


RESEARCH ARTICLE (ORIGINAL) 

Adolescents' experiences of psychoactive substances and their interface with gender, politics, and the media

Vivências dos adolescentes acerca das substâncias psicoativas e sua interface com gênero, políticas e mídia

Experiencias de los adolescentes con las sustancias psicoactivas y su relación con el género, la política y los medios de comunicación

Camila Souza de Almeida ¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7032-0945>Francisco Carlos Félix Lana ² <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9043-3181>¹ University of the State of Minas Gerais, Divinópolis, Minas Gerais, Brazil² Federal University of Minas Gerais, Department of Maternal-Child Nursing and Public Health, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil**Abstract****Background:** Psychoactive substance use among adolescents can result in harm linked to sociocultural conditions.**Objective:** To understand adolescents' experiences of the sociocultural determinants of psychoactive substance use.**Methodology:** Mixed-methods study conducted with adolescents from Divinópolis, Minas Gerais. In the quantitative axis ($n = 303$), the modules on the use of alcohol and illicit drugs from the National School Health Survey were applied. The qualitative axis ($n = 18$) was predominant and followed the quantitative axis. A descriptive analysis of the associated factors was performed for the quantitative variables. In the qualitative axis, the participants' narratives were analyzed based on social determination.**Results:** Adolescents who drink alcohol intend to continue working and studying after finishing school and to have friends who also drink alcohol. As for gender, consumption among women is not socially accepted. Public policies and the media do not reach adolescents when it comes to psychoactive substances.**Conclusion:** Adolescents reproduced the discourse of their social group, demonstrating the ethical and moral precepts of their community.**Keywords:** adolescent behavior; illicit drugs; public policy; social behavior; economics; gender identity**Resumo****Enquadramento:** O consumo de substâncias psicoativas por adolescentes pode acarretar danos, sendo esses relacionados com as condições socioculturais.**Objetivo:** Compreender as vivências dos adolescentes sobre os determinantes socioculturais do uso de substâncias psicoativas.**Metodologia:** Pesquisa de método misto, conduzida com adolescentes de Divinópolis, Minas Gerais. No eixo quantitativo ($n = 303$) aplicaram-se os módulos de uso de bebidas e drogas ilícitas da Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde do Escolar. O eixo qualitativo ($n = 18$) foi preponderante e seguiu-se ao quantitativo. Realizou-se análise descritiva dos fatores associados para as variáveis quantitativas. No qualitativo analisaram-se os discursos com base na determinação social.**Resultados:** Os adolescentes que fazem uso de bebidas alcoólicas pretendem após o ciclo escolar continuar a trabalhar e estudar e tendem a fazer amizade com quem também faz uso. Quanto ao sexo, o consumo por mulheres não é socialmente aceite. As políticas públicas e os media não alcançam os adolescentes quando o assunto é substâncias psicoativas.**Conclusão:** Os adolescentes reproduziram o discurso do seu grupo social, demonstrando os preceitos éticos e morais da sua comunidade.**Palavras-chave:** comportamento do adolescente; drogas ilícitas; política pública; comportamento social; economia; identidade de gênero**Resumen****Marco contextual:** El consumo de sustancias psicoactivas por parte de los adolescentes puede causar daños, que están relacionados con las condiciones socioculturales.**Objetivo:** Comprender las experiencias de los adolescentes en cuanto a los determinantes socioculturales del uso de sustancias psicoactivas.**Metodología:** Investigación de método mixto, realizada con adolescentes de Divinópolis, Minas Gerais. En el eje cuantitativo ($n = 303$) se aplicaron los módulos de uso de bebidas y drogas ilícitas de la Encuesta Nacional de Salud Escolar. El eje cualitativo ($n = 18$) fue predominante y siguió al cuantitativo. Se llevó a cabo un análisis descriptivo de los factores asociados para las variables cuantitativas. En el cualitativo se analizaron los discursos basados en la determinación social.**Resultados:** Los adolescentes que consumen bebidas alcohólicas tienen la intención de seguir trabajando y estudiando después de la escuela y tienden a hacer amistad con los que también las consumen. En cuanto al sexo, el consumo por parte de las mujeres no está aceptado socialmente. Las políticas públicas y los medios de comunicación no llegan a los adolescentes cuando se trata de una sustancia psicoactiva.**Conclusión:** Los adolescentes reprodujeron el discurso de su grupo social, demostrando así los preceptos éticos y morales de su comunidad.**Palabras clave:** conducta del adolescente; drogas ilícitas; política pública; conducta social; economía; identidad de género**Corresponding author:**

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Introduction

Adolescence is a phase of intense physical and psychosocial changes, in which adolescents crave for new sensations and learning experiences (Faria-Filho, 2014). The use of psychoactive substances (PS) can emerge as one of these new sensations. Its use is one of the leading causes of disability and premature death worldwide, especially alcohol consumption (Jones, 2016).

The determinants of PS use among adolescents is one of the main issues that should be analyzed when researching the consumption of alcohol and drugs in this age group. To this end, it should be taken into account that the phenomena of health and illness, and consequently PS use, are part of a single process, in which biological factors are influenced by the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of individuals depending on their processes of social production and reproduction (Almeida & Gomes, 2014). Thus, the phenomenon of PS use should be analyzed based on the general, particular, and singular dimensions (Breilh, 2006).

In view of the above, it is relevant to understand the factors influencing PS use from the adolescents' perspective, so that government programs and the media can dialogue with their reality.

This article was extracted from a doctoral thesis that had four chapters, in which the social determinations of PS use in the daily life of adolescents were discussed. The chapter that originated this article aimed to understand adolescents' experiences of the sociocultural determinants of PS use.

Background

PS use among adolescents occurs in all cultures, and alcohol is one of the main substances used, causing serious damage to health in the short and long term (Liu et al., 2018). Its use among adolescents is high in developing countries such as Brazil and China, and, in China, consumption among adolescents aged 12 to 17 years, in a 30-day analysis period, was 42.2% (Liu et al., 2018). In Brazil, a study conducted in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, revealed an increase in binge drinking (heavy episodic drinking) between 2010 and 2012, from 35.6% to 39.9% (Jorge et al., 2017).

The analysis of PS use at the social level shows that alcohol is allowed by society, but its excessive consumption is not. On the other hand, the use of illicit drugs is condemned, and the user is socially stigmatized. Thus, PS abuse can be seen either as a disease or as a moral deviation, depending on the user's social position (Huang, Soto, Fujimoto, & Valente, 2014). This fact transforms the consumption that could be treated clinically and creates the need for improved health but blames only the individual for this harm.

In relation to adolescents, the overexposure of the media and the demands of postmodernity have transformed them into users who are marked by conflicts and the need for experimentation, longing to be socially accepted and

respond to the demands of the consumer market (Souza & Silva, 2006).

Thus, PS use is a multidimensional phenomenon with economic, social, and cultural aspects, and, to analyze it, it is necessary to address both the macrosocial and the singular dimensions of social determination. The macrosocial dimension is understood as the health-disease process at the collective level while the particular dimension unfolds in social groups, and the singular processes occur in the daily lives of individuals, with the influence of their genotype and phenotype (Lu et al., 2016).

Thus, when discussing the phenomenon of PS use among adolescents, merely descriptive data cannot cover the complexity of the problem. Both a statistical description and an in-depth understanding of the problem are required, one sustaining the other, considering the factors associated with consumption, but at the same time discussing its interface with the sociocultural and economic determinants in which the phenomenon unfolds (Abeldaño, Fernández, Ventura, & Estario, 2013).

Research question

What are adolescents' experiences of the sociocultural determinants of PS use?

Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods design. This type of research analyses both qualitative and quantitative data. An exploratory sequential approach was used, in which the qualitative axis was prioritized, and the results of both axes were integrated into the interpretation of data based on the theoretical framework (Breilh, 2006).

One way to minimize bias and increase the validity of the study was to perform the quantitative analysis first, because it is a sensitive topic surrounded by taboo, and many students could feel uncomfortable by participating in the qualitative study, exposing their experiences. With the quantitative axis being applied first, mutual trust was created, which facilitated the semi-structured interviews. In addition, the analysis of quantitative data intended to identify gaps and possible important issues for the qualitative phase.

The study was conducted with adolescents who attended the 9th grade in the city of Divinópolis, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The choice of this sample is justified by the fact that it was the same age group used in the 2015 National School Health Survey (PeNSE), whose questionnaires about general information and the use of alcohol and other drugs were used in the quantitative axis of this study (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2016). Data were collected between May 2017 and March 2018. Regarding the questions about alcohol experimentation and consumption, the 2015 PeNSE included eight questions: if the adolescent had already experimented with alcohol, if yes, what was the age of experimentation, how many drinking days per month, number of drinks

in the last 30 days, form of acquisition of the alcoholic beverage, alcohol-related problems, and about having friends who consumed alcohol (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2016).

The quantitative axis followed the same sampling criteria as the original research. Sample size was calculated to provide estimates of the prevalence of alcohol consumption by 9th-grade adolescents in the last 30 days, which is estimated at 23% in Brazil (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2016). Considering a population of 3,000 9th-grade students, with a maximum sampling error of 5%, in absolute values, 95% confidence interval, and sampling plan effect (conglomerate sampling plan effect) of 1.5, a sample of approximately 375 9th-grade students was estimated, already considering possible losses. Considering the average number of 30 students per class, a sample of approximately 13 schools (= 375/30) was estimated, proportionally allocated across the strata of public and private schools. Approximately 15% of the city's 9th-grade classes were in private schools, and 85% were in public schools. Thus, following the proportional distribution, the sample consisted of two private schools and 11 public schools. They were randomly selected. Considering the refusals and losses, a total of 303 respondents were obtained in the 13 selected schools.

The modules were applied at the institutions by the researcher. The inclusion criteria were: to be regularly enrolled in the 9th grade of the selected schools and to be present in the classroom on the day scheduled for the explanation of the project, as well as on the day of questionnaire application. Exclusion criteria were: not being present at the time of project explanation and on the day of questionnaire application. The adolescents who had some limitations regarding the self-completion of the questionnaire were assisted by the monitors in a specific room reserved for this purpose, without interference from the teachers.

In the quantitative analysis, an overall description was first made of the variables of the applied modules, with frequency distribution, measures of central tendency (mean), variability (standard deviation), and position (median, minimum, and maximum). In a second moment, the factors related to alcohol consumption among adolescents were associated based on the theoretical framework of social determination (Breilh, 2006). The response variable used was "Have you ever consumed alcohol?" and the response options were yes or no. The explanatory variables were grouped into categories of covariables. As this article is a clipping of a thesis, the covariates analyzed here will be: gender; what will you do when you finish school (continue to study / only work / continue to study and work / follow another plan / do not know), and do you have friends who drink? (yes/no).

The collected data were stored and organized into an electronic spreadsheet and analyzed using STATA 12.0 statistical software. Soon after, all variables were descriptively analyzed, and the prevalence of alcohol consumption in life-time was estimated with the respective 95% confidence interval (95%CI).

In the univariate analysis, Pearson's chi-square test was

used to assess possible factors associated with consumption. Next, the Poisson model was used with robust variances, both simple and multiple. For the analysis of univariate variables, a *p*-value below 0.20 was used. In the final model, only variables with a significance level equal to or lower than 5% remained. Prevalence ratio (PR) values were estimated with 95% CI.

After the quantitative analysis, the qualitative axis was applied, which was the preponderant one. Based on the theoretical framework and the quantitative axis analyses, a semi-structured guide was elaborated. It was divided into three parts: the first part addressed the macro-social dimension, with questions about gender, violence, the media, and general opinion on PS use; the second part had singular questions about the adolescent's school, family, friends, perception about neighborhood and other social contacts; and, finally, the third part included questions about the adolescent to understand his/her PS use, feelings, and experiences.

The six schools with the highest number of students that participated in the first phase were selected. These schools were a municipal public school, four state public schools, and a private school, and then three students were randomly selected from each institution. This choice aimed to increase the diversity of views about the phenomenon, and if the theoretical and data saturation was not reached with the 18 interviewed students, new interviews would be conducted. However, saturation was reached with the initial number of interviews (Saunders et al., 2018). The selection criterion of the participants in the qualitative axis was to have participated in the quantitative axis and to be at the school on the day scheduled for the semi-structured interview. If the selected student was not present, a new selection was performed. Exclusion criteria were not being present on the day of the interview or attending another pedagogical activity.

Data were collected in the schools, during class hours, in a private room. The average interview time was 25 minutes, and a recorder was used after the participants' authorization. Alphanumeric codes were used to identify the interviews, and the letters M (male) or F (female) were followed by the interview number. The field diary played an important role in the interpretation and discussion of research data.

The qualitative results were interpreted through hermeneutics-dialectics because it was believed that the study should cover the meanings attributed by the adolescents to PS use and because it relates to the theoretical framework (Alencar, Nascimento, & Alencar, 2012). The trajectory took place in the following order: data sorting, classification, and final analysis, with every phase being dynamic and complementary (Alencar et al., 2012).

Data were sorted by reading both the interviews and the field diary. Data classification enabled the creation of meaning units, in which the horizontal and vertical syntheses were performed. Horizontal synthesis allowed observing the differences and equalities in the interviewees' accounts, and vertical synthesis allowed generalizing and gaining an insight into the perception of each interviewee. Then, a transversal reading was carried out, comparing the

material with the theoretical framework and the field diary. Based on this reading, the fundamental determinations were built, that is, a summary of the field observations of each school together with the cross-cutting, horizontal analysis of the meaning units. With these stages, the general fundamental determination of all interviews was built. In the final analysis, the sequential exploratory strategy was used, and the quantitative and qualitative axes were integrated and interpreted in light of the theoretical framework (Creswell & Clark, 2013). After these stages, three categories were structured, which originated four chapters in the thesis. This article discusses the second chapter and is divided into three subcategories.

This project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (opinion no. 2.007.097). The selected individuals signed an informed consent form, and the adolescents' parents/guardians consented to their participation through an informed consent form. The research complies with the assumptions in Resolution 466/12 of the Brazilian National Health Council.

Results

The quantitative axis had a representative sample of 303 adolescents who attended the 9th grade in 2017, of whom 54.7% ($n = 158$) were male students, with a mean age of 14 years. Regarding the respondents of the alcohol use module, 298 adolescents answered whether they had ever consumed alcoholic beverages, of whom 50.3% ($n = 150$) had drink alcohol at some point in their life, with an average age of onset of 13 years (12.8 ± 1.9). The table below (Table 1) shows the univariate analysis of the determinants associated with alcohol consumption that are relevant to the discussion.

In this analysis, associations were found between drinking alcoholic beverages and the intentions after finishing school, with the adolescents who intended only to work being 3.11 times more likely to have already consumed alcohol. In addition, having friends who consume alcohol also increases the likelihood of consuming alcoholic beverages.

Table 1

Univariate analysis of the assessment of the factors associated with alcohol consumption among 9th-grade students ($n = 298$)

	Total Frequency	Alcohol prevalence	<i>p</i> -value*	PR† [95%CI]‡
Gender				
Female	144 (47.7%)	66 (46.2%)	0.166	1
Male	158 (52.3%)	84 (54.2%)		1.17 [0.93; 1.48]
Intention after finishing school				
Only study	42 (14.2%)	9 (21.4%)	0.001§	1
Only work	19 (6.4%)	12 (66.7%)		3.11 [1.60; 6.06]
Study and work	180 (60.8%)	98 (54.7%)		2.55 [1.41; 4.63]
Follow another plan	17 (5.7%)	7 (41.2%)		1.92 [0.85; 4.33]
Don't know	38 (12.8%)	20 (55.6%)		2.59 [1.35; 4.96]
Friends who drink				
No	24 (8.8%)	3 (13.0%)	<0.001§	1
Yes	249 (91.2%)	139 (56.0%)		4.30[1.48;12.44]

Note. **p* = Percentile; PR = †Prevalence ratio; ‡95%CI = 95% Confidence Interval; § Statistically significant difference after univariate analysis.

In the multivariate analysis (Table 2), the variables intention after finishing school and friends who drink are still associated, with those who intend to work and study after finishing school being those who are more likely to

have already consumed alcoholic beverages (95%CI = 1.33;4.19). The association between drinking and having friends who drink remained significant.

Table 2
Multivariate analysis of the assessment of the factors associated with alcohol consumption among 9th-grade students (n = 298)

Variable	p-value*	PR [†] [95% CI] [‡]
Intention after finishing school		
Only study		1
Only work	0.067	1.94 [0.95; 3.95]
Study and work	0.003 [§]	2.36 [1.33; 4.19]
Follow another plan	0.141	1.82 [0.82; 4.05]
Don't know	0.011	2.30 [1.21; 4.38]
Friends who drink		
No		1
Yes	0.009 [§]	3.87 [1.40; 10.66]

Note. *p – Percentile; PR – [†]Prevalence ratio; [‡]95%CI - 95% Confidence Interval; [§]Statistically significant difference after multivariate analysis.

In the second phase (qualitative), 18 participants were interviewed, of whom 50.0% (n = 9) were female students, with a mean age of 14 years. Of these, 33.4% (n = 6) had never consumed alcoholic beverages in their lives. In relation to the administrative dependence of the six students who had never consumed alcohol, 66.6% (n = 4) attended state schools. Regarding the consumption of alcoholic beverages and gender, 77.0% (n = 7) of the girls and 55.5% (n = 5) of the boys had already consumed alcohol at some point in their lives. None of the interviewees in this research axis reported using illicit drugs.

The first subcategory is called The social imaginary: gender and PS use, in which it was observed that alcohol consumption among women is still considered a deviation when compared to consumption among men. The analysis revealed a standardized discourse about the equality between men and women, but contradictions were found when these same adolescents considered episodes of alcohol use among women worse than those that occurred among men. “I think that it (society) sees women differently, unfortunately. Because there’s that thing that women can’t drink, can’t do anything wrong. Then when women drink, they think it’s wrong!” (F14, November 2017). “Women are worse than men. They drink more, they’re more work. Everybody looks and thinks that! Women have to set the example!” (M15, November 2017).

M15 studied in one of the state schools, in a neighborhood near the center, and he reported that his mother drank alcohol occasionally at home, while his father and brother drank more than her. The adolescent has a nuclear family, and, in his accounts, he reproduces the family view regarding alcohol consumption among women.

Another aspect addressed by adolescents is machismo. F10 and F11 reflect on how the social imaginary permeates the phenomenon. Both of them come from a vulnerable social class, study in the most peripheral school included in the study, drink alcohol, and have no father figure. The father of F10 was arrested at the time of the interview, and the father of F11 died due to an accident that occurred when he was intoxicated by PS.

I don’t see any difference! Women drink the same. It’s the same thing to me, but when I think about it... It’s uglier for women, isn’t it? Because it’s machismo! Then the woman falls on the street, and it’s ugly, now for men it’s OK to be lying there on the ground. (F10, November 2017)

“I think that there’s prejudice, yes. A woman who drinks a lot is a b****, right? Everyone talks about her, men are just having fun” (F11, November 2017).

The adolescents’ accounts demonstrate how their experiences influence the perception of the phenomenon, but, although the majority of adolescents indicate that alcohol consumption should be treated equally, they also report some contradictions.

“It’s not cool for girls to get dizzy and fall to the ground” (F7, November 2017). “He (boyfriend) thinks it’s ugly to drink and fall down. Then I avoid it” (F10, November 2017).

F10 explains that she avoids drinking alcohol due to her boyfriend’s control, and she even reported, as mentioned earlier, that machismo inhibits alcohol consumption among women, thus showing her subjection to social paradigms.

The violence that women suffer at the hands of their partners due to PS use was also reported by F10 and F11. The mother of F10 worked at night, and she suffered aggressions when she got home.

Because he (father) was very jealous, then sometimes he would assault her (mother). I’d get sad, I’d try to separate them, ask him to stop. It just didn’t work. I can’t hit my dad. (F10, November 2017)

F11 describes that, because he used PS, her father sold their household items, forcing both mother and daughter to move to another city.

He was always using drugs, and he had to get the money, so he sold things from our house. [...] They even separated [the mother separated from the father], but he stole her anyway. Then we moved. (F11, November 2017)

The second subcategory addressed how adolescents per-

ceived the laws and policies on PS use and selling. The adolescents were aware of the laws prohibiting alcohol use by minors (under the age of 18) and the use of illicit drugs.

I know that if we're under 18 we can't drink or buy alcohol and stuff. Now drugs? No! About a law, I never read an article, I never read anything that prohibits the use of drugs and such, I only know that drugs are not legal, but only that. (F10, November 2017)

Adolescents report that the laws in Brazil are not applied because it is easy to purchase alcoholic beverages.

I don't think it's that efficient. I think there should be more inspections because some young people manage to buy them, even with fake IDs, or they ask adults to buy and then pay them, so I don't find it so efficient. (M18, March 2018)

"It doesn't work! Back in my neighborhood, my cousins drink and sell (illicit drugs) and are all underage" (F7, November 2017).

The above statements are from adolescents attending both public and private schools, with diverse social realities: M18 is from a private school and with a history of not using PS and F7 drinks alcohol and lives in a peripheral neighborhood where there is drug trafficking. In all these spaces, adolescents perceive that it is easy to buy and use PS.

The third subcategory is called The media and the (dis)service in relation to PS. As for the role of the media, adolescents believe that anti-drug advertisements are ineffective.

I don't think it (advertisements) influences, it does nothing. If you want to make the person quit, you have to explain it better, you have to get into their head. And a commercial, I don't know! It would have to be a conversation to understand the person and the person to understand you, and the commercial doesn't do that. (F14, November 2017)

Adolescents perceived advertisements about illicit drugs as ineffective. They believe that drug use is a road of no return. Alcohol advertising was perceived as more effective.

For example, alcohol companies are far more popular than the commercials against them. You see a lot of alcohol advertising, and because the brand has been around for long it ends up influencing the person to drink. Because on TV it seems like a wonderful thing, there's always a beautiful woman, the guy gets what he wants, it seems like a fun thing, but in real life it's not like that [...]. So people end up believing in that vision and being influenced. That's why they're going to end up in that world, and they can't get out. (M6, November 2017)

M16 attends a private school, does not drink alcohol, and his family owns a company. This teenager introduces a different view of alcohol advertising that is associated with the need to sell the product, reporting that alcohol is just another consumer good, so it needs advertising.

It's a way of spreading the word. I think they (the beverage industry) have to advertise it. They're not wrong, they have to sell the product. In business,

they need to sell, so much so that now they are not so appealing as they used to be. (M16, March 2018)

Discussion

This study found an association between alcohol consumption and the intention to study and work after finishing school. These future actions and intentions of adolescents reflect what society expects of them, being surrounded by the power of the media and market forces (Souza & Silva, 2006). Continuing to study is important because it confers the perspective of success through a profession, but the fact that they want to work shows that labour market integration is important because it is through a source of income that the human being is socially part of postmodernity (Bauman, 2006).

Another important aspect is the network of friends. Many adolescents will consume alcohol due to peer pressure (Huang et al., 2014). Social meaning is what makes an object useful to a certain group, becoming more important for its symbolic value than for its physical properties (Jones, 2016). The need to drink is not associated with the quality of the product or the need of the organism, but with the need created by the media and the economy (Bauman, 2006).

With regard to alcohol consumption among women, this study found higher consumption among male participants, which is not the case in 2015 PeNSE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2016). The research conducted in Hungary also corroborates the results found in this study (Varga & Piko, 2015).

Despite the high prevalence of consumption in males, no significant association was found between alcohol consumption and the gender variable. A possible explanation would be that there are other more relevant factors associated with alcohol consumption than gender because there have been some behavioral changes in recent decades that have increased the opportunities for alcohol consumption among women (Faria-Filho, 2014).

But even with the changes that have occurred and the freedom conquered, an ideal has been culturally built that dictates what attitudes and roles are expected. There is a duality because women are expected to be both obedient and competitive in the labor market (Faria-Filho, 2014; Machado & Boarini, 2013).

Some laws and policies ensure gender equality, but in practice they are not socially legitimized, and the same occurs with PS use. This lack of legitimacy occurs due to the legalization or prohibition of drugs or the fact that the perception of gender equality depends on the social representations that run through the political and economic moment (Machado & Boarini, 2013).

Adolescents showed basic knowledge about the legislation on PS, but even so, they consumed alcohol and had difficulties in perceiving the associated risks. A study conducted in Spain with adolescents showed similar results (Suárez-Relinque, Arroyo, Ferrer, & Ochoa, 2017). The purchase and use of PS by adolescents is a common practice in the city where the research was conducted,

which can be seen as a lack of supervision. In countries such as Norway, where the government controls the sale of alcoholic beverages, there has been a reduction in consumption in recent decades (Hnilicová et al., 2017). The market, in addition to regulating the application of laws, is strongly influenced by the media. The interviews showed that adolescents find the use of advertisements to be ineffective in the prevention of PS use. They end up reinforcing the stereotypes of drug users without discussing the phenomenon critically (Hnilicová et al., 2017). Alcohol advertisements were considered more appealing. They sell more than a given product; they represent styles, portraying alcohol beverages as a democratic product (Varga & Piko, 2015). Thus, the media fulfill their role of maintaining the social imaginary on the topic through the micropolitics of power.

This study demonstrates how adolescents perceive PS and its nuances. By giving voice to the adolescents, it can be seen that for effective behavioral changes to occur in young people, it is necessary to create spaces in which they can express themselves. Today, the policies and publicity campaigns are idealized and discussed by adults, without the actual perception of young people, thus objectives such as the reduction of PS use will not be achieved through advertising campaigns.

The limitations of this study are associated with being a study based on self-reports of risky behaviors, which can lead to the omission or underestimation of reports, either out of shame or fear of exposure. As a way to mitigate potential omissions, the researchers explained the project and ensured anonymity previously in the participating schools. Other limitations are related to the fact that the study was conducted in schools, capturing only the reality of the adolescents who attend them, failing to capture the reality of those outside the classroom. Finally, the study occurred in a single city, but its results may reflect the national reality, mainly because the results of the quantitative axis are very similar to those found in the 2015 PeNSE.

Conclusion

The adolescents reproduced the discourse of their group. Thus, these interviews reflect the way of thinking and acting of a community, as well as its structures and hierarchies, all of which are influenced by the economic and cultural factor that dictates behaviors through the media and other institutions.

A change in these young people's discourses and actions is possible from the moment they understand their social determinations. To this end, the promotion of actions at the community level is important, involving all its individuals, whether in school, health units, or church. Therefore, by recognizing the main social obstacles, the community can discuss and propose actions aimed at changing both the physical space and empowering adolescents about their rights and duties. In this way, they can demand improvements in the community and laws, asserting their role as citizens. These macrosocial changes

lead to a singular resignification, with transformations in their interpersonal relationships while assuming their duties in social improvement.

Author contributions

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