Characterization of chemically dependents...



## **ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

# CHARACTERIZATION OF CHEMICALLY DEPENDENTS IN TREATMENT AT A THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

## CARACTERIZAÇÃO DE DEPENDENTES QUÍMICOS EM TRATAMENTO EM UMA COMUNIDADE TERAPÊUTICA

## CARACTERIZACIÓN DE LOS DEPENDIENTES QUÍMICOS EN TRATAMIENTO EN UNA COMUNIDAD **TERAPÊUTICA**

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Objective: to characterize the profile of chemically-dependent individuals from a therapeutic community. Method: quantitative, descriptive and exploratory study, which involved 22 users in treatment at a therapeutic community. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire and the descriptive statistical analysis was performed and presented in percentage by the statistical program SPSS version 19. Results: the participants' demographic profile showed that the most significant age group was 39 through 45 years (27.2%), and the majority (45.4%) had only incomplete primary education. Most users were unmarried (68.1%), Catholics (81.8%), and unemployed (36.4%). In relation to the use of psychoactive substances, alcohol accounted for 90.9% of the participants and crack, 81.8%. The majority (95.4%) had family support during the completion of treatment, mainly by the mother (59.1%). Conclusion: chemical dependency affects various areas of an individual's life, and it is characterized by its early beginning, which may be an important factor for the establishment of sociodemographic characteristics presented in this research. Descriptors: Therapeutic Community; Mental Health; Substance-Related Disorders; Illicit Drugs; Nursing; Health Care.

Objetivo: caracterizar o perfil de indivíduos com dependência química de uma Comunidade Terapêutica. Método: estudo quantitativo, descritivo e exploratório, que envolveu 22 usuários em tratamento em uma comunidade terapêutica. Os dados foram coletados por meio de um questionário e a análise estatística descritiva foi realizada e apresentado em percentuais estatísticos pelo programa SPSS versão 19. Resultados: o perfil sociodemográfico dos participantes demonstrou que a faixa etária mais expressiva foi de 39 a 45 anos (27,2%), sendo que boa parte (45,4%) tinha apenas ensino fundamental incompleto. Dentre os usuários houve predomínio de solteiros (68,1%), católicos (81,8%), e desempregados (36,4%). Em relação ao uso de substâncias psicoativas, o álcool representou 90,9% dos participantes e o crack 81,8%. A maioria (95,4%) teve apoio familiar durante a realização do tratamento, principalmente pela mãe (59,1%). Conclusão: constatou-se que a dependência química atinge diversos âmbitos da vida do indivíduo e tem como característica o início precoce, o que pode ser um fator importante para a constituição das características sociodemográficas apresentadas nessa pesquisa. Descritores: Comunidade Terapêutica; Saúde Mental; Transtornos Relacionados ao Uso de Substâncias; Drogas Ilícitas; Enfermagem; Atenção à Saúde.

Objetivo: caracterizar el perfil de las personas con dependencia química de una comunidad terapéutica. Método: estudio cuantitativo, descriptivo y exploratorio, con la participación de 22 usuarios en tratamiento en una comunidad terapéutica. Los datos fueron recolectados por medio de un cuestionario, y el análisis estadístico descriptivo se realizó y presentó en porcentaje en el programa estadístico SPSS versión 19. Resultados: el perfil demográfico de los participantes mostró que la edad más significativa fue de 39 a 45 años (27,2%), siendo que una buena parte (45,4%) sólo tenía educación primaria incompleta. Entre los usuarios, hubo un predominio de solteros (68,1%), católicos (81,8%) y desempleados (36,4%). En relación con el uso de sustancias psicoactivas, alcohol representó 90,9% de los participantes y crack, 81,8%. La mayoría (95,4%) tuvo el apoyo de la familia durante la realización del tratamiento, principalmente por la madre (59,1%). Conclusión: la dependencia de sustancias químicas afecta a diversos ámbitos de la vida de un individuo, y tiene como característica el inicio temprano, lo cual puede ser un factor importante para el establecimiento de características sociodemográficas presentadas en esta investigación. Descriptores: Comunidad Terapéutica; Salud Mental; Trastornos Relacionados Con el Uso de Sustancias; Drogas Ilícitas; Enfermería; Atención a la Salud.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The use and abuse of psychoactive substances, coupled with the use of new substances, became a serious public health problem in the world panorama. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO), in its report on drugs treatment and care, pointed out that 205 million people consume illicit drugs in the world, of which 25 million are within the framework of dependency, indicating consumption of drugs to the group of 20 major risk factors for health in the world and one of the 10 main factors in developing countries.1-2

The question of drugs use has occupied a significant space in the media, in the State policies, government plans and in the everyday life of mental health workers and services. It is a practice of human beings since the dawn of mankind, and the decision about the drug type for consumption bases on their needs and subjective and social motivations.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, chemical dependency is a chronic and relapsing disease, and the continuous use of psychoactive substances causes changes in the structure and functioning of the brain. In this sense, the use of psychoactive substances is understood as a consequence of a disorder of the whole person, affecting the various areas of life. Among the various psychosocial and biological damage, there are situations involving the use, such as the occurrence of risk sexual behaviors, involvement with violent acts and damage to health, such as malnutrition, neurological problems and comorbidities. 4-5

With the Psychiatric Reform, the number of psychiatric beds for the treatment of chemically dependents financed by the Unified Health System (UHS) reduced. Thus, services arose, such as Psychosocial Care Centers (CAPS - Centros de Atenção Psicossocial) and the therapeutic communities. These are methods of health attention that arose in Britain in 1940, for the treatment of psychiatric patients and, subsequently, were adapted to chemically dependents. In Brazil, it appeared in 1968 in the city of Goiânia-GO, resulting from an evangelical religious movement, called Desafio Jovem.6-7

Thus, they are characterized as private institutions and often with confessional character, in which religion is the main treatment strategy. Moreover, this type of community has a specific treatment program,

Characterization of chemically dependents...

which lasts from six to twelve months, depending on the institution, rigid rules and mandatory activities, which must be followed by all who are admitted. The visits of relatives are meager and restricted and there is no external contact, including school and professional activities.<sup>8</sup>

### **OBJECTIVE**

• To characterize the profile of chemicallydependent users in treatment at a therapeutic community.

### **METHOD**

Quantitative, descriptive and exploratory study, conducted at a therapeutic community for chemical dependency, located in a municipality in the state of Piauí, in the month of September 2016, with 22 male users who were in full admission. The inclusion criteria considered those aged greater than or equal to 18 years and who were in the Community during the collection period. Those aged less than 18 years were excluded.

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire with closed questions. After studying and analyzing the material, the obtained results were entered into tables. In this way, the descriptive statistical analysis was performed based on the responses from the questionnaires and presented in percentage by the statistical program SPSS version 19, expressing the variables in absolute numbers and percentages, which enabled the discussion according to the literature.

This article came from the research project, approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University Center UNINOVAFAPI, CAAE 56959316.7.0000.5210, obtaining a favorable opinion number 1,709,504 on 31 August, 2016. The ethical precepts were safeguarded in accordance to Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council.

## **RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the Age Range; City of Origin, Nationality; Ethnicity; Education; Marital Status; Current Religion; Federative Unit; Occupation; Social Benefit; Monthly Income and Affiliation. participants were in the age range from 18 to 24 years and in the age range from 32 to 38, both with 22.7%; followed by the age range from 39 to 45 (27.2%), and by the age from 25 to 31 years, which accounted for 18.2% of the participants.

In relation to city of origin, most participants (63.6%) of the study came from

cities in the countryside of the state of Piaui. Regarding ethnicity, 59.1% are *pardos*, 31.8% are black, and 9.1% correspond to the white color. Most participants (45.4%) had incomplete primary education and the minority (4.6%) had incomplete higher education.

Regarding religion, almost all (81.8%) members of the study were Catholics. With regard to marital status, there was a predominance (68.2%) of singles, followed by those with stable union (18.1%); married accounted for 9.1% and the rest was divorced. Furthermore, 72.7% lived in the countryside of the state of Piauí; 22.8% in another state and 4.5% in the capital of the state.

In relation to the labor market, half (50%) reported having a job and the other party did not. Furthermore, regarding occupation, most participants (36.4%) were unemployed; 31.8%

Characterization of chemically dependents...

were self-employed and 31.8% were working; however, they did not mention the occupation. In the aspect of receiving social benefits: those that did not receive any benefit prevailed (81.9%); and among those that received, half received the *Bolsa Família* program benefit, and the other half received retirement.

The majority (77.3%) received from one to two minimum wages; 18.1% reported a monthly income of two through four wages and 4.5% stated an income of four or more minimum wages. With regard to the affiliation: 59.1% reported having children and 40.9% had no children, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic and occupational characterization of the participants (n=22). Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2016.

Variables		N	%
Age group	18 - 24 years 25 - 31 years 32 - 38 years 39 - 45 years 46 - 52 years 53 - 60 years	5 4 5 6 1	22.7% 18.2% 22.7% 27.2% 4.6% 4.6%
City of origin	Capital	3	13.6%
	Countryside	14	63.6%
	Other state	5	22.8%
Nationality	Brazilian	22	100%
	Others	0	0.0%
Ethnicity	White	2	9.1%
	Black	7	31.8%
	<i>Pardo</i>	13	59.1%
	Yellow	0	0.0%
	Indigenous	0	0.0%
Education	Incomplete elementary school Complete elementary school Incomplete high school Complete high school Incomplete higher education Complete higher education	10 2 4 5 1	45.4% 9.1% 18.1% 22.8% 4.6% 0.0%
Religion	Evangelical	2	9,1%
	Catholic	18	81.8%
	Others	2	9.1%
Marital status	Unmarried	15	68.2%
	Married	2	9.1%
	Divorced	1	4.6%
	Widower	0	0.0%
	Stable union	4	18.1%
Current city	Capital city of Piauí	1	4.5%
	Countryside of Piauí	16	72.7%
	Other state	5	22.8%
FU	Piauí	17	77.3%
	Other state	5	22.7%
Part of the working market	gYes	11	50.0%
	No	11	50.0%

Characterization of chemically dependents...

Which occupation?	Unemployed Self-employed Own business Teacher Others	8 7 0 0 7		36.4% 31.8% 0.0% 0.0% 50.0%
Any social benefit?	Bolsa Família Retirement Others None	1 1 2 18		4.5% 4.5% 9.1% 81.9%
Monthly income (Minimum Wages)	1 - 2 2 - 4	17	4	77.3% 18.1%
	More than 4		1	4.5%

Table 2 shows the data related to drug consumption and the health conditions of the participants based on questionnaire responses. Thus, when questioned about legal problems or ongoing legal process, there was a predominance (72.7%) of those who denied such questions. In addition, regarding the time using drugs: 68.3% said they had been using for more than 10 years.

Regarding the different types of drugs that participants reported using, alcohol use predominated (90.9%), followed by crack

(81.8%) and cigarettes (72.7%). The majority (81.8%) did not use any medication, and among those who used it: 9.1% had been using for less than one year and 9.1%, between one and five years.

Among the survey participants, only 16.6% completed the treatment. Moreover, the majority (27.3%) reported performing the treatment at a therapeutic community, and 18.2%, in the CAPS. The data also showed the predominance (81.8%) of non-carriers of chronic disease.

Table 2. Datat related to consumption of psychoactive substances and self-reported health condition. Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2016.

Variables		N	%
			_
Any ongoing legal process	Yes	6	27.3%
Any ongoing legal process	No	16	<b>72.7</b> %
		_	
	Less than 1 year	0	0.0%
Time using drugs	1 - 5 years	6	27.3%
	5 - 9 years	1	4.6%
	10 years or more	15	68.2%
	Cocaine	14	63.6%
	Alcohol	20	90.9%
	Cigarette	16	72.7%
	Crack	18	81.8%
T 6 1	Heroin	3	13.6%
Type of drug	Marijuana	15	68.2%
	LSD	3 3	13.6%
	Ecstasy		13.6%
	Amphetamine	0	0.0%
	Solvents	7	31.8%
	Morphine	1	4.6%
	Others	4	18.2%
	Yes	4	18.2%
Using any medication	No	18	81.8%
	NO	10	01.0%
	Less than 1 year	2	9.1%
Time using medication(s)	1 - 5 years	2	9.1%
. ,	5 - 9 years	0	0.0%
	More than 10 years	0	0.0%
	Antidonrossanta	0	0.0%
	Antidepressants	0	0.0%
Type of medication	Benzodiazepines	3	13.6%
)	Anticonvulsants	0	0.0%
	Antihypertensives	1	4.6%

Characterization of chemically dependents...

	Neuroleptics Others	1	4.6% 0.1%
Recovery clinic	Yes	9	40.9%
	No	13	59.1%
Completed the treatment	Yes No	3 6	13.6% 27.3%
Admission site	Psychiatric hospital	0	0.0%
	CAPS	4	18.2%
	Therapeutic community	6	22.7%
	None	2	9.1%
Reason for leaving	Conclusion	3	13.6%
	Escape	0	0.0%
	Withdrawal	5	22.7%
	Termination	1	4.5%
Chronic disease carrier	Yes	4	18.2%
	No	18	81.8%
Chronic disease	Arterial hypertension Diabetes HIV/Aids Tuberculosis STI Schizophrenia Bipolar disorder Others None	1 1 0 0 0 0 1 1 1 0	4.6% 4.6% 0.0% 0.0% 0.0% 4.6% 4.6% 0.0% 81.8%

Table 3 shows the data related to the family support in the user's treatment. The questionnaire had several alternatives with respect to the members who supported the participants, so they could mention more

than one family member. In this way, the data revealed that the support was mainly represented by the mother (59.1%), followed by the father (27.2%), and other family members (27.2%).

Table 3: Family support to the user's treatment. Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2016.

Variables		n	%
Family support	Yes	21	95.4%
	No	1	4.6%
	Mother	13	59.1%
Family member that supported the treatment	Father	6	27.2%
	most Wife	3	13.6%
	Children	2	9.1%
	Others	6	27.2%
	None	1	4.6%

### **DISCUSSION**

The study demonstrated the predominance of young and adult male participants, aged between 18 and 45 years. The expectation for the age range is that individuals were at the college or starting the professional life, but with the abusive use of psychoactive substances, they commonly fail to study to compose the group at risk for unemployment, responding legal problems or getting involved in violent acts and suicide. 9,10

The data of the United Nations (UN) show that around 10% of the population living in large urban centers use in an abusive way some kind of psychoactive substance, regardless of sex, age, level of education, purchasing power and housing conditions. With regard to race, 59.1% of the participants are *pardos*, corroborating a study that reported the white skin color as the most mentioned color.<sup>11</sup>

Most participants (45.4%) had incomplete primary education. Therefore, this information shows that low schooling among chemically dependents can be associated to the development of dependency, since the school deficiency causes a low qualification. This can exacerbate the dependency problem due to social vulnerability and lead to crime, since the user requires money for the maintenance of consumption of substances. 12

The results showed the predominance (68.1%) of singles. This is a common condition resulting from changed values that emerges as the dependencys installs itself, since the search and the consumption of the product will be a priority for the dependent. With regard to religion, almost all (81.8%) affirmed to be catholic. Thus, the evangelicals are the least prevalent group for treatments in CAPSad, in addition to using less alcohol in relation to catholics. Moreover, prevalence of alcohol use is higher in those who have no religion. 13,14

of employment The situation the participants of this study is another relevant aspect, because 36.4% are unemployed and 31.8% reported being self-employed. This condition may worsen the dependency problem due to social vulnerability. Thus, it becomes one of the major risk factors related to drug use, because it can generate secondary problems, such as crime, since the dependent needs money for the maintenance of consumption of substances. When asking those that reported having some monthly income, the majority (77.3%) receives from one to two minimum wages.15

Another fact that draws attention is in relation to paternity: most participants (59.1%) have at least one child. In this way, living with a chemically dependent is affected as the disorder worsens, because the negative consequences, besides reaching the user, also affect all those close to the user. <sup>16</sup>

The data showed that the first contact with drugs occurred in adolescence. In addition, 90.9% of the participants used alcohol, 81.8% crack and 72.7% cigarette. The excessive consumption of drugs, even those socially accepted, can bring serious risks to health and predisposes the consumption of illicit drugs.<sup>17</sup>

Among the most commonly used illicit drugs, there was prevalence of crack (81.8%). There is a high prevalence of illicit drug use among those who use alcohol. Thus, the use of multiple drugs is a common habit among chemically dependents, and the combination of substances is often associated to a method to contain the cleavage or the withdrawal syndrome caused by lack of the chosen drug. 13,18

The participants were asked about the use of some medication and 18.2% answered yes. Therefore, the inmates had been using various drugs, in addition to their substance of preference. This context justifies the diagnosis for mental and behavioral disorders due to use of multiple drugs and the use of other psychoactive substances.

Characterization of chemically dependents...

Regarding self-reported health conditions, 18.18% of the survey participants are carriers of chronic disease and 81.8% are not. Of these, 4.5% have hypertension, 4.5% diabetes, 4.5% schizophrenia and 4.5% bipolar disorder. theres Therefore, were psychiatric comorbidities participants. among the However, the overlapping of symptoms hinders the treatment path, thus, interventions must also involve the comorbidity. 10

The family is part of the primary prevention of various psychopathologies, among them, the chemical dependency. Since it is the individual's first reference, it can minimize or add consequences of exposure to risk factors. In this item, 95.4% of the participants reported receiving support, and the mother represented 59.1%; followed by the father with 27.2%. In this sense, the multidisciplinary team must be trained for comprehensive health actions, articulating the user, the family and society in the care production, incorporated in the rehabilitation process. 19,20

#### CONCLUSION

The population using psychoactive substances received the in Therapeutic Community of this study consists predominantly of young adults, in productive phase and are, mostly, out of the formal labor market or unemployed. In addition, all male participants stated using more than one type of drug, including alcohol, followed by crack, marijuana and cigarette.

Thus, these individuals are exposed to various risk situations and social vulnerability. Furthermore, the abuse of chemical substances interfere with the family bond, justifying the high index of unmarried users. daily consumption of drugs contributed to the distancing from the labor market, because as the dependent spends most of his time to acquire or use drugs, he abandons or disregards the daily responsibilities.

The actions directed to the population must be preventive, focusing on primary care, aimed at preventing the use of drugs since adolescence, with differentiated and earlier approaches, which sustain the user prior to the installation of the dependency syndrome, avoiding losses in life in adulthood. The data found intends to stimulate reflections on health promotion and assistance to families, in order to minimize the social impacts caused by drugs in the Brazilian reality.

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