THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY RISK FACTORS FOR ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE

Background
Substance use (i.e., alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drugs) continue to be of great concern, especially when it involves youth. Apart from the immediate physical, psychological and social consequences, the impact of substance use on outcomes in late adolescence and young adulthood has been well documented. An area of substance use that is of interest to researchers and program planners is the identification of personality characteristics that influence such use.

Rationale
Health-risk behaviours such as substance use contribute to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among youth and adults. Such behaviours are often established at a younger age and require prevention before they extend into adulthood. There is a lack of knowledge about the influence of personality risk factors for substance use among adolescents in Sri Lanka. The study is necessary and timely as society attempts to understand various factors related to substance use, especially among adolescents. The study data would also benefit to expedite advances in preventive interventions. The objective of the present study is to determine the relationship between adolescent substance use and personality risk factors.

Methodology
A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 3454, 13-18 year-old adolescents from 29 schools selected proportionate to size using multi-stage cluster sampling. The validated Sinhala Adolescent Substance Use Student Questionnaire (ASUSQ) and the Sinhala Substance Use Risk Profile Scale (SURPS) was used to measure substance use and personality risk factors, respectively. The validated Sinhala Adolescent Substance Use Correlates Questionnaire (ASUCQ) was used to measure correlates of adolescent substance use from individual, peer, family, school and community contexts. A standardised procedure was used to collect data. Analytical strategies eliminated returned questionnaires of questionable validity. Descriptive statistics were carried out to obtain the prevalence of substance use. Chi-square and logistic regression analyses revealed un-adjusted and adjusted associations of substance use and personality risk factors. Analyses were carried out separately for ever use (i.e., use at least once in lifetime) and current use (i.e., use in the past 30-days prior to survey).

Results
This study found that except for anxiety sensitivity, high levels of introversion/hopelessness, impulsivity and sensation seeking personality traits scores were robust correlates of use depending on the substance and status of use. The findings indicated that adolescents who had a high level of sensation seeking were more likely to engage in lifetime use of cigarette (OR=3.44, CI=2.28-5.20, p<0.001), alcohol (OR=5.59, CI=4.12-7.59, p<0.001), marijuana (OR=3.24, CI=1.73-6.08, p<0.001) and other drug (OR=15.53, CI=5.24-46.00, p<0.001) use than those who had low level of sensation seeking. Adolescents who had a high level of sensation seeking were three times (OR=3.20, CI=1.34-7.62, p<0.05) more likely to engage in current cigarette use than those who had a low level of sensation seeking. Adolescents who had a high level of impulsivity were more likely to engage in the use of lifetime
cigarette (OR=3.27, CI=2.20-4.88, p<0.001), alcohol (OR=7.40, CI=5.46-10.04, p<0.001) and marijuana (OR=2.98, CI=1.64-5.43, p<0.001) use than those who had a low level of impulsivity. Adolescents who had a high level of impulsivity were nearly three (OR=2.70, CI=1.22-5.98, p<0.05) and two and a half (OR=2.55, CI=1.39-4.67, p<0.001) times more likely to engage in current cigarette and alcohol use than those who had a low level of impulsivity respectively. Adolescents who had a high level of introversion/hopelessness were nearly twice as likely to engage in lifetime cigarette (OR=1.94, CI=1.27-2.97, p<0.001) alcohol (OR=1.83, CI=1.33-2.53, p<0.001) use than those who had a low level of introversion/hopelessness.

**Conclusions**

The study results demonstrate the significant association between sensation seeking, impulsivity and introversion/hopelessness personality risk factors and lifetime and current use of substances among adolescents attending schools. The findings are discussed in the light of limitations of the study and the need for further research.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that program developers take into consideration the significant relationships between personality risk factors and the use of substances found in this study for developing preventive interventions among adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents; substance use; risk factors; ASUSQ; SURPS; ASUCQ