

Relationship between outness and substance abuse susceptibility among Croatian men who sleep with men (MSM) population

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Abstract

Outness is defined as a status of being openly homosexual/bisexual. While most of the contemporary studies conducted in developed liberal societies deal with psychological benefits of the such status, few deals with this issue in conservative and less developed countries where support to openly gay members of the society often lacks. What is more, in such context outness may be associated with psychological harm imposed by unsupportive society.

For that reason, we conducted a survey in order to investigate potential negative effects of outness among Croatian MSM population, specifically assessing the relationship between the outness and habits such as smoking, alcohol consumption and abuse of marijuana.

We assessed the data using an ordinal-polytomous questionnaire in which MSM participants (n=220) answered the total of 13 questions regarding their substance abuse habits and outness status. Statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS. By means of Kendall's τ -B test, we found the strong positive correlation between outness and substance abuse ($p=0,000$). U-test revealed statistically significant difference between fully outed and non-outed (closeted) participants: outed ones tend to smoke more cigarettes ($p=0,001$), drink alcohol more often ($p=0,001$), as well as abuse marijuana ($p=0,000$). In addition to that, strong statistical significance is demonstrated regarding involvement in sex while influenced by various substances, such as alcohol, poppers and marijuana ($p=0,000$). No statistically significant difference was found when comparing non-outed to partially outed participants.

Our results revealed that outed participants tend to be more susceptible to substance abuse than partially outed or non-outed participants. It may be suggested that discrimination and stigma imposed by society make them more vulnerable and prone to substance abuse.

Keywords: outness, MSM, substance abuse