

Identification of the alcohol abuse in bankers

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This study aimed to observe aspects related to the consumption of alcohol as a risk factor for occupational illness in workers at bank branches in the city of Alegrete - RS. In the period from May to August 2013 they were applied questionnaires in 94 bank workers who agreed to participate, of whom 58.5% were male and 41.5% female, with an average age of 41.54 years. Among the participants, 14.9% had risk consumption of alcohol, whereas 1% is considered high risk, and 1% had probable dependence. The results indicate considerable prevalence of hazardous alcohol consumption among workers of financial institutions in Alegrete and highlight the need for health promotion actions of these workers.

Descriptors: Alcoholism; Occupational Health Services; Work Conditions.

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Identificação de uso de álcool em bancários

Este estudo tem como objetivo observar aspectos relacionados ao consumo de álcool enquanto fator de risco para o adoecimento laboral em trabalhadores de agências bancárias do município de Alegrete – RS. Foram aplicados questionários de maio a agosto de 2013 em 94 bancários que aceitaram participar da pesquisa, destes, 58,5% eram do sexo masculino e 41,5%, do feminino, com uma média de idade de 41,54 anos. Dentre os participantes, 14,9% realizavam consumo de risco de álcool, ao passo que 1% dos bancários fazem consumo de alto risco, e 1% apresentou provável dependência. Os resultados indicam prevalência um consumo de risco para bebidas alcoólicas entre os bancários deste município e apontam a necessidade de ações de promoção da saúde destes trabalhadores.

Descritores: Alcoolismo; Serviços de Saúde do Trabalhador; Condições de Trabalho.

Identificación del uso de alcohol en bancarios

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo observar aspectos relacionados al consumo de alcohol, como factor de riesgo para el adoecimiento laboral en bancarios en la ciudad de Alegrete - RS. Así, fueron aplicados cuestionarios de mayo a agosto del 2013 en 94 funcionarios que aceptaron participar de la investigación, y de éstos, 58,5% eran hombres y 41,5% mujeres, con la edad por medio de 41,54 años. Entre los participantes, 14,9% fueron considerados consumo de riesgo de bebidas alcohólicas, mientras que 1% de los bancarios alcanzaron el alto riesgo y 1 % fueran considerados probable dependencia. Los datos obtenidos en este estudio indican una alta prevalencia de consumo de riesgo de alcohol entre los trabajadores de las instituciones financieras de Alegrete y apuntan la necesidad de acciones de promoción de la salud de estos trabajadores.

Descriptores: Alcoholismo; Servicios de Salud del Trabajador; Condiciones de Trabajo.

Introduction

The work environment can be a risk factor for alcohol use, considering that studies show associations between stress at work and an increase in alcohol consumption, generating dependence on alcoholic drinks⁽¹⁾. Alcohol abuse is one of the most serious public health problems in Brazil and worldwide. Despite the fact that scientific studies have highlighted the abusive use of alcohol as a cause

for unemployment, the reverse has also be found; in other words, unemployment can stimulate alcohol consumption, increasing the risk of developing abuse or dependence. Data from the 2nd National Alcohol and Drugs Survey (LENAD) revealed an important change in the consumption pattern of the Brazilian adult population over a period of six years (2006 to 2012). Among the people who drink, there was an increase of 20% in the proportion of frequent drinkers

(once a week or more), and 17% presented criteria for alcohol abuse and/or dependence⁽²⁾.

Alcoholism refers to a chronic and continued way of using alcoholic beverages, characterized by the periodic lack of control of its ingestion or by a pattern of use with frequent episodes of intoxication. Concern with its use and the adverse consequences that this behavior has on the life and health of the user are also part of this condition⁽³⁾.

It is known that in Brazil alcoholism is the third greatest reason for absenteeism at work, the most frequent cause for early retirement and work accidents, and the eighth cause for Social Security to grant sickness benefits⁽⁴⁾. Rio Grande do Sul is among the five states with the highest number of benefits granted in 2011 by Social Security for Work Accidents from mental disorders due to alcohol use⁽⁵⁾.

In light of the data presented by the Ministry of Health, a higher frequency of cases of alcoholism has been observed in certain occupations, among which are those characterized by high density of mental activity, as is the case in government departments, banks, and commercial establishments⁽³⁾.

Considering that work is seen as a psychosocial risk factor for alcoholism, the factors related to the work environment can also trigger or aggravate alcohol abuse. Thus, given that one of the purposes of this study consists of observing facts of the work process and environment that may be related to the dynamics of consumption of alcoholic beverages, we consider it relevant to understand if these workers are exposed to risk factors such as repetitive and monotonous work, pressure from leadership and the workload, and overtime, which are conditions present in the work organization of the subjects studied. According to the Ministry of Health⁽³⁾, work-related chronic alcoholism has been observed in monotonous labor and other conditions that influence the state of health of these workers.

Workers of bank agencies, according to the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO), called bank service clerks, generally have private health plans, meaning that their work pathologies are not treated or registered in the public health network⁽⁶⁾.

The Workers' Health Reference Center in the west region of Rio Grande do Sul, CEREST Oeste, which is part of the National Network for Comprehensive Workers' Healthcare, works in actions for promotion,

prevention, monitoring, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation in workers' health, following the Unified Health System's precepts of integrality and universality⁽⁷⁾. The priority of CEREST is activities of vigilance and education in workers' health, and it plays an important epidemiologic role, promoting actions based on teaching and research. In this light, CEREST Oeste elaborated this study, which has the goal of observing the dynamics of alcoholism in terms of the frequency, volume, and psychosocial aspects of alcohol use, its prevalence, and factors of the work process and environment related to these dynamics.

Methods

This is a cross-sectional observational study, undertaken with workers from bank establishments in the municipal of Alegrete, Rio Grande do Sul. This study is population-based, and all workers of the public and private bank agencies covered in the Brazilian Occupation Classification (in CBO) 4132 were invited to participate. This includes bank service clerks and excludes interns and outsourced employees. From a total of 142 workers, nine were absent from work due to illness. Of the 133 active workers at the bank agencies in this municipal, only 94 agreed to participate in the study, which generated a loss of 29.32% of the target population of the study.

The data were collected from May to August 2013 through a structured questionnaire applied by professionals licensed by CEREST Oeste, comprising questions regarding socio-demographic, occupational, and health aspects. In this questionnaire, a Visual Analog Scale was included to evaluate the degree of job satisfaction⁽⁸⁾. The Visual Analog Scale has been included in research instruments to more objectively evaluate the symptoms and emotional states of the subjects. In this case, it was used to evaluate the degree of job satisfaction. It is a horizontal line 10 cm long. At its two ends, there are two descriptors that represent extreme sensations of satisfaction, with the first end as "unsatisfied" and the second as "completely satisfied". The interviewee indicated their satisfaction by drawing a vertical mark on this line⁽⁸⁾. In addition to this questionnaire, the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) test was applied⁽⁹⁾. The AUDIT, compared to 22

other instruments, presents the most sophisticated, reliable, and valid psychometric characteristics, considering that it was applied in various populations of numerous countries, having been widely used nationally and internationally to evaluate population groups or individuals regarding alcohol use patterns and identify those that required different levels of intervention⁽¹⁰⁾.

The data entry and analysis were done through the EPIDATA software version 3.1 to calculate descriptive statistics through absolute and relative frequencies, with a confidence interval of 95%⁽¹¹⁾.

This study was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the School of Public Health of the State of Rio Grande do Sul on January 27, 2013, under CEPS-ESP protocol number 741/12.

Results

The bank employees of Alegrete had an average age of 41.54 years. As for gender, 58.5% were male and 41.5% were female. For marital status, 67.7% were married, 23.7% were single, and 8.6% were separated. A total of 68.8% of the interviewees reported having children and 37.6% said they lived with three or more people in their homes. The educational degree of the interviewees was 14.9% with a high school degree, 22.3% with an incomplete bachelor's degree, 41.5% with a complete bachelor's degree, and 21.2% with a graduate degree.

In Alegrete there are three public banks, concentrating 77.7% of the bankers who participated in the study, and four private banks, representing 22.3% of the interviewees. The average accumulated work time among the interviewees at the current bank establishment was 15 years, where 30.9% worked in managerial services, 20.2% were tellers, and 43.6% performed the remaining customer service activities.

Table 1 shows factors that influence the working conditions at bank agencies and factors that can minimize such conditions of excessive work rhythm and volume. Regarding organizational factors, 80.9% considered their job repetitive and 84.1% reported some type of demand for productivity and goals to be met. As for the preventative aspects, widely

disclosed by the scientific community and evidenced as health benefits for these workers, only 21.3% took breaks, 22.3% worked rotations, and 20.2% did labor gymnastics.

Table 1 - Characteristics of the organization of labor in bank agencies in Alegrete, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, 2013 (N = 94)

Organizational Factors	Affirmative	%
Repetitiveness	76	80.9
Monotony	26	27.7
Pressure and Workload	79	84.1
Overtime	56	59.6
Preventative Factors	Affirmative	%
Breaks	20	21.3
Rotation	21	22.3
Labor Gymnastics	19	20.2

Still regarding the organization of the work, the workload of the interviewees was an average of 7.28 hours daily. Among the 59.6% that worked overtime, the average of hours exceeding those for which they were hired was 5.04. Of those who reported taking breaks during working hours (the period given for lunch was not considered a break), which consisted of only 21.3% of the interviewees, 55% took only one (1) break, 25% took two (2) breaks, and the remaining 20% took three (3) to five (5) breaks. These breaks had an average duration of 8.75 minutes. Regarding the relationship between the workload and the job position, 93.1% of the workers with a management position worked from eight to ten hours daily, and 84.21% of the tellers reported working overtime.

Through a Visual Analog Scale⁽⁸⁾, we aimed to measure the satisfaction level of each bank employee with the activity they performed. The satisfaction average was 7.36. As for financial satisfaction, only 30.9% considered their pay compatible with the amount of work done.

The results of the test for identifying problems related to alcohol use – AUDIT (Figure 1) revealed that 14.9% of the bank employee population of Alegrete can be considered risk consumers of alcoholic beverages.

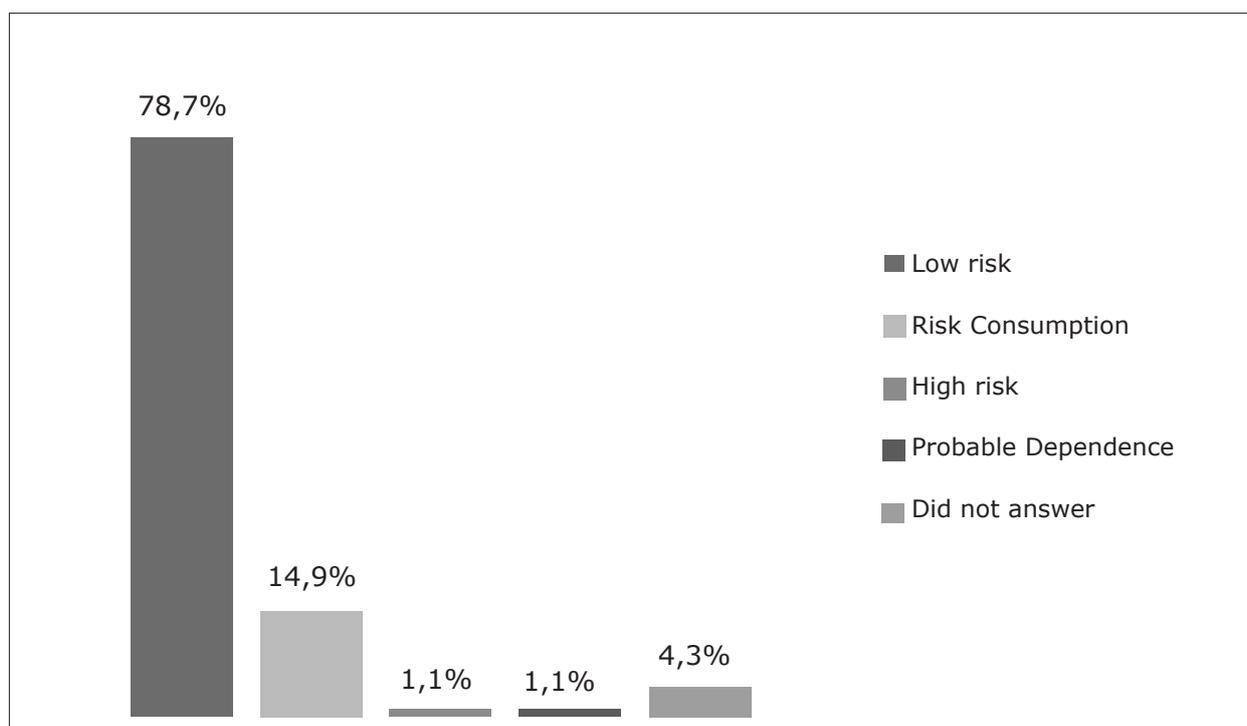


Figure 1 - Results of the AUDIT test for 94 bankers from Alegrete, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, 2013

Discussion

Various studies regarding the consumption of alcohol and other psychoactive substances that cause chemical dependence presented difficulties as to the acceptance and inclusion of the target population in the study. The losses due to the refusal of some bank employees were similar to those in a previous study that aimed to reach the entire bank employee population of the region of Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul; in this study, around 70% of the employees worked in public establishments⁽¹²⁾. Also, in Alegrete, the majority (77.7%) of the employees interviewed were linked to the public establishments.

This study found that 31% of the bank employees interviewed had a managerial position. This information is similar to the results observed in the studied in Pelotas and its region, where 33% of the workers performed a managerial role, and in Porto Alegre, with 32.1%. Most of the bankers with a managerial position (93.1%) presented long work hours, between eight to ten daily hours. According to the Consolidation of Labor Laws and the Federal Constitution, except for those performing managerial roles (trusted positions), with a general regime of eight hours, bank employees

can work six hours per day⁽¹²⁻¹⁴⁾. In addition to being exposed to higher demands from their managers, these workers had greater workloads when compared to the rest, where the managerial practices such as excess work, increased overtime, and pressure for goals contribute to the appearance of mental and muscular-skeletal diseases⁽¹⁵⁾.

As for regular breaks, the data found showed that most of the subjects did not take breaks (78.7%), except for the lunch break. The National Confederation of Workers in the Financial Sector refers that one of the proposals by bankers for health improvement is the guarantee of a break of 10 minutes after every 50 minutes worked, in the case of services that use repetitive movements, such as tellers and the positions that require calculation, money counting, and digital reading of documents – situations currently predicted in Regulatory Norm 17⁽¹⁶⁾.

Among the subjects studied, 84.1% reported feeling some type of pressure generated by the leadership, for goals or deadlines, where 59.6% described this pressure as being constant. This fact can be understood from the analysis of the new management model used today by the bank establishments that uses subtle tools to mold the subjectivity of the workers, coopting

them to be productive, flexible, and motivated. These strategies are based on quality, productivity, and goal programs linked to variable payment, which end up being elements responsible for the intensification and extension of work, even compromising social relations between coworkers. When the pay depends on the productivity of the work group, which generates control over the activities of each, there is an increase of competitiveness. It is important to remember that these goals are established by upper hierarchical echelons, in an authoritarian and unilateral fashion⁽¹⁷⁾.

A situation found in this study was “conformism in response to the status of the job market”, considering that, despite the fact that 69.1% of the clerks considered their pay incompatible with their work activities, only 39.4% would like to work at another company, leading to believe that the job market status, mainly in suburban cities such as Alegrete, provokes a situation of conformity⁽¹⁸⁾. Mental health can be affected by the individual’s perception of a lack of opportunities on the job market and the economic crisis, which make the person susceptible to negative feelings regarding their work.

The results of the AUDIT showed that around 15% of the banker population of Alegrete can be considered risk consumers of alcoholic beverages. The men were six (6) times more prone to this risk consumption than the women. The only person considered by the AUDIT as a likely dependent presented the lowest degree of job satisfaction among the interviewees (degree of 3.2).

In the interviews, we observed that the transference of workers to other locations influenced the more frequent use of alcohol by provoking separation from their family members. Alcohol use, especially its excessive use, was also associated with tardiness, warnings, and early suspensions at work, as well as loss of productivity. In extreme cases, it provokes inappropriate and criminal behavior, precarious relationships between colleagues, and even premature death⁽¹⁹⁾.

Conclusion

The data obtained in this study showed a considerable prevalence of risk consumption of alcoholic beverages among workers of financial

institutions in Alegrete. In addition, it showed that despite the accomplishments of the category over the years, in this municipal these bank employees still had working hours exceeding the six hours regulated by law, and few took breaks for work and labor gymnastics – actions that reduce stress and produce a feeling of well-being. Many report an overload of goals imposed by the leadership and deadlines to meet them. All these factors can trigger the consumption of alcohol and other substances that cause chemical dependence.

CEREST, considered a regional center of workers’ health surveillance, should accrue prevention through actions to promote the health of these workers in a professional and continuous manner, with the purpose of minimizing damage caused by abuse and recurrent use of alcohol, which can generate work accidents and trigger more severe problems such as non-transmittable chronic diseases and mental diseases, and, thus, premature retirements.

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