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## ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SEXUALITY AND REGULAR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN ADOLESCENTS

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### ABSTRACT

This work presents data about association between regular alcohol drinking in adolescence and sexuality. We conducted an interview using an original questionnaire, classifying alcohol drinking as regular, social and abstinence. The adolescents were asked to evaluate the drinking patterns and different aspects of their sexuality. 169 regularly drinking adolescents (RDA) were compared with 279 abstainers. We found that RDA are four times more likely to be already sexually initiated (OR=4,14; 95%CI=2,75-6,24) and their sexual initiation is significantly more often preceded by risky behavior (P<0,01). RDA are seven fold more likely to have had sex with more than five sexual partners (OR=7,06; 95%CI=2,99-16,68), but also seven fold more likely to have sex without experiencing love (OR=7,39; 95%CI=3,14-17,39). RDA are more likely to be interested in the ways of soliciting other for casual sex (OR=2,09; 95%CI=1,23-3,54) and to exploit their sexual desires (OR=2,54; 95%CI=1,40-4,63). The survey found associations between regular alcohol use and a special kind of sexuality, which is distinguished with prematurity, immaturity, promiscuity and dishonesty. Health deviation (regular alcohol use) is strongly associated with social deviation.

**Key words:** sexual abuse, personality, promiscuity

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time characterized by the onset and escalation of alcohol use (1) and sexual behavior. There is a wealth of evidence for significant positive associations between alcohol use and sexual risk behaviors (2-7) and outcomes, including sexually transmitted infections (8), premarital intercourse, multiple sexual partners, unprotected sex, sexual violence, sexual assault and unwanted pregnancy (9-11). In the literature, the association between alcohol and sexual behavior is explored primarily in connection with unwanted biological consequences. Much less attention is paid to the personality of the adolescents and the specific way in which it is related to alcohol use and sexual behavior. Other deficits of the research in the field is that less than half of the

studies theoretically motivates the rationale for exploring the association between alcohol and sexual behavior (12).

Why the personality is important for the prevention of alcohol consumption and sexual risk in adolescence? Etiologically, alcohol influences sexual risk behaviors through direct psychoactive effects on cognitive processes, increasing sexual arousal and desire, upsetting judgment and sense of responsibility (13-15). In fact alcohol has the potential to destroy the personality foundation and to promote behavior that is unlikely to happen otherwise. As the decision to do or not to do sex is a deeply personal act, the association between alcohol use and sexual behavior has not only biological, but also unwanted psychological and social consequences. In this sense, the preservation of the personal sovereignty and self-control can be an important tool in the design of effective

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prevention strategies against alcohol misuse at both the individual and societal levels. In this regard it is interesting to investigate the associations between adolescents' regular drinking, adolescent personality and sexuality.

## METHOD

Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect information on sexual behavior, alcohol use and some personality features (cited below). The adolescents were asked to evaluate the alcohol drinking of themselves and their parents, classifying the frequency of drinking as regular, social (occasional) and abstinence. 903 students (aged 15-19) were investigated: 169 of them (18.72%) identified themselves as regular drinkers (RDA), and 279 (30.9%) - as abstainers (NDA). These two groups were compared statistically about drinking habits and different aspects of their sexuality. Statistics used was OR and Pearson's chi-square test.

## RESULTS

We found that RDA were four times more likely to have been already sexually initiated at the moment of the study (OR=4,14; 95%CI=2,75-6,24). RDA were also more likely to have had more than one sexual partners (OR=1,93; 95%CI=1,20-3,10) and more than 5 sexual partners (OR=7,06; 95%CI=2,99-16,68).

This results indicate increased risk of sexual promiscuity in RDA. RDA were also significantly less likely to declare that „Sex does not excite me yet” (OR=0,21; 95%CI=0,10-0,46); „I am afraid or ashamed to have sex” (OR=0,33; 95%CI=0,13-0,81); „I am in love and I am loved, but still do not have sex” (OR=0,57; 95%CI=0,33-0,97) and „I am not looking for love, friendship is enough for me” (OR=0,45; 95%CI=0,25-0,81).

As it concerns the qualitative aspects of sexual life, two distinct trends were identified.

The positive trend was that 30,77±3,55 % of RDA declared that they „have sex with beloved and loving person”, which is significantly more likely than in NDA (OR=2,51; 95%CI=1,58-3,98). RDA were also more likely to have positive self-esteem of being attractive members of their own gender (OR=2,33; 95%CI=1,56-3,48).

The negative trend was that 27,22±3,425 of RDA declared that they „want to have sex, but have no sexual partner” which is significantly

more likely than in NDA (OR=1,85; 95%CI=1,16-2,93). RDA were also more likely to „have sex with some intimate partner, but not feeling love with him/her” (OR=7,39; 95%CI=3,14-17,39) as well as to declare; „I am not looking for love, to have sex is enough for me” (OR=2,5; 95%CI=1,25-4,99). We consider as negative also the facts that the sexual initiation of RDA was significantly more likely to be preceded by alcohol drinking (OR=2,93; 95%CI=5,79-1,48) and the RDA attitude to sexual relations shows a clear tendency to dishonesty: RDA were more likely to be interested in information about the ways of soliciting other gender for casual sex (OR=2,09; 95%CI=1,23-3,54) and to exploit the sexual desires of the opposite gender for their own benefit (OR=2,54; 95%CI=1,40-4,63). RDA were also more likely to be interesting in information about the variety of sexual techniques and skills (OR=2,17; 95%CI=1,44-3,28).

## CONCLUSIONS

Our data are consistent with the data from the literature about significant association between alcohol use and sexual behavior (2-7), but we have found evidence that regular alcohol drinkers among adolescents have very specific attitudes to sexual relations, which could hardly be explained by the psychotropic effects of alcohol. Although some of RDA have a chance to experience intimate relationships with mutual love, free from reticence and shame, RDA were more likely to see sexuality as experience lacking human intimacy, dominated by selfish desires and in this regard alcohol may be a tool for achievement of selfish and dishonest purposes. These findings point to quite different approach to alcohol abuse prevention. The relevant purpose in this regard might not be alcohol-consuming youths but adolescents that could be potentially sexually abused. Probably the center of gravity in new strategies should be shifted from the alcohol prevention and sexual education to education about human dignity, human values and honest intimate relationships. The emphasis on human relations in education of the adolescents would make alcohol unwanted mediator of intimacy and would reduce alcohol and sexual abuse, as well as all their undesirable biological consequences.

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