

EVALUATION OF CASES REFERRED TO A FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY OUTPATIENT CLINIC IN TERMS OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS: A TWO-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: Forensic psychiatry is a specialized branch of psychiatry that evaluates individuals guided by laws and institutional regulations, aiming to diagnose and treat mental disorders, provide medical opinions on criminal responsibility and legal capacity and contribute to public welfare. This study retrospectively examines the diagnoses, demographic characteristics, referral reasons and decisions made in cases presented to the forensic psychiatry outpatient clinic of a tertiary-level-non-high-security hospital.

METHODS: This study included 512 cases referred to the forensic psychiatry outpatient clinic of our hospital between January 1, 2022-June 1, 2024. These cases were retrospectively analyzed in terms of demographic characteristics, clinical diagnoses, referral reasons and the decisions made. Descriptive statistical methods were applied. Ethical approval was obtained from the hospital's ethics committee (2024-TBEK2024/08-05).

RESULTS: Among the 512 cases, 85.9%(n=440) were male and 14.1%(n=72) were female, with a mean age of 35.80 ± 12.20 years. A history of substance use was present in 52.3% of the cases, with 94.8% of these being male. The most common referral reason was the evaluation of involuntary hospitalization under Article

432 of the Turkish Civil Code (TMK)(69.3%), followed by the assessment of guardianship necessity (36.5%) and the evaluation of criminal responsibility under Article 32 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) (16.2%). Requests for the evaluation of involuntary hospitalization and guardianship under Article 432 of TMK were most frequently associated with substance use disorders and related psychiatric conditions. The most common diagnoses made during the study included substance use disorders and associated psychopathologies, atypical psychosis, mood disorders. Among individuals evaluated for criminal responsibility, 32.5% were deemed fully responsible, while 33.7% were determined to require further forensic psychiatric observation.

CONCLUSIONS: Substance use and related psychiatric disorders occupy an important place in forensic psychiatry. Our study highlights the need for more comprehensive assessment processes in criminal responsibility evaluations. The development of early intervention and treatment programs for substance use disorders may contribute to improvements in both legal and clinical procedures.

Keywords: Criminal responsibility, forensic psychiatry, legal capacity, mental disorders, substance use