

Towards an understanding of substance use risk and prevention factors to promote mental health and human resilience among high school age youth

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Abstract

Substance use was studied among 537 Israeli male (76%; n=407) and female (24%; n=130) high school youth (M age=15.0 years) from 2013-2016. A valid and reliable data collection instrument was used. Demographic factors used for analysis were age, gender, country of origin (e.g., Israel, former Soviet Union, and Ethiopia), and regular or residential school status. The study aim was to understand substance risk and protection factors that may influence resilience to prevent substance use. For the entire study cohort, findings evidence current last 30 day cigarette smoking (37.6%); alcohol use (53.9%) including binge drinking (21.0%); as well as inhalant (5.5%) and cannabis (3.9%) use. No differences were found among the youth based on gender status. Immigrant origin youth reported higher levels of smoking, alcohol, cannabis and inhalant use than those with Israeli origin status. Youth in residential facilities reported higher levels of substance use than those attending regular school. Family low socio-economic and/or immigrant status were risk factors linked to substance use among residential school youth. For both regular and residential high school youth, the main risk factors were easy access of harmful substances and being involved with non-structured night activity. Religiosity and good relationships with family members and friends were protection factors for both study groups. Study findings have relevance for policy, service provision, and the training of program personnel to promote mental health and human resilience among youth.

Biography :

Alexander Reznik is Senior Research Associate of the Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Center, Ben Gurion University. He received his PhD from the Russian Academy of Sciences - the Institute of Psychology, (Moscow). He has served in key education and research roles with the Far Eastern Federal University and the Maritime State University (Russia). He is author of books and scientific publications on substance abuse among high risk populations including issues of immigration, school dropout and acculturation. His research interests include multicultural aspects of substance abuse, resilience factors of substance abuse and statistical methods in addictology.

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