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WOMEN USERS OF ALCOHOL: EPIDEMIOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS

¹Renata Costa da Silva, ¹Larissa Beatriz Ferreira de Paiva, ²Alano Roberto Rocha dos Santos, ²Francisca Priscila Duarte de Figueiredo, ¹Daiane Teixeira Soares, ³Bruno Frota Amora Silva, ⁴Ariel Gustavo Scafuri, ^{5,1}Francisca Juliana Macedo ⁴Bruno Sousa Pinto Ferreira, ⁵Maria Lucianny Barbosa, ⁴Jonas Nogueira Ferreira Maciel Gusmão, ⁶Inez Cristhina Palitot Clementino Remígio Leite, ²Ianna Cristina Palitot Remígio Leite, ⁸João dos Santos Pereira Braga Neto, ⁵Luiz William Barreto Wanderley, ⁹Lorena Cerqueira Santana and ^{5,7,*}Ana Paula Fragoso de Freitas

¹Postgraduate Program in Nursing, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

²Family Health Program, Family Medicine, Brazil

³School Dentistry, University of Fortaleza, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil

⁴Department of Morphology, Faculty of Medicine Federal University of Ceará, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil

⁵Research Group on Education, Law and Health, Brazil

⁶Post-graduate Program in Health of the Science, Faculty of Medicine of São Paulo, Brazil

⁷Joaquim Nabuco Faculty, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil

⁸Medical Course, Amazonas State University, Brazil

⁹Physiotherapy Course, University of Salvador, Brazil

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ABSTRACT

The alcohol intake according to its rules and norms can be classified in six stages being abuse, pathological, alcoholism, alcoholism, addiction, drunkenness among others. Excessive consumption of alcohol by women is growing every day with negative repercussions on physical, mental and social health. The present study aims to trace the profile of alcoholism in women from a city of Cariri Cearense. A descriptive exploratory study with a quantitative approach was carried out. The sample consisted of 50 women residing in the municipality of Brejo Santo - Ce. The main characteristics of the interviewees were: average of 14 to 24 years of age presenting 38% of the participants; 42% single 70% Catholic; 48% white; 44% live with other people. It was observed that of the 94% of the participants who consumed alcohol, 68% had a history of family alcoholism. The beer was the most consumed drink with 68.82%. Problems related to the ingestion of alcoholic beverages not only affect who consumes, but also of the whole society. There is a great need to implement educational actions for this population, aiming at behavioral changes related to alcohol consumption.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of psychoactive substances by women has increased in the Western world, the same occurring among Brazilian women. Epidemiology has been fundamental in the characterization of excess and dependence on alcohol intake, making alcoholism one of the main public health problems in Brazil (PULCHERIO *et al.*, 2011).

Alcohol causes a feeling of disinhibition and favors conversation and interaction with friends, especially if consumed in greater quantity at the same time, which increases sensitivity to the stimulating phase and tolerance to the depressant phase. Although this pattern of use does not bring about the same organic losses as chronic use, impulsivity and loss of reflexes can lead to social impairments such as involvement in risky sexual behavior and traffic accidents (LIMA *et al.*, 2017). The public health perspective for alcohol consumption has been playing a significant role in morbidity and mortality on a global scale.

*Corresponding author: Ana Paula Fragoso de Freitas,

⁵Research Group on Education, Law and Health, Brazil.

⁷Joaquim Nabuco Faculty, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil.

In the last 50 years, there has been a significant evolution in the knowledge of the relationship between alcohol and health, increasing the scientific basis for public debate and the elaboration of public policies (ROMANO; LARANJEIRA, 2004). There are differences in gender-related alcohol intake, where abusive use is more common among men. However, there are other studies pointing to the advancement of consumption among women and earlier, showing that the difference between the genders has progressively decreased, as well as for other special groups. Metabolization of alcohol and other psychoactive substances occurs more slowly in women than in men, and thus they become more susceptible to the losses associated with their consumption, even by ingesting lower levels of alcohol for a shorter period (ELBREDE *et al.* 2008). Among the possible factors associated with alcoholism are the biological ones, when there is a genetic predisposition and the altered alcohol metabolism causes an inadequate physiological response; the psychological ones favored by the low self-esteem, search of pleasure and prevention of the pain and family relations impaired; and sociocultural, determined by the availability and cultural acceptance of abusive use of substances, attitudes, norms and cultural values, nationality, ethnicity and religion, among others (SENA, 2011). Its repercussions are associated with high rates of traffic deaths, absenteeism at work, family disagreements, separation of couples and complications in the health not only of the person who drinks, but also of those who live with their families. It is a problem that indiscriminately affects men and women of all ages, including children, from all walks of life and whose prevention is hampered by the fact that alcoholic beverages are sold freely with fragile warnings to the population about their health maladies (SANTOS; SILVA, 2012).

Data from a study in Britain showed that 11% of women drink more than the recommended level of 14 units per week, with 2% drinking heavily, ie more than 35 units per week. The authors conclude that loss of control over constant alcohol consumption leads to neglect of daily activities within the diagnostic criteria for harmful use and alcohol dependence (NÓBREGA *et al.*, 2005). The ingestion of alcoholic beverages is an integral part of social life, operating as an important marker of social relations, spaces of sociability, bodily experience, health and disease. Drinking with friends in the bar, after work or on festive occasions, for example, defines the periodization of social time and space - work / leisure and work / home - defining the spaces in which the use of alcohol is acceptable and possible. In this line, the whole discourse on alcohol is also a discourse on society (CAMPOS; REIS, 2010). In studies conducted in northeastern Brazil, the authors verified that the reasons for alcohol use in the population are attributed to the need to forget problems and participation in regional festivities, yet the consumption of alcoholic beverages would act as a defense and escape mechanism against the the frustrations of the reality with which they can not deal satisfactorily (GUEDES *et al.*, 2010). Regardless of the associated etiology, alcoholism is a pathology that can be considered one of the most serious for humans, since it affects not only the user, but all those who live directly or indirectly with it, causing serious consequences for the development of people and for the quality of life and health of those living with the problem (SENA, 2011). The use of psychoactive substances, especially alcohol, is present in commercial advertisements, films, lyrics and other mass media. Thus, based on these premises, it is associated with the fact that alcohol consumption among Brazilian women is a

public health problem, with few resources invested in the prevention and control of alcoholism among women, and that alcohol advertising on Brazilian television is intense and abusive stimulating the uncontrolled consumption of the same the objective of this work was to investigate the profile of the alcohol consumption in women of the Brazilian Northeast.

METODOLOGY

A descriptive exploratory study with a quantitative approach was carried out. Exploratory research has as main purpose the development, clarification, improvement of ideas or the discovery of institutions, providing the construction of more precise problems or searchable hypotheses (GIL, 2006). The data collection was carried out in the months of May and June of 2012 in the municipality of Brejo Santo - Ce. Located on the banks of the Br 116, the municipality of Brejo Santo was created in 1890 and today, according to the 2010 census, has a population of 45.193 thousand inhabitants (BRAZIL, 2010). Presenting 23,275 thousand women and 21,918 men (IPECE, 2011). Its territorial area is 663,421 square km and represents 0.467% of the total area of the state of Ceará. The study was made up of women alcohol users who live in the municipality mentioned above. The present study had as sample, 50 women selected in a non-probabilistic way, and the snowball method was used. This technique is used in social research where the initial participants of a study indicate new participants that in turn indicate new participants and so on, until the proposed goal is reached (BALDIN, MUNHOZ, 2011). To collect data, a questionnaire was applied based on the Brazilian Center for Information on Psychotropic Drugs - CEBRID, 2006, modified by Cerqueira to meet the needs of the research. (Cerqueira, *et al.*, 2011). Prior to application, individuals were instructed on the voluntary nature of the study and were granted confidentiality by anonymity. The data analysis was descriptive, in order to determine the sociodemographic profile of the sample studied, behavior and consequences of alcohol consumption. The chi-square test (χ^2) were applied to verify the association between the variables studied, at the significance level of 5%. The Excel computer program, version 2003, was used to organize the database, and as a tool for statistical analysis, the Graph Pad Prisma application, version 5.0. In order to carry out this project, we considered the ethical aspects of research required in studies involving human beings, established in Resolution no. 466/12 of the National Health Council, in force in the country, which requires that the Free and Informed Consent of the research participants be requested (BRAZIL, 2012). For this purpose, during the research, a free and informed consent term (TCLE) was presented to each participant, where they were invited to sign it. This study does not have any conflict of interests according to the norms of the national health council and following a universal tendency and recommendations of forums of scientific editors, that regulates research involving human beings (VALE *et al.*, 2008). This study is part of a rain umbrella project and was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (Protocol 67/2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample consisted of 50 women who use alcoholic beverages inserted in an age group of 14 to 53 years of age, with a predominance among participants, 42% single; 70% declare themselves Catholic; 48% white; 44% live with other people (Table 1). Table 1 below shows the profile of the

women who used alcohol from the Cariri of Ceará to analyze the following variables: age, marital status, religion, race, and residence. Studies conducted in the city of Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo Brazil, the authors found that the mean age of women under treatment for alcohol misuse was 50 years, with a minimum age of 27 years and a maximum of 66 years.

Table 1. Distribution of sociodemographic variables of the study population

Socio demographic Profile	n	%
Age		
14 - 24	19	38
25 - 35	15	30
36 - 46	10	20
47 ou +	6	12
Marital status		
Single	21	42
Married	18	36
Divorced	5	12
Concubine	5	10
Religion		
Catholic	35	70
Evangelical	9	18
spiritist	3	6
without religion	3	6
Race		
White	24	48
Brown	22	44
Black	4	8
Who do you live with		
Others	22	44
With the parents	15	30
Alone	6	12
With colleagues	5	10
Pousada	2	4

The majority of women were married (n = 16, 59.3%), mother (n = 25, 92.6%), catholic (n = 14, 51.9%) and did not work until the last visit 19; 70.4%) (ESPER *et al.*, 2013). It is clear that biopsychosocial problems resulting from excess and / or dependence on alcoholic beverages that affects both the user and his / her family, such as: physical and mental suffering and complications, unemployment, violence and crime, mortality, morbidity, among others. These problems lead, significantly, to an increase in the economic cost to society (MORAES *et al.*, 2006). The profile of alcohol consumption of the population living in the municipality of Brejo Santo-Ce, according to the figure below, 48% of the interviewees began to use alcoholic beverages from 13 to 22 years of age, and 52% have a current age group comprised between 14 to 53 years of age. The implications of both licit and illicit drugs in the adolescence phase are extremely relevant as a topic for discussion, as several studies state that it is during this period of development that adolescents and young people are more vulnerable to first contact, especially with drugs considered as lawful, of which alcohol and tobacco predominate due to their prevalence (GALDURÓZ, 2005). Regarding alcohol consumption for the first time observed that the average age of the first alcoholic experimentation was 16.83 ± 0.33 , with the minimum age of experimentation being 13 years and the maximum age of 22 years, subjects presented on average at 17 years of age (Table 2). It is important to emphasize that the excessive use of alcohol by adolescents and adults is becoming, increasingly, a serious public health problem in our country. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is stimulated by intense propaganda and its abuse, socially tolerated, and sometimes even stimulated. Excessive intake brings with it a number of risks rarely recognized as such, especially in adolescence, although this event is accepted in society.

Therefore, preventive activities that favor the recognition of these risks and the development of strategies to minimize them assume a character of importance and urgency in our country (DEA *et al.*, 2004).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the ages of the interviewees who consumed alcohol

Sex	Mean \pm standard	Median	Max	Min
Age of first experimentation	16.83 ± 0.33	17	22	13

Values represent the mean \pm standard error of the mean

It was observed that of the 94% of the participants who consumed alcohol, 68% had a history of family alcoholism, and there was no statistically significant difference in alcohol consumption in relation to the family history ($X^2 = 2.04$, $p = 0.152$) (Table 3). It was also observed higher consumption of alcohol and alcoholism among adolescents with a family history of alcohol use. A similar situation, although with other objectives, was found in family studies, where children of alcoholic parents present greater behavioral problems when compared to the children of abstinent alcoholic parents. This suggests that the alcohol consumption of the parents could be a risk factor for the development of dependence on the children (SOUZA, *et al.*, 2005).

Table 3. Distribution of participants according to parents' knowledge

Family alcoholism	Alcoholism				X ²	p-valor	Odd ratio
	Yes	No	n	%			
Yes	34	68	1	2	2.04	0,152	5.23
No	13	26	2	4			

*Chi-square test. Significant values when $p < 0.05$.

From the description of table 4, it is evidenced that the great majority of the relatives of individuals who use alcoholic beverages also makes use of some type of drink, confirmation obtained through the questionnaire. 37 people present someone in the family who use drinks and 13 stressed not to introduce anyone in the genealogy. Alcohol consumption may be due to the current lifestyle, high levels of stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, depressive feelings, susceptibility to peer pressure and problems related to school (SOUZA *et al.*, 2005).

Table 4. Knowledge of parents about alcohol use

Parents' knowledge	n	%
Yes	22	44
No	28	56

Table 5 shows that the most consumed alcoholic beverages were beer and chopp, and 68.82% of those who said they made use of beverages stood out among all other types of drinks. second place with 20.43% of the drip, whiskey, vodka and brandy representing the distilled beverages containing a greater amount of alcoholic content, wine presents with 9.68% of the 1.07% use the liquor for being smoother. Studies carried out in the south of Brazil, the most consumed beverages among women were beer (61%), followed by wine (25%), distilled beverages (12%) and, finally, "ice" (%) in a survey carried out (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2012). The South region maintains these same standards, with beer (61%) as the most

consumed drink; followed by wine (29%), distillates (9%) and ice drinks (1%) (BRAZIL, 2007).

Table 5. Distribution of the frequency of the main beverages consumed among women users of alcohol from the state of Cariri, Ceará, 2012

Beverage	n	%
Beer / Chopp	64	68,82
Pingan / Whiskey / Vodka / Cognac	19	20.43
Wine	9	9.68
Liquor	1	1.07

This is due to the fact that these beverages are easily found in any environment and for a relatively low price, besides being fermented and soft drinks related to the distilled beverages, presenting a smaller amount of alcohol, in any case, there is the fact that the alcohol to reach higher concentrations in the body of women due to the increased amount of body fat they possess in relation to men, causing greater physical damage to them, even when consumed in small quantity (Laranjeira, 2001). When excessive alcohol consumption is analyzed between men and women, the effects of alcohol are faster in females than in males, since females have a higher proportion of fatty tissue, due to variations during the menstrual cycle and differences in the gastric concentration of alcohol metabolism. Studies of this magnitude are more difficult to find in the Brazilian literature, especially in the case of females (VARELLA, 2011; LIMA *et al.*, 2017).

According to Table 6, the main places where women used beverages were: 42% reported having drinks in their friends' houses, 28% in bars, discos and nightclubs, 20% in promoted events in the residence and 10% did not use beverages. The culture, country, gender, age group, social norms and social subgroup, make patterns of consumption of alcoholic beverages vary. The risk associated with various patterns of consumption is also quite variable. For example, drinking wine usually with meals and in moderate amounts is a lower risk standard compared to copious intake of distilled beverages, even if it is occasional, in public or not (MELONI; LARANJEIRA, 2008). The use of psychoactive substances by the female population is little accepted socially, leading them to have preference for the use of licit substances, such as drugs, alcohol and tobacco (VARGAS *et al.*, 2015). In recent years women in Brazil have been consuming more alcohol and in some regions women consume more alcohol than men, and are now more vulnerable to having sex without condoms, increasing the risk of HIV, hepatitis, syphilis and HPV.

Table 6. Distribution of the frequency according to the place of alcohol consumption among women of the cariri cearense, 2012

Place	n	%
Friends' house	21	42
Bars / Dance Clubs / Nightclubs	14	28
At home	10	20
Did not drink	5	10

It can be seen in table 7 that the factors that lead women to use alcoholic beverages, the following results were obtained: 42% drink for fun, 24% said they drink by peer influence, 12% for family conflicts, 8% for reasons 6% for liking the effects, 6% for lack of better life options and 2% for problem solutions.

Table 7. Distribution of study subjects according to the factors that influenced the alcohol consumption among women of the cariri cearense, 2012

Factors that Influenced	n	%
Fun	21	42
Companions	12	24
Family Conflicts	6	12
Others	4	8
Likes the Effects of Alcohol	3	6
Lack of Option	3	6
Troubleshooting	1	2

In general, the ingestion of alcoholic beverages has become indispensable for various types of celebrations. In a study carried out with the women, it was observed that the consumption of alcohol is entirely correlated with leisure activities, giving them the opportunity to express their desires such as: having fun, relaxing. In this way, we can infer that, in order to obtain desirable feelings and situations, many use alcohol as the drug of choice to perform certain manifestations. Drinking for fun or relaxation was included in the initial level of consumption and manifested as adequate euphoria (MARÇAL, 2005). The ability to interact with people relates to the individual's social skills, which in turn facilitates the establishment of closer relationships with people. Thus, the lack of social skills can impair the individual's adaptation to the environment, bringing consequences that range from difficulties in making friends to developing antisocial and risk behaviors (SILVA, 2011).

Conclusion

It was found that alcoholism in women in the Brazilian Northeast is a public health problem, which requires the implementation of health policies to prevent and reduce alcohol consumption among these individuals. This study reveals that family groups usually consume alcoholic beverages, that consumption is higher among youngsters and that subjects construct many similar meanings for these beverages, appropriate moments for consumption, motivations and effective behaviors associated with alcohol. Alcoholism reverberates more and more in the social environment and presents itself as one of the most serious problems of public health in Brazil. Because it is a matter related to society, it is important to emphasize the importance of preventive measures that contribute to the reduction of disabilities related to the pathologies that affect women who use alcoholic beverages. One of the ways to prevent it is through guidelines on the importance of never ingest the first dose of beverages containing alcohol and or after ingestion always seek to police to avoid addiction. To attend the Basic Health Units for consultation and control of alcohol consumption for a good quality of life. Finally, it was evident in the research the existence of sensitivity regarding the priority of prevention and the need for the nursing staff to receive this population. However, it is clear that it is very important that there is an investment in permanent education on the subject. It was also possible to trace the profile of alcoholism in women from a city of Cariri Cearense, relating to their availability and sensitivity to the population's reception, thus contemplating the research objectives.

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