



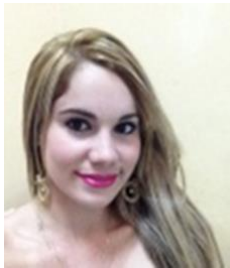
Relationship between Social Skills and Alcohol Consumption



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Abstract

In recent times, intervention programs designed to prevent the consumption of alcohol and other drugs have shown that approaches based on improving social skills can reduce the incidence and prevalence of these consumption behaviors. Therefore, it was considered necessary to conduct a literature review with the following objective: Determine the relationship between social skills and alcohol consumption. As a result of the theoretical review carried out, it was possible to identify that numerous authors emphasize that social skills are important protective factors against alcohol consumption. On the other hand, the deficit in social skills is associated with the appearance of substance use. In addition, there are studies that point to the social incompetence of adolescents and young people as a risk factor for alcohol abuse. In this regard, several researchers have emphasized that training in social skills should be part of behavioral treatments for individuals with alcohol problems and also have to integrate preventive programs. In conclusion, the research carried out has made it possible to deduce that the strengthening of social skills can contribute to improving the resistance to pressure from the consumption of alcohol and other drugs, and therefore to the prevention of this scourge. It is concluded, therefore, that social skills training could be an option, not only for the treatment of people with alcoholism or other addiction problem but also as a prevention factor.

Keywords

*alcohol consumption;
drugs;
intervention program;
prevention;
social skills;*

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1. Introduction

The consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, produces more diseases and disabilities each year than any other cause that can be prevented. Updated data from the World and Pan American Health Organization (WHO / PAHO) report that drug abuse and dependence is related, worldwide, to 12.4% of total deaths and 8.9% of the total of productive years lost due to disabilities ([González, 2012](#)). Added to this situation is another problem associated with the decline in the last years of the average age of consumers, reaching several countries in the ages of adolescence and early youth ([Gobierno de la Rioja, 2012](#)).

Of all these drugs, the research results reveal that alcohol is the most consumed at present ([Gárciga, 2015](#); [Golpe, 2017](#); [Hernández, 2015](#)), considered a model drug for the beginning of the consumption of other illegal substances and whose abusive use has led to a complex public health problem: dependence and alcohol addiction ([Fabelo et al., 2015](#)).

Given that treatment techniques do not achieve the level of efficacy expected so far, a more promising option with a better cost/benefit ratio is the development and application of prevention programs aimed primarily at children, adolescents, and young people. Undoubtedly, prevention is essential to prevent the consumption of alcohol and other drugs continue to become a social problem of greater magnitude.

Consequently, research has been carried out in recent years by different authors ([Arias, 2000](#); [Maturana, 2006](#); [Anguiano et al., 2010](#); [Moral et al., 2011](#)), who emphasize that social skills represent important protective factors against alcohol consumption, and as a counterpart, the deficit in social skills is associated with the appearance of substance use and specifically with alcohol abuse, confirming that although it is not a direct factor and determinant so that a problem of alcoholism begins, constitutes an important variable that influences the inadequate consumption of this substance ([Estevez et al., 2018](#)).

In recent times, intervention 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 consumption behaviors. As a result, interventions have been developed to enhance social skills and prevent alcohol consumption, such as, for example, the "Saluda" program of [Espada y Méndez \(2003\)](#), which has been applied in Spain since 2003 and has different research projects that support its effectiveness ([Espada et al., 2008](#); [Hernández et al., 2013](#)).

Hence, it is considered necessary to conduct a literature review with the following objective: Determine the relationship between social skills and alcohol consumption. This article is of great importance and practical use for researchers since it constitutes a theoretical foundation that integrates and systematizes concepts, indicators, and variables that make it possible to understand the importance acquired by social skills in the prevention of alcohol consumption.

First, it is important to note that the social skill category has been conceptualized by different authors, among whom [Alberti & Emmons \(1978\)](#), stand out, who consider it as the behavior that allows a person to act according to their most important interests, defend themselves without inappropriate anxiety, comfortably express honest feelings or exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others.

While, more recent authors like [Nuns Casares \(2002\)](#), highlight social skills as "acquired and learned behaviors and not personality traits"; Therefore, they constitute a "complex set of interpersonal behaviors that are put into play in the interaction with other people".

2. Materials and Methods

A review of the bibliographic databases where the subject related to the relationship between social skills and alcohol consumption was made, taking into account the references of all the relevant publications on the subject for 10 years to date, and documents are written in Spanish and English (these articles can be reviewed in the Bibliography).

They were consulted scientific journals from five years ago to date, theses and dissertations on the subject, digital and printed books. Personal communication was conducted with researchers in the area of social skills and alcohol consumption, especially to ensure that important published papers or unpublished communications have not been omitted.

The analysis of documents is the process by which the most outstanding information contained in a given information source is determined and extracted, which is separated into its constituent elements based on a specific organization.

The analysis carried out involved in the following phases:

- a) Familiarization with the content of the document or series of documents.
- b) Preliminary classification of documents based on their content and organizational criteria (first evaluation).
- c) Selection and extraction of the most relevant or outstanding information, in order to eliminate all that is not necessary, and thus reduce the volume of materials to be handled.
- d) Verification of the concepts or data in individual extracts (second evaluation).

It is the process of condensation and distillation of the information analyzed from one or more sources, which is now presented in a new format or structure and with an interpretative or evaluative point of view.

The synthesis consisted of the following phases:

- a) Ordering and combination of information.
- b) Comparative evaluation of the different extracts or data (third evaluation).
- c) Condensation of the information in a structure and more affordable way and in accordance with the objectives and sources worked.

3. Results and Discussions

In today's society, social skills are defined by the way the individual handles their social, academic and professional environment; These skills are essential when deploying compensatory strategies against the demands of the environment; It is common to talk about the dimensions in relation to the ability, the person and the situation, which gives rise to the behavioral, cognitive and situational (emotional) components constitutive of social skills (Caballo, 2002). These components have been identified in the following way (See Figure).

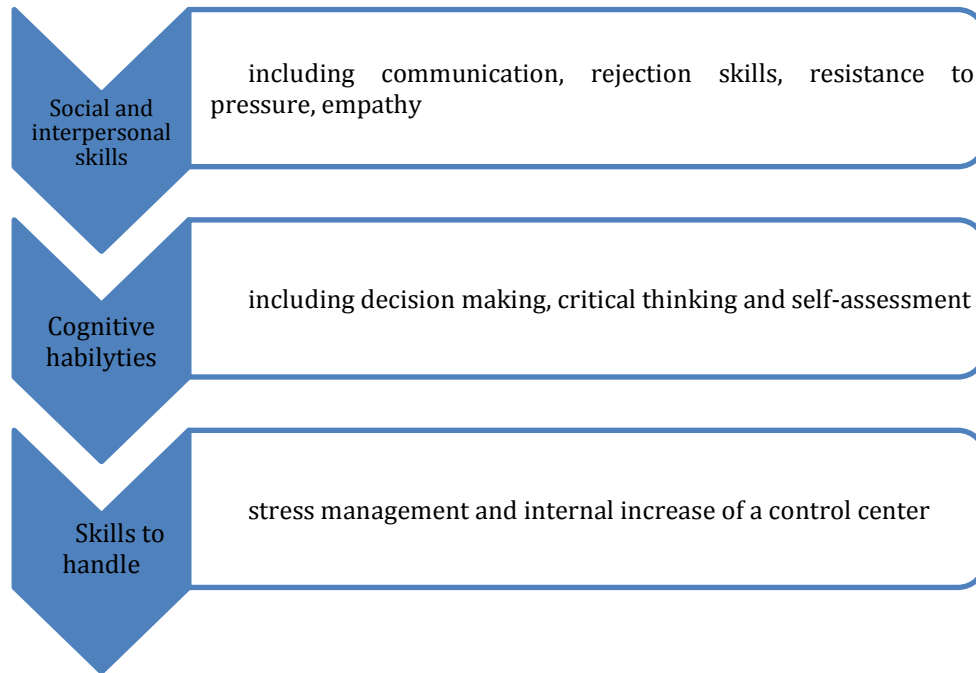


Figure 1. Environment skills

Source: (Caballo, 2002)

As evidence, there are different criteria for conceiving social skills; However, it is important to note that in the study, the author, without denying the significance of the judgments issued by other authors, assumes the concept proposed by Vicente Caballo (2002), author with specific weight in this area of research, who defines the social skills as a set of behaviors issued by an individual in an interpersonal context that expresses their feelings, attitudes, desires, opinions or rights in a way appropriate to the situation, respecting those behaviors in others and that usually resolves immediate problems of the situation while minimizing the likelihood of future problems.

I study them made in recent times about this subject (Del Prette *et al.*, 2015; Londoño *et al.*, 2016), have shown the effectiveness of social skills to promote desirable behaviors, such as socialization, better communication, effective decision making and solution of conflicts. In this way, the skills act on the determinants of health (set of conditions of health and disease in individuals, groups, and communities), mainly in lifestyles (alcohol and drug use, violent behavior, sexual intercourse early, among others).

For its part, in prevention, the results of the evaluation of programs (Gilbert *et al.*, 1995) show that skill development can delay the initiation of alcohol and other drug use, prevent high-risk sexual behaviors, teach anger management, improve academic performance, and promote positive social adjustment. Likewise, the analysis of the specialized bibliography (Mastroleo *et al.*, 2014) shows that the issue of social skills in adolescence and youth has received marked attention in recent years, due to the impact they seem to have on the psychological organization and quality of life of the subject.

There are studies (Senra, 2014), that indicates that an adequate repertoire of social skills helps individuals to have appropriate social functioning, which enables them to prevent psychological problems throughout their lives. Of the problems that can occur during the different stages of development, there is the abuse of substances, particularly alcoholism, which is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon, which has also become a public health problem.

Precisely, in relation to the problem of substance use, numerous authors (Arias, 2000; Maturana, 2006) emphasize that social skills are important protective factors against this harmful practice. On the other hand, the deficit in social skills is associated with the appearance of substance use; there are studies (Senra, 2014; Graña *et al.*, 2013) that point to the social incompetence of adolescents and young people as a risk factor for alcohol abuse.

Although the limited development of social skills is not a direct and determining factor for the initiation of a problem of alcoholism, a considerable number of investigations (Martínez *et al.*, 2010), have indicated it as an important variable that influences drinking behavior in excess. For example, Graña & Muñoz (2013), found in their research that alcoholics lacked the social skills necessary to face conflictive situations; they also point out that children of drinkers will probably learn that excess drinking is a requirement for adequate coping with social situations, and that they never learned the essential social skills that could be used in the absence of alcohol.

On the other hand, some authors like Martínez & Alonso (2013), consider that assertive and socially skilled adolescents and young people more easily acquire habits and healthy lifestyles, and have less risk of using drugs. Meanwhile, Martínez & Alonso (2013), they affirm that the style of aggressive behavior and the difficulties in interpersonal relationships are associated with the consumption of legal drugs.

In the same direction, other authors such as Caballo (2002), point out that difficulties in interpersonal relationships seem to affect the appearance and/or maintenance of problems related to the experimentation and use of substances, both legal and illegal. Specifically, in the case of alcoholic patients, it was found in some studies that they lacked social skills to face conflicting situations (Andrade, 2014), and it was determined that those who adopt risk behaviors associated with consumption showed a greater deficit in social skills.

This conclusion was also obtained in the research carried out by the Pan-American University and the Domecq Foundation, presented by Flores & Barragán (2010). The research showed that young people consumed alcohol to feel more relaxed and confident, to make friends, find partners, be extroverted and feel accepted by the group of peers. Hence the relationship observed between the following variables: a lower social ability, higher alcohol consumption. This study also showed that it is possible to learn to moderate alcohol consumption through training in social skills and self-control.

In the research developed by Sandra Anguiano *et al.*, (2010) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, called "Social skills in university students, adolescents and recovering alcoholics of a group of alcoholics anonymous", it is confirmed that social skills play a role important in the lives of individuals and that could represent a protective factor in order to prevent people from developing addictive behaviors. Although social skills are not the only factor that allows an individual to become an alcoholic or develop another addiction, they do have an important weight, not only for prevention but for treatment.

In effect, programs aimed at children and adolescents whose main purpose is training in social skills for the prevention of future problems, among them: addictions (Mármol, 2008; Betancourt, 2010), are currently being defended for their effectiveness. In this regard, several researchers (De Lira *et al.*, 2016; González *et al.*, 2014; Reolid, 2014), have emphasized that social skills training should be part of behavioral treatments for individuals with alcohol problems and must also integrate the preventive programs.

4. Conclusion

The theoretical review carried out has made it possible to deduce that the strengthening of social skills can contribute to improving the resistance to pressure before the consumption of alcohol and other drugs, and therefore to the prevention of this scourge. The results of the investigations that serve as a precedent to the present study, justify and encourage the development of intervention programs to promote social skills, with a purpose aimed at the prevention of substance use. It is concluded, therefore, that social skills training could be an option, not only for the treatment of people with alcoholism or other addiction problems but also as a prevention factor.

Acknowledgments

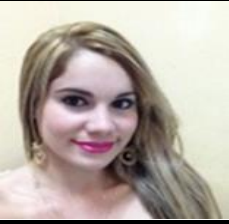




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