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## ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES AND HEALTH RISK BEHAVIOURS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN ALBANIA

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### ABSTRACT

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are associated with considerable harmful effects on various health outcomes of the affected individuals and non-negligible costs. ACEs are rather widespread and could increase the risk of a wide range of health risk behaviors. In this context our aim was to assess the association between ACE forms and number with various risk health behaviors in Albania. For this purpose, a cross-section survey was conducted in 2015 in a representative sample of 957 young adults studying in universities of four regions of Albania. The Family Health History questionnaire was used to retrieve information about 10 ACE forms, basic socio-demographic information and various health risk behaviors. Binary and Multinomial Logistic Regression was used to determine the associations between ACEs and health risk behaviors. The most prevalent ACE was emotional abuse (35%), followed by physical neglect (34%), witnessing mother's violence (24%) and physical abuse (21%). Each ACE form was a significant predictor of at least one health risk behavior. Living in household with members that abuse with substances, emotional abuse, physical abuse, parental divorce and witnessing mother's violence significantly increased the odds of suicide attempt by 8.8, 5.8, 4.6, 4.6 and 4.4 times, respectively whereas parental divorce was the strongest predictor of respondents problematic drug use, increasing the likelihood of the later by 24.3 times. The increasing number of ACEs was a significant predictor for most health risk behaviors. There is need for carefully planned strategies and interventions in order to address the burden of ACEs on Albanian population.

**Keywords:** Albania, adverse childhood experience, health risk behavior, prevalence, cross-sectional.