

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**ScienceDirect**journal homepage: <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/kontakt>**Original research article****Use of addictive substances and gambling among Slovak immigrants in the Czech Republic****Alena Kajánová****University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Health and Social Studies, Department of Social Work, České Budějovice, Czech Republic***ARTICLE INFO****Article history:**

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ABSTRACT

The article is focused on addictive substance abuse and gambling, and its relationship to the subjective perception of health and basic socio-demographic variables among Slovak immigrants living in the Czech Republic. The Slovak minority is the second largest ethnic minority in the Czech Republic, but surveys concerning this area are lacking. Foreign surveys in the field of addictive substance abuse point to the differences between immigrant populations and the populations in their home countries. The research was carried out using a self-questionnaire in the immigrants' native language. 184 Slovak immigrants completed the questionnaire, and they were living in seven selected regions of the Czech Republic for different periods of time. The data were statistically analyzed by the SPSS programme. In all areas surveyed, the results pointed to some differences between immigrants and the Slovak population. There were more smokers among immigrants, and daily smokers outnumbered occasional ones. No link between smoking and employment was proved. Also no link between gender and alcohol consumption was proved. In terms of the subjective state of health assessment, occasional smokers felt themselves to be the most comfortable. No statistically significant relationship between the subjective perception of health and passive smoking, alcohol consumption or playing slot machines was proved.

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Introduction

This article deals with the issue of smoking, alcohol, illegal drugs consumption and gambling among Slovak immigrants in the Czech Republic. The article is a partial outcome of the project "Social determinants and their impact on the health of immigrants living in the Czech Republic" (identification no:

13044 LD). It was funded by the Ministry of Education as part of the project COST (Cooperation on Scientific and Technical Research). Project duration: 2013–2015. Principal investigator: doc. Mgr. et Mgr. Jitka Vacková, Ph.D. By immigrant we mean a foreign person entering the country (in this case the Czech Republic) in order to stay long-term.

The goal of this article is to describe the frequency of addictive substance abuse and gambling in the target group,

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and also its relationship with basic socio-demographic variables (where gender, age, education and employment are rated). A link to the state of health assessment is also included. Although Slovak immigrants represent the second largest ethnic minority in the Czech Republic (after the Ukrainians), they are not the subject of many research studies. The reason may be, among other things, the assimilation of this minority. This may give the impression that it is actually not a different group, and this makes it invisible. This leads to a lack of information about it, and complicates any possible intervention in this area. Interesting information could be obtained by a comparison of data between addictive substance use in Slovak citizens in Slovakia and Slovak immigrants.

Theoretical bases

The theoretical basis is dedicated to basic information regarding Slovak immigrants in the Czech Republic, as well as addictive substance abuse and playing slot machines among Slovak citizens.

Historically, Slovak migrants came to the territory of the Czech Republic in several waves of migration. The first wave was related to the settlement of a Czech–German border in the years 1945–1947. It was followed by waves that were, under the previous regime, motivated primarily by labour migration to the industrial areas of Ostrava and the North Bohemian coal fields. On the Czech–Slovak border the migration resulted from immediate neighbourhood. Even at the time of the former regime, tens of thousands of Slovaks commuted daily from Slovakia to work in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia. After the Velvet Revolution, university students, politicians and artists left Slovakia for political reasons. Currently Slovaks are geographically spread throughout the Czech Republic. Their specific position is related to a shared history (not only within the Czechoslovak state). There were certain advantages in the possibility of acquiring citizenship, and then, in legislative conditions (a simplification of the process of obtaining permission to stay and work), and also the possibility of crossing the border on identity cards before entering the Czech Republic into the European Union. The specific position of Slovaks is also confirmed by the high number of Czech–Slovak mixed marriages, which are an indicator of good interethnic relations with the Czech majority [1]. Slovaks represent a minority, which is the most popular and accepted by the Czech population [2].

Up to December 31, 2013, 90,948 Slovaks were living in the Czech Republic [3].

The WHO report details the prevalence of nicotine abuse in Slovakia [4]. 29% of the population are occasional consumers, 23% are daily consumers. The numbers are significantly higher in adolescents and also in men compared to women. Mravčík and Kiššová [5] reported an average consumption of 1403 cigarettes in Slovakia per capita.

Alcohol consumption in Slovakia is about 13 litres per person/year, and this amount has been more or less steady since 1961. Regular drinkers represent 28.6% of the population and 43.4% of the population use alcohol. Also, in this instance, men outnumber women. Among women alcohol is used by 16.8%, and among men it is used by 41.3%. The most commonly used alcohol is distilled (46%), followed by beer (30%) and wine (18%) [6].

Problem drug users in the Slovak Republic reached about 18,500 people in 2005, of which about 18,000 were intravenous users, 10,400 were users of opiates and 8100 were methamphetamine users [5].

Materials and methods

Within the quantitative research a self-questionnaire was used. This was used in combination with several standardized sub-parts to be used in other cases (but they are not the subject of the present article). In the field of addictive substance abuse and compulsive gambling it contained closed questions, with the exception of questions about experiences with illegal drugs (where the respondents had the option to list the specific drug). Altogether, six questions in this field were asked. Comparative questions relating to a subjective evaluation of health were asked on a three-level Likert scale. The questionnaire was distributed to the target group via gatekeepers from different areas (social services, employers, students). These were selected on the basis of their availability. The research group was set up by 184 Slovak immigrants, including 84 men and 100 women. It was a quota sample, which was based on the project assignment. The respondents were selected from the following regions: Prague, Central Bohemia, Plzeň, Ústí, South Moravian and Silesian regions. In terms of the type of stay, they were mostly permanent residents (52%). This was followed by long-term stays (13%) and temporary stays (11%). This fact corresponded to the length of the stay in the Czech Republic, 25% of respondents reported to have stayed longer than 15 years. The group showed a high level of education: 44% reported higher vocational or university education, 37% secondary education graduates, 16% vocational education (secondary school without graduation) and 4% reported a basic education. In terms of marital status, 39% were married, 35% single, 12% divorced, 10% lived in cohabitation and 4% were widows/widowers. In the labour market there were mainly full-time employees (55%) or part-time employees (5%), self-employed people (9%), students (15%) and 6% were unemployed. Manual work was performed by 31%, intellectual work by 35% and a combination of both by 33%.

The data were statistically processed by the SPSS programme. The article worked with already categorized data.

Results

When asked: “How do you feel physically?” most respondents (54%) answered: “Well”. Less than 2% chose the option “bad” (Table 1).

Table 1 – Subjective wellbeing.

| | Frequency | % |
|------------------------|-----------|------|
| Bad | 3 | 1.6 |
| Satisfactory (average) | 75 | 38.9 |
| Well | 106 | 5.9 |
| Total | 184 | 9.3 |

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