



Psychosocial Factors Contributing To Alcohol Dependence

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ABSTRACT

Alcohol dependency is a major public health issue that affects individual families and society. The study focuses on the psychosocial factors influencing alcohol dependence among patients in a de-addiction centre in Coimbatore. It highlights that alcohol dependence is influenced not only by biological factors but also by psychological aspects such as stress, anxiety, and depression, along with the social factors like peer pressure, family environment, and social economic conditions. The research adopted descriptive research design with a sample of 60 respondent selected through purposive sampling, data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency and percentage methods.

The findings show that most respondents are middle aged and married and many began drinking at an early age. A large number consume alcohol daily. Psychological factors such as stress and emotional problems along with social influences like peer pressure and family impact play a major role in alcohol dependence. The study concludes that alcohol dependence is caused by multiple psychosocial factors and a requires a holistic approach including awareness, counselling and a community based interventions for effective preventions and treatment.

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol use has long been embedded in human culture and social traditions, often linked to celebrations, rituals and social interactions. Despite its widespread acceptance, excessive and uncontrolled consumption of alcohol has become a major global public health concern in recent years. Alcohol dependence is a chronic disorder marked by an intense craving for alcohol, inability to regulate consumption, increased tolerance and the occurrence of withdrawal symptoms when intake is reduced or stopped. According to World Health Organisation (2018) “impact extends beyond physical health, affecting mental well-being, family dynamic occupational efficiency and overall social functioning. The rising incidence of alcohol dependence, particularly among the younger and middle age population, has become a significant concern for health professionals and policy makers worldwide.” According to Lazarus, R.S and Folkman, S(1984) “The onset of alcohol dependence is shaped by a complex interplay of psychological and social influences. Psychological factors such as stress, anxiety, depression, emotional instability and low self esteem often motivate individuals to consume alcohol as a coping mechanism for life's challenges”. Many individuals use alcohol as a form of self medication to temporarily alleviate emotional pain or psychological discomfort. Simultaneously, social factors play a vital role in influencing drinking behaviour. Elements such as peer pressure, family background, cultural practices, societal acceptances and economic conditions significantly impact an individual's likelihood of consuming alcohol. In many settings alcohol use is normalised and even encouraged, thereby increasing the risk of dependency. Hence, gaining a thorough understanding of the psychosocial factors is crucial for designing effective prevention, treatment and rehabilitation strategies.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study the researcher adopted descriptive research design with a quantitative approach to investigate the psychosocial determinants of alcohol dependence. Objectives of the study is to identify the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, to examine the psychological factors contributing to alcohol dependence among the respondents, to analyze the social factors influencing alcohol consumption behavior, to study the pattern and duration of alcohol use among the respondents. The research was conducted at a deaddiction centre located in Coimbatore, where individuals undergoing treatment for alcohol dependence were selected as respondents. The study population included all individuals undergoing treatment at the chosen centres. From this population, a sample of 60 respondents was selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that participants met specific criteria such as a history of alcohol dependence and willingness to participate in the study. Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire developed to obtain detailed information on demographic characteristics, patterns of alcohol consumption, psychological factors, and social influence. The questionnaire consisted of closed ended and multiple choice questions to facilitate clear and accurate responses. Prior to data collection informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was strictly maintained. The collected data were systematically coded, categorised, and

analysed using basic statistical techniques such as frequency and percentage distribution. The findings were presented in a tabular form to enhance clarity and facilitate interpretations.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The results of the study indicate that alcohol dependence is more common among individuals aged 31 to 40 years, (33.3 %) suggesting the middle aged adults are particularly vulnerable. A large proportion of respondents were married (53%), indicating the family responsibilities, stress and interpersonal issues may contribute to alcohol consumption. The study further revealed that most respondents belonged to lower and middle social economic groups and were engaged in daily wage labour or unstable employment (43%). This highlights the influence of financial stress and job insecurity on alcohol dependence. Additionally early initiation of alcohol use was frequently observed, with many respondents beginning consumption before the age of 25 (36.7%) . Early exposure significantly increases the likelihood of developing long term dependency. A considerable number of respondents reported daily alcohol consumption (46.7 %), reflecting a high level of dependence.

Psychological factors were identified as key contributions to alcohol dependence. Stress was found to be the most prominent factor, followed by anxiety, depression and low self esteem. Many respondents indicated that they use alcohol as a coping strategy to manage emotional distress, loneliness and personal challenges. Social influences such as peer pressure, family drinking patterns, and social gatherings also played a crucial role in shaping alcohol consumption behaviour. The acceptance of alcohol use in social contexts further encourages frequent consumption and increases the risk of dependency. Overall, the findings demonstrate that alcohol dependence arises from the combined effects of multiple psychological and social factors rather than a single cause.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed to effectively address alcohol dependence. Community-level awareness programs should be implemented to educate individuals about the harmful effects of alcohol use and the risk associated with dependence. Early identifications and intervention strategies should be introduced to support individuals at a risk. Access to counselling and mental health services should be improved to address psychological issues such as stress and anxiety and depression. Family-based interventions should be encouraged to strengthen the family under the influence of peer pressure. Additionally community-based rehabilitation services should be enhanced to support recovery and prevent support systems and reduce conflicts that may lead to alcohol consumption. Peer group interventions can also help minimize the influence of peer pressure. Additionally community-based rehabilitation services should be enhanced to support recovery and prevent relapse . Government initiatives should focus on regulating alcohol availability and promoting healthy lifestyle through public health campaigns .

SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

Social workers play a significant role in addressing alcohol dependence through preventive, therapeutic, and rehabilitative approaches. They work closely with individuals, families, and communities to provide guidance and support throughout the recovery process. Social workers offer individual counseling to help clients identify the root cause of their addiction and develop healthier coping strategies. Group therapy and support groups provide opportunities for individuals to share their experiences and gain emotional support. Family counselling is also an essential component, as it helps improve communication and strengthens family systems. Furthermore, social workers organize awareness programs in communities and educational institutions to prevent alcohol misuse. They also advocate for policies that enhance mental health services and reduce alcohol availability. Through a holistic and client-centred approach, social workers assist individuals in overcoming addiction and reintegrating into society.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, alcohol dependence is a complex issue influenced by a wide range of psychological and social factors. The study emphasizes the significant impact of stress, emotional difficulties, peer influence, family environment, and social-economic conditions on alcohol consumption and dependency. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that combines psychological counselling, social support, and community-based interventions. Preventive efforts should focus on awareness, early detection, and education, while treatment programs should address the underlying psycho-social causes of addictions. Effective collaboration among healthcare providers, social workers, policy makers, and the community is essential in reducing the prevalence of alcohol dependents. By adopting a holistic approach, it is possible to enhance the well-being of individuals and contribute to a health care society.

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