

Effect Of Gender On Anxiety And Self Esteem Of Children Of alcoholics.

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Abstract: Alcohol consumption has been identified as a risk factor for many health, social and economic problems of communities worldwide. Alcoholism also known as alcohol dependence is a chronic, progressive disease that affects millions of Indians. Parental alcohol affects a child's normal development resulting in behavioral, physical, emotional, educational and economic problems. Health professionals have focused on the harmful effects of alcoholism on individual and spouse over the past decades, while children of alcoholics often times have unnoticeable symptoms. Majority of children of alcoholics manifest lower level of self esteem and higher anxiety symptoms.

Objectives: 1.To study the socio-demographic variables of children of alcoholics. 2. To assess the effect Gender on Anxiety and self esteem among Children of alcoholics.

Methodology: A Non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted. Sample included 100 high school students recruited using random sampling method. Children of Alcohol Screening Test was used to identify children of alcoholics. The selected sample were assessed for their anxiety and self-esteem using Screen for Childhood Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Results: The findings showed that among 100 children who completed the self-administered questionnaire (CAST), 32% of children scored ≥ 06 were considered as children of alcoholics (COAs). Higher number of Girls (50%) reported elevated anxiety when compared to boys (28.57%) and 100% boys and 88.9% of girls had low self-esteem as a result of parental drinking. The study concluded that there is no significant association between level of anxiety, self esteem and gender of children of alcoholics.

Key words: Alcohol, Anxiety, Self-Esteem, Children of Alcoholics (COAs).

Introduction:

“One Indian dies every 96 minutes due to alcohol consumption.”- The Indian Express, 25 May 2016

“Indians drinking alcohol up 55% in 20 years.”- The Times of India, 17 May 2015

“Alcohol consumption in India on the rise”- WHO report 15 May 2014

Substance-related disorders are a significant health problem in today's society. Alcoholism also known as alcohol dependence is a chronic, progressive disease that affects millions of Indians.

Today, there is a rising awareness about the ill-effects of alcoholism on an individual's health, job prospects and family. However, the devastating impact that parental alcoholism has on the growth and development of children goes unnoticed. Parental alcoholism affects children in many ways, as it interferes with parenting duties and family relations. Addiction is a family problem and is a major source of stress for family members. Though the individual who abuse alcohol is the primary victim, but the family members are also affected with the same

intensity. The associated problems with alcoholism such as social stigma, job insecurity, financial threat and ill health force spouse and children to work. Hence the impact of parental substance abuse on children is a significant public health issue¹.

Specific problems faced by children of alcoholics are Physical and mental health problems, Low verbal ability, Difficulties in school, Difficulty with abstraction and conceptual reasoning². Parents' preoccupation with the substance, to the exclusion of other priorities, will have a range of consequences for children's sense of emotional security. An unavailable, preoccupied or emotionally, psychologically and physically detached parent will find it difficult to keep children in mind or put them first. Changes in mood and behaviour, together with inconsistent responses and lack of empathy, will make life uncertain and anxiety-provoking at the very least^{3, 4}.

Devis (2009) have identified certain Behavioral roles that develop in childhood and can continue into adulthood. These survival roles have been designated by as follows⁵.

- **Family hero:** The "hero" is often the oldest child who serves as a surrogate parent. The child is typically an overachiever and overcompensates for their family's inadequacies by trying to be "good" all the time.
- **Family scapegoat:** These COAs are the opposite of the heroes as they work to divert attention away from the parental alcohol abuse (the real issue) by acting out.
- **Lost child:** The lost child adapts to the system's chaos by removing himself or herself and hiding, requiring the least amount of energy from caregivers.
- **Family mascot:** The principal function of this role is to redirect attention away from the family's alcohol abuse and pain through the mascot's humor, charm, foolishness, and self-deprecation.

Deepika and Periera⁶ and Thampi⁷ have reported Gender preponderance in previous studies on children of alcoholics Impact of parental alcohol may not be similar among male and female children of alcoholics. Hence researcher felt the need for studying effect of gender on psychosocial problems of children of alcoholics.

Objectives:

1. To study the socio-demographic variables of children of alcoholics.
2. To assess the effect Gender on Anxiety and self esteem among Children of alcoholics.

Methodology:

A Non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted. Participants consisted of 100 high school students studying at Kengeri Sattellite Town Govt.High school. Obtained permission from Block Education Officer Bangalore South and school head. The sample for the study were the adolescents who are studying in class 8th till class 10th from Bangalore South, who fall under the age group of 13 to 16 years. Children of Alcohol Screening Test was used to identify children of alcoholics. The selected sample were assessed for their anxiety using Screen for Childhood Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders and self esteem using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Results:

Table 1 Identification of COAs using Children of Alcoholics Screening Test.

N=100

CAST Score	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0-1	23	48.94	17	32.07	40	40
2-5	10	21.28	18	33.96	28	28

>6	14	29.78	18	33.96	32	32
Total	47	100	53	100	100	100

Table 1 depicts frequency and percentage of COAs Identified using Children of Alcoholics Screening Test. Hundred children completed the self administered questionnaire, 47 were boys and 53 were girls. Among 47 boys 48.94% scored less than one indicating their parents are non-alcoholics, 21.28% with a score of 2-5 whose parents are possibly alcoholic and 29.78% scored **six** />**six** revealing their parents were alcoholics. Among 53 girls 32.07% scored less than one indicating their parents are non-alcoholics, 33.96% with a score of 2-5 whose parents are possibly alcoholic and 33.96% scored **six** />**six** revealing their parents were alcoholics. Among 32 children of alcoholics 43.75% were males and 56.25% were females.

Table No 2: Gender wise Comparison of Comparison of Demographic characteristics of COAs.

Variables		Male n=14		Female n=18		x ² / Fisher's Exact Test	p value
		Freq	%	Freq	%		
Age (Years)	13-14	9	64.28	9	50	0.4896	NS
	15-16	5	35.72	9	50		
Class	8th Standard	1	07.15	0	00	0.1692	NS
	9th Standard	13	92.85	18	100		
Religion	Hindu	14	100	18	100	--	--
Type of Family	Nuclear	10	71.43	10	55.55	0.4709	NS
	Joint	4	28.57	8	44.45		
Father educational qualification	No formal education	10	71.43	8	44.45	3.375	0.33 NS
	Primary education	0	00	2	11.11		
	Secondary education	1	7.14	1	5.56		
	PUC	3	21.42	7	38.88		
Mother educational qualification	No formal education	9	64.28	9	50	1.930	0.587 NS
	Primary education	0	00	2	11.11		
	Secondary education	1	7.14	1	5.55		
	PUC	4	28.57	6	33.33		
Father occupation	Coolie	13	92.85	17	94.44	1	NS
	Driver	1	7.15	1	5.56		
Mother occupation	Coolie	2	14.30	4	22.22	0.67228	NS
	Housewife	12	85.70	14	77.78		
Family	< 10000	6	42.85	11	61.12	3.131	0.372

monthly income(Rs)	10000 – 20000	4	28.55	5	27.77	NS
	20000 – 30000	2	14.30	0	00	
	> 30000	2	14.3	2	11.11	

NS-Non significant at $p < 0.05$

Table: 3 Gender wise Comparison of Level of Anxiety among Children of alcoholics.

Anxiety	Male n=14		Female n=18		Total	Fisher's exact test
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Normal (<25)	10	71.43	9	50	19	0.289 NS
Elevated (>25)	4	28.57	9	50	13	
Total	14	100	18	100	32	

NS-Non significant

Score range: 0-78

Table 3 depicts Level of Anxiety among Children of alcoholics. Majority of (71.43%) male and 50% of female COAs did not exhibit signs of anxiety. Higher number of Girls (50%) reported elevated anxiety when compared to boys (28.57%). However non significant p value revealed that there is no significant association between level of anxiety and gender of children of alcoholics. Impact of parental alcohol was similar among male and female children of alcoholics with regard to anxiety.

Table: 4 Gender wise Comparison of Level of Self esteem Among Children of alcoholics.

Self-esteem	Male		Female		Total	Fisher's exact test
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Low(<15)	14	100	16	88.9	30	0.492 NS
Moderate(>15)	0	00	02	11.1	02	
Total	14	100	18	100	32	

NS-Non significant

Score range: 0-30

Table 4 revealed the level of Self esteem among Children of alcoholics. The entire male (100%) and 88.9% of female COAs had low self esteem as a result of parental drinking. Fisher's exact test was computed to find gender difference. Non significant p value inferred that there was no significant association found between girls and boys with regard to level of Self esteem scores.

The table: 5 Gender wise Comparison of mean scores of Anxiety and Self esteem among COAs.

Variable	Score range	Male (n=14)	Female (n=18)	t value	P value
		Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)		
Anxiety	0-78	23.21 (9.374)	21.5 (9.494)	0.717	0.506 NS

Self esteem	0-30	13 (2.38)	13.6 (2.4)	0.7049	p=0.6908 NS
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NS-Non significant

The table 3 depicts Mean scores of anxiety among COAs in both groups. Mean anxiety scores of male COAs is 23.21(9.374) which is higher than 21.5(9.494) of female COAs 9.494. However statistical significant difference was not found between mean scores of boys and girls with regard to anxiety ($t=0.717$, $p>0.05$). Similar mean scores were observed with regard to self esteem ($t=0.7049$, $p>0.05$).

Discussion:

Majority of sample were females (56.25%) and 43.75% were males. Among them 64.28% of males and 50% of female COAs belonged to the age group of 14-15 years, all the female and 92.85 male respondents were studying in 9th standard, and 62.5% from nuclear family. All the subjects belonged to Hindu Religion. With regard to parent's education 56.5% had no formal education, Majority of fathers (97%) were coolie workers, most of mothers of children (81.25%) were house wives and 53.13% of parents were earning below rupees 10000 per month.

This was comparable to the findings of intervention study in Shillong, showed that 52.2% participants belonged to the age group of 14-15 years, majority (60.5%) of the participants were girls, 40.5% participants were studying in class nine, 84.4% participants belonged to nuclear family, 66.7% participants were Christian.⁸ while a Goa study reported 48% of children of alcoholics belonged to 13-18 years, 62% males and 38% females.⁶

Raman, Prasad and Appaya studied Children of men with alcohol dependence: Out of 32 children included in the study, 48% of the respondents were males and 52% were females⁹. **Kumar, et,al.**, reported that illiteracy and lower educational levels were associated with an increased risk of alcohol use in Rural Tamilnadu¹⁰. Similarly, in the present study majority (56.5%) of parents did not have formal education and only 6.5% had primary education.

Present study revealed elevated anxiety in 50% of female subjects when compared to 28.57% males. Half of the female respondents (50%) and 43.5% of males had low self esteem. Study findings are in consistent with **Sidhu** who reported the girls had more internalizing problems as compared to boys who had more externalizing problems. Internalizing problems included anxious/depressed, withdrawn/depressed and somatic complaints¹¹.

In contrast to findings of present study **Vidal, et al.** reported that male students with paternal drinking problems showed significantly increased risk of anxiety (odds ratio [OR], 2.21; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.05 to 4.63), female students with paternal drinking problems showed significantly increased risk of depression (OR, 1.84; 95% CI, 1.24 to 2.74).¹²

Goan study reported that 32% in the study group obtained scores higher than 10 on the CBCL, whereas only 8% of the children of the control group scored above 10⁶. A slight female preponderance was seen in the gender distribution of the children in our study as it was reported Deepika and Periera and **Sidhu**. Studies showed that the internalizing as well as the externalizing scores of the COAs were greater than the normal scores of the matched population on the CBCL. In the group of 12-18 years the internalizing score, score of 56.3 (\pm 9.3) compared to a Normal T-Score of 50.2 (\pm 9.6) were observed among boys¹¹. This is in contrast to the study by Raman et al showed no gender difference with regard to occurrence of psychosocial problems. In Indian literature too, the high risk subjects had significantly higher scores than the low risk subjects on hyperactivity,

impulsivity, inattention, total attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and total externalizing symptoms score¹³.

Behavioral and emotional difficulties are commonly seen in children of alcohol-dependent parents and substantive findings exist in literature. Even with a small sample, our data corroborates this. **Jeronymo and Carvalho** reported that the children of alcoholic parents had more behavioral problems than did those of nonalcoholic parents ($p=0.0005$)¹⁴. **Hussong and Chassin (2004)** found that children of alcoholics showed a statistically significant difference in their emotional and behavioural aspects such as shyness, insecurity and low self-esteem¹⁵. The low self-esteem scores ($t=11.41$, $p < 0.01$) obtained by the study group respondents according to **Stanley and Vanitha (2008)** indicated feelings of unhappiness with oneself and feelings of not being competent¹⁶.

Limitations of the Study

1. The sample size was small and the subjects included were children of alcoholics studying at Kengeri Sattellite Town Govt.High school.

Conclusion

There is enough evidence in literature to indicate that children of alcoholics are at increased risk for behavioral and emotional problems. Currently, many COAs are unidentified within schools and in need of counseling services that they deserve and require. The present study endorses these findings in the Indian context. In addition attempt was made to assess the association of gender on anxiety and self esteem of children of alcoholics. Results showed that girls had elevated anxiety scores when compared to boys and highest number of boys had low self esteem that did not reach statistical significance.

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