

The Importance of Research Studies for Public Health Development and Policy-making Process

Dear readers,

You have received a double issue of the *Adiktologie* journal addressing compelling current issues related to the use of legal and illegal drugs. The concept of this double issue has a clearly defined goal: to provide readers with the results of intriguing primary research from different countries, as well as presenting comparative studies of countries based on data from international databases. This opens up further opportunities for a deeper examination of the stability of the countries' positions and for predicting the development of dependencies in the population. Both groups of studies are beneficial not only for the research community, but also for health policymakers, regional health plans, and public health experts too.

The first study covers the treatment of gambling disorders from the perspective of Cloninger's theory. Its authors also deal thoroughly with the prevalence of gambling, paying particular attention to the importance of gender differences in their research trajectory. The results of the study bring findings with interesting implications for prevention programmes. The study confirms that the risk of suicide is more common for gamblers than for any other group. It is also important for practical use in both outpatient and inpatient treatment of pathological gamblers. The study draws attention to the issue of comorbidities among gamblers and their effect on the course of treatment, and its termination, too.

The drug use environment is an important determinant for the examination of drug addiction. This is demonstrated by a study on the use of psychoactive substances by the attendees of nightclubs and festivals in Georgia. The authors sought to examine psychoactive drug use and related behaviour among attendees of nightclubs and festivals by means of a questionnaire survey, with the average age of the respondents being only 24.4 years. The study offers several inspiring findings that should be implemented in prevention programmes and in strategies to prevent and reduce drug use. It also provides valuable guidance for creating comparative studies, differentiated both in terms of age and geographically.

National drug policies are based on international strategies and concepts. Therefore, it is important that the results obtained at the national level in the field of addiction and prevention are shared and studied together with other countries in order to quantify the important determinants of the emergence and deepening of the differences in drug addiction. This topic is reflected in another research study that is of a macroeconomic nature and aims at the exploration of the disparities in alcohol consumption and alcohol consumption preferences in the OECD countries. The results of the study identify the countries that show the highest alcohol consumption and that of spirits, beer, and wine respectively.

They are aggregated not only at the level of the countries but also the continents. This emphasises the great importance of an effective alcohol control intervention strategy in developed countries. Awareness-raising and educational programmes, which should be part of health literacy, are also important components of these intervention strategies.

The issue of intervention strategies is explored by another study with a focus on evidence-based practice and training needs in drug prevention. The authors' ambition was to examine the interest and viability of the European Prevention Curriculum (EUPC) in prevention training in Spain. The EUPC training series has been pilot-implemented in nine European countries under the UPC-Adapt Project. Research techniques applied by the authors as part of their research included discussion groups and interviews with prevention experts, policymakers, and students. The message of the study is clear in that it points out that, following the application of the EUPC in Spain, common drug prevention curricula should also be developed in other countries.

One of the possibilities of regulating the use of legal drugs at the macroeconomic level is tax regulation. It is a complex systemic process that can hardly be evaluated in a simple causal line. However, it is important to capture the basic relationships and their development in order to establish decision-making mechanisms and economic scenarios. These intentions seem to be reflected in the goal of the research study examining alcohol consumption in different EU member states in view of related tax aspects. Numerous studies declare that alcohol consumption has an impact on government tax revenues, as well as consumer spending. Many international statistics provide scope for examining the development of alcohol consumption and mortality associated with it. National governments have tools available to reduce alcohol consumption through price mechanisms, including excise duties and value added tax. Performing a thorough examination of macroeconomic data from a sample of the OECD countries over a limited period of time, the authors drew clear conclusions to the effect that national pricing policies aimed at increasing VAT on alcoholic beverages reduce alcohol consumption. For the future, it will be important to examine other relevant macroeconomic systems and national mechanisms, which can be very complex and the setting of which can be influenced by many determinants.

In addition to alcohol, the issue of tobacco use is also very important in national drug policy systems. International research studies emphasise the importance of the examination of smoking, including a number of its socio-economic determinants and life stages of individuals that have motivated many research teams to initiate stimulating research. In recent years, there have been clear preferences for ex-

amining the determinants of addiction among children and adolescents or among the productive working population. Research studies aimed at examining addiction among university students are less frequent. In 2020, a team of Slovak authors conducted research focused on the use of several types of drugs and here they offer the results from this research focusing on tobacco addiction among university students. The authors pointed out a wide range of diseases caused by smoking and the risk they pose for the population of young people. They state that the period of university study is considered to be the riskiest period in the life of an individual in terms of developing a smoking habit. The study represents a powerful appeal to develop prevention programmes aimed at raising awareness of the harmful effects of smoking.

Just as pricing policy can affect alcohol consumption on a national level, as is clear from the results of the fifth study, so can it also affect tobacco consumption. This consistent fact is pointed out in a study by a team of Czech authors whose ambition was to look into the effects of excise duty on tobacco on consumers and exporters in the Czech Republic. This significantly expands the scope of application of addiction studies and the importance of creating multidisciplinary teams for causal investigation of the issue. Future research into this area may be of particular benefit to the formation of study programmes such as health economics and health policy.

While there are clear government mechanisms for regulating the use of legal drugs in individual countries, the issue of regulation and impact assessment is much more

complex as regards illicit drugs. Non-substance addictions, such as internet addiction, are an issue of their own. The complexity of addressing them is aggravated by powerful globalisation processes and the “internetisation” of society, as well as socio-economic determinants. Internet addiction is most common among young people, generally in the 16–29 age category. In addition, those at risk include children under 15, university students, mothers on maternity leave, and the unemployed. The authors of the final study examine the significance of the relationship between internet addiction and the perception of health through a sample of 1612 university students in Slovakia. The study provides valuable conclusions and points to the fact that non-substance addictions are, and will continue to be, a major threat to society in the future.

All the research studies included in this double issue provide a useful platform for policymakers and practitioners, as well as national and international research teams, whose results strongly encourage follow-up research or the development of international cooperation networks and collaboration. This is one of the successful ways of eliminating addictions and improving the processes involved in national drug policies.

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