ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE:

To describe the prevalence and types of injuries in relation to traumatic experiences, posttraumatic stress symptoms, depression, and health-risk behaviors among university students in Kenya.

METHOD:

A cross-sectional study collected data on a random sample of university students using a questionnaire to record sociodemographic variables while injuries experiences recorded using the Centers for Disease control criteria and Breslau's seven-item screener was used to identify posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Depressive symptoms were measured using Center for Epidemiological Studies Short Depression Scale.

RESULTS:

Nine hundred and twenty-three students (525 male and 365 female) were included in the study, mean age 23 years (SD 4.0). Serious injury in the previous 12 months was reported by 29.00% of the students. PTSD was present in 15.67% (men 15.39% and women 16.1%). Out of the total, 41.33% of the students had depressive symptoms (35.71% mild-moderate symptoms and 5.62% severe). In the multivariable logistic regression being poor, binge drinking, tobacco use, ever been diagnosed with HIV, physically abused as a child, high PTSD score, and depression (adjusted odds ratio 5.49, 95% confidence interval 4.32-13.21) were significantly (p value < 0.05) associated with injury in the last 12 months.

CONCLUSION:

Unintentional injuries and PTSD symptoms are common in this student population and are positively linked to depression and other risky behaviors. Measures aimed at improving the mental health, such as early identification and treatment of depression, may be useful in reducing the prevalence of such injuries among the youth.