ABSTRACT

Prevalence of Social Phobia in Undergraduate Students at Adnan Menderes University, and its Impact on Life Quality and Identity Formation.

Purpose: The present study aims to investigate the prevalence of social phobia, and the sociodemographic variables, substance use patterns and comorbid psychiatric disorders associated with it. The impact of social phobia on quality of life, academic achievement and the identity development are also addressed.

 Method: 700 undergraduate students at Adnan Menderes University participated in the study between 1st of March and 1st of June 2008. A sociodemographic data form cconsisting of 24 questions, Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) Short Form on Quality of Life that has prepared by the World Health Organization for Turks (WHOQOL-BREF-TR), and the Instrument for Assessing İdentity Confusion (IFAIC) were administered to the participants. Diagnoses were made according to DSM-IV-TR by psychiatric interview.

Findings: Of the participants, 20.9 % were found to have had social phobia in the last 1 year, and 21.7% in their lifetime. 74.6 % of those who have had social phobia in last 1 year and 76.5 % of those have had social phobia in their lifetime have been detected to have had specific social phobia. Both common social phobia group and specific social phobia group differed from subjects with no social phobia in terms of of LSAS and IFSAIC scores, however, no significant difference was found between the two phobic groups. The prevalence of social phobia was relatively higher in women, in participants with the low income, who have lived in villages and towns in the last 15 years, and who have any family members with psychiatric problems. The multiple logistic regression analysis revealed that women were more vulnerable than man (OR=1.7), those participants who have lived mostly in villages or in towns than those who have lived mostly in cities over the last 15 years (OR=1.9 and OR=1.5 respectively), and those with a family member suffering from psychiatric disease than those without (OR= 1.8). It was also found that the higher the income is, the less the risk for social phobia. The frequency of participants who smoke was decreased, but the frequency of participants having suicidal ideation was increased in a significant manner among social phıbics as compared with non-phobics. Also WHOQOL-BREF-TR life quality scores were significantly lower in those with social phobia than those without. According to the self-evaluation of the participants, the academic achievement of those with social phobia was not different than those without.

Conclusion: Social phobia which has been ignored for years is quite prevalent among university students and has significant impacts on n the identity development process and the quality of life. Therefore, early diagnosis of social phobia will both increase the quality of life and facilitate a healthy identity development. In this regard, it is of utmost importance to implement projects aiming to enhance students', families', teachers' and academicians' knowledge on, and sensitivity to the existence of social anxiety in adolescents and the psychological, social as well as academic problems associated with it.

Key Words: Social phobia, university student, quality of life, identity development.