

## Pattern of alcohol consumption among workers of a technical-agricultural college: transversal study

Padrão de consumo de álcool entre trabalhadores de um colégio técnico-agrícola: estudo transversal

Patrón de consumo de alcohol entre los trabajadores de una escuela técnica agrícola: investigación transversal

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**Abstract: Objective:** to draw the pattern of alcohol consumption among workers of a technical-agricultural college in a Brazilian northeastern city. **Method:** a quantitative, transversal and descriptive research with 30 workers, with census sampling. It was listed as eligibility criteria: to be a public servant who has been permanent employed in the institution and who has been employed for at least six months. The collection took through the application of the Test for Identification of Problems related to the Use of Alcohol and the data were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics. **Results:** it was found that 73% of the workers have used alcohol in the last 12 months, above the national average. That the highest pattern of risk and harmful consumption occurred among men, aged between 30 and 39 years-old, married, with full postgraduate studies, with income between three and five minimum wages. **Conclusion:** the pattern of alcohol consumption identified was that the participants consumed alcoholic beverages in the last 12 months with a risk and harmful pattern.

**Descriptors:** Alcoholism; Alcohol-Related Disorders; Occupational Health; Occupational Health Nursing

**Resumo: Objetivo:** traçar o padrão de consumo de álcool entre trabalhadores de um colégio técnico-agrícola de uma cidade nordestina brasileira. **Método:** pesquisa quantitativa, transversal e descritiva com 30 trabalhadores, com amostragem censitária. Elencou-se como critérios de elegibilidade: ser servidor público concursado na instituição e com vínculo empregatício de, pelo menos, seis meses. A coleta ocorreu por meio da aplicação do Teste para Identificação de Problemas relacionados ao Uso de Álcool e os dados foram analisados por meio de estatística descritiva. **Resultados:** verificou-se que 73% dos trabalhadores consumiram álcool nos últimos 12 meses; que o maior padrão de consumo de risco e nocivo ocorreu entre homens, com idades entre 30 e 39 anos, casados, com pós-

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graduação completa, com renda entre três e cinco salários mínimos. **Conclusões:** o padrão de consumo de álcool identificado foi de que os participantes consumiram bebidas alcoólicas nos últimos 12 meses com padrão de risco e nocivo.

**Descritores:** Alcoolismo; Transtornos Relacionados ao Uso de Álcool; Saúde do trabalhador; Enfermagem do trabalho

**Resumen: Objetivo:** dibujar el patrón de consumo de alcohol entre los trabajadores de una escuela técnica agrícola, en una ciudad del nordeste brasileño. **Método:** se realizó una investigación cuantitativa, transversal y descriptiva con 30 trabajadores, con muestreo censal. Se definió como criterios de elegibilidad: ser servidor público concursado en la institución y con vínculo laboral de al menos seis meses. La recolección ocurrió mediante la aplicación de la prueba para Identificación de Problemas relacionados con el consumo de alcohol y los datos fueron analizados mediante estadística descriptiva. **Resultados:** se encontró que el 73% de los trabajadores han usado alcohol en los últimos 12 meses, por encima de la media nacional; el mayor patrón de consumo de riesgo y perjudicial ocurrió entre los hombres, de edades comprendidas entre 30 y 39 años de edad, casados, con estudios de postgrado completo, con ingreso mensual entre tres y cinco salarios mínimos. **Conclusión:** el patrón de consumo de alcohol identificado fue que los participantes consumieron bebidas alcohólicas en los últimos 12 meses con un patrón de riesgo y perjudicial.

**Descriptor:** Alcoholismo; Transtornos Relacionados con Alcohol; Salud Laboral; Enfermería del Trabajo

## Introduction

It is estimated that alcohol abuse is responsible for 3.8% of the world mortality rate, ranking third among the main health risk factors in the world. In addition, alcoholism is considered one of the main risk factors for neuropsychiatric disorders, dependence, depression, anxiety and non-communicable diseases, such as neoplasms and cardiovascular diseases.<sup>1</sup>

Data show that alcohol consumption in Brazil exceeds the world average, while the average consumption for people over 15 years-old is 6.2 liters per year, in Brazil, corresponds to 8.7 liters per person annually. In addition, the country has consumption rates of more than 140 countries, ranking 53rd among the most alcoholic in the world. It is projected for the year 2025 that consumption will rise again, reaching 10.1 liters per year per person. In this sense, the world rate of people who have already, at some point in their lives, excessive use of alcohol is 7.5% and in Brazil, this percentage rises to 12.5%, 5% more in relative to the overall rate.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the work environment, other researchers corroborate that alcoholism is considered a public health problem worldwide, characterized by the loss of quality of life, being

the third cause of absenteeism at work, the most frequent cause of early retirement and work accidents. work and the eighth cause of sickness allowance by the Brazilian Social Security.<sup>3</sup> It mainly causes delays, presentism, waste of materials, conflicts with co-workers, exaggerated and aggressive reactions to criticism, drowsiness and reduced productivity. This may imply a compromise in the quantity and quality of service provided by the worker, staff and company.<sup>4-5</sup>

A study conducted in the northeastern region of Brazil showed the sociodemographic profile of alcoholic dependents attended by a Psychosocial Care Center and found that 88.9% were male; 50.2% single; 87.6% aged 19 to 59 years-old and 48.6% employed. These data indicate that the age group (19 to 59 years-old) in which alcohol abuse is predominant, coincides with the productive age of the individual, i.e., the period in which he is inserted in the labor market. It is also pointed out that almost half of the sample had a job, which enhances the relationship between alcoholism and work.<sup>6</sup>

From the above, the following question was elaborated: How is the pattern of alcohol consumption among workers of a technical-agricultural college of a northeastern Brazilian city? Thus, the study aims to trace the pattern of alcohol consumption among workers of a technical-agricultural college of a northeastern Brazilian city.

## **Method**

This is a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive research conducted in a technical-agricultural college located within a university campus in northeastern Brazil. The college has 30 years of operation and offers courses in nursing technician, agricultural technician, computer technician and health surveillance technician, in addition to regular high school.

The study population consisted of all technical-administrative staff and teachers totaling 58 individuals, 22 of whom were technical-administrative staff and 36 professors. For

the selection of participants, census sampling was used and the sample consisted of 30 workers, as 28 individuals who did not meet the eligibility criteria were excluded: to be a public servant in the institution and with employment of at least six months.

The data collection period was from September to November 2015 and occurred through the application of an anonymous, self-administered and standardized individual questionnaire called "Alcohol Use Problems Test" (AUDIT).<sup>7-8</sup>

This questionnaire is public domain and consists of ten questions about alcohol use in the last year, symptoms of addiction and problems related to alcohol. Each question in the instrument offers a group of answers with a score from 0 to 4. In it, risk lines are identified through quantitative scores: the low risk use represents zone I with a score from 0 to 7; the use of risk (zone II) for those who score between 8 and 15; harmful use or zone III, for scores between 16 and 19; and zone IV addiction symptoms with a score of 20 or higher.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the AUDIT score, the following variables were collected: gender, age group, self-reported skin color, education, marital status, income, religion, socioeconomic profile data and length of service in the institution; managerial position and time in the managerial position and work schedule and referring to the occupational profile at the time of data collection.

Technical-administrative staff and professors were invited to participate voluntarily in the study. Prior to collection, participants were informed about the objectives of the study, the stages of the research and their expected benefits at both the individual and collective levels, potential risks and, finally, the signing of the Informed Consent Form (ICF). The collection was individual, private and took place at the workplace. The researcher did not intervene in their answers, remained close to the participants just to clarify any doubts that could arise regarding

the questions of the applied questionnaire. And then, the questionnaires were collected, being under the responsibility of the researcher.

The data collected was grouped and organized into a database typed in Microsoft Office Excel. Descriptive analyzes considered absolute (n) and relative (%) frequencies.

The research project was approved by the National Ethics and Research in Human Beings Committee of the Federal University of Piauí (CEP/UFPI), with case number 1,214,351 in 2015 and the research was conducted in accordance with the ethical and legal aspects established in Council Resolution 466/2012.

## Results

The total study sample consisted of 30 workers. It was found that of the research members, 53.3% are female, with a majority age range between 40 and 49 years-old. Regarding self-reported color, 43.3% had brown color; 53.3% are married, 63.4% received between three and five minimum wages; 90% are Catholics and 70% of participants completed their full postgraduate degree. The characterization of the socioeconomic profile of these workers is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Distribution of socioeconomic variables of study participants. Floriano, Brazil, 2015.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n=30</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	14	46,7
Female	16	<b>53,3</b>
<b>Age group (years)</b>		
19 to 29	6	20,0
30 to 39	7	23,3
40 to 49	8	<b>26,7</b>
50 to 59	4	13,3
>60	5	16,7
<b>Self-referenced color</b>		

Black	6	20,0
Parada	13	<b>43,3</b>
White	9	30,0
Yellow	2	6,7
<b>Education</b>		
Complete Elementary School	1	3,3
Incomplete graduate course	2	6,7
Complete graduate course	4	13,3
Incomplete post-graduate course	2	6,7
Complete post-graduate course	21	<b>70,0</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	16	<b>53,3</b>
Divorced	2	6,7
Widower	3	10,0
Single	9	30,0
<b>Per capita income</b>		
From one to three minimum wages (724,00)	7	23,3
From three to five minimum wages (724,00)	19	<b>63,4</b>
From five to ten minimum wages (724,00)	4	13,3
<b>Religion</b>		
Catholic	27	<b>90,0</b>
Others	3	10,0

Regarding the occupational profile, it is observed that 50.0% of the participants reported working time of up to 5 years; 73.3% reported not exercising leadership positions during the data collection period. About the 8 participants who held leadership positions, 75% highlighted that they worked in this position for up to 5 years. Regarding working hours, 76.7% reported being a day laborer, according to Table 2.

**Table 2:** Occupational variables distribution of study participants. Florianópolis, Brazil, 2015.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n=30</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Service time (years)</b>		
Up to 5 years	15	<b>50,0</b>
6 to 10 years	4	13,3
11 to 20 years	2	6,7
21 to 30 years	3	10,0
>31 years	6	20,0
<b>Leadership position (in the institution)</b>		
YES	8	26,7
NO	22	<b>73,3</b>
<b>Leadership time (in the institution)</b>		
Up to 5 years	6	<b>75,0</b>

6 to 10 years	2	25,0
<b>Work hours</b>		
Day laborer	23	<b>76,7</b>
Morning or afternoon shift	4	13,3
Night shift	3	10,0

A Tabela 3 mostra a descrição do AUDIT quanto à quantidade e à frequência de consumo de álcool pelos trabalhadores e observou-se que 66,7% afirmaram ter consumido bebidas alcoólicas nos últimos 12 meses, sendo que 33,3% dos trabalhadores eram abstêmios. Não se obteve, entre os participantes, padrão de consumo de provável dependência. O consumo de bebidas alcoólicas nos últimos 12 meses foi mais frequente mensalmente ou menos (23,3%) e de duas a quatro vezes por mês (23,3%), ou seja, os valores se equipararam.

**Table 3:** Distribution of alcohol consumption pattern of study participants. Florianópolis, Brazil, 2015.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n=30</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Alcohol Consumption Pattern</b>		
Abstains (abstainers without the low risk)	10	33,3
Low risk consumption *	12	<b>40,0</b>
Risk consumption	7	23,3
Harmful consumption	1	3,4
Probable dependence	0	0,0
<b>Consume frequency</b>		
Never (total abstainers)	11	36,7
Monthly or less	7	23,3
2 to 4 times a month	7	<b>23,3</b>
2 to 3 times a week	3	10,0
4 or more times a week	2	6,7

Subtitle:\* consumption pattern without abstainers.

Regarding alcohol consumption according to the participants' AUDIT score, it was found in this research that 26.7% had a risky and harmful alcohol consumption pattern (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Alcohol consumption distribution according to AUDIT score of study participants. Florianópolis, Brazil, 2015.

<b>Classification</b>	<b>n=30</b>	<b>%</b>
Low risk consumption (<8 AUDIT)	22	73,3
Risk and harmful consumption (≥ 8 AUDIT)	8	26,7

According to Table 5, 67.7% of the workers answered the questions on the AUDIT questionnaire related to alcohol use and abuse (low risk, risk and harmful), and were excluded from this analysis the employees who said they had not consumed alcohol in the last 12 months.

Thus, 45% of workers could not stop drinking and 20% failed to do as expected due to drinking. Regarding the need to drink in the morning to feel better after having drunk a lot the night before, 100% of the workers never answered, 25% have already felt remorse after drinking and 25% were unable to remember what happened due to drinking.

**Table 5:** Frequency distribution and consequences of study participants' alcohol consumption. Floriano, Brazil, 2015.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n=20</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Frequency of non-stop drinking</b>		
Never	11	<b>55,0</b>
Less than once a month	6	30,0
Monthly	1	5,0
Weekly	0	0,0
Daily or almost daily	2	10,0
<b>He failed to make what was expected due to drink</b>		
Never	16	<b>80,0</b>
Less than once a month	4	20,0
Monthly	0	0,0
Weekly	0	0,0
<b>Need to drink in the morning</b>		
Never	20	<b>100,0</b>
Less than once a month	0	0,0
Monthly	0	0,0
Weekly	0	0,0
<b>Feeling of remorse after drinking</b>		
Never	15	<b>75,0</b>
Less than once a month	4	20,0
Monthly	1	5,0
Weekly	0	0,0
<b>Inability to remember what happened last night because of the drink</b>		
Never	15	<b>75,0</b>
Less than once a month	4	20,0
Monthly	1	5,0



In addition to the data listed in the tables regarding dose intake on a typical day, it was found that 40% of participants consumed three or four doses. It is noted the frequency with which these servers consumed five or more doses at a time, as 70% reported this consumption with some frequency, among which 50% reported consuming five or more doses less than once a month.

## **Discussion**

The proportion of men and women in the study was almost equivalent, reinforcing women's participation in the labor market, assuming the role of maintaining the household and household expenses. This fact contrasts with the old social representations engendered by the symbolic capital that defined that women were less capable, fragile sex, which needed protection, while men were attributed the strength and power of protection, claiming them superior.<sup>10-11</sup> The current reality is very different, even with all the still existing prejudices of inferiority, women become essential in the workplace, as their organization, creativity, posture, responsibility and even their sensitivity becomes more valued every day.<sup>11</sup>

The sample consisted mostly of workers aged 40 to 49 years-old and married. These results corroborate with other studies<sup>9,12</sup> that further emphasize that this population also affirms itself with the higher rate of absenteeism, thus increasing the demand for workers' health care services, due to health complications caused by age.

With regard to education, it was observed that most participants had completed postgraduate education, followed by those who had completed higher education. This data that contacts that most of the administrative technicians attended higher education. It was also found that most of these servants had per capita income between three and five minimum wages (63.4%), i.e., the majority of workers had low income compared to their education, a fact that refers to the devaluation of workers, since most of these servers have postgraduate degrees, such

as masters and doctorates. Similar data were found by another author,<sup>9</sup> in which the per capita income among workers at a university in Rio de Janeiro was one to five minimum wages.

Regarding occupational variables, the results are consistent with a study conducted in 2010, which showed a predominance of employees from a university with less than five years of work.<sup>13</sup> Thus, it is clear that some people have little service and are still working. By adapting to the demands of employment, the other half already have many years of work done, and because of this and their age may be more prone to work-related problems. When asked about leadership position at the time of data collection, the results are reaffirmed by other researchers,<sup>1</sup> who found in their study that most servants, 69.6%, were day laborers.

Some studies<sup>11-15</sup> have a proportion between 40% and 50% of abstainers, including a study conducted in Rio de Janeiro to describe and discuss the prevalence and pattern of alcohol and drug use among health professionals, a study with objective of conducting a medical leave survey at UFRJ, as well as a survey for the National Survey on Alcohol and Drugs in 2012. In this context, the on-screen study reinforces the need for services aimed at workers' health, since the proportion of consumption reached standards above the national average, disagreeing with percentages observed in other publications.<sup>16-17</sup>

There are several factors related to this increase, among which stand out the influence of alcohol advertising on the induction of this consumption in Brazil. These stand out for their quality and creativity, and associate pleasant and joyful situations with alcohol consumption; where the environments are always permeated by beautiful women, accomplished men and relaxed situation. All this denotes an attractive power, which induces the population to pursue these situations suggested as ideal.<sup>4</sup>

In a survey on depression, stress, anxiety and alcohol use among 1,239 workers in the technical-administrative category of a public university in the interior of the state of São Paulo, they stated that self-reported alcohol use problems were significantly associated with

depression. 12 Workers who reported having problems with alcohol use were 2.76 times more likely to be depressed than subjects who did not report this situation.

The results show that 10% of workers consume five or more doses of alcohol, on one occasion, monthly. The consumption of alcohol in large quantities on a single occasion is internationally called *bingedrinking* and in Brazil, it is called "heavy episodic drinking". This type of behavior is very dangerous for both those who practice it and the people around them. This fact is closely linked to drunkenness, a major cause of consumer-related harm, including car accidents, fights, and increased vulnerability to unprotected sex and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).<sup>2</sup>

Most of the time, workers dependent on alcoholic beverages do not seek worker services but emergency units already in the advanced state of dependence, mainly due to the fact that, in emergency care, anamnesis generally does not identify labor aspects. Denial of dependence may be one of the reasons for the lack of demand for occupational health services. Another important factor is the diagnostic underreporting of work-related chronic alcoholism, a reality that social prejudice encourages masking. The worker may be removed from work after some time due to complications of alcohol in the body and may be early retired due to disability.<sup>1,14,18</sup>

It is essential that society, and especially health professionals, shed the social stigma attached to excessive alcohol consumption, no longer treating alcoholism as a deviation from behavior, a voluntary, amoral and incorrect act and see it as the disease needs specialized treatment, social and family support.<sup>19</sup>

Other data from this study are related to the proportion of workers who said they could not stop drinking once they started drinking (45%), reaffirming the degree of lack of control in relation to alcohol consumption. This pattern of lack of control draws attention to the acute and chronic consequences of this situation, among which dependence can be cited, even if a consumption pattern for probable dependence has not been reached.<sup>20</sup>

Although the results do not indicate percentages for harm to themselves and others caused by alcohol consumption and need for drink in the morning, 20% of workers who consumed alcohol stated that they had failed to do as expected due to drinking at least once a month. This question is closely related to absenteeism, as alcohol abuse is one of the main reasons for absenteeism and work accidents.<sup>14</sup>

Another relevant finding refers to the inability to remember what happened the night before due to drinking, so that 25% of the servers who consumed alcohol reported with some frequency in the last 12 months, the inability to remember what happened. This is very worrying because it significantly increases the chances of acquiring an STI, including HIV/AIDS, as well as unwanted pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>

This value is twice as high as that found in a study among university employees in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, where 32.5% of the sample population reported consuming five or more doses at some frequency.<sup>9</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The pattern of alcohol consumption among workers of a technical-agricultural college of a northeastern Brazilian city identified was that the participants consumed alcoholic beverages in the last 12 months with hazardous and harmful drinking pattern; however, it was not obtained among the standard sample of consumption of likely dependence.

Among the limitations of this research, we highlight the lack of a larger number of available participants who fit the criteria outlined. In addition, this study was built with data from a specific context of a region of Brazil suggesting that it should be developed in other regions.

In view of the results, it is necessary to implement a worker health care sector in this institution, with specialized multidisciplinary care, with professionals trained to deal with this

and other types of health problems that affect the worker, as well as stress; Professional demotivation that can lead to depression and work overload because all of these factors can somehow be related to alcohol use of other drugs.

It should also be considered that there is still much to be done, especially at the national level, regarding the awareness of the population about the short and long term consequences of this consumption, such as: changing the expectation that the drink is related to welfare and social interaction; promoting greater dissemination of educational advertisements on the risk of alcohol consumption and continuous monitoring of alcohol use, especially among the population under 18 years-old.

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### **How to cite this Article**

Soares LS, Silva MPM, Rocha RC, Silva GRF, Nogueira LT, Figueiredo MLF. Pattern of alcohol consumption among workers of a technical-agricultural college: transversal study. Rev. Enferm. UFSM. 2019 [Acesso em: Anos Mês Dia];vol e42: 1-20. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.5902/2179769226945>