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Alcohol addiction - a psychosocial perspective

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Abstract

Alcohol is the most widely used addictive substance, representing a genuine social phenomenon of global importance. Addiction to alcohol, as a dysfunctional pattern, has an undeniable impact on the overall functionality of the addict and his entourage. Alcohol addiction and alcohol itself represents something different for each individual depending on their socio-economic status and gender-based affiliation while maintaining a cultural cliché. The study aims to analyze the way in which individuals perceive alcohol and alcohol consumption according to gender, age, background, level of training and even consumer status.

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1. Introduction

Alcoholism blends its history with that of humanity, making its way along different historical periods and civilizations, by being a genuine social binder. Research on alcoholism, beginning with the individual, and continuing with the study of the relationship between behaviour and alcohol, social representation and the structure and dynamics of alcohol abuse. The socio-cultural factors are fundamental in the initiation of alcohol use.

Alcohol is the most widely used substance for addictive purposes. Alcohol abuse generates multiple organic and psychiatric consequences, with a complex social impact. The term alcohol addiction represents a pejorative meaning by its "social label". Beyond the social stigma imposed by alcoholism, rooted in the consciousness of humanity from ancient time, it has developed the concept of alcoholism as a disorder back in the mid '30, thus promoting model for its treatment. Specifically, alcoholism is distinguished as a maladaptive syndrome, more than a disorder,

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with different clinical forms and without a predictable natural evolution in subjects. Prelipceanu (2011) states that the evolution of the behavior of alcoholics can stop anytime and can also resume unexpectedly .

Studying this phenomenon represents a real worldwide problem, going beyond the impact of alcohol beginning with the individual and ending up with the socio- professional aspects and family issues that it raises, as Ades (1984) claims.

2. Features of alcohol addiction

According to Babor, (2008), alcoholism is a fundamental problem of the contemporary society both through its medical implications and the marked decrease in functionality at work, by it's propensity to accidents of various nature starting from a slight diminishing attention to the alteration of thought processes. It is fundamental to understand how people perceive alcohol and alcohol consumption in order to establish a consumer's pattern. Beyond an indisputable genetic component underlying alcohol addiction, Epstein, (2001) demonstrates that one can speak of an authentic social legacy, based on a cognitive process which targets family-based behaviours, having a repetitive and easily transferred character.

Alcohol addiction according to DSM V (2013) is defined as being a dysfunctional pattern of alcohol consumption, which leads to manifest clinical disorders stretched on a period of 12 months (for that it has to be fulfilled at least two of the following criteria):

1. the alcohol is used in large amounts for a long period of time
2. persistent desire / great efforts to give up alcohol
3. time invested to buy, to consume alcohol or to recover after its effects
4. craving
5. recurrent alcohol consumption with a deficiency in social and family integration
6. continued drinking despite a deficiency both relational and professional
7. decreased involvement in social, family and professional activities because of alcohol use
8. the use of alcohol in risky situations for health
9. continued drinking despite increased risk for poor health
10. tolerance
11. withdrawal

The first episode of acute alcoholic intoxication occurs frequently in adolescence but usually most people develop disorders related to alcohol consumption after the age of 30.

Often alcohol addiction is mistakenly perceived as an untreatable medical condition based on numerous recurrences of alcohol abuse. However, severe cases represent only a small proportion, typically people with alcohol addiction show a more promising prognosis. Risk factors and also prognostic factors often include cultural attitudes, the wide availability of alcohol, personal experience related to alcohol consumption and also the stress level.

3. Objectives

This study aims to assess the attitude of a certain population group towards alcohol and also towards its multidimensional implications in all aspects of life. In order to achieve this goal we have created and validated a tool to assess one's opinion regarding the consequences of alcohol abuse and also regarding alcoholic beverages in general.

4. Research methods

We assessed the opinion of 200 subjects regarding alcohol and alcohol addiction using a questionnaire, that we designed, having 35 items (initially the questionnaire had 43 items, 8 of them being excluded on a consistency basis) aimed at various aspects of alcoholism and its psychosocial implications, it's effect on family life, work and health, responses being graded from 1-4 (1-strongly disagree while to 4-strongly agree). This questionnaire was created by the authors of this study in our native language (Romanian), being an original tool and not being assumed from other

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