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CHARACTERISTICS OF ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract

Even though drug abuse can be found in every stage of human life its occurrence in adolescence seems to be the most important due to the serious consequences on personality development and quality of life. Youngsters like to experiment with risky life styles, without adequate knowledge about long-term health effects.

Alcoholism ranks high on the list of the prevailing psychiatric disorders, followed by phobias, depressive disorders and symptoms of other psychoactive substances.

As a country in transition, Bosnia & Herzegovina has all characteristics of the post-war community and post-traumatic society.

Our goal was to analyze some of psychosomatic factors among adolescents who abuse alcohol.

Data and Method: The research focused on 600 adolescents (400 in Sarajevo Canton and 200 in Tuzla Canton – in both their rural and urban parts). This group is of an equal gender and age distributions. The research tool used was *Q 2000* test.

Study design is prospective, epidemiological and analytical. Results were compared within the groups, as well as the Cantons and the groups. Out of the total number of the adolescents, 15,55% of them were found to be alcohol abusers.

The results shows 71, 0% of high school first-graders (age 15-17) consume alcohol; while that percentage is 29, 0 in elementary school pupils (age 12-14). A significant difference between high school students and elementary school pupils is obvious. A significant statistical gender difference between alcohol consumers and non-consumers is evident. Distribution of alcohol consumers by gender: 68, 8% boys while 31, 2% girls Results shows somatic disorders exhibited by alcohol consumers: sleepiness 59, 6%, body pains 34, 1% and a clear difference in frequency of sleepiness between consumers and non-consumers.

Key words: alcohol, abuse, epidemiological, adolescents, rural, urban

Introduction

Of all psychoactive substances, alcohol is the most frequently used throughout the world. Alcoholism ranks high on the list of the prevailing psychiatric disorders, followed by phobias, depressive disorders and symptoms of other psychoactive substances. According to the American National Institute's research, the most common etiological factor in psychological disorders in men between the ages of 18 and 65 is the alcohol abuse ⁽¹⁾. Alcohol is the oldest and the most used drug with well-known

variations between calming and stimulating effects, depending on the quantity consumed, social situation and personality structure.

Until 1992, problems relating to various drugs use and abuse in Bosnia & Herzegovina were under certain control, manifested in part in preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitation activities ⁽²⁾. Alcohol use and abuse related problems was mainly dealt with institutionally in large urban areas (the system of support clubs), while strategy for fight against massive tobacco use was only being developed. The war also caused disintegration of the psychiatric services causing all organized measures and activities in the field of prevention and rehabilitation, of huge number of addicts, to end.

Bosnia & Herzegovina has all characteristics of the post-war community and post-traumatic society with huge numbers of unemployed, people with bodily injuries, as well as people with mental disorders caused by the war related stress. A large number of suicides and homicides, increase in criminal activity and violence as well as increased use of alcohol and other psychoactive substances are ever present ⁽²⁾.

The fact that the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina ended only recently and that its borders are still unprotected, adds to the claim that the conditions are right for a real epidemic of psychoactive substances abuse. We are facing a massive Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and some individuals are trying to fight its symptoms through self-help using alcohol, tobacco and other substances. At the same time, this syndrome is more than other psychiatric disorders coupled with other ones, mainly with the psychoactive substances abuse.

The current data on alcohol and other substances abuse in Bosnia & Herzegovina is not available, but it is believed that number of such cases is higher than before the war. Among the most commonly abused substances are cannabis, Parkinson's disease medicines, glues, solvents, heroin, ecstasy, sedatives and hypnotics, alcohol, tobacco, rare hallucinogenics, cocaine, etc.

Even though drug abuse can be found in every stage of human life, its occurrence in adolescence seems to be the most important due to the serious consequences on personality development and quality of life. The adolescence separates childhood from adulthood, period of parents-dependence from a period of using one's own powers to go through life.

Our goal was to analyze analyze some of psychosomatic factors among adolescents who abuse alcohol.

Method

Type of Research

The study is of a prospective, epidemiological and analytical character.

Sample

This research focused on 600 adolescents, 200 in Tuzla Canton (100 in elementary schools, 100 in high schools), and 400 in Sarajevo Canton (200 in elementary schools and 200 in high schools). The participants were between 12 and 17 years of age, with equal gender distribution and type-of-community distribution (rural vs. urban community).

Research Tools

Data was gathered using Q 2000 tests, the Bosnian version of the original questionnaire designed by Swedish doctor Kristina Berg Kelly (2). It contains a wide variety of questions about all relevant factors that may influence drugs use and abuse. Questions relate to every aspect of adolescents' life - health issues, life style and school behavior. The research was anonymous and voluntary in nature and was conducted in schools. Its prepared and executed in 2001, simultaneously in Sarajevo and Tuzla Cantons.

Results

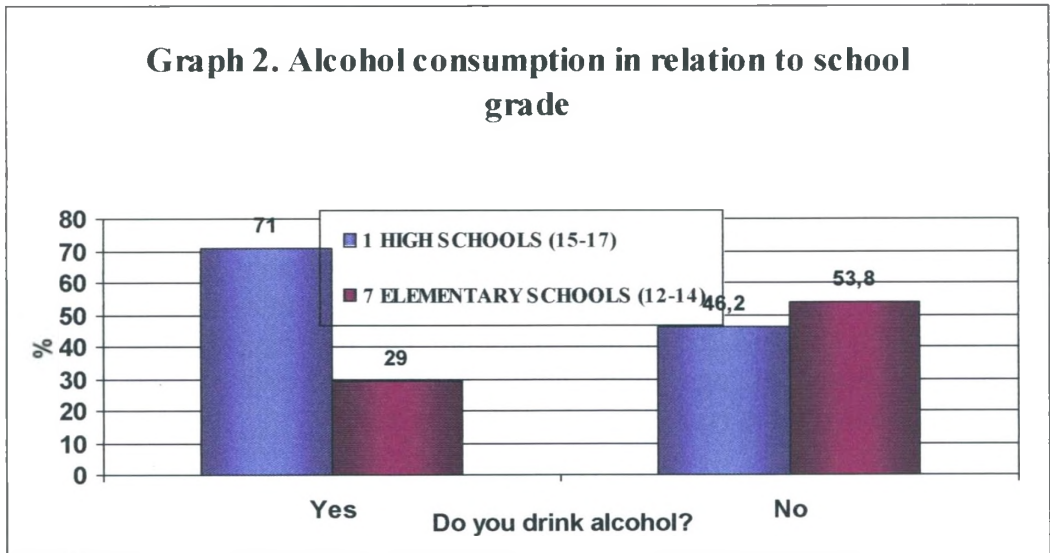
Data gathered was analyzed with standard statistical methods, using EPO-INFO software (3) and was presented in 1-4 Figures.

Fig. 1. Distribution of participants related to substance abuse

Participants	Total: 598%
smoke	6,69%
alcohol	15,55%
cannabis	3,34%

Out of total number of participants, 598 (100%) 6,69% claim that smoke 15,55% consume alcohol, and 3,34% /ab/use cannabis.

Fig.2. Distribution of alcohol consumers by age groups



As histogram presented 71 % of high school first-graders (age 15-17) consume alcohol; while that percentage is 29% in elementary school-pupils (age 12-14). A significant difference between high school students and elementary school pupils is obvious.

Fig.3. Distribution of alcohol consumers by gender

Alcohol consumption in relation to Gender		Do you drink alcohol			
		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
Gender ($X^2=20,080$ $p=0,0001$)	Boy	64	68,8	215	43,5
	Girl	29	31,2	279	56,5

Fig.3. shows distribution of alcohol consumers by gender: 68, 8% are boys while 31, 2% are girls. A significant statistical gender difference between alcohol consumers and non-consumers is evident.

Fig. 4. Psychosomatic characteristics of alcohol consumers

Psychosomatic symptoms of adolescents who use alcohol					
		Do you drink alcohol			
		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
Sleepy ($X^2=12,250$ $p=0,0001$)	Yes	53	59,6	192	39,6
	No	36	40,4	293	60,4
Tired ($X^2=0,79$ $p=0,7781$)	Yes	47	51,1	240	49,5
	No	45	48,9	245	50,5
Have body pains ($X^2=2,917$ $p=0,0876$)	Yes	31	34,1	122	25,4
	No	60	65,9	358	74,6
Desperited ($X^2=1,081$ $p=0,2984$)	Yes	17	19,1	82	17,3
	No	72	80,9	392	82,7
Anorexic/Bulimic ($X^2=0,956$ $p=0,3282$)	Yes	1	1,1	14	3,0
	No	86	98,9	452	97,0



Figure 4. presents somatic disturbances exhibited by alcohol consumers: sleepiness 59, 6%, body pains 34, 1% and a clear difference in frequency of sleepiness between consumers and non-consumers.

Discussion

Having in mind the significance of adolescent period of life and serious disorders often associated with it, we conducted this study in order to establish a level of alcohol use among the adolescents. We approached this problem from a number of aspects, attempting to identify possible causes for the increase in alcohol consumption. Identifying these factors might possibly

allow us to formulate a prevention strategy, which, in turn, would give results on a larger scale.

Our research found that, out of 598 adolescents, 15, 55% of them consumed alcohol.

The analyzing data we noticed that alcohol consumption among adolescents is present more in high schools (15-17 years of age) than in elementary (12-14 years of age). Our research revealed the results similar to those reached worldwide.

Some authors, like Gilligan and his colleagues, found that alcohol consumption to be more exhibited towards the end adolescence period⁽⁴⁾.

Alcohol consumption viewed in terms of gender distribution shows that alcohol is consumed more by boys than girls (68, 8% vs. 31, 2%), which is similar to what other researches found (34, 8% among boys and 11, 6% among girls)⁽⁴⁾.

There are some references with opposite results from our. Hence, the girls are seen to exhibit risky behavior frequently than boys - first drinking, smoking, sexual behavior and drug abuse^(4, 5, 6).

The youngsters who consumed alcohol experienced somatic disorders often than non-consumers within the same age group (particularly exhibited in frequency of sleepiness).

Conclusion

- Of all age groups examined, alcohol abuse is most frequent in high school age group, (71, 0%).
- A significant statistical gender difference between alcohol consumers; alcohol use is more frequent in males ($\chi^2=20,080$ $p=0,00019$);
- Alcohol consumers are more likely to exhibit a number of various difficulties: fatigue, headache, sleepiness, allergic reactions... ($\chi^2=12,250$ $p=0,0001$).

Apstrakt**KARAKTERISTIKE KOD MLADIH U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI KOJI UŽIVAJU ALKOHOL**

Uvod: Iako je pojava zloupotrebe droga evidentirana u svakom životnom dobu, čini se najznačajnijom njena pojava u adolescenciji, sa težim posljedicama na dalji razvoj ličnosti i kvalitetu življenja. Mladi eksperimentiraju sa rizičnim stilovima života bez adekvatnog znanja o njihovim dugoročnim posljedicama po zdravlje.

Zloupotrebi alkohola pripada prvo mjesto na listi prevalentnih stopa svih psihijatrijskih poremećaja, iza kojeg slijede fobije, depresivni poremećaji, a potom zloupotreba i ovisnost o drugim psihoaktivnim supstancama.

Kao država u tranziciji, Bosna i Hercegovina, ima i sve karakteristike poslijeratne društvene zajednice i posttraumatskog društva.

Cilj ove studije je analiza demografskih i psihosomatskih karakteristike mladih koji uživaju alkohol.

Materijal i metod: uzorak je reprezentativan, stratificiran. Obuhvaćeno je ukupno 600 adolescenata, (200 u tuzlanskom i 400 u sarajevskom kantonu). životna dob ispitanika se kretala od 12-17 godina sa podjednakom spolnom zastupljenošću, a i u odnosu na mjesto stanovanja (ruralno-urbano).

Provedena studija je prospektivnog, epidemiološko-analitičkog tipa. Kao instrument istraživanja korišten je test Q 2000.

Rezultati su komparirani, između ostalog, unutar grupa, kao i kantona. Od ukupnog broja ispitanika 598 (100%), 15,55% je izjavilo da svakodnevno konzumira alkohol, od kojih je 71,0% dobi od 15-17 (srednja škola) a 29,0 % iz osnovne škole (dob 12-14). Statistička signifikantnost ove dvije grupe ispitanika u odnosu na dob i spol (68,8% muški i 31, 2% ženski spol).

Rezultati ukazuju i na somatske smetnje kod ispitanika koji uživaju alkohol, kao: pospanost 59, 6%, bolovi u tijelu 34, 1%. Razlika između dvije grupe ispitanika što se tiče pospanosti je vrlo signifikantna.

Ključne riječi: alkohol, zloupotreba, epidemiološki, adolescenti, ruralno, urbano.

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