

ALCOHOLISM; AN ABSOLUTE NEPOTISM ON ANCENTRY

A Study of Slum dwellers in Visakhapatnam city of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract: *Thousands of families are ruined by alcoholism especially the poor who are slum dwellers. The opening of liquor shops in every nook and corner has increased the problem of alcoholism. In the last decade of the twentieth century, women's organizations in the country launched their movements to fight against alcohol consumption. They led a number of struggles to pressure the government to introduce total prohibition. Whereas in the beginning of the twenty first century many belt shops spread everywhere especially adjacent to the urban slums and made it easy availability and directly responsible for the ill health of alcoholics and increased the scope for domestic violence which in turn caused broken families. Hence there is a need to focus on the impact of alcohol consumption on families in general and individuals in particular. The present study discusses the problem of alcoholism in this direction.*

Key Words: *Alcoholism, Slum dwellers, Domestic violence, ill health.*

Introduction

Consumption of alcohol is common in many countries especially most developing countries. Alcohol consumption is more in urban slums and rural areas whose economic status is low. Gender, social, emotional and environmental factors are the most common causes of alcoholism in the slum. Alcoholism leads to health as well as economic implications for the affected family. Alcohol misuse can have damaging physical, psychological and social consequences who regularly consume large amounts of alcohol may be in an even more vulnerable position as they are responsible for the care and wellbeing of their children. An alcoholic can totally disrupt family life and cause harmful effects that can last a lifetime. Alcoholism also has negative effects on the spouse of an alcoholic. Very often the spouse has to perform the roles of both parents. Family responsibilities shift from two parents to one parent. A survey, on "Exposure to alcoholism in the family" conducted in 2011 stated that alcoholism is a major factor of premature widowhood. Christopher L. Heffner highlighted that alcoholism is responsible for more family problems than any other single cause. It impacts the children's development, family functioning and parenting also. It also affects many families because alcohol is often expensive, so uncontrolled use can lead to financial problems so as revealed by the number of researchers. Jurgen Rehm rightly stated that the alcoholic's family may have to give up certain privileges because of the large amount of money spent on alcohol. And it is also one of the major reasons for divorce. Since alcohol abuse in the family institution becomes one major concern of the contemporary society to deal with the family dysfunction, government and nongovernmental organizations have to take initiative to control the alcohol consumption. In this backdrop an attempt was made to study the habit of alcohol consumption among slum dwellers and understand its impact on their health and families. For this purpose primary data has been collected from the women of alcoholic families living in slum areas of Visakhapatnam city.

Research questions

The following are the research questions before us.

1. At what age they have started consuming alcohol and what factors influenced them to do so?
2. Do the alcoholics have the habit of other intoxicants and how much quantity of alcohol they are consuming ?
3. Did the alcoholics realize the negative impact of alcoholism and try to stop the consumption of liquor?
4. Do the behavior of the alcoholic has been changed after alcohol consumption?

Need for the study

Despite major source of revenue to the government, alcohol consumption impacts not only the health of the drunkards but ruins thousands of families and causes domestic violence, broken families and heavy debts. Hence there is a need to understand the severe repercussions of alcoholism which may bring change in their habit thereby controlling alcohol consumption.

Aim

The aim of the present study is to assess the impact of alcohol consumption on individual in particular and on family in general.

Objectives

The study mainly focused on the impact of alcohol consumption on health and family. More specifically the objectives are as follows.

1. To understand the socio-economic characteristic features of the slum dwellers.

2. To examine the habit of alcoholism and other intoxicants of the spouses of the women respondents and assess the attitude of the drunkards about drinking habit.
3. To elucidate the impact of alcohol consumption on health and family with a view to understand the severity of the problem.
4. To examine the behavioural aspects of the alcoholics before and after the consumption of alcohol.
5. To give suggestions to improve the wellbeing of the alcoholic families with a view to uplift the conditions of women and children of the alcoholic families.

Research methodology:

Coverage

Visakhapatnam is the largest city in the new state of Andhra Pradesh situated on the eastern coastline of India. According to the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation's (GVMC) (2005); there has been successive increase in the number of slum dwellers who came from adjacent villages and with the extension of the city limits, areas which were already poverty stricken, got included within the city's peripheries. According to the 2011 Census, Visakhapatnam (under GVMC) was identified as the city with the highest slum population (44.1%) in the country, in relation to its total urban population. There are 107 identified slums (according to Debapriya Ganguly) in Visakhapatnam city. Out of it 10 slum areas are selected for the purpose of the present study.

Sampling and data collection

The study was based on purposive random sampling method. A well structured self prepared schedule was used to collect the primary data from 300 slum women respondents in order to assess the drinking habit of the spouses of the slum dwellers and the repercussions that are being faced by the family and the individual. In addition to that, secondary data has been obtained from the Journals and news papers in order to understand the seriousness of the alcohol problem.

Variables covered

The variables covered for the purpose of the present study are age, income, health, education and behavioural aspects.

Hypothesis

- H 1) There is an association between alcohol consumption and health status of the drunkards.
- H 2) There is an association between alcohol consumption and basic consumption pattern of the alcoholic family.
- H 3) There is an association between drinking habit and behavioural aspects of the drunkards and violence in the family.

Testing of hypothesis

The study endeavours to examine whether there is any association between alcohol consumption and behavioural aspects, health status of the drunkards and violence in the family. For this purpose "Testing of Hypothesis" is attempted by applying chi-square test. The study found that the calculated value of the chi-square with the table value for the given degrees of freedom and with the desire level is significant in all the above mentioned variables.

Period of study

The study has been conducted during 2016- 2017.

Research findings

[i] Socio-economic Status of the Respondents

- The present study has been conducted with the sample size of 300 women respondents. Out of 300 respondents, majority of the respondents are in the age group of 26-35 years i.e 45% followed by the age group of 36-45 i.e 31%. It was observed that the respondents at the age group of 46-55 years was at low percentage i.e 15%. Obviously the age group of the spouses is also varies almost all the same percentage i.e. 36% 33% and 22%.
- The study reveals that, majority of the respondents belonged to OBC and bears 46% and followed by socially marginalized group i.e schedule caste 33%. The respondents who belonged to other minority classes constitute 20%. It was found that majority of the respondents are belong to Hindu religion. (93%) All most all the respondents are living as nuclear families (97%).
- From the study it was observed that, half of the respondents and their spouses are illiterates. (50% and 52% respectively) and the spouses of the respondents who have completed secondary and primary education are very low i.e 21% and 17% respectively. Whereas the spouses who have completed higher secondary and graduation are insignificant. (ie.8% and 2% respectively). The study reveals that illiteracy is one of the causes for habituating alcohol consumption and illiterate people are ignorant about its impact on their health and family.
- The data reveals that, majority of the children of the respondents have completed only secondary education (61%), followed by the children who have completed only primary education (56%). The percentage of the children who have completed graduation are only a small percentage (29%). Interestingly it was found that a significant percentage of the children are dropouts (33%) and majority of them are working somewhere else.(57%). The data depicts the low educational status of the children of the alcoholics is due to low economic status of their parents.

- It was found that , majority of the respondents and their spouses are working as daily wage workers which constitute 51% and 45% respectively. Followed by domestic servants (14%) and working in shops (14%) From the above discussion it was observed that all most all the spouses of the respondents are engaged in daily work which reflects low economic status.
- The study reveals that, majority of the respondents' families earn above Rs. 10,000/- per month (49%) and the families of the respondents who earn above Rs.7000/- are 38%. The data reveals that , the income of the respondents are very low which is not sufficient to meet even the daily routine consumption expenditure . Interestingly it was noticed that majority of them are having houses as asset and nearly 70% of them are having own houses either ancestress or government subsidy houses.

(ii) Habit of alcoholism and other intoxicants

- It was found that , all most all the spouses of the respondents are having the habit of alcohol consumption (99%). Majority of them are having the habit for the long period i.e above 10 years.(58%) .
- It was found that , majority of the spouses of the respondents are addicted to alcohol in between the age of 19-25 years. Surprisingly a significant percentage of them are started consuming alcohol from the adolescent age itself i.e 15-18 years (27%).
- The present study made an attempt to know why did the alcoholics start consuming alcohol. Majority of the alcoholics are consuming alcohol for peer pressure (91%) , followed by the alcoholics who are start consuming alcohol out of curiosity (69%) . Above half of the alcoholics are consuming alcohol as they were influenced by friends/relatives. A significant percentage of the alcoholics are consuming alcohol in order to escape from family problems and financial problems (19% and 12% respectively.)
- Surprisingly it was found that, majority of the spouses of the respondents are consuming other intoxicants like chaini (72%) , cigarettes (83%) and they consume daily (83%). It was also found that majority of them consume alcohol daily (94%) .
- The respondents observed that their spouses drink a minimum of quarter of alcohol every day (67%) , followed by the spouses who consume half (20%) Since the spouses consume alcohol in bars and restaurants and near belt shops , the respondents did not find how much quantity of the alcohol that their spouses are consuming .But the respondents feel the tendency of alcoholism as they do not have control over their bodies , when they consume alcohol.

[iii] Details of sources of getting alcohol and sources of expenditure on alcohol and opinion of the alcoholics about alcoholism

- Interestingly it was found that, majority of the respondents are getting alcohol from bars and restaurants (83%). A considerable percentage are getting from belt shops (10%) . Interestingly it was observed that though their income levels are low, they prefer to visit bars and restaurants for drinking which is beyond their income limits.
- Surprisingly it was found that, majority of the alcoholics are spending half of their income on alcohol (67%). The data reveals that the alcoholics are giving much priority for alcohol consumption rather than maintaining family and providing food and education to their children.
- It was found that , majority of the alcoholics spend from their own earnings (97%) and sometimes from their spouses' earnings , (20%) and borrowing from friends/neighbours (31%). It was found that a significant percentage of them used to borrow from the private financiers.(14%).
- Surprisingly it was found that, , majority of them opined that alcohol consumption increases the efficiency of work of the alcoholics. An insignificant percentage of them only observed that alcohol consumption has reduced their ability to work (11%).
- Alcohol consumption will become an addiction if the people start consuming alcohol . Hence it was found that majority of the alcoholics are not able to stop drinking whenever they want to stop (89%).

[iv] Impact of alcohol consumption on health and other aspects

- The present study examined whether alcohol consumption impact the health of the spouses of the respondents. It was found that out of 300 respondents , a significant percentage of the alcoholics are suffering from health problems caused by alcohol consumption (25%). A significant percentage of the spouses of the respondents are suffering with ulcer (13%) followed by nervous weakness (4%) and there are a few cases of liver problems (2%).

Result of hypothesis : 1)

The present study is based on the hypothesis that alcohol consumption has adverse impact on the health of the drunkards. It was found that a significant percentage of the alcoholics are suffering from health problems like ulcer, nervous weakness, damage in liver. Hence the hypothesis is proved.

[v] Impact of alcoholism on consumption pattern of the family

- The present study focused on the impact of alcoholism on consumption pattern of the families of the respondents especially the consumption of food items, clothing, comforts and children's education and also violence in the family. Out of 300 respondents , majority of the respondents revealed that their spouses spend major portion of their earnings on alcohol. Obviously it impacts the consumption pattern of the family (70%).
- It was found that, out of 300 respondents , the consumption of fruits and milk products are declined due to the consumption of alcohol as they prefer to spend more income on alcohol rather than on food items (84% and 83% respectively). It was also observed that in 3/4th of the families, the expenditure on clothing has declined. Half of the families could not raise their standard of living as they were unable to purchase the comfort goods like furniture, electric goods, own vehicles etc. Surprisingly, though it adversely effects the children's education by curtailing the payments for children's school fees and purchase of books and stationary for children (58%), which leads to discontinuation of studies (62%) , the alcoholics did not stop or even reduce the expenditure on alcohol. The data reveals that consumption of alcohol negatively impacts the consumption of family which deteriorates the well being of the people.

Result of hypothesis: 2)

The present study is based on the hypothesis that alcoholism impacts the consumption pattern of the family. The data reveals that the expenditure on alcohol adversely affected the consumption of the basic food items and also children education. Hence the hypothesis is proved.

[vi] Behavioral aspects of the drunkards before and after alcohol consumption

- It was found that out of 300 respondents, majority of them are affectionate towards their family members (93%), allot time for the entertainment and recreation to the family members (91%), by taking them to movies (94%) and relatives houses (93%) etc., before consuming alcohol. It was found that since majority of the respondents and their spouses are illiterates they did not take care of their children's education directly (79%) but arranged tuitions for them (36%). It was also found that they are friendly with their neighbours (78%). The data reveals that before taking alcohol, the behavioural aspects of the spouses are very normal and they are leading happy family life.
- Above half of the respondents found change in the behavior of their spouses after consuming alcohol. The data reveals that a significant percentage of them have mortgaged the valuables especially gold and silver items(24%).
- It was found that a significant percent of the respondents faced the situations like throwing things especially while the drunken spouses are taking food (16%). Interestingly it was found that the spouses of the respondents used to quarrel with their spouses (36%) for no reason.
- Noteworthy point is alcoholism increased the violence in the family (64%).

Result of hypothesis: 3

The present study is based on the hypothesis that drinking habit may change the behavior of the alcoholics. The study found the behavioural changes in the alcoholics and increased domestic violence after consuming alcohol. Hence the hypothesis is proved.

Summary and Conclusion

To sum up, majority of the alcoholics are in the age group of 26-45 years. Majority of them are belonged to back ward class and socially marginalized groups. All most all the respondents are living as nuclear families. Half of the respondents and their spouses are illiterates which reveals that illiteracy is one of the causes for habituating alcohol consumption and illiterate people are ignorant about its impact on their health and family. Majority of the children have completed only primary education and a significant percentage of the children are dropouts and majority of them are working somewhere else. The data depicts the low educational status of the children due to low economic status of their parents. Majority of the respondents and their spouses are working as daily wage workers all most all the respondents are engaged in daily work which reflects low economic status. The study reveals that, the income of the respondents are very low which is not sufficient to meet even the daily routine consumption expenditure. It was found that all most all the spouses of the respondents are having the habit of drinking. Majority of them are having the habit for the long period. Majority of the spouses of the respondents are addicted to alcohol in between the age of 19-25 years. majority of the alcoholics are consuming alcohol for peer pressure. They start consuming alcohol out of curiosity. Above half of the alcoholics are consuming alcohol as they were influenced by friends/relatives. Interestingly it was found that majority of the spouses of the respondents are having the habit of other intoxicants like consuming chaini, cigarettes etc. which are injurious to their health. The respondents observed that their spouses drink a minimum of quarter of alcohol every day and feel the tendency of alcoholism as they do not have control over their bodies, when they consume alcohol. Interestingly it was observed that though their income levels are low, they prefer to visit bars and restaurants for drinking which is beyond their income limits. majority of the alcoholics are spending half of their income on alcohol. The data reveals that the alcoholics are giving much priority for alcohol consumption rather than maintaining family and providing food and education to their children. It was found that majority of the alcoholics spend from their own earnings, and sometimes from their spouses' earnings and borrowing from friends/neighbours. It was found that a significant percentage of them used to borrow from the private financiers. Alcohol consumption will become an addiction if the people start consuming alcohol. Hence it was found that majority of the alcoholics are not able to stop drinking whenever they want to stop. a significant percentage of the alcoholics are suffering from health problems caused by alcohol consumption.

A significant percentage of the spouses of the respondents are suffering with ulcer nervous weakness and there are a few cases of damage of liver. majority of the respondents revealed that their spouses spend major portion of their earnings on alcohol. Obviously it impacts the consumption pattern of the family. It was found that, the consumption of fruits and milk products are declined due to the consumption of alcohol as they prefer to spend more income on alcohol rather than on food items. It was also observed that in 3/4th of the families, the expenditure on clothing has declined. Half of the families could not raise their standard of living as they were unable to purchase the comfortable goods like furniture, electric goods, own vehicles etc. Surprisingly, though it adversely effects the children's education by curtailing the payments for children's school fees and purchase of books and stationary for children, which leads to discontinuation of studies, the alcoholics did not stop or even reduce the expenditure on alcohol. It was found that alcoholism increased the violence in the family. The study reveals that before taking alcohol, the behavioural aspects of the spouses are very normal and leading happy family life. Majority of them are affectionate towards their family members, allot time for the entertainment and recreation to the family members by taking them to movies and relatives houses etc. It was also found that they are friendly with their neighbours. Above half of the respondents found change in the behavior of their spouses after consuming alcohol. It was found that the spouses of the respondents used to quarrel with their spouses for no reason. The data reveals that a significant percentage of them have mortgage the valuables especially gold and silver items. On the whole, alcoholism has negative effects on the individual and the family as a whole and its effects being felt with both spouses and children who bear the consequences.

Therefore it is imperative to develop effective interventions that can prevent the addiction. To address the impact of alcohol consumption on society, a national policy on alcohol should be initiated and implemented. Here the non-governmental organizations can play a key role in bringing the change in alcoholics and also can give support to the women in alcoholic families by strengthening their ability to earn income for wellbeing of their families through productive activities.

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