.2% (n=208) of the students smoked. According to the 2022 results of the Türkiye Adult Tobacco Survey, it was determined that the daily tobacco use rate of the 15-24 age group was 28.3%. The rate was found to be 20.6% by Oguz et al. (13), 20.8% by Al Kubaisy et al. (25) in their study with a similar research group, 27.3% by Canbulat et al. (1) and Ilic et al. (11) found that the smoking rate among students in the Western Balkan Countries varied between 13.9 and 28.9%. In this study, the smoking rate of students (32.2%) is higher than that of the studies in the literature. Taş et al. (26) and Aydin et al. (27) observed similar smoking rates among students (32.4% and 33.1%, respectively). Furthermore, this study discovered that 28% of students began smoking before enrolling in university, and 4.2% began smoking while on campus. This research demonstrates that the majority of students began smoking in adolescence, before attending university. Studies (27,28) suggests that students begin smoking in adolescence, which aligns with the findings of our study. Adolescent smoking leads to lifelong addiction (29), emphasizing the need for more research on the adolescent period and establishing primary protection prior to university.

According to this study, 208 out of 645 students smoked, and the percentages of male and female students who smoked were very similar (51.9% and 48.1%, respectively). It was found that male students smoke at a higher rate than female students, and that this

difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Men were found to smoke at higher rates than women in numerous studies involving university students (25,26). It was suggested that this difference in smoking rates could be attributed to men's greater sense of freedom and their lower levels of social and familial pressure. Contrary to previous studies (25,26), the similar smoking rates of male and female students in this study and Aydın et al. (27) indicate that there is no gender difference in smoking rates and suggest that precautions should be taken. In this study, circle of friends ranked first as the reason for starting smoking with a rate of 85.6%. In many national and international studies conducted with university students, the first reason for starting smoking is the circle of friends, although the rates vary (13,30). These findings suggest that students acquire cigarette addiction through the influence of their friends rather than their families.

In this study, it was observed that 52.8% of 437 non-smoking students were uncomfortable with smokers around them, but 47.2% were not disturbed by this, which is a thought-provoking finding. Exposure to secondhand smoke negatively affects health in all age groups, most notably infants and young children (31). Despite this, young adults may not see this condition as a risk factor for health, as they generally describe themselves as energetic and healthy (32). Although the recent or periodic increase in advertising campaigns reflecting the negative effects of smoking on health has caused an increase in the awareness of passive smoking among young people (33,34). However, this study shows that students are not aware of secondhand smoking.

In this study, 54.1% of the students reported that their roommate smoked in the dormitory they stayed in when they started university, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the students thought that staying in the dormitory had an effect on their smoking, and 63.2% of the students stated that if they had the choice, they would prefer their roommate in the dormitory to be a non-smoker. Ulukoca et al. (35) reported that students living

in a dormitory environment had a lower smoking frequency than students living at home, while Semerci et al. (23), on the contrary, reported that students living in dormitories smoked more than students living alone. This study, along with those by Semerci et al. (23) and Ulukoca et al. (35), demonstrate how surroundings like dorms can influence people's health behaviors in either a positive or bad way. In light of this, initiatives should be taken to make dorm rooms healthier in the current climate. Students should be guaranteed to stay with a non-smoking roommate because dorm environments that improve health conditions and introduce technology will increase students' awareness; additionally, it should not be disregarded that an inappropriate social environment can increase negative health behaviors.

In this study, 32.2% of the students stated that there were times when they wanted to change or quit their smoking habits, approximately half of the students ($n=208$; 49.5%) who smoked thought about getting support to quit or reduce smoking, and 77.9% of them thought of getting support to quit or reduce smoking. It has been observed that the majority of students have made an attempt to quit or reduce smoking in the last year suggests that planned attempts to quit smoking have a high chance of success. Studies (1,24) show that students continue smoking by providing various excuses and are indecisive about quitting smoking. The main reason for this is that students are not sufficiently informed about smoking and have inadequate coping methods. In addition, in this study, it was found that 45.6% of the students wanted to participate in awareness-raising activities about smoking, but 48.7% did not know where to get help if they wanted to get more information/support about smoking, 54.6% were not aware of the information and support services offered by the university regarding smoking and 40.8% did not know the YEDAM-Green Crescent Consultancy Center. These findings reveal the importance of providing support services to students during

the time they are separated from their families and increasing studies on the subject.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to students at a public university. The data does not cover all the students in Türkiye. The study's findings are based on participant statements.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research, 1/3 of the students smoked, ¼ of them were already smoking when they started university, the ratio of female students who smoked was close to men, the first reason for starting smoking was their circle of friends, and approximately half of the students had a smoker roommate in the dormitory they stayed in when they started university. The students were found to state that if they had the choice, they would prefer their roommate in the dormitory to be a non-smoker.

Considering that the majority of university students have already started smoking before they come to university, it is recommended that efforts to combat smoking addiction be started early, before they come to university, that university students be regularly monitored for smoking addiction, and that counseling services be provided for students to quit smoking. In order to eliminate/reduce smoking behavior, students should be informed about cigarette addiction in schools. In order to prevent negative health behaviors that may develop directly related to the environment, non-smoking students should be given the right to choose a non-smoking roommate in student dormitories. It is thought that evaluating informational studies sensitively and supporting them with projects to be developed within the university will contribute to obtaining positive and productive results.

Ethical Aspects of Research

The research was conducted with institutional consent and approval from the university's non-invasive research ethics council (05.06.2024/2024-13). Students who decided to participate in the study were

informed about it and provided their consent via an informed consent form.

Declaration of Interests

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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Main Points

- Early onset of smoking precedes students' arrival at university.
- Female students smoke at a rate that is comparable to that of male students. Regardless of gender, it is crucial to give all students knowledge about the topic.
- When students initially arrive at university, their fellow students are the primary cause of their smoking habit, and almost half of them have roommates who smoke in the dorms. In this instance, studies on the topic is crucial to removing the peer impact and establishing smoke-free environments in dorm rooms.
- A nonsmoking university student naturally has the right to a nonsmoking roommate, which is why it is crucial to give non-smoking students the option to select from among non-smoking friends.
- University students are unaware of the smoking-related information and support services provided by YEDAM and the university. Both YEDAM and the university need to be more sensitive to this matter.

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