

COPING ATTITUDES AND INTOLERANCE OF UNCERTAINTY IN INDIVIDUALS WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: Substance use disorder (SUD) negatively affects individuals' ability to cope with stress and regulate emotions. Dysfunctional coping strategies may contribute to the initiation and maintenance of substance use. Intolerance of uncertainty has also been associated with maladaptive coping and emotional regulation difficulties across various psychiatric conditions. However, its role in SUD remains insufficiently clarified. This study aimed to compare coping attitudes and intolerance of uncertainty between individuals with SUD and healthy controls.

METHODS: This cross-sectional study included 78 patients with SUD and 90 healthy volunteers. Coping attitudes were assessed using the COPE Inventory, and intolerance of uncertainty was evaluated with the Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS). Ethical approval was obtained from the Akdeniz University Scientific Research Ethics Committee (TBAEK-787, 28.08.2025). Group comparisons were performed using appropriate statistical analyses.

RESULTS: The SUD group was younger than controls (32.49 ± 7.74 vs. 39.8 ± 10.79 years, $p < 0.001$), and males were overrepresented (86.3% vs. 45.6%, $p < 0.001$). Controls scored

higher on COPE self-help, approach, adaptation subscales, and total COPE scores (all $p \leq 0.001$), indicating stronger functional coping strategies. No differences were observed in avoidance or self-punishment. Prospective anxiety scores were higher in controls ($p = 0.030$), whereas inhibitory anxiety and total IUS scores did not differ significantly. Given demographic differences between groups, this finding should be interpreted cautiously.

CONCLUSIONS: Individuals with SUD exhibit weaker functional coping than healthy controls, supporting the role of maladaptive coping in substance use maintenance. Overall intolerance of uncertainty levels were comparable between groups. Higher prospective anxiety in controls may reflect greater future-oriented cognitive processing rather than increased psychopathology, whereas impulsivity and present-focused decision-making in SUD may attenuate anticipatory concern. Ongoing data collection and planned adjusted analyses are expected to strengthen the robustness and generalizability of these findings.

Keywords: Coping behavior, intolerance of uncertainty, substance-related disorders