

# The importance of social support in the treatment of alcohol abuse - a study from Croatia

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# Issues with the definition of alcohol abuse

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- ❑ Alcohol abuse – a medical and sociopathological phenomenon
- ❑ Various definitions focusing on different aspects of the phenomenon
- ❑ Alcohol abuse is a lifestyle and a style of behavior, and only when psychological, physical and social complications appear, then it can become a disease (Hudolin, 1991) - **family, society and the environment in general have an influence on recovery**

# Alcohol abuse problem in Croatia

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- ❑ Croatia is above the European average in terms of the so-called of heavy episodic drinking and that 32.1% of the population drinks in this way, with three times more men in that category compared to women (WHO, 2018)
- ❑ Data from the WHO report (2018) indicate a slightly higher prevalence of alcohol abusers in Croatia, more precisely, 6.1% of men are addicted to alcohol and 1.5% of women are addicted to alcohol.
- ❑ Numerous researches (Glavak Tkalic et al., 2012; 2016; Konstantinovic Vilic and Zunic, 2014; Kovco Vukadin, 2016;) point out the problems regarding alcohol consumption in Croatia = first consumption 15-17 yrs of age (sometimes 14 and lower); problems with binge drinking (student population and population between 45-55 yrs of age)

# Alcohol abuse treatment in Croatia

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- ❑ In Croatia, the treatment of alcohol abuse can be "roughly" divided into institutional, which implies complete or partial hospitalization, and non-institutional, which implies outpatient treatment or visits to individual/group psychotherapy, family therapy or **visits to clubs for treated alcoholics** (Prekratić, 2016).
- ❑ **Clubs for Treated Alcoholics (CTA)**
- ❑ Since 1964
- ❑ CTA clubs are defined as „multi-family communities that are conceived on the principles of self-help and mutual assistance of its members that operate continuously with the aim of changing the lifestyle of treated alcohol abusers as well as their growth and maturation.” (Zoričić, Ivančić and Matošić, 2006).
- ❑ when CTA were founded and expanded in Croatia, the aim was that the treatment of alcoholism should take place in the patient’s community and that the individual's family should also be involved in the treatment;

# Aims of the research

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- The main goal of the research was to examine the functioning and effectiveness of CTA's from the city of Zagreb, from the perspective of treated alcohol abusers, their support companions who accompany them to the CTA meetings, and the perspective of managers of the CTA's
- Aim of this paper - to examine the differences in perceived social support between different demographic groups (age, gender, education, marital status, employment)

# Instrument - The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

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- ❑ 19 statements
- ❑ Sample questions: There is a special person who is there when I need it; My family really tries to help me; I can count on friends in difficult times; The club manager tries to help me; Coming to the CTA helps me better understand my alcohol problem
- ❑ Likert type scale (1- I don't agree at all; 7- I completely agree)

# Methodology

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- ❑ Data collection – between June, 2019 and July, 2019
- ❑ Paper-pencil
- ❑ On the group meetings and individually
- ❑ Voluntary basis and anonymously
- ❑ 30 minutes to answer
- ❑ For the purposes of achieving the goals of this paper, descriptive analysis and chi-square test were used (SPSS software)

# Sample

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- 227 individuals
- **Mean age:** 57,5 years (Min. 26., Max 81)
- **Gender:** Male: 81,5%; Female = 18,5%
- **Level of Education:** Finished elementary school = 9,3%; Finished secondary school = 60,8%;
- Completed undergraduate studies = 13,2%; Completed graduate studies = 14,1 %; (mag)Ph.D = 6%
- **Current partner status:** Single = 29.5%; Marriage or extramatrimonial union = 58,1%; widow/widower = 6,2%; Other = 6,2%
- **Current work status:** Employed = 49,6%; Unemployed = 12,8%; Retired = 37,6%

# RESULTS - GENDER

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- ❑ There are significant statistical differences between men and women for the following items:
- ❑ My family is really trying to help ( $\chi^2(6) = 15.67, p = 0.016$ );
- ❑ I get the emotional help and support I need from my family. ( $\chi^2(6) = 17.43, p = 0.08$ );
- ❑ My friends are really trying to help ( $\chi^2(6) = 21.90, p = 0.01$ );

# RESULTS – Marriage status

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- ❑ There are statistically significant differences between those are married/extramarital union and those who are single or widowed or in other type of relationship:
- ❑ I have a special person with whom I can share happiness and sadness ( $\chi^2(18) = 36.31, p = 0.006$ );
- ❑ My family is really trying to help ( $\chi^2(18) = 34.29, p = 0.012$ )
- ❑ There is a special person who is a real source of comfort ( $\chi^2(18) = 36.87, p = 0.05$ )
- ❑ My friends are really trying to help ( $\chi^2(1) = 30.42, p = 0.033$ )

# CONCLUSION

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- ❑ Results suggest certain demographic characteristics have an impact on people's perception of support
- ❑ Bigger samples - separate samples (men and women, other demographic characteristics)
- ❑ Treatment should be tailored for different people/groups (Risks Need Responsivity approach)
- ❑ More research on the subject and different statistical operations to see other significant results

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**THANK YOU!**

