Abstract

Objective. To determine the prevalence of sexual abuse among high school (secondary and preparatory) students, male and female, throughout Mexico, and its relationship with drug abuse. Material and methods. Data were obtained from the National Survey of Drug Use in Schools applied in November and December, 1991. A total of 61,779 students, 51.8% men and 47.1% women, with a mean age of 14.4 years completed the self-applied questionnaire. Sexual abuse was explored from the perspective of the abusers and of the victims. Results. The prevalence of sexual abuse in adolescent victims was 4.3% and no statistically significant differences were found between sexes. The prevalence of sexual aggressors was 2.5%. Men coerced someone else in a higher proportion than women. Adolescent women experienced sexual abuse at a younger age than men and they also reported a higher percentage of intrafamily abuse. Men reported friends as the most frequent aggressors. Victims and aggressors of both sexes reported a significantly higher drug consumption than students without these antecedents. Conclusions. The differences in the experience of sexual abuse between men and women are described. In particular, the fact that sexual abuse in men mainly occurs outside the family sphere, while in women it is mainly within the family and at a younger age than in men. Additionally, the need for further research focusing on the consequences on mental health of infantile and adolescent sexual abuse and drug consumption is emphasized, considering the characteristics of each gender.