



Alcohol and Tobacco Consumption Among Adolescents: A Descriptive Quantitative Approach

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 06 June 2023 Revised: 05 Sept 2023 Accepted: 11 Sept 2023	<p>Aim: This research aimed to find the factors influencing alcohol and tobacco consumption among adolescents. A descriptive quantitative approach was employed, using questionnaires to gather information on the reasons adolescents engage in alcohol and tobacco use. Material and method: The findings revealed that most of the respondents-initiated substance use to reach social acceptance, followed by reasons related to family problems, and after to feel better or out of curiosity/experimentation. These findings show that adolescents turn to these substances as a means of seeking social acceptance, escaping family problems, and coping with challenges. Statistics and Result: The study underscores the importance of addressing these risk factors in preventive interventions targeting adolescents, as well as the need to provide them with tools to effectively cope with emotional and familial issues.</p>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	<p>Keywords: Alcohol and Tobacco Consumption, Adolescents, Influencing Factors, Preventive Interventions.</p>

1. Introduction

The consumption of alcohol and tobacco among adolescents and their consequences have had a significant impact globally and are of great importance in today's society. According to UNODC (2021), approximately 275 million people used these substances in the last year, and more than 36 million people experienced related disorders. Importantly, teens make up the majority of consumers. It is worrying to note that excessive alcohol consumption is widely tolerated and even accepted, becoming the most commonly abused psychoactive substance among young people worldwide. Similarly, tobacco also influences adolescents, as they are easily influenced by advertising, the Internet, and the actions and words of their peers. Often, they lack awareness about how difficult it can be to abandon these habits and are unaware of the consequences they may have for their health in the future.

As he exposes (Urrutia, 2019) one of the primary objectives of the reports on drug use in the Americas is to analyze the trend in the use of psychoactive substances. In this sense, it is observed that, in ten countries, twenty percent of students have consumed some alcoholic beverage in the last 30 days. Likewise, in nations such as Chile and the Dominican Republic, twenty percent of eighth graders have experienced tobacco use at some point. This is especially because adolescence is a very vulnerable stage of life for the consumption of toxic substances, both because of the concern to experience new sensations, and because of the feeling of invulnerability.

The frequent practice of going out and consuming alcohol on weekend nights has become routine for some teens. In the case of tobacco, marketing strategies aimed at attracting young people are employed, using special filters, designer packaging and specific promotional campaigns that include the addition of substances that increase the attractiveness of tobacco, such as flavored cigarettes and the incorporation of chemical compounds such as acetaldehyde, which, combined with nicotine, enhances its addictive capacity. Adolescents appear to be especially susceptible to the effects of tobacco, which increases their predisposition to develop addiction. (Cango & Suárez, 2021; Ricardo et al., 2022).

Tobacco is responsible for a significant percentage of cardiovascular diseases, cancer and respiratory diseases, even becoming the cause of death in half of smokers due to diseases related to tobacco consumption. For its part, alcohol has an ambivalent effect, since, in high doses, it produces multiple harmful effects both cardiovascular and systemic (Callisaya, 2017). Adolescents are immersed in a process of development and subjected to multiple changes, so alcohol consumption can affect their physical and psychological health, decrease their academic performance and lead to risky behaviors, such as the practice of unprotected sex, violent behavior or reckless driving of vehicles and can act as a facilitator for the consumption of other illegal drugs. The negative effects of tobacco appear in the long term, such as damage to the heart and blood vessels which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke, heart attack and lung cancer (Montezuma et al., 2022).

This behavior may be related to personal insecurities, the desire to be socially accepted, the easy accessibility to these substances, as well as the use of them as a way to cope with intrafamily problems, economic limitations, the need to explore new experiences or interact with people who promote the consumption of these substances. Lack of education on this topic can lead to problems that will be difficult to address in the future, posing a threat to the community and society at large (Santillán et al., 2022).

Another likely cause is that teens do not find satisfaction in activities that meet their emotional and intellectual needs holistically. They feel unmotivated and the activities they perform are repetitive and unstimulating. This lack of stimulation can lead to irritability and adjustment difficulties, leading to the desire to seek different activities, such as alcohol and tobacco use (Muñoz, 2019; Leyva et al., 2021).

Therefore, in the work that is presented, the objective is to identify the elements that influence the consumption of alcohol and tobacco in adolescents. Hereinafter, a section is devoted to the description of the methods, another to the results and discussion. Finally, the conclusions reached and the bibliographic references used for the writing of the report are presented.

2. Materials And Methods

A descriptive research design will be employed to enable a clear and accurate analysis of the natural context and factors contributing to adolescent substance use. The descriptive method allows to represent and characterize the variables of interest related to the consumption of alcohol and tobacco in adolescents. This method is associated with the quantitative method since this approach is based on the collection and analysis of numerical data (Mata, 2019; Penelosa, 2021).

A survey will be used to learn about the causes that lead adolescents to use these substances and how it affects their health. The Likert Scale will be used, which is a rating scale used to measure the level of agreement or disagreement of a person with a statement, being ideal for measuring reactions, attitudes and behaviors. They will be designed with the objective of obtaining data that allow a detailed view of the factors involved using structured questionnaires with closed questions to obtain quantifiable information on the frequency and patterns of alcohol and tobacco consumption in adolescents.

To carry out this research, the population was selected to the 20 adolescents residing in the neighbourhood La Estrellita, belonging to the canton Tulcán. A probability sampling method will be used, since all adolescents in the La Estrellita neighbourhood share characteristics that make them eligible to participate in the study and respond to the same type of survey without modifying the questions.

3. Results and Discussion

The research was launched with the implementation of the questionnaire specially designed to collect relevant data on alcohol and tobacco consumption in adolescents. This questionnaire was carefully crafted considering the key dimensions of the study, such as the frequency and amount of consumption, the circumstances and environments in which it is conducted, and the underlying motivational factors. To ensure the understanding and accuracy of the answers, clear and concise language was used, avoiding any ambiguity or potential bias in the questions asked.

The application of the questionnaire was carried out in a systematic and standardized manner, following an established procedural protocol. The participants selected according to the probability sampling method in the La Estrellita neighbourhood, belonging to the Tulcán canton, were contacted and explained the purpose of the research and the importance of their participation. The confidentiality of the information provided was guaranteed and the informed consent of each adolescent and, if necessary, of his parents or legal guardians was obtained.

Data collection was carried out rigorously and all responses provided by adolescents were carefully recorded. Tracking techniques were employed to ensure data integrity and to resolve any doubts or ambiguities that arose during the collection process. The results are as follows:

Table 1: **How often do you use alcohol or tobacco?**

Frequency	Number of teenagers
Seldom	10
Often	5
Very often	3
Never	2
Total	20

Source: Authors.

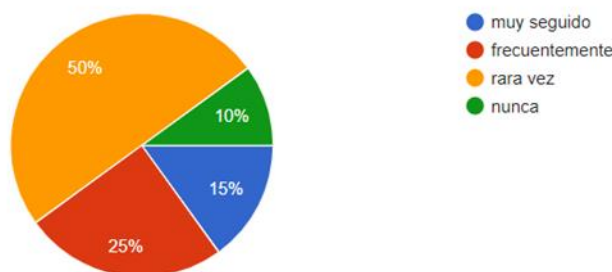


Figure 1. Statistical data. Source: Authors

As can be seen, 50% of the adolescents surveyed mention that it is rarely the frequency with which they consume these substances, 25% admit to consuming them frequently, 15% very often and 10% stopped consuming them.

Table 2: **Why did you start using alcohol or tobacco?**

Element that influenced to start its consumption	Number of teenagers
Fitting into a group	9
Family problems	6
Feeling better	3
Experience	2
Total	20

Source: Authors.

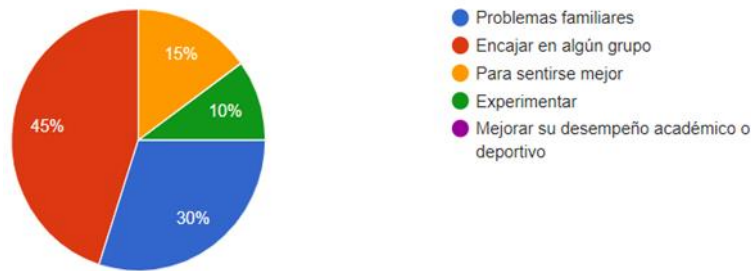


Figure 2. Statistical data. Source: Authors

Figure 2 presents in a visual and clear way the percentage distribution of the reasons that led adolescents in the study population to initiate alcohol and tobacco consumption. The results reveal that a significant 45% of the participants admitted to having started using these substances in order to fit into a certain social group. 30% mentioned that family problems were the factor that prompted them to start this consumption, while 15% did so in order to seek relief or feel better emotionally. On the other hand, 10% of adolescents indicated that their main reason was experimentation. These findings provide in-depth insight into the various motivational factors that influence alcohol and tobacco use in this adolescent population. It highlights the need to address the influence of social group and family dynamics in relation to these substances, as well as the importance of implementing preventive strategies that promote healthy coping mechanisms and positive alternatives to meet the emotional and social needs of adolescents.

Table 3: Do you try to avoid alcohol or tobacco?

Frequency	Number of teenagers
Always	15
Almost always	4
Sometimes	1
Total	20

Source: Authors

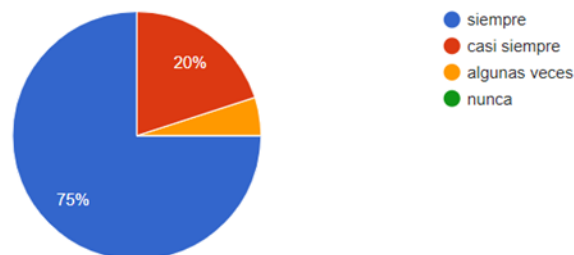


Figure 3. Statistical data

It is noteworthy that a significant percentage of adolescents, specifically 75%, show a proactive attitude by constantly seeking help to move away from ethyl alcohol and tobacco use. In addition, 20% of participants report doing it almost always, while 5% mention seeking help on some occasions. These data reveal a positive trend in adolescents' willingness to seek support and resources to enable them to abandon these harmful habits. Willingness to seek help reflects a recognition of the negative effects of these substances and a willingness to take action to protect their health and well-being.

The importance of promoting and facilitating access to support resources, both at the family and professional levels, becomes evident in light of these results. Providing adolescents with the right

tools and support needed to overcome the difficulties associated with alcohol and tobacco use is critical to encouraging healthy behaviors and preventing the development of long-term problems. These findings highlight the need to strengthen intervention and support programs aimed at adolescents, with the aim of providing them with a safe and conducive environment to overcome the influence of alcohol and tobacco use, and thus promote their overall well-being and a successful transition to a healthy adult life.

These results emphasize the need to strengthen educational and awareness programs aimed at adolescents about the harmful effects of ethyl alcohol and tobacco consumption. It is essential to provide them with accurate and understandable information about the associated risks, with the aim of encouraging informed decision-making and promoting healthy behaviors.

Table 4: **Do you know the consequences of alcohol and tobacco use?**

Level of knowledge	Number of teenagers
Few	14
Some	3
No	2
Many	1
Total	20

Source: Authors

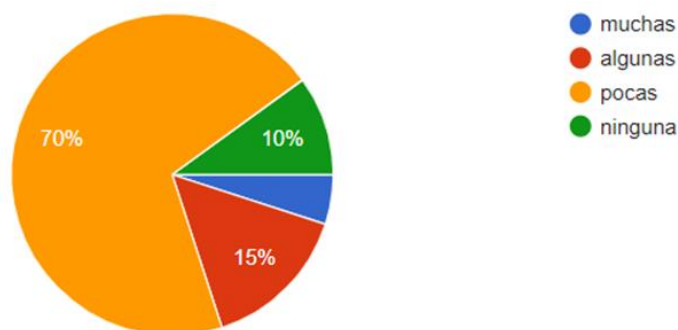


Figure 4. Statistical data. Source: Authors

The results of the survey show worrying data regarding the level of knowledge that adolescents have about the consequences of alcohol and tobacco consumption on their health. It is observed that a considerable percentage, specifically 70% of the participants, have limited knowledge about the harmful effects of these substances. It is alarming that only 15% of adolescents surveyed have partial knowledge about some of the negative consequences associated with ethyl alcohol and tobacco use. Even more worrying is that 10% of the participants have no knowledge about the adverse effects that these substances can cause on their health. This lack of knowledge implies a significant risk to their well-being and exposes them to potential physical and psychological complications.

On the other hand, it is encouraging to note that a small percentage, equivalent to 5% of adolescents, demonstrate a broader and more detailed knowledge about the multiple consequences that these substances can have on their health. It is also imperative that health professionals, educators and families play an active role in transmitting knowledge and promoting greater awareness of the consequences of substance use. Providing a comprehensive and accessible education, as well as generating spaces for dialogue and support, can help adolescents better understand risks and adopt responsible behaviors in relation to their health and well-being.

The results of the study showed that most adolescents have used ethyl alcohol and tobacco frequently. These findings differ from the data reported in the Report on Drug Use in the Americas, which

mentions that two out of ten adolescents have consumed an alcoholic beverage in the last thirty days. In countries such as the Dominican Republic or Chile, they have smoked tobacco at least once. This indicates that the majority of the population studied in the research consumes these substances frequently and alarmingly, which reinforces the relevance and urgency of addressing this problem. In addition, the findings are consistent with the World Drug Report, which notes that adolescents are the group most affected by alcohol and tobacco use, experiencing disorders and negative consequences for their health. These effects include high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, lung cancer, and digestive problems.

These results provide in-depth insight into the various motivational factors influencing alcohol and tobacco use in this adolescent population. It highlights the need to address the influence of social group and family dynamics in relation to these substances, as well as the importance of implementing preventive strategies that promote healthy coping mechanisms and positive alternatives to meet the emotional and social needs of adolescents. Likewise, the importance of promoting and facilitating access to support resources at both the family and professional levels is highlighted. Providing adolescents with the right tools and support needed to overcome the difficulties associated with alcohol and tobacco use is critical to encouraging healthy behaviors and preventing the development of long-term problems. These findings underscore the need to strengthen intervention and support programs targeting adolescents, with the goal of providing them with a safe and conducive environment to overcome the influence of alcohol and tobacco use, thereby promoting their overall well-being and a successful transition to a healthy adult life (Suarez et al., 2022; Davila et al., 2022).

Additionally, the results emphasize the importance of strengthening educational and awareness programs aimed at adolescents about the harmful effects of ethyl alcohol and tobacco consumption. Providing accurate and understandable information about the associated risks is crucial to encourage informed decision-making and promote healthy behaviors (Cruz et al., 2019; Comas et al., 2022). Finally, it is necessary to emphasize that this research has addressed an issue that has been little questioned in other studies: the attempts of adolescents to stop consuming alcohol and tobacco. It is essential to know if adolescents themselves are willing to change and do their part to stop these substances harmful to their health. In this sense, the findings reveal that the vast majority of adolescents in the La Estrellita neighbourhood are constantly seeking help to stop consuming these harmful substances. This fact is encouraging, since there are other adolescents who do not seek to improve or show intention to change their habits. It is important that they are supported by their relatives, receiving advice and, in some cases, seeking professional help.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has revealed important findings on alcohol and tobacco use in adolescents. It has been observed that most adolescents use these substances frequently, which is alarming and contradicts the figures reported in previous reports. In addition, it has been confirmed that adolescents are the group most affected by the disorders and negative consequences associated with alcohol and tobacco consumption, such as cardiovascular diseases, lung cancer and digestive problems. It has been identified that motivational factors for the use of these substances include the search for social acceptance, escape from family problems and use as a coping mechanism. These findings highlight the importance of addressing social group influence and family dynamics in preventive interventions targeting adolescents. It is necessary to provide healthy alternatives and positive coping mechanisms to meet their emotional and social needs. In addition, the need to strengthen educational and awareness programs on the harmful effects of alcohol and tobacco consumption on adolescents has been evidenced. It is essential to provide them with accurate and understandable information about the associated risks, promoting informed decision-making and healthy behaviors. Encouragingly, most teens are constantly seeking help to move away from alcohol and tobacco use. This highlights the importance of providing them with support, both at the family and professional level, and providing them with the necessary tools to overcome the difficulties associated with these substances. A safe environment that encourages healthy behaviors and facilitates the transition to a healthy adult life should be promoted. Overall, this study contributes to the field of public health by providing relevant information on risk factors and motivations related to alcohol and tobacco use in adolescents. These

results are critical for the design and implementation of effective prevention and treatment strategies, as well as for improving education and support provided to adolescents regarding these substances. Further research and addressing this problem are imperative, with the aim of protecting the health and well-being of the adolescent population.

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