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PROCENA DIMENZIJA LIČNOSTI, PUŠENJA DUVANA I DEPRESIJE KOD LEČENIH MUŠKIH AKOHOLIČARA

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The assessment of personality dimensions, tobacco smoking and depression among treatment-seeking male alcoholics

Sažetak Background/Aim. The co-occurrence of depression and tobacco smoking among treating alcoholics is frequent, but understudied. Some findings suggest that there are some shared aetiological factors, but a few clinical researches of personality dimensions among patients with these comorbidities were done. The personality dimensions, the pattern of cigarette use and depression and correlation of personality and depression among inpatient alcoholics were explored. **Methods.** The one hundred primary male inpatient alcoholics were consecutively recruited. The eighty six completed study and were compared with thirty male age matched healthy subjects. Semistructured clinical interview for sociodemographics, the pattern of cigarette and alcohol use and family history data was applied. According cut-off on Hamilton Depression Rating Scale-HDRS (Hamilton, 1960) the alcoholics divided into depressive and non-depressive subgroups resulting in half of alcoholics in each subgroup. The Eysenck personality questionnaire- EPQ (Eysenck, 1975) was completed. Student t-test for differences and Pearson test for correlation were used. **Results.** There were no significant sociodemographic differences between groups. Alcoholics were more frequent smokers (86% vs. 50%). They didn't started drinking earlier, but earlier started smoking, with higher daily cigarettes use than controls. Alcoholics had average mild depression degree after detoxification. The personality dimensions did not show differences between groups, except neuroticism. The neuroticism showed significantly higher level among alcoholics vs. controls (12.72 ± 5.19 vs. 5.00 ± 3.36) and among depressive vs. non-depressive alcoholics (15.07 ± 4.89 vs. 10.37 ± 4.40). The depression correlated only with neuroticism ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.001$). **Conclusions.** The

majority of detoxified alcoholics were smokers, earlier started smoking with mild depression and higher neuroticism compared to controls. Our results suggest that the alcoholics with high neuroticism may experience higher depression and may require more intensive integrative treatment.

Introduction

There is increasing interest of researchers and clinicians in heterogeneity of alcohol dependent patients, especially of those with comorbid conditions. The findings from epidemiological study on the prevalence of lifetime alcohol dependence was 12.5% and the prevalence of nicotine dependence among alcoholics was 45%, which is over two times higher than in the general population (1). Smoking is a major health issue in persons with a lifetime history of depression, who are twice as likely to smoke as those who do not suffer from depression (2). Co-occurrence of mental disorders, such as alcohol use disorders (AUDs), major depression, and nicotine dependence are increasingly common among patients in the clinical settings but understudied and present challenges for treatment (3).

The complex, self-sustaining relationship between alcohol and tobacco dependence and depression is partly explained by self-medication attempt by person who may smoke or drink to alleviate depression (4). Contrary, the long-term use of alcohol and nicotine can decrease levels of the brain serotonin production, which might worsen depression (5). The co-morbidity of alcoholism and depression is high and may related to effects of alcohol on neurotransmitters involved in mood regulation, but nicotine has been demonstrated antidepressant effects due to counteracts alcohol-induced depression in preclinical as well as clinical studies (6). This interaction may also be a contributory factor to drinking-smoking co-morbidity (7). Posttreatment depressive symptoms are related to less abstinence and more frequent drinking (8).

Comorbidity of alcohol dependence with other substance abuse appears as a part to unique aetiology factors underlying for each substance use disorder. However, comorbidity of alcoholism with anxiety, mood and personality disorders were explained by shared aetiological factors, but a few clinical studies of personality traits among patients with these comorbidities were done (9).

Some researches reported that smoking behavior in the general population is linked to personality traits and negative emotionality, but it is unknown whether these traits are related to alcoholic smokers (10). Previous research has indicated that specific relations existence between personality traits in individuals with alcoholism (11). Exploration of these complex associations between drinking, smoking, and depression is important due to depression can complicate comorbid alcohol and nicotine dependences by exacerbating the negative affect during early abstinence from one or both drugs (12).

The aim in the present study was to explore the personality traits, cigarette smoking and depression among treatment-seeking alcoholics and the correlations between personality traits and depression were investigated.

Methods

Subjects and procedures

The cross sectiona study was performed at the Department for Psychiatry of the Military Medical Academy (MMA), Belgrade. The sample included consecutively recruited one hundred treatment-seeking male inpatient alcoholics, aged between 25 and 60 years. The total final sample consisted of 86 alcoholics (Alc) who completed study. Inclusion criteria were alcohol dependence syndrome diagnosed according to Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders-DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) (13). They were assessed at baseline and compared to 30 age matched male controls (Cont), which were consecutively recruited among persons undergoing periodical routine examination in the MMA. All subjects received complete medical, neurological and psychiatric examinations to confirm good health condition. Exclusion criteria for alcoholics were any other current DSM-IV Axis I diagnoses assessed by the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV, a history of significant medical illness, the use of other psychotropic drugs or substances except tobacco smoking. Control subjects did not meet current or lifetime abuse or dependence criteria for alcohol or any other illicit drug and Axis I psychiatric diagnosis according SCID.

All participants were explored for demographic characteristics, the patterns of alcohol and cigarette use, the family history, personality dimensions and depression. In additional analysis, the alcoholics were reassessed for depression after four weeks of in-patient treatment and were categorized into depressive (Ad) and non-depressive (And) subgroup. The 50% of total alcoholics were scored above cut off score on Hamilton depression rating

Scale (Hamilton, 1960) (14) resulting in 43 subjects consisted each subgroup. The subgroups were compared for baseline characteristic.

All subjects signed written informed consent prior entering the study and all study procedures were approved by the Local Ethics Board.

Measures

On the baseline a trained psychiatrist interviewed subjects by semistructured clinical interview for collecting sociodemographic characteristics, the patterns of alcohol and cigarette use and family history data. The pattern of alcohol use included the alcohol use in years, the drink number per week for the past year and the number of times in treatment. The smoking status was evaluated by years of daily smoking and daily cigarettes number. The family history (FH+) on alcoholism and depression was explored. Michigan alcoholism screening test- MAST (Selzer, 1971) (15) is 25-items screening tool for alcohol use disorder. The cut off score sum MAST score < 3 is related to no alcohol use disorder.

Depression was assessed by independent trained rater who applied the 21-item Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HDRS) (14). HDRS is semi-structured interview which score sum ranges from 0 to 63 and indicates condition with no depression (scored 0-7) and three degrees of severity: the mild depression (8-16 scored) moderate depression (17-24 scored) and severe depression scored 25 to 63.

The personality dimensions were measured by self-administered Eysenck Personality Questionnaire- EPQ (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) (16). The EPQ consists of 90 true-false self-descriptive items and covers four dimensions: extraversion/introversion (E), neuroticism (N), psychoticism (P) and control (C) or lie scale. The neuroticism refers to the stability/instability dimension of personality and assesses the general emotional over-responsiveness, anxiety and worrying. Extraversion describes sociable, uninhibited personality. The psychoticism is related to more bizarre personality characteristics, such as being distant, cold, insensitive, absurd, and unable to empathize with others (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). The control, lie scale highlights the social desirability was introduced later in an attempt to measure to what extent subjects were deliberately attempting to control their scores (17).

Statistics

For all the variables descriptive statistics were applied and data were expressed as mean \pm SD. The difference between groups was calculated by the Student t-test and χ^2 test. The correlations were tested by Pearson's correlation coefficient. SPSS for Windows was used and the p values of 0.05 or below defined as statistically significant.

Results

The differences between alcoholics and controls

Demographic data did not show significant differences between groups.

The mean age (\pm SD) of the alcoholics and control subjects was 43.29 (\pm 7.32) years and 43.33 (\pm 7.10) years, respectively ($t= 0.028$, n.s). The groups were similar in term of years of education Alc vs. Con 13.72+1.95 vs. 13.47+2.28 (n.s). There were married 83.7% of Alc and 93.3% of Cont subjects.

The significant difference for MAST score between Alc (19.01 \pm 10.64) and controls (1.30 \pm 1.12) was showed ($t= 15.192$, $p<0.01$). The majority of controls were social healthy drinkers (90%) and only 10% were sober. The alcoholics smoked cigarettes more frequently (86,01%) than controls (50%).

The data from the pattern of alcohol use and cigarettes use were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. about here

While alcoholics and healthy controls did not differ in years of drinking, the group of alcoholics had more lifetime smoking in comparison with healthy controls. The alcoholics consumed more drinks and more cigarettes daily (Table 1). The alcoholics had significantly more frequent family history for alcoholism, but no for depression and suicide in comparison to controls (Table 1).

The personality traits assessed by Eysenck personality questionnaire (EPQ) showed significant difference only for neuroticism, which was more prominent among alcoholics vs. controls 12.72 \pm 5.19 vs. 5.00 \pm 3.36 ($t = 9.292$, $p< 0.01$). There were not significant differences for other personality dimensions (Figure 1).

(Figure 1. about here)

Alcoholics were depressed. The mean HDRS sum score was 15.37 \pm 6.20 for alcoholics and 1.43 \pm 1.55 for controls with significant difference between groups ($t = 19.219$,

$P < 0.01$). The mean HDRS sum scores for depressive and non depressive alcoholics' subgroups at baseline was 18.67 ± 5.60 and 12.07 ± 4.89 respectively ($t = -5.822$, $p < 0.01$).

The differences between depressive and non-depressive alcoholics

The depressive alcoholics had more lifetime duration of smoking and more number of treatment compared to non-depressive alcoholics near statistical significance difference, but there was no difference for daily cigarettes smoking (Table 2).

(Table 2 about here)

The personality traits differences between Ad and And alcoholics' subgroups showed that only for Control (lie) scale there was no significant difference. The most prominent difference was higher neuroticism among depressive vs. non-depressive alcoholics 15.07 ± 4.89 vs. 10.37 ± 4.40 ($t = -4.684$, $p < 0.01$) respectively. Depressive alcoholics had lower extraversion and higher psychoticism than non depressive alcoholics ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 2).

(Figure 2. about here)

Relationship between personality dimensions and depression measures in depressive alcoholics recorded the positive and significant correlation between the mean HDRS sum score and EPQ Neuroticism dimension ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.001$), without significant correlation between other EPQ dimensions and depression. The exploring relations between each EPQ dimensions showed only negative correlation between Neuroticism and Extraversion ($r = -0.310$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

This study explored the male alcoholics' personality and sociodemographic heterogeneity in early alcohol recovery. The gender and individual differences may impact susceptibility to AUD and other addiction. However, the majority studies had mainly male subjects and gender was not taken into consideration in the analysis (18). In this paper all participants were male, and there were no significant demographic differences between groups. The majority of controls were social drinkers (90%) and 50% of them were daily smokers. Among alcoholics 86% were smokers and more cigarettes daily had smoked than controls

(Table 1). These findings were in concordance with previous research in which smoking prevalence estimated among 80% of alcoholics in the clinical samples (19).

Early age at onset is an index of high liability to illness and may increase risk of illness in relatives in many biomedical disorders (20). Age at first alcohol use reported as a risk factor for the development of alcohol use disorders (21). In this paper alcoholics had significant longer duration of lifetime smoking than controls, which mean that they earlier started smoking in adolescence with almost two fold higher number of daily cigarettes use than controls (Table 1). Nicotine addiction use problems develops rapidly in adolescents and is the most expressed in vulnerable persons who have other substance use disorders or psychiatric illness. This findings are of interest since psychiatric comorbidities are associated with a less favorable prognosis (22).

There is growing interest in research and treatment of comorbid AUD and tobacco dependence. Some investigations showed that alcoholics smokers have a higher dependence severity than non-smokers suggesting careful assessment of both dependences on admission (23). Alcoholics smokers evidenced shorter alcohol treatment duration and poorer outcome compare to to their nonsmoking counterparts (24). The debate about treating tobacco dependence during early alcohol abstinence have continued. Some researches showed that concurrent treatment does not increase risk for alcohol relaps, and suggest the integrating smoking cessation services in treatment program during early alcohol remission are needed to enhance smoking cessation outcomes in this population (25).

The family history (FH+) of alcohol dependence among first-degree relatives was significant more frequent among alcoholics (77.9%) compared to controls (26,6%). The male gender and FH+ of AUD present inherited high risk factors which contribute to heterogeneity of alcoholics (26, 27). Also, adult psychopathology are proposed as risk factors for AUD, especially depression, anxiety and personality disorders (28). Nicotine dependence considers as a general marker of psychiatric comorbidity, and the patients suffering from alcohol and nicotine dependence should be carefully assessed for other mental disorders (29). There are findings that negative affect is a strong relapse predictor (30). The association of smoking and depression explored with findings that former smoking and persistent smoking predict all depression dimensions (31). On the baseline total alcoholics sample reveal average mild depression score compared to normal mood level among controls and after four weeks of abstinence the half of alcoholics (Ad

subgroup) showed persistent depression according cut off score on HDRS (Table 1). The findings from general population survey suggested that gender and measurement are key issues in the interpreting the relationship between depression and alcohol. This relationship is stronger for women than for men only when measured major depression diagnose, but not when measured only recent depressed affect (32).

The exploring drinking pattern from three urban Eastern European populations showed that problem drinking was associated with approximately a 2-fold increase risk for depressive symptoms in both sexes (33). The central serotonergic (5-HT) function is related to alcohol dependence among the bouth gender with positive family history of alcoholism. Among them the gain-of-function 5-HTTLPR genotype is related to higher score of depression and neuroticism, so that may contribute to a compensatory drinking for these affective tendencies (34). For comorbid alcoholism and smoking various explanations were provided including genetics, pharmacodynamic and pharmacokinetic interactions such as rewarding and mood effects (35). Chronic haevy alcohol use may precipitate depressive-like behavior, however nicotine may block the depressogenic effects of alcohol (6). The early recovery alcoholics with comorbid depression are in the higher risk for tobacco smoking for mood modulating than alcoholics without depression (36). The depression is associated with relapse to drinking and there is need for early recognition and concurent tretment among alcoholics (25). Susceptibility to addiction may impact by individual differences (37). Neuroticism is useful marker of non-specified general risk for common mental disorders and is product of the genetic and environmental factors, with heritability estimates range from 40% to 60% (38, 39). In this paper, the EPQ personality dimensions did not expressed significant differences between alcoholics and control groups except neuroticism which was more than two-fold higher scored among alcoholics (Figure 1). However, depressive alcoholics (Ad) subroup was characterised by significant higher neuroticism and psychoticism, but lower extraversion compared to non-depressive alcoholics (And). The most prominent differences was registered for neuroticism which was three fold vs. two-fold higher among Ad vs. And alcoholics compared to controls $15,07 \pm 4,89$ vs. $10,37 \pm 4,40$ vs. $5,00 \pm 3,36$ respectively (Figure 1, Figure 2). These results were consistent with findings of other researches that the alcohol-dependent patients showed high neuroticism, extroversion, anxiety, depression as compared with healthy control subjects (10,38). The patients with alcohol-dependency also obtained significantly higher scores on the neuroticism dimension (40). This indicates that they are significantly

more emotional, frequently anxious and/or depressed, moody and tense. Similar results were reported in earlier studies (18).

Exploring the relationship between personality dimensions and depression among depressive alcoholics showed that only neuroticism significantly correlated with depression ($r= 0.487$, $p<0.001$). Other authors suggested that since depression in male alcoholics is more related to neuroticism, strategies tailored stress or mood management would be useful (38). The researches of associations of alcoholism and personality reported that the most vulnerable to alcoholism may be the persons with high neuroticism/negative emotionality (41). Furthermore, in this paper the results indicated negative correlation between neuroticism and extraversion, without significant differences between other personality dimensions. The prominent extraversion are characterized with sociability, activity, assertiveness and under-aroused, thus substance use disorders may consider as a form of stimulation (42).

The expression of personality traits may be influenced by other factors, thus potentially biasing the results. The gender differences in personality traits across cultures showed significantly higher impulsivity and lower neuroticism among men than women (43). Also, the age of participants should be taken into consideration because personality may be not fully established before age 30 (37). In this paper all subjects were middle aged male, so the gender and age differences did not influence the personality traits results. When considering personality vulnerability and depression among alcoholics there is need for taking account the previous research which suggested that treatment seeking alcoholics often have greater alcohol-related problems and psychiatric distress than those who do not seek treatment (28).

There are several limitations of the generalizability of the findings in this study. The cross-sectional design was used in a relatively small sample, thus the observed differences in the personality traits do not provide explanation whether they are the causes or consequences of alcohol dependence development. Furthermore, the inpatients are likely to have more severe psychopathology and comorbidities compared to the general population. Also, patients' personality traits scores were not pre-morbid and chronic AUD may modify the assessment of personality traits. The larger prospective study with both gender subjects is needed for further study of complex interplay between alcoholism, tobacco smoking, depression and personality traits. Thus, these findings may inform early interventions and treatments that target alcoholics at risk for developing persistent depression in the early alcohol recovery.

Conclusion

These findings showed that male alcoholics significantly earlier started smoking with more daily cigarettes smoking and were significantly more depressive with prominent neuroticism compared to healthy subjects. The primary male treatment-seeking alcoholics characterised with higher neuroticism may experience persistent depression, thus requiring more intensive interventions and relapse prevention approaches.

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Figure 1: The personality dimensions assessed by Eysenck personality questionnaire (EPQ) among alcoholics and controls

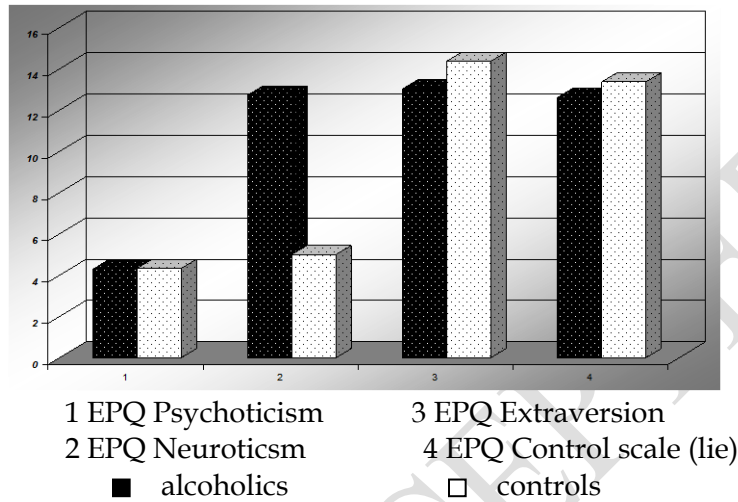


Figure 2: The personality dimensions assessed by Eysenck personality questionnaire (EPQ) among depressive and non-depressive alcoholics

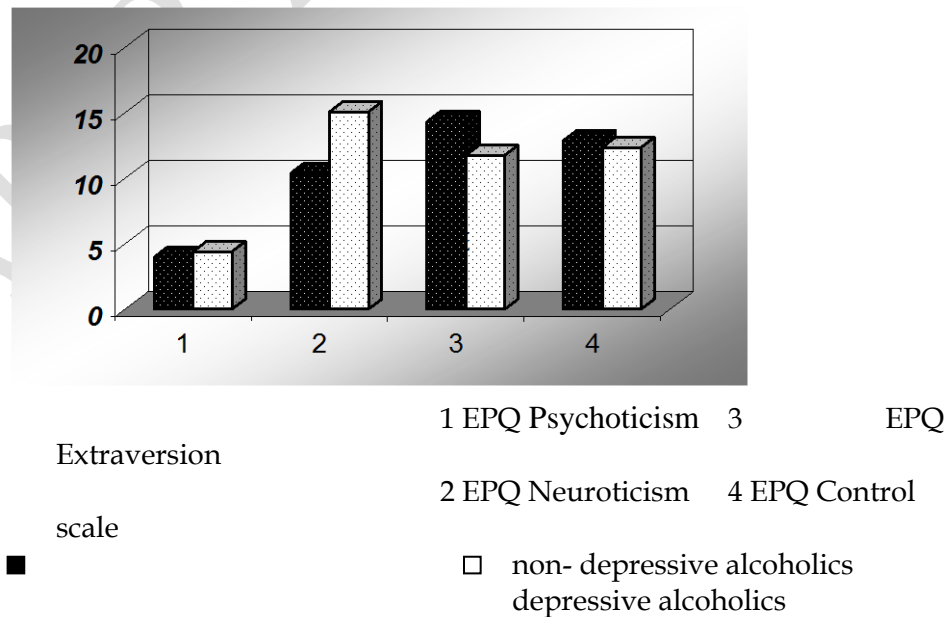


Table 1. The patterns of alcohol and cigarettes smoking and family history (FH+) among alcoholics and controls

	Alcoholics M±SD	Controls M±SD	t	p
Years of alcohol use	25.47 ± 8.35	26.40 ± 8.64	-0,367	n.s.
Alcohol units per week	65.52 ± 27.49	4.20± 5.53	19.585	< 0,01
Max alcohol units per occasion	13.93± 5.04	2.57 ±1.72	18.114	<0.01
Daily cigarettes number	27.91 ±17.29	14.17 ±14.39	3.903	<0.01
Years of smoking	20.20 ±10.46	11.93 ± 12.26	3.297	< 0,01
Family history (FH+)	% (n)	% (n)	χ ²	p
FH+ for alcoholism	77.9% (67)	26.7% (8)	25.554	<0.01
FH+ for depression	9.3% (8)	0% (0)	2.997	n.s.
FH+ for suicide	10.5% (9)	16.7% (5)	0.806	n.s.

Table 2. The pattern of cigarettes smoking and alcoholism, the number of treatment and MAST score differences between non-depressive (And) and depressive (Ad) alcoholics

	And (n=43)	Ad (n=43)	t	p
Daily cigarettes number	27.21 ± 16.27	28.60 ± 18.43	-0,372	n.s.
Years of smoking	18.1± 10.46	22.28 ± 10.16	1.872	0.065
Number of treatment	1.14 ± 0.41	1.37± 0.66	- 1.968	0.052

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