

PSYCHOLOGIC CHARACTERISTIC OF WOMEN ALCOHOLISM

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Abstract: The alcoholism is an acute problem of the contemporary society. The alcohol under all its forms is present in every great event of the human life: marriage, christening, burial, illness etc. If in the previous centuries the alcohol use was considered to be usual for the men, in our century the problem of women who use alcohol is an increasing problem of public health. The author presents a research on a sample of 30 women with the clinic diagnosis of chronic alcoholism, trying to underline the characteristics of women consumption and the personality features of the alcoholic women. The sketch of a psychologic profile can be useful in the prophylaxy of women alcoholism.

Key words: alcoholic women, characteristics of the consumption, psychologic profile of the alcoholic women

Theoretic frame

The daily stress and the permanent time crisis in a more and more accelerated society, determine the people to resort to different methods to obtain a short period of peace or happiness and to feel themselves free from the daily problems. These methods include the use of different substances from medication to drugs, from alcohol to coffee, but also different behavior types which are modalities of discharge the increased intrapsychic energy (i.e. gambling, shopping etc.) (Galbard, 2007).

The use of alcohol in these conditions is bigger, not only between the men, but also the young people and the women. Some young people use the alcohol as a drug associated to other toxic products. Though the alcohol use is a habit social accepted (any festivity is associated with alcohol), it becomes noxious when it surpasses certain limits. The alcohol abuse trains the dependence phenomenon (the impossibility to abstain from the consumption) and the tolerance (the tendency to increase the doses). The effects of the abusive and long consumption are very well known: from the familial violence to the dissolving of the family, antisocial acts as roaming, thefts and even crime (Moldovan, Balas-Timar, 2010).

As against the men, the women who have problems related to the alcohol consumption present a greater risk for depression, suicid attempts, the diminish of the self-esteem, more frequent and more acute psychotic complications, the faster instalation of the dependence, organic diseases related to the alcohol consumption, marital problems, divorce, using of the alcohol in critic moments (Grecu și col., 2000). These differences were explained by woman greater vulnerability towards the alcohol, by her metabolism particularities, and also by her social role so different from the man social role. Till a certain point, the woman condition was and still is partly determined by the others, especially by the men.

The social group tolerance and the value reasons of this prove much less indulgence for the alcoholic woman because of the unesthetic character of her moral degradation and its consequences. The women emancipation at all the levels is not equivalent with a total change of her traditional status and role (as mother and wife). The learning situation seen in he family influence also the women attitudes towards alcohol.

That is way, the new program of prevention includes learning educational programs for new behaviors and to form new values system (Roman, Dughi, 2007).

The alcohol abuse supposes a social stigma much more grave for the women than for the men. The implicit reserve of the women regarding their label as alcoholics may determine them to deny their problem related to the alcohol consumption and to delay the search for a therapeutic help.

The term of dependence represents the psychologic or physic need to continue the use of the substance – the dependence from certain drug can be physic (somatic) or psychic (psychologic) or both (Kaplan, Sadock, 2001).

The psychologic dependence, named also habituation, is characterized by the continuous or intermittent desire for the substance. The physiologic dependence is characterized by the tolerance, the need to take the substance to avoid the withdrawal syndrome or the abstinence syndrome (Robinson, 2010).

From the behaviorist point of view the addictiv disease appears as a result of a habituation, it being learned. In this theory the gambling or the toxicomania are seen as the results of a progressive conditioning. The drug consumption favoured by the social group pression (the company) can be considered as a possible answer to the imminent or anxiogenic factors. The euphoric effect provides a number of behaviors from the immediate revigoration which are salutary for the individual, being considered asadaptative behaviors (Tudose, Tudose, Dobranici, 2011).

Freud (2010) states that the mechanisms which is at the addictive diseases foundation could be similar with those of the neurosis, in other words they could be the effect of a toxic state of the body. Some

addiction types could be determined by the constitutional orality, that is they have at the foundation a fixation to the oral phase. Thus the addictions are included in the perversions category and Freud adds that there are addictions without drugs, speaking about a dependence to the primordial object, not a dependence to a special substance. Freud compares the sudden hunger accesses with the anxiety accesses and the pleasure given by the addiction object with the sexual pleasure. He considers that in the case of the addictive diseases the body is in a state of toxicity similar to the specific state of the actual neurosis.

The personality of the alcoholic was the subject of numerous investigations (psychoanalytic, genetic, sociologic). It must be retained the nocive effects of the alcoholic parents (mother or father) on the development of the child. The children coming from such families present uncertainty feelings, difficulties in their affirmation, and an uncontrolled aggressivity.

Research hypothesis

Our research is a constative one and regards the field of women alcoholism. At the beginning of the research we state the following hypothesis:

H1: we supposed that there are common aspects related to the alcohol consumption of the women;

H2: we supposed that the women who use alcohol, present some common personality features.

The statement of these hypothesis determined us to establish the following objectives:

- the selection of the subjects sample;
- the making up of an interview guide to establish the consumption common characteristics;

- the selection of the psychologic tests to evidentiate the personality features;
- the statistic processing of the data obtained and their psychological interpretation.

Sample

We selected a sample made by 30 women, who had the clinical diagnosis of chronic ethylic dependence, and who benefited from the profile assistance in the ambulatory service in Arad, in the period september-december 2013. The women had the age between 30 and 41 years old.

Work methodology

1. The interview guide

To establish the consumption characteristics, we made up an interview guide, which was applied to each subject. The guide refers to the quantity, the frequency, the consumption modality , the place where the consumption was performed etc.).

2. Psychological tests

We used two multiphasic personality questionnaire, with a reduced number of questions, but which offer enough informations about the subject personality. Thus we used the Eysenck Personality Inventory and The Woodworth-Matthews Questionnaire, which are used especially in the clinical domain.

Results and discussions

First hypothesis

The analysis of the interview helped us to obtain the alcohol consumption characteristics from the studied sample. We shall detail further two of these characteristics:

In the figure we present the distribution of our sample from the civil state point of view: married - a; unmarried- b; divorced – c; widow – d.

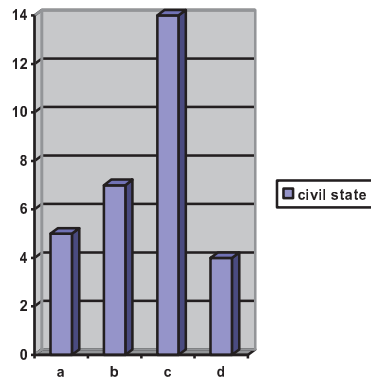


Figure 1. The sample distribution taking into account the civil state

The analysis of the figure above shows the fact that the bigger number of alcohol users are included in the category of divorced persons (14 subjects). The smallest consumption is met to the widow women (4 subjects) followed in increasing order by those married (5 subjects) and those unmarried (7 subjects).

We consider that the divorced women passed through very unpleasant moments related to the divorce and the division of the goods, maybe also some difficulties related to the children tutelage and that is the reason for what their number is greater against to the others single consumers (unmarried – 7 cases and widow – 4 cases). The divorce, by itself supposes a long period of high stress, which was preceded by numerous familial conflicts. All these aspects are considered as good enough reasons for these subjects to use alcohol in which they said to find comfort and relief.

Moreover the divorced women, could live with the fair to remain alone, to not find any other life partner, to be obliged to manage alone all their life without any support from someone close to them. This fear of loneliness may be another factor that justifies the alcohol consumption.

For the married women the consumption of alcohol may be the results of some familial stressant factors (the existence of the conflicts in family, but not so important to lead to the divorce; or maybe they are scarred to divorce, because they are convinced that they could not manage alone themselves in life).

The widow women are less consumers because they are related to beautifull reminiscences with their deceased partner or they could find a moral support in the children education or in their profession.

The characteristic that must be retained is that *the consumption is bigger to the divorced women*.

The second characteristic that we present here is the motivation of the aolcohol use. The answers of our subjects can be seen in the figure 2.

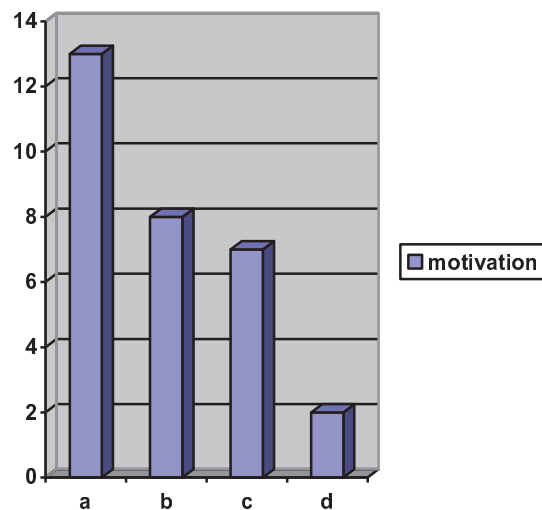


Figure 2. The consumption motivation.

Where: a = it is relaxant; b = I like it; c = because of boredom; d = I don't know.

For relaxation and comfort reason is the answer of 13 subjects, almost half of our sample. Their personality structure, more vulnerable, determines them to be not able to surpass the impediments and the difficulties to which they are confronted in the daily life. This incapacity to face the reality leads to an abusive consumption of alcohol, as an adjuvant to maintain the relaxation capacity.

Eight of our subjects state that they drink from pleasure. These are not anymore interested nor the family opinion about them, neither the society attitude towards them and their only aim is to procure the alcohol and to obtain the pleasure that they feel in the consumption.

A number of 7 subjects state that they are drinking because of boredom. This can be explain because of the reduced social relations and because of the lake of interest for other activities and hobbies. They use the alcohol because of boredom. Maybe if they could find an interesting activity, which request implication and preoccupation, they could renounce to the alcohol use.

Two cases state that they do not know the reason for what they are drinking. They never thought that there is a certain reason for the consumption, and they are drinking only because they saw the others doing the same thing. They are not search for more profound reasons, and do not identify the dissatisfactions that could determine the begining of the consumption. We retain as a characteristic: the consumption motivation is the relaxation and the relief after the daily stressant conditions.

After the entire analysis of the interview answers we can state that the first hypothesis made by us at the begining of the research was

demonstrated in practice: there are common characteristics of the alcohol consumption of the women. These are the following:

- the majority of the consumers have the age between 34 and 37 years old;
- the majority of the consumers are workers;
- the consumption is more frequent to the divorced women;
- the majority are consumers from 4 or 5 years;
- are preferred the strong drinks- tzuica in our case;
- the use of alcohol is daily and in the majority of the cases in the morning;
- the great majority of the sample use alcohol at home and the quantity is over 400 grams;
- the motivation of the use is to obtain relief and relaxation after the daily stressful conditions
- the majority of the subjects present withdrawal syndrome – perspirations and trembles in the alcohol absence;
- the great majority present a previous hospitalization, but they never done a detoxification cure;
- to the majority of the cases there was an abusive consumption to the relatives.

Second hypothesis:

The second hypothesis state by us at the beginning of the research refers to the personality features common to the women who are alcohol users. To verify this hypothesis we used two personality questionnaires: EPI (Eysenck Personality Inventory) and W-M (Woodworth-Mathews Questionnaire), which are used with predilection in clinic, because they have a small number of questions but offer enough informations about the subject structure of personality.

The answers of our subjects are shown in figure 2.

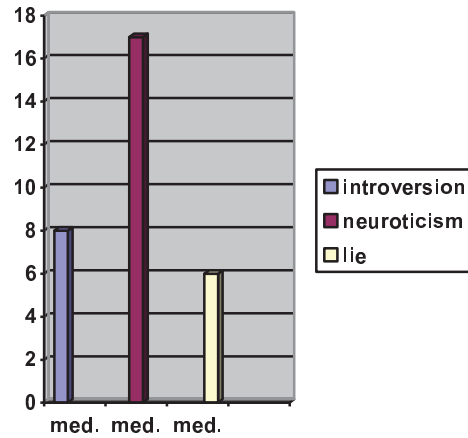


Figure 2. The answers at EPI

Generally, the personality inventories and questionnaires are endowed with a lie scale to evidentiare the degree in which the subject answers in a favourable manner or under the social desirability influence on the answers.

In our case the quota of the lie scale is big enough. This reflects the habitude of the alcohol dependent women to lie regarding different subjects: to justify the time that they are missing for consumption, to justify the lack of money used for the consumption, to justify the different symptoms that they have as a consequence of the consumption (the dizziness, the difficult speaking etc.). In the same time with the dependence installation increases the tendency to lie and to try to mislead the company to hide their vice.

The introversion is also great, the social isolation and loneliness being initially causes of the consumption, but becoming latter more accentuated because of the consumption. The women isolate themselves

to use the alcohol quietly, hide themselves for the company do not observe the effects of the alcohol on their behavior. The friendships are lost, the family relationships are destroyed and even these are a consequence of alcohol use, the women have the tendency to consider them as causes which lead to the alcohol use.

In the figure 2 we represented an average of the answers on the entire sample. The neuroticism average (that Eysenck considers in terms of emotional stability-instability) shows a great instability of the consumers. They cannot keep stable and constant relationship neither with the family nor at their work place. This instability is accentuated by the use of alcohol and they prove an increased impatience to finish their work for going to use alcohol quietly.

For the W-M Questionnaire, the answers of our subjects are presented in the figure 3, under the form of averages on the entire sample.

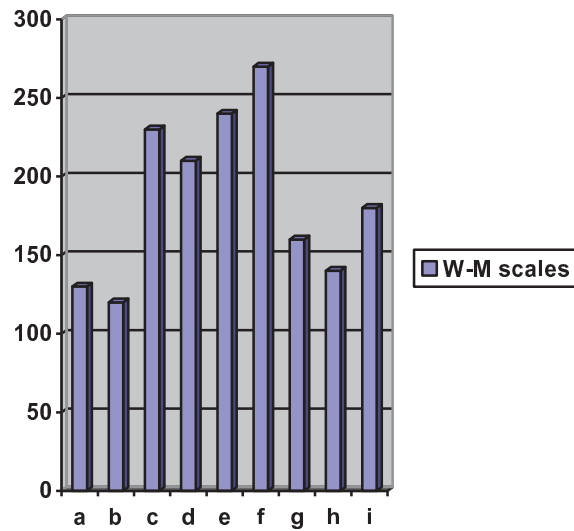


Figure 3. The answers at the W-M Questionnaire

Where: a = emotivity; b = anxiety; c = schizoid tendencies; d = paranoid tendencies; e = depression; f = psycho-affective instability; g = aggressivity; h = antisocial tendencies; i = the lie scale.

To this questionnaire also the lie scale has great quota, sign that the subjects refuse to accept the reality and try to denaturate it. These quota are similar with the quota for the paranoid tendencies (210) which shows that our subjects blame anyone else with their exception for the consumption and the situation in which they are in the present. Are incriminated the stressant daily conditions, the daily difficulties, the conflicts in the family or at the work place. Their tolerance to the frustration is small, and that is why the great majority of the answers are extra-punitive, when the others are guilty and not the subject.

In fact, the distribution obtained to the W-M Questionnaire is characteristic for the disharmonic structured personalities. There is not yet in the psychologic literature a relation firmly established between the disharmonic structure (in psychiatric terms psychopathy) and the use of alcohol, but the disharmonic structures are bent for negative or absurde behaviors .

The schizoid tendencies, that is isolation and loneliness are similar with the answers to the introversion scale of the EPI. The women close themselves in their own world, in which the alcohol consumption is the only pleasure and the main preoccupation. In this way are lost all the familial or social relationships that they had before and become more and more isolated and more and more lonely.

The depression, even initially is accused by the women as being a cause of the alcohol use, increases gradually as a consequence of the use, being a risk factor for suicide attempts. Another consequence of the consumption is that the women consider that no one love them and no

one understand them and they resort to suicidal act as a shortcircuit reaction.

The instability is the more important personality feature. The subjects become more and more impatiente, have not the patience to finish something, being all the time preoccupied by the obtaining of the alcohol and its consumption.

In conclusion our second hypothesis state by us at the begining of the research is confirmed by the practice. There are common personality features of the women consumers and these are the following:

- disharmonic structure of personality;
- increased instability;
- introversion, isolation and loneliness
- depressive disposition, with risk of suicidal attempts on the shortcircuit pattern;
- diminished tolerance to the frustration, with the blame of the other for all that happen;
- the denaturing of the reality and the use of the lies in a pathologic way to obtain and justify the vice that dominate their existence.

Conclusions

The researches on alcoholism are oriented more and more on the study of the behavior towards the alcohol, on the predisposant factors, on the alcohol dynamic, on the body reaction face to the alcohol intoxication, and in this aim are nedeed inter-disciplinary teams.

Our research tried to establish a psychologic profile not only of the consumption but also of the women consumers which have the diagnosis of chronic alcoholism. These could be elements which can be

latter use in the prevention, considering that a psychologic profile that is included in the frame established by us, can be a great risk factor.

The prevention of the consumption by including the risk persons in psychotherapeutic programs for support and awareness of the dependence dangers will reduced the number of women consumers and consequently will reduce the negative effects of the consumption on the social and familial life of the person.

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