



## Social Skills Training Program to Prevent Alcohol Consumption in University Students

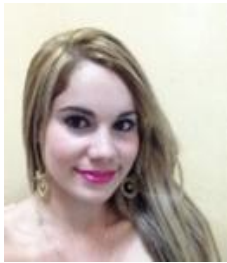


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**Abstract**



### Keywords

*Consumption;  
Prevention of alcohol;  
Social skills;  
University of Oriente;  
University students;*

In the University of Oriente (UO) of Santiago de Cuba, recent diagnoses made by specialists of the Department of Psychology demonstrated in the last years an increase in the index of students that consume alcoholic beverages, the objective of this investigation was to develop a program of training in social skills that would contribute to the prevention of alcohol misuse, the methods used were intervention, where 16 students participated and was carried out through three stages. In the first, the initial diagnosis was made by applying the Goldstein social skills questionnaire, the questionnaire for the Identification of alcohol-related disorders and a group interview, then the program was designed and applied and the final phase was evaluated. The changes that emerged in the group after the intervention. The pattern of alcohol risk consumption was initially obtained, there was a prevalence in the low level of development of social skills and a limited knowledge about the harmful effects of their consumption. After the intervention, the majority of the students reached a high level of social skills development and the social consumption pattern prevailed in the group. Favorable results were obtained for the reduction of undue alcohol consumption, where adolescents reached a high level of skill development and managed to reduce the amount and frequency of their consumption.

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## 1. Introduction

The region of the Americas, together with Europe, according to the World Health Organization reports (WHO, 2014), have the highest rates of alcohol consumption worldwide. A recent study by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the WHO regional office for the Americas, includes Cuba among the countries that have the highest mortality rates due to causes attributable to alcohol, which reflects the harmful patterns of Consumption (CNCA, 2017).

Such data show that in Cuba, alcohol is one of the most widely used addictive substances. Added to this is the increase in consumption among adolescents and young people, there is a significant decrease in the age of the first contact with this substance and an increasing incidence in the university context (Hernández *et al.*, 2015, 2016), (Rodamilans *et al.*, 2016), (Barandas, 2015), (Fabelo, 2016).

Therefore, the Ministry of Higher Education (MES), has conceived since 2000 a specific National Program for the prevention of misuse of drugs in Higher Education Centers (MES, (MONTH, 2014).) In this sense, there is also a movement of "Health Promoting Universities" in our country, which aims to strengthen the work of school health and whose genesis is the initiative of healthy communities, stimulated by the Pan American Health Organization (Tsours *et al.*, 2000)

The UO, in Santiago de Cuba, has a Strategy for the prevention of drug abuse and control, was held in 2001 and updated every academic year by a multidisciplinary work team. This has allowed an approach to the problem, but it still does not solve the actual situation of existing risk, since there is currently a statement from the Student Residence Office which states that the consumption of alcoholic beverages is affecting coexistence, Aghara *et al.*, 2018, the adverse effect of alcohol consumption includes dangerous verbal and even physical offenses among students, in addition to negative effects on the consumer such as sleep disorder and learning problems.

Also, there is a recent research called "Sociopsychological characterization of the Student Residence of the UO,10 conducted in 2015 by the psychologists of the Department of Psychology in the Student Residence, in which the author of the present study participated, which constitutes an important antecedent for the present investigation, because their results show that in the last three courses there has been an increase in the rate of students who consume alcoholic beverages, since 81% are consumers. The study showed that of them, 53% are included in the categories of social consumers where consumption was linked, preferably to festive situations, which does not imply alcohol dependence and 47% are consumers of risk since they have frequent drunkenness, as part of your lifestyle.

The main results of this study indicate that students who drink alcohol frequently lack the necessary social skills to face conflictive situations, consumption has been associated with reducing tension and disinhibiting to improve social relationships at parties or raise opinions that normally they are afraid to express; that is, a lack of social skills was identified that allows them to make responsible decisions and assume a rejection attitude towards alcohol consumption.

In order to solve the research problem, we start with the results of the psychosocial diagnosis (Gilbert, 1995), which identified a poor development of social skills in young consumers, which is why it is considered a very important factor. that must be taken into account for the prevention of consumption.

These results coincide with research conducted in recent years by different authors (Arias, 2002), (Maturana, 2006), who emphasizes that social skills represent important protective factors against alcohol consumption, and as a counterpart, the deficit in the social skills is associated with the appearance of

substance use and specifically with alcohol abuse, confirming that although it is not a direct and determining factor for the initiation of a problem of alcoholism, it constitutes an important variable that influences the inadequate consumption of alcohol. substance.

Also, studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of programs designed to prevent the consumption of alcohol and other drugs (Gilbert, 1995), have shown that approaches based on the improvement of social skills can reduce the incidence and prevalence of these behaviors. consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. As a result, interventions have been developed in recent times to enhance social skills and prevent alcohol consumption, such as, for example, the "Saluda" program of Espada y Méndez 14, which has been applied in Spain since 2003 and has different investigations. that support its effectiveness (Espada, 2008), (Hernández *et al.*, 2013), (Álvarez, 2018).

Similarly, in Cuba, there is a project called "Lights for Life", which arises at the request of the Ministry of Education for the need to promote the development of life skills in children, adolescents and young people based on the prevention of addictions. In addition, educational materials have been prepared as part of this project, as is the case with a book that has the same name as the project and that does not only deal with drugs but also helps develop the necessary skills to avoid and reject the consumption of drugs these (Álvarez, 2018).

On the other hand, in the UO, of Santiago de Cuba, an investigation was carried out in 2002 by the authors Malena Abreu and Solvey del Río (Río, 2002), in which a program of development of social skills in order to prevent the consumption of illegal drugs, which had effective results.

This study is convenient as it responds to the priorities established by the Ministry of Higher Education (MES) through the National Program for the Prevention of Drug Abuse, which establishes that university institutions have the duty and the social order to develop strategies and educational programs aimed at the prevention of addictions.

In addition, the need and relevance are justified as it guarantees compliance with one of the priorities that have been established in the educational work of the UO student residence, which is to achieve university welfare. In this sense, the study can contribute to the UO being incorporated into the movement of "health promoting universities", which has become a priority task of the MES and supports the relevance of developing research to assess and influence welfare from university institutions.

It has a great social and practical relevance, in as much as it provides a program for the development of social skills in university students that constitutes a way to prevent one of the most important social problems at present: the irresponsible consumption of alcohol.

It also has methodological utility, since through research it is possible to create an intervention program that constitutes a novel instrument with a view to the educational work carried out in the UO, which does not currently have a program of this type, and also It can be used as a guide or methodological material to apply it in other universities of the country and thus contribute to university welfare.

The study has as a General Objective: To develop a training program in social skills that contribute to the prevention of undue consumption of alcohol in university students, in the Student Residence of the UO. The level of development of social skills in the students participating in the study is diagnosed; Identify the existing patterns of alcohol consumption in these students; design a training program in social skills for the prevention of alcohol misuse and evaluate the short-term results obtained after the application of the intervention program.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research was conceived as an intervention study, quasi-experimental, with a pre-test-post-test design with a single group (Hernández *et al.*, 2006), in the field of the UO Student Residence, in Santiago de Cuba, during the 2016-2017 course.

The population and sample consisted of 97 students of the Student Residence Julio Antonio Mella of the UO, belonging to the career of Chemical Engineering, who consume alcoholic beverages.

Sample: It consisted of 16 students from the population under study, which were selected by a non-probabilistic intentional sampling (Hernández *et al.*, 2006), which met the following criteria: belong to the 1st. year of the race; present frequent problems in interpersonal relationships (conflicts with other students, difficulties in communicating assertively); state their willingness to participate in the study.

The variables of the study were: Social skills (it was evaluated through the questions of the Goldstein social skills questionnaire, taking into account the following criteria: Low level (when the subject obtained a general score in the questionnaire, from 50 to 150), high level (when the subject obtained a general score in the questionnaire, greater than 150), consumption pattern (it was evaluated through the questions of the questionnaire for the Identification of alcohol-related disorders (AUDIT), taking into account the following criteria:

Normal (when the subject reached a score of 0 - 7), drinker of risk (when the subject reached a score of 8 - 15), harmful drinker (when the subject reached a score of 16 - 19); Alcohol dependence (when the subject reached a score of 20 or more)

The techniques and procedures used were carried out in three stages, which are illustrated below:

### *Stage I*

During the first stage, coordination was first established with the Office of the Student Residence of the UO, and the director was asked for permission to carry out the study. Subsequently, a first contact was held with the 16 students who gave their consent to participate in the research and the initial diagnosis of the group was made, to achieve these purposes, diagnostic techniques were applied, such as:

a) Goldstein Social Skills Questionnaire

Objective: To evaluate the development of the social skills of the subject based on the diagnosis of the dimensions of the study variable.

b) Questionnaire for the identification of alcohol-related disorders (AUDIT)

Objective: Identify in the research subjects the presence of patterns of harmful consumption, risk consumption or alcohol dependence.

c) Group interview

Objective: Evaluate social skills in adolescents linked to autonomy in decision-making, the ability to resist pressure from the group and assertive communication, specifically in situations related to alcohol consumption.

### *Stage II*

During the second stage, the program "Saying NO is a YES to life" was designed and implemented, with the aim of developing social skills that contribute to the prevention of alcohol abuse in university students, in the Student Residence of the UO. The program lasted approximately two months, since eight group work sessions were designed and a weekly session was applied.

### *Stage III*

Finally, one month after having implemented the Intervention Program, a meeting with the group was held to carry out the final evaluation, for which the questionnaires that were used during the initial evaluation were applied again.

### *Information processing plan*

A quantitative evaluation was made of the information obtained through the questionnaires applied, using the SPSS version 21 for the processing of the data. For the fulfillment of specific objectives 1 and 2, summary measures were used, such as absolute frequencies and percentage. Given that the execution of the Intervention Program requires the systematic evaluation of this (before, during and after), it was considered pertinent to carry out an evaluation of the process and the result and thus fulfill objective 4.

The evaluation of the process took place through the analysis in each of the group work sessions, based on the qualitative evaluation system based on proposals from the theory of the Pichon Rivière groups<sup>20</sup>.

The evaluation of results was carried out through the test-retest method, comparing the results of the questionnaires used during the initial and final diagnosis, using the Mc Test. Nemar to evaluate the level of

significance of the changes before and after having performed the intervention, for which a confidence level of 0.05 was used.

### *Ethical aspects*

The authorization of the Office of the Student Residence of the UO was taken into account to carry out the investigation. In addition, the willingness of students to participate in the sample was taken into consideration, for which the informed consent of each of the adolescents was collected in a report designed for that purpose

### **3. Results and Discussions**

As a result of the application of the social skills questionnaire, it was identified that the majority of adolescents considered that they almost never or very rarely are able to choose the best way to join a group, because sometimes they tend to feel inhibited to start an interaction, they feel that they can't always defend their opinions and reject the ideas of their friends, even when they know they can bring problems. Almost never manage to make decisions without having as a fundamental aspect the position of their peers, so it turned out that 87.5% presented a low level of social skills development since their scores were less than 150, these are shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
Distribution of students according to the level of development of social skills Social

skills	Frequency	Percentage
High	2	12.5
Low	14	87.5
Total	16	100

Most tend to consume alcoholic beverages frequently and in a significant amount, including there are slight drunkenness symptoms, so in the present study, as shown in Table 2, there is a greater presence of risk consumption (81.3%).

Table 2  
Distribution of students according to the pattern of alcohol consumption of alcohol

Pattern consumption	Frequency	Percentage
Social consumption	3	18.7
Risk consumption	13	81.3
Total	16	100

Results after the application of the intervention program are shown in table 3, the distribution of students according to the level of development of social skills, before and after the intervention.

Table 3  
Development of social skills, before and after intervention

Social skills	No.	High % *	After		Total		
			Level No.	Low Level % *	No.	% **	
Before	High Level	2	100	0	0	2	12.5
	Low Level	13	92.9	1	7.1	14	87.5
	Total	15	93.7	1	6.3	16	100

\* percentages calculated based on the total by rows  $p < 0.05$

\*\* percentages calculated based on the total number of students

As shown in table 3, before the intervention, 87.5% had insufficient development of social skills, which is a significant fact because, due to the difficulties they had to initiate interactions, reject the pressure of the group and express their opinions assertively, adolescents They stated that they often went to the consumption of alcoholic beverages, in order to establish new relationships and be accepted by the group of friends.

These results are in correspondence with the approaches of María (Senra, 2010) who considers that the poor development of social skills in adolescents is a risk factor for alcohol abuse, since the ability to make decisions, solve problems and reject the peer pressure is the basis of the critical attitudes of the adolescent that will allow him to have a responsible attitude towards consumption (Epstein, 2001).

After the intervention, a significant change was observed since 93.7% presented a high level of development of social skills. There was only one teenager in the group who stayed at the low level; nevertheless, the total score obtained in the questionnaire increased after the intervention, which shows that it increased the frequency in which it adequately uses the social skills that were trained through the applied program.

Obviously, the results of training in social skills are significant, but as stated Caballo (2002), they imply a different time for each person to incorporate them into their repertoire, to the extent that they practice them and modify their beliefs as a basis for acquiring them. and consolidate the new behavior.

Therefore, the intervention fulfilled its objective, since all the members of the group had positive changes and there were significant differences between the initial and final evaluation. These results coincide with studies conducted by Epstein (2001) and other authors such as Londoño and Valencia (2008) who have demonstrated the effectiveness of training programs in social skills to promote desirable behaviors, such as socialization, effective decision making and problem-solving.

Likewise, in the research carried out in 2003 by Antonia Pades Jiménez<sup>25</sup> in Spain, similar results were achieved after applying an intervention program to develop social skills in a group of nursing students and professors, which produced a significant increase in scores. means obtained in the group after the intervention and it was found that social skills training was effective.

In Cuba, similar results were found very recently in the research conducted by Evelyn Fernández<sup>26</sup> in 2017, in which a psychoeducational strategy was developed for the prevention of alcohol consumption in university students, and as part of the intervention, during the exploration of the risk and protection factors, a poor development of social skills in the subjects was obtained as a result. However, at the end of the intervention, there was a tendency to increase the averages of the items related to social skills

Table 4 shows the students according to the frequency of use of the ability to initiate interactions, before and after the intervention.

Table 4  
Students according to the frequency of use of the ability to initiate interactions, before and after the intervention

Ability to initiate interactions	Before		After	
	No.	%	No.	%
Rarely	6	37.4	0	0
Ever	7	43	0	0



Often	3	18,8	12	75.0
Always	0	0	4	25.0
Total	16	100	16	100

As shown in table 4, during the initial diagnosis, in terms of the ability to initiate interactions, it was found that only 18.8% used it often, considering the majority (43.8%) that only use it once, and 37.4% rarely, which shows that there are many students with difficulties to establish new relationships, although it is a significant need for them to feel members of a group.

Similar results were also found in the research carried out in 2014, with the title "Formative experience in basic skills of social interaction in the Latin American School of Medicine" (Brito *et al.*, 2014), where a low level was identified in the study sample. level of development of social skills to initiate interactions, and the least favored was the ability to listen, initiate, maintain and end conversations. Then, by applying a program designed by the authors mentioned above, favorable criteria were revealed about the improvement of said ability.

In table 5, it shows that during the initial diagnosis an insufficient development of the ability to express opinions and feelings was identified since it was used only once in 62.5% and rarely in 31.2%. Similar results were obtained in the research of (Cabrera, 2013), in Ecuador, in which the level of development of social skills in male adolescents aged 15 to 18 years were evaluated and a low level was obtained, specifically in the related ones. with feelings and opinions.

Table 5  
Students according to the frequency of use of the ability to express feelings and opinions, before and after the intervention

Ability to express feelings and opinions	Before		After	
	No.	%	No.	%
Rarely	5	31.2	1	6.3
Sometimes	10	62.5	0	0
Often	1	6.3	13	75
Always	0	0	3	18.7
Total	16	100	16	100

In table 6 it can be seen that before the intervention in the group there was an insufficient level of development of the ability to make and reject requests, since 56.2% used it at some time, while 43.8% only seldom used it. Neither felt that he was able to use it often or always. Precisely, it was identified that one of the factors for which they tend to consume alcoholic beverages is because they do not have the ability to say "no" and reject the request of friends, for which they end up, on multiple occasions, accepting, since they prefer to be accepted by others.

In the investigation (Senra, 2010), it was also identified in the habitual consuming subjects a low capacity to reject demands, proving the lack of assertiveness in those subjects who are influenced by the pressures of the environment, unable to face situations or unwanted interactions.

Table 6  
Students according to the frequency of use of the ability to make and reject petitions, before and after the intervention

Ability to make and reject petitions	Before		After	
	No.	%	No.	%
Few times	7	43	0	0
Once	9	56,2	1	6.2
Often	0	0	12	75
Always	0	0	3	18.8

Total	16	100	16	100
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As evidenced in Table 7, when analyzing the results obtained by applying the AUDIT on the pattern of alcohol consumption, it was identified in the group that before applying the intervention only 3 adolescents had social consumption (18.7%) and the remaining 13 (81.3%), risk consumption. These results show that the university population is highly vulnerable to ingesting alcohol, due to the independence and autonomy that students assume, associated with low responsibility in consumption, and in many cases, the lack of direct control of alcohol. parents when they are on a scholarship (Flórez, 2007).

In the group, they associated the cause of consuming alcoholic beverages, mainly to the need to feel less inhibited in order to establish new relationships, as well as the importance of being approved by their friends, and also because they feel unable to reject dissimilar occasions the pressure of the group.

This conclusion was also obtained in the research carried out by the Universidad Panamericana and the Domecq Foundation presented (Flores and Barragán, 2013). In this study, it was found that young people consumed alcohol to feel more relaxed and confident, make friends, find a partner, be extroverted and to feel accepted by the rest of the peers.

Similar results were found by (Conde, 2016), in a study on patterns of consumption and alcohol use disorders in university students, in which it was identified that peer pressure, gain self-confidence, the search for sensations and alternatives to overcome the problems, are some of the factors that seem to motivate the ingestion of alcohol in this population. Likewise Londoño (2010) In an investigation in Spain with a group of university students, is obtained as a result that 99.2% of consumers had deficits to withstand the pressure of the group.

Table 7

Distribution of students according to the pattern of alcohol consumption, before and after the intervention

Pattern of alcohol	After						
	Consumption Social		consumption Risk consumption		Total		
	No.	% *	No.	% *	No.	% **	
Before	Social consumption	3	100,0	0	0.0	3	18.7
	Risk consumption	9	69.2	4	30.8	13	81.3
	Total	12	75	4	25	16	100

\* percentages calculated based on the total by rows  $p < 0.05$

\*\* percentages calculated in function of the total of students

In Cuba very recently in the investigation of (Evelyn, 2017) in the University of Las Villas, similar results were obtained, because it was identified that among the main reasons for the initiation of alcohol consumption were just the imitation social and group pressure. However, regarding the pattern of consumption that prevailed, there are differences with the present investigation, since in the study done by (Evelyn, 2017) there was a greater presence of social consumption.

#### 4. Conclusion

During the initial diagnosis it was evident that the majority of the students presented a low level of development of social skills to initiate interactions, to make and reject requests, to express feelings and opinions, to defend one's rights and to plan, almost all of the adolescents were characterized by presenting a pattern of risk drinking, associated with poor knowledge about the harmful effects of alcohol consumption and insufficient development of social skills.

In correspondence with the results of the initial evaluation, an intervention program was designed and implemented based on the training of social skills to prevent the misuse of alcohol, evidence that the training program in social skills had favorable results for the reduction of consumption. alcohol abuse, since after the



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intervention most adolescents reached a high level of development of social skills, and managed to decrease the amount and frequency of alcohol consumption, so they came to present a pattern of social consumption.

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