

## Young People's Attitudes to and Experiences with Alcohol and Tobacco in Slovakia



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**BACKGROUND:** The control of tobacco and alcohol is one of the most important measures aimed at reducing the negative health, social, psychological, and economic impacts of the use of these substances. The objective of the work is to identify attitudes towards smoking and alcohol on the basis of experience, health awareness, and risk behaviour on the part of parents and peers. In addition, the study seeks to identify the relationship between the risk of tobacco and alcohol consumption. **SAMPLE AND METHODS:** The study sample comprised respondents in the 15–29 age group from the whole of Slovakia. The research was carried out using the questionnaire method on a sample of 501 respondents who constituted a representative sample in terms of age, gender, and urban and rural areas. **RESULTS:** The most significant conclusions in terms of young people's experiences, attitudes, and health awareness concerning smoking and alcohol consumption are presented. The article shows correlations between alcohol

consumption and cigarette smoking among respondents. Attitudes, experiences, and health awareness in relation to smoking are mainly influenced by whether a respondent is a smoker, while attitudes are influenced by the gender. As far as alcohol is concerned, attitudes and health awareness are influenced mainly by the age at which experimentation with alcohol began, as well as by the gender. The results also refer to the relationship between experimentation with tobacco on one hand and alcohol on the other. **CONCLUSIONS:** Apparently, the family background and parents' behaviour, imitated by children and young people, are factors which influence people's choice to start smoking and consuming alcohol. The study respondents, too, showed clear correlations between alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking. People who have drunk alcohol at the age of 15 are more likely to have started smoking when they are 15. The respondents whose friends do not smoke are most likely to be non-smokers or ex-smokers.

**KEY WORDS:** SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE – NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS – PERCEIVED ACCESSIBILITY – TOBACCO CIGARETTE SMOKING – ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

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