AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES IN ADOLESCENTS TOBACCO USE BY SEX, AGE, AND TIME

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Research about inequalities in adolescent tobacco use often shows contradictory results. Evidence demonstrates that findings differ depending on the socioeconomic indicator employed. Moreover, different patterns of inequalities are also found according to sex, developmental stage and over time. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship of socioeconomic indicators and adolescent tobacco use, attending to their differential impact through sex, age, and time.

Data comes from a sample of 40,089 adolescents (11-16 years old) who participated in the HBSC study in Spain in 2006, 2010, and 2014. Multiple logistic regression models were used to explore the impact of parental unemployment, family affluence, and the perception of family wealth on adolescent tobacco use, analyzing their interaction effects and their impact on different levels of stratification by sex, age, and survey year.

Interaction analysis revealed different patterns of inequalities according to age: having a mother out of the labor market showed a protective effect on smoking only for 15-16 years old adolescents, whereas perceiving their families as normal or rich had a protective effect only for the 11-12 and 13-14 years old adolescents. In addition, inequalities showed to vary over time: having a father’s out of the labor market did not influence adolescent smoking in 2006 but was a risk factor in 2010 and 2014. Moreover, whereas in 2006 adolescents with high family affluence showed a lower probability of smoking, family affluence did not show significant effects in 2010 and 2014.

No sex differences were found in the effect of different socioeconomic factors on adolescents smoking, but different patterns were found according to age and time. Interventions aimed at reducing inequalities in adolescents’ tobacco use should contain specific components depending on the adolescents age and take into account the dynamic interaction between socioeconomic factors and tobacco use over time.