Preventive and Social Pediatrics

GENDER AND HEALTH RISK BEHAVIORS IN TRAFFIC AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ZAGREB


Risky traffic behaviors among youth potentially lead to serious consequences, injuries or deaths. Young men are particularly at risk.

Growing body of research indicates that the endorsement of traditional masculinity is at the root of the causes of deviant behavior of boys. With National program for road safety due to expire in 2020, there is a need for evidence on the present state of behaviors of youth in traffic in Croatia, using indicators that take into the account the differences between boys and girls and the influence of the prevalent gender norms on these groups.

The goal of the research was to analyze the health risk behaviors in traffic for high school students from Zagreb by sex as well as to test the association between the endorsement of traditional masculinity and risky traffic behaviors among adolescent boys.

Study and included 4094 high school students in the City of Zagreb. Two of the most prevalent risky traffic behaviors were analyzed: the use of seat belts while riding in the front seat of a vehicle and the use of helmets while riding a bike. To compare scores between participants who reported risky traffic behavior and those who did not, we used chi-square test for sex and independent samples t-test for masculinity scale.

Students engage in multiple health risk behaviors while participating in the traffic. Over half of the students report inconsistent seat belt use when riding in the front seat of the car and only 7.5% report ever using a helmet when riding a bike. A significant association was found between sex and inconsistent seat belt use, with male adolescents reporting significantly more risky behavior than their female counterparts. Stronger endorsement of traditional masculinity norms among boys was correlated with less consistent use of seat belts (p<0.001). The difference between male and female students in carrying a helmet when riding a bike was less significant, with results suggesting that the lack of protection when riding may be a part of the general youth culture.

The results in general highlight the prevalent harmful risky traffic behaviors of adolescents. The study highlights the need to further investigate the causes of risky traffic behaviors among youth and intervene at the level of youth culture. The results further suggest the need to design experimental gender-transformative interventions for boys specifically, as a group at a higher risk.

THE IMPACT OF TOXIC STRESS ON A DEVELOPING BRAIN

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The effects of negative environmental factors in childhood result in neuro-biological changes. Exposed to powerful, negative environment, lead to hyperactivation of the neurological and endocrine system. This state is known as a toxic stress. Symptoms may frequently imitate ADHD and other neurodevelopmental disorders. Hyper-vigilance and dissociation, could be mistaken for inattention. Impulsivity might be brought on by a stress response in overdrive.

The aim of this study was to estimate preliminary results of a multi-disciplinary (Pediatric neurologist, Social worker, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Speech therapist and special need