SMAD, Rev. Eletrônica Saúde Mental Álcool Drog.

2021 Jan.- Mar.; 17(1):84-91 DOI: 10.11606/issn.1806-6976.smad.2021.168374 www.revistas.usp.br/smad/



Original Article

Alcoholism: impacts on family life

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Objective: identify the problems caused by excessive alcohol consumption, as well as the consequences it brings to the family. Method: the instrument used was a semi-structured interview, with a script composed of 12 questions prepared by the researchers themselves, to answer the proposed themes. For the analysis of the interviews, Content Analysis was used and, as an analysis tool, the NVivo11 software was used, aimed at processing data in qualitative research. Results: during the treatment of the interviews, a categorical tree was elaborated, which presents alcohol as the nucleus, and four categorical knots as main aspects of the interview, being them: beginning of the use; consequences for the family; problems by excessive consumption and help. Conclusion: the negative consequences that the excessive use of alcohol generates for family relationships can be inferred, and this is the axis of the life of a more devastated alcoholic. In addition, it is important to point out that the same destroyed family axis is the basis for the resumption of a change as a support for the search for help from competent entities, such as the Alcoholics Anonymous.

Descriptors: Alcoholism; Family; Helping Behavior; Alcoholics Anonymous.

How to cite this article

Cordeiro KPA, Souza LLG, Soares RSMV, Fagundes LC, Soares WD. Alcoholism: impacts on family life. SMAD, Rev Eletrônica Saúde Mental Álcool Drog. 2021 Jan.- Mar.; 17(1):84-91. doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.11606/issn.1806-6976.smad.2021.168374

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2

Alcoolismo: impactos na vida familiar

Objetivo: identificar os problemas acarretados pelo consumo excessivo do álcool, bem como as consequências que ele traz à família. **Método:** o instrumento utilizado foi uma entrevista semiestruturada, com roteiro composto por 12 questões elaboradas pelos próprios pesquisadores, para responder às temáticas propostas. Para a análise das entrevistas, utilizou-se a Análise do Conteúdo e, como ferramenta de análise, empregou-se o *software* NVivo11, destinado ao tratamento de dados em investigação qualitativa. **Resultados:** durante o tratamento das entrevistas, elaboraram-se uma árvore categorial, que apresenta o álcool como núcleo, e quatro nós categoriais como aspectos principais da entrevista, sendo eles: início do uso; consequências para a família; problemas pelo consumo excessivo e ajuda. **Conclusão:** podem-se depreender as consequências negativas que o uso excessivo do álcool gera para as relações familiares, sendo este o eixo da vida de um alcoolista mais devastado. Além disso, é importante salientar que o mesmo eixo familiar destruído é base para a retomada de uma mudança como respaldo para a procura de auxílio de entidades competentes, como os Alcóolicos Anônimos.

Descritores: Alcoolismo; Família; Comportamento de ajuda; Alcoólicos Anônimos.

Alcoholismo: impactos en la vida familiar

Objetivo: conocer la realidad del alcohólico e identificar los problemas causados por el consumo excesivo de alcohol, así como las consecuencias que trae a la familia. Método: el instrumento utilizado fue una entrevista semiestructurada con un guión compuesto por 12 preguntas, preparadas por los propios investigadores, para responder a los temas propuestos. Para el análisis de las entrevistas, se utilizó el Análisis de contenido y, como herramienta de análisis, el software NVivo11 para el procesamiento de datos en la investigación cualitativa. Resultados: durante el tratamiento de las entrevistas fue posible elaborar un árbol categórico que presenta el alcohol como núcleo y cuatro nodos categóricos como los aspectos principales de la entrevista, a saber: comienzo del uso; consecuencias para la familia; problemas de consumo excesivo y ayuda. Conclusión: uno puede entender las consecuencias negativas que el uso excesivo de alcoholico genera para las relaciones familiares, siendo este eje de la vida de un alcohólico el más devastado. Además, es importante tener en cuenta que el mismo eje familiar destruido es la base para la reanudación de un cambio, como apoyo para la búsqueda de ayuda de entidades competentes, como Alcohólicos Anónimos (AA).

Descriptores: Alcoholismo; Familia; Conducta de Ayuda; Alcohólicos Anónimos.

Introduction

The use of alcoholic beverages is linked to the culture in which, since the beginning, it was used as a gesture of commemoration in various festivities, religious acts, commercials or culinary complements⁽¹⁾. However, the inappropriate/excessive use of these entails complications for the individual's life. Alcoholism has progressively increased throughout society, becoming a major public health problem, and its constant use is linked to easy access and low cost factors⁽²⁾.

Considered a licit drug, alcohol is one of the main causes of drug abuse deaths in Brazil. Of eight thousand deaths per year, alcohol is responsible for 85% of them. The number of dependents grows substantially, affecting both youth and adults. Although it is ingested in a few quantities, it has serious consequences for everyone around the alcoholic. The harm caused by alcoholism goes beyond this, because people who have this dependence have a greater chance of suffering some kind of interference in the work environment, that is, it is harmful both to family relations and to social and professional relations⁽³⁾.

The alcohol dependent individual will rarely admit and understand that he/she is going through an illness process, because he/she believes he/she can stop at any time he/she wishes. This factor prevents many alcoholics from seeking the necessary treatment to help them, which begins to cause negative factors for them and their closest relationships. The reality of the family that lives with alcoholism is one of worries and conflicts, which wears down the affective relationships in the family life^(2,4).

After the installation of the addiction, the treatment is of crucial importance for the alcoholic individual to achieve his reintegration in the social environment after the damages caused by the addiction. The scientific literature shows important data on the use and treatment of alcoholics, such as, for example, the fact that 11.2% of the Brazilian population is part of the group of addicts⁽⁵⁾.

Through this treatment, it will be possible for the alcoholic to return to his/her family and social relationships and to have access to professional activities, that is, he/ she would begin to return to his/her life with the activities that were interrupted. To help in this reinsertion, support and welcome alcoholics, there are the group of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other groups that do work to help the alcoholic and users of other drugs offered free of charge by the public power⁽⁵⁾.

The A.A. group is based in a community where people of both sexes participate, share their losses, difficulties, consequences, strengths and determinants that help them resolve and recover from alcoholism. This occurs as a way to help the other participants in a common good: overcome the addiction. What is asked of the participants who enter the group is the willpower to stop

the consumption of alcohol. Being a member of the AA does not require any cost, as the support network is not internally linked to any type of institution or religious issues. The crucial issue is to help each other control their addiction so that they stay sober⁽⁶⁾.

Based on the above, the general objective of this work was to identify the problems caused by the excessive consumption of alcohol, as well as the consequences it brings, mainly, to the family.

This issue is urgent because of the need to deepen the discussions about the influences of alcoholism in the family environment, the difficulties faced with addiction and the importance of the search for help as a way to confront. In this context, the greater production of studies and contents on what are the impacts caused in the family environment, resulting from the excessive consumption of alcohol by one of its members, may be the beginning of a transformation process that starts in the academy and extends its reflexes to social reality.

Method

This is a descriptive research, with a qualitative and cross-section approach. The study consisted of a sample of nine men, aged 30 to 69 years (x= 47.1 years), randomly selected, belonging to the AA group of the city of Montes Claros - MG. Included were men over the age of 17 who had a history of abusive alcohol consumption and excluded those who did not agree to participate voluntarily in the survey and/or did not attend for interview after three attempts.

Research participants are treated, throughout the work, as interviewees, being characterized as E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8 and E9.

The instrument used was a semi-structured interview with a script composed of 12 questions, prepared by the researchers themselves, to answer the proposed topics.

For data collection, initially, contact was made with the AA management in order to obtain authorization to conduct the research. At this time, the study proposal was presented. After authorization, a meeting was held with the participants of the group to explain the objectives, justification and methodology of the study. Those who accepted to participate voluntarily signed the Free and Informed Consent Term (FICT) containing all the information pertinent to the research.

All the interviews were carried out in a reserved room at the institution researched and took place in the month of September/2019, being carried out by the researchers themselves.

For the analysis of the interviews, Content Analysis was used and, as an analysis tool, the NVivo11 software was used, aimed at processing data in qualitative research. The use of Content Analysis software enables a more complete and feasible processing. Compared to

the analysis of content "by hand", these programs offer an extremely important innovation: the possibility of testing and relating hypotheses, making use of the resources and benefits brought by informatics⁽⁷⁻⁸⁾.

The routines of qualitative data analysis were facilitated by using computer resources. As such, in this study, it was proceeded: the organization of documents; the formatting of documents for standardization; the treatment of the interviews by the contexts of application; the analysis of the variables of the study, problem and frameworks⁽⁹⁾.

For the purpose of clarifying the names used throughout the research as a result of the NVivo software, some nomenclatures are explained: a) codification is the process of grouping similar items, that is, the process of grouping the interviewees' speeches into similar themes; b) reference is the number of times that a certain category was cited in the interviewees' speeches; c) categories are composed of a key term that indicates the central meaning of the concept to be understood and other indicators that describe the semantic field of the concept; d) categorical tree is the graphic scheme in which the categories related to the interpretation of the data are arranged by means of a sequential and objective image; e) branch of the categorical tree is the junction of the categories and subcategories of the same trunk of the categorical tree(10).

This study was submitted to and approved by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of United Colleges of the North of Minas Gerais - Funorte under Opinion No. 3,361,169/2019.

Results

During the treatment of the interviews, with the help of the Nvivo11 software, it was possible to build a categorical tree that presents alcohol as the nucleus and four categorical knots as main aspects of the interviews, being them: beginning of the use; consequences for the family; problems by excessive consumption and help. These categories were not drawn up previously, but were identified in the very analysis of the interviewees' statements.

The results are explained according to Figure 1, which represents the final categorical tree.



Figure 1 - Final categorical tree

It is possible to notice, with Figure 1, that alcohol is the center of the alcoholic's life, being also the generator of consequences, many times, fatal for everyone around him. Right below and as the first category presented, one can point out the "beginning of the use" of alcohol, that is, what motivated that user to start consuming alcohol, being able to be at any age.

Soon after, it was possible to diagnose, from the statements of the interviewees, that this use generated consequences in the family environment, being categorized as "consequences for the family", that is, how the family reacted to the situation of having an alcoholic entity.

In greater depth, and before they could seek help, some "problems in excessive consumption" were diagnosed, which alcoholic beverages generated in the user's life, that is, not only in the family environment, but in all aspects (social, labor and sentimental).

Finally, it was possible to perceive, in the speeches of the interviewees, that there is a limit moment in their lives, in which there is the need to seek help, this knot being categorized as "help". In this category, it was possible to perceive how the family helps in this search for rescue of the person himself, besides bringing benefits to all.

Regarding the beginning of use, the interviewees' statements regarding each category could be demonstrated by means of graphs, presenting the quantity of references made by each interviewee to each of the nodes, as shown below in Figure 2 of the first node (beginning of use).

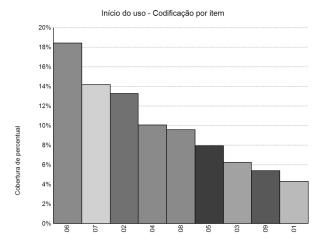


Figure 2 - First categorized node (start of use)

The first of the four categories (knots) diagnosed from the interviewees' statements was the "beginning of use", this being an important category, since it deals with how everything began in the life of the alcoholic and can be seen as a gap to be studied by other researchers in order to curb the beginning of alcohol use.

As can be seen, in the first node (category), shown in Figure 2, the interviewee who most mentioned the beginning of alcohol use in his life was E6, with more

than 18% of the references. The interviewee who least mentioned this category was E1, with 4% of the references.

In front of all the interviewees, the one who stood out most was the number six participant, considering that it was the one who explained, in the clearest way, the issues of his beginning with alcohol.

I started when I was very young, I think since I was about 19 years old; I always drank from everything, but in a controlled way, only when I had some party, something like that. I had a good time drinking like that, the older I got, the worries were taking over my head, you know, then I started to increase the amount, I met some friends who played pool, then I started to go play with them. We played three times a week after work, and every day I got drunk, I got used to it, and by the time I realized it, I was drinking in an uncontrolled way. (E6)

The second node (category) presented is "consequences for the family", being characterized as a central item for the analysis, since it deals with how the use of alcohol generates, in its majority, harm to the closest beings.

You can see the references to this node according to Figure 3.

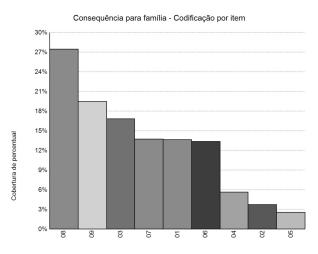


Figure 3 - Second categorized node (consequence for the family)

Figure 3 shows that the interviewee who most cited this category was the E8, referring to this knot by more than 27%. One of his lines, which characterize and demonstrates this consequence, can be seen below.

My wife and children suffered a lot when I came home drunk. Sometimes I would fall down, my wife would have to help me go to my room, my children would stare at me strangely. Once I slapped my wife because she couldn't get me up, I really regret that. The other day, I woke up dying of shame, but that didn't even make me stop drinking (head down). (E8)

My wife left me for three years because I couldn't stand the situation inside the house anymore, my children also left me, I

think they were ashamed (head down, voice trembling as he spoke that he thought his children were ashamed of him). (E8)

On the other hand, the interviewee who made less mention of this category was E5, with less than 3% of the references to this category, bringing, in his speech, only that the relatives suffered a lot from this situation, demonstrated in the following speech.

I've made my family suffer a lot. Because father, mother, brothers.

Then came the rest of the family, mother, brothers, relatives, friends, all suffering with me. (E5)

As soon as the subject establishes meaningful relations with the world according to the elaboration of his/her experiences, he/she begins to make a personal judgment and learns the meaning of what he/she has had as experience⁽¹¹⁾.

The penultimate categorized knot was related to the problems, consequences of excessive alcohol consumption, and is shown in Figure 4.

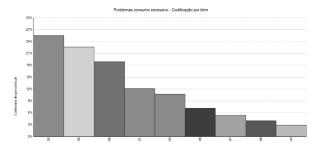


Figure 4 - Third categorized node (Problems with excessive consumption)

According to Figure 4, among all the interviews and quotes on alcohol over-consumption, interviewee two (E2) had the most frequency in his speech, with more than 24%. This fact could be observed a little before the following speech.

The drink has "disgraced" my life. I've stayed away from family, friends, lost my job. I was working as a servant, people were losing confidence in me. (E2).

To be able to face reality, to be able to rethink the attitudes of drinking uncontrollably and to analyze them according to the consequences arising from alcoholism, such as the loss of family, the loss of friends, the loss of a job, where it "disgraced", even include the loss of the very meaning of life.

On the other hand, the interviewee who had less references in his/her speech, regarding this third node, was E4, having only two references, corresponding to less than 3%, as shown below.

I even lost a girlfriend because I drank. I've had too much hangover. (E4)

The last categorized knot, and perhaps the one that has the most positive effect on the lives of the alcoholics and their entities, is the "help", the search for help from others in trying to get rid of this vice. For this, the data of this node will be presented in Figure 5.

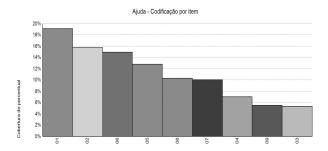


Figure 5 - Fourth categorized node (Help)

With regard to the question help, a higher frequency of citation (more than 18%) was observed in the number one interviewee (E1). In the following statements, it is possible to clearly identify this.

When the addiction became unsustainable, when I saw that I could no longer cope alone, I saw my children suffering and it hurt too much. Then I saw that I had to change my life, that I couldn't stay like that. If I wanted to "get rid" of my addiction, there were more people who wanted to help me. It wasn't easy to stop drinking, no addiction is easy to get rid of, but thank God I succeeded. (E1)

In reporting his/her experiences, his/her losses, the fragility of not being able to get rid of alcohol on his/her own, the interviewee identifies, in him/herself, a will to change his/her life, to be able to extract, from suffering, a turnaround, a chance to be better, an opportunity to transform him/herself.

Regarding the interviewee who positioned himself less on this category, E3 stood out, with less than 6% of the quotations referring to this knot, representing only one speech, as demonstrated below.

At what point did you seek help? Why? How was it received? When I had put an end to everything, nay, since I was alone, I had to try and take care of myself. (E3)

Discussion

This study proposed to analyze the impacts on family life of alcoholics. From the statements of the interviewees, the consequences generated over the years by both family members, friends, as well as the alcoholic himself were highlighted.

Regarding the beginning of alcohol consumption, studies have pointed out that alcoholics had the habit of starting to consume alcohol at an early age, resulting from living with people who drank the alcohol. Wives also reported to have experienced the consumption of alcohol due to seeing and living with their husbands who used to drink⁽¹²⁾. This study is supported by this research, since two participants (E5 and E1) also reported having consumed alcohol early, more precisely at the age of sixteen (E5) and by living with their spouse (E1).

It was possible to analyze the importance of the role of the family in the process of understanding the issue of excessive consumption, making a bridge between the alcoholic and the search for help. And, even though the family supports the alcoholic, he/she is fully aware that fights, breaks in ties, loss of confidence and credibility come from alcohol. On the other hand, there are families who, when they perceive alcohol abuse, understand it as a factor of social interaction and begin to deny that the problems they face are connected to its use/abuse, thus seeking justification for the existing conflicts in the home⁽¹³⁾.

For some scholars, the individual can see that, in the beginning, he/she remains surrounded by family and friends, however, from the moment the disease sets in and progresses, these same people, who were by his side, begin to move away⁽¹⁴⁾. In some situations, the family isolates itself from the patient for fear of the momentary aggressiveness and violence generated by the drink.

I used to drink a lot from my wife; when I drank, I changed myself, I accused her, I shouted at her, that's when everything went to hell. (E3)

Considering the fact that alcohol is one of the main influencers of family and social problems nowadays⁽⁴⁾, results similar to those of this study were presented. This similarity occurs with regard to the factors of estrangement from children and the breaking of marital ties, which happens when the consequences of alcoholism are already becoming a critical case.

When dealing with the consequences for families, the losses experienced by the alcoholic may include up to and including marital breakdown. However, although the family acts as a great motivator, to drive the subject in the search for treatment, both when searching the literature and the data collected indicate that the desire for change depends mainly on factors intrinsic to each individual⁽³⁾.

Thanks to my higher power (God), who rescued me from that life, here I am and I can help any other alcoholic to recover, all he has to do is to want and admit that he is powerless in the face of alcohol, then everything works out. (E5)

Regarding the way alcoholism affects family and social relationships, it can be observed that when the subject enters the world of excessive consumption of alcohol, he hinders the exercise of his responsibility as a spouse, father, worker. The abandonment of responsibilities before social and family areas is the first step towards

unemployment and affective loneliness⁽¹⁵⁾. From this point of view, it is possible to link these aspects to several issues mentioned in the interviews in which some participants report having lost the trust of their children and wife and also report having lost job opportunities. When they reach this point, it is considered that the addiction is already at a very advanced degree in which the user no longer has control over the quantity he/she consumes.

When it comes to help, the AA group is very much present as one of the main forms in the search for treatment. An attempt is made to build a relationship that helps to strengthen the person's trust by offering care and attention without being judged, making it possible to listen by sharing the problems experienced⁽¹⁶⁾. An analogy is made from the lines of those interviewed. For E5, for example, to be in AA is to be with real friends, it is a family that is conquered in the search of a common good: to help themselves.

It was notorious that in AA no one is induced to possess a certain religion or confess belief in a certain God, but most of those interviewed demonstrated belief in a power superior to them, which helps them not to relapse. However, each member experiences his or her spiritual experience in an individualized manner and in conformity with the conception that each one has of God⁽¹¹⁾.

The AA group has helped me, collaborated too much with my recovery; I just have to thank my higher power who, in my conception, is God and, secondly, the members who really embraced me. (E5)

However, even if one understands the need to talk about alcohol and the consequences for the individual's health, understanding it in a biopsychosocial context, its family relationships, cycles of friendship and employment, it is valid to talk about the relevance of carrying out more research on this subject on which many people still have prejudice and even shame to talk about and accept themselves as an alcoholic. It is important to point out that, although there is a lot of adhesion on the part of the participants in opening their realities to the researchers, some still feel shy when talking about the subject, from issues such as coming from a small town, where they are judged at all times for their conduct, or even for feeling undervalued for their condition.

The study presents the inherent limitation of a crosssectional design research by the impossibility of the causeeffect relationship.

Conclusion

Alcoholism has emerged as a major aggravating factor in conflicts in family dynamics. This study made it possible to identify that the impact of alcoholism is one

of the main problems faced by the family and society today, as well as the increase in the number of users of the ethyl substance. The breaking of affective ties motivated by fights, removal of their members and even marital break-up, and the physical, material and moral losses are some of the various problems caused by the exacerbated consumption of alcohol.

From the speeches of the participants, which were focused on the influences of alcoholism in the family environment, it was possible to see that both the alcoholic and the family suffer from the situation of dependence on alcohol. The process of recognition of addiction is the most difficult in the search for help and confrontation. After this recognition process, the AA group proved to be very effective in the recovery process. It is also understood that this becomes the alcoholic's support network, where he identifies with other users and often becomes a new network of friendships. This fact makes the individual try to recover from addiction, improve the intra-family relationship and resume their daily activities.

In view of the arguments presented, this article demonstrates its relevance, since it contributes, through the personal experiences of each participant, to a greater knowledge of the impacts on the family life of the alcoholic and the influence that the A.A. group has for the motivation in the rehabilitation process.

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Author's Contribution

Study concept and design: Ketlen Patrycia Alves Cordeiro and Lavinia Luzia Gomes Souza. Obtaining data: Ketlen Patrycia Alves Cordeiro, Lavinia Luzia Gomes Souza and Ludmila Cotrim Fagundes. Data analysis and interpretation: Raquel Schwenck de Mello Vianna Soares. Drafting the manuscript: Ketlen Patrycia Alves Cordeiro, Lavinia Luzia Gomes Souza and Ludmila Cotrim Fagundes. Critical review of the manuscript as to its relevant intellectual content: Wellington Danilo Soares.

All authors approved the final version of the text.

Conflict of interest: the authors have declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Received: May 4th 2020 Accepted: Jul 29th 2020

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