

**REVIEW ARTICLE ON KNOWLEDGE ON SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ILL EFFECTS OF ALCOHOLISM****Uzma eram\***

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Alcoholism is defined as chronic dependence characterized by compulsive drinking of alcohol to such a degree that produces mental disturbances and interferes with social and economic functioning. A large proportion of unwanted sexual advances are mediated by alcohol. There is risk of accidental injury, violence and acute alcohol-poisoning. Alcohol and domestic violence are linked to spouse/partner and family structures. It is well established that alcohol-dependent people and heavy drinkers have more sick-leave days than other employees. Many studies have shown that unemployment and heavy drinking tend to go together. Parental heavy drinking increases the risk of poor school performance and school drop-out among their children. In some cases, a mother's heavy drinking during pregnancy leads to attention deficits and behavioural problems in the child. Numerous research reports attest to the significant impact of drinking on accidents, suicide and violence. Alcohol plays a major role in crime, especially in crimes of violence. Alcohol is estimated to cause about 20-30% worldwide diseases of oesophageal cancer, liver cancer, cirrhosis, homicide, epilepsy, and motor vehicle accidents.

The aim of this study was to review the literature on knowledge on socio-cultural and ill-effects of alcoholism.

**INTRODUCTION**

Alcoholism is defined as chronic dependence characterized by compulsive drinking of alcohol to such a degree that produces mental disturbances and interferes with social and economic functioning(6). A large proportion of unwanted sexual advances are mediated by alcohol. There is risk of accidental injury, violence and acute alcohol-poisoning. Alcohol and domestic violence are linked to spouse/partner and family structures. Children are the most severely affected, since they can do little to protect themselves from the direct or indirect consequences of parental drinking. In particular, abuse, neglect, isolation and insecurity or inconsistent parental behaviour and demands are much more common in the families of alcohol abusers than in others. It is well established that alcohol-dependent people and heavy drinkers have more sick-leave days than other employees. Many studies have shown that unemployment and heavy drinking tend to go together. The causative effect can work both ways: heavy drinkers have a higher risk of losing their jobs, but becoming unemployed often leads to increased drinking. Parental heavy drinking increases the risk of poor school performance and school drop-out among their children. In some cases, a mother's heavy drinking during pregnancy leads to attention deficits and behavioural problems in the child. But parental heavy drinking (or alcohol abuse) also seems to affect their parenting skills, and thereby, again, the child's performance in school. Numerous research reports attest to the significant impact of drinking on accidents, suicide and violence. Alcohol plays a major role in crime, especially in crimes of violence. Alcohol is estimated to cause about 20-30% worldwide diseases of oesophageal cancer, liver cancer, cirrhosis, homicide, epilepsy, and motor vehicle accidents(1). Alcohol use has been shown to be a major contributor to injury through interpersonal violence, particularly assaults, domestic violence and child abuse(13), and is a factor in some cases of suicide(14). It can also contribute to absenteeism and reduced productivity in the workplace(15,16). Financial problems, legal problems, work problems, sexual problems, accidents and poor personal appearance, are amongst the wide array of social problems associated with harmful alcohol use(17).

The aim of this study was to review the literature on knowledge on socio-cultural and ill-effects of alcoholism

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

A population based cross-sectional study(2) was conducted among students from four schools (Grades IX to XII) in Ajman. 91.2% perceived alcohol consumption as harmful. 70.1% were aware of the use of alcohol among



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school students. A total of 74.9% stated that they knew the possible reasons for alcohol consumption, the reasons being to blend with friends and to elevate mood. Severe health-associated risks were attributed by 63% to drinking alcohol. 81.3% responded that social problems were associated with alcohol consumption. Common social problems mentioned were poor academic performance, and problems with parents, friends, and teachers. The common source of their knowledge regarding effect of alcohol were the internet 64.2%, television 61.5%, newspaper 46.5%, radio 35.8%, books/magazines 35.4% and school 15.5%. About 66.2% had advised individuals to quit alcohol; 21.2% participated in alcohol prevention campaigns. The suggested measures to increase awareness were through media, seminars, workshops and student groups in schools. With regard to the attitude towards alcohol control activities, 84.5% were willing to participate in campaigns against alcohol, 87.6% were keen to organize programs in their schools, and 78.6% were interested in giving talks on the ill effects of alcohol and other substances among school students. The majority of the students responded that school seminars (67.8%), workshops (47.8%), curricular activities (35.6%), and role play (31.7%) and media (75.0%) were the best mediums to impart awareness regarding the adverse consequences of substances commonly abused.

In another study, from India, easy availability was the most common reason for initiation and continuation of alcohol(3). Yet another study from India documented that the pleasurable effects, boredom and curiosity as the reasons for initiating the substances(4). Students of a survey from Africa stated relief from stress as the prime reason(5).

A study in Denmark(7) reported that 76% of the pregnant women spontaneously considered some alcohol intake during pregnancy acceptable, and 46% specifically mentioned alcohol intake on a weekly basis as acceptable. Only 24% spontaneously answered that a pregnant woman should abstain from alcohol; these women were significantly more likely to be abstainers. Eighty-five percent of the women believed that binge drinking was potentially harmful to the fetus. 95% considered it acceptable for her partner to drink while she was pregnant, and only 18 (4%) did not consider it acceptable half of whom reported that their partners were abstainers during the index pregnancy. Mass media (television, newspapers, and/or weekly magazines) and relatives were spontaneously mentioned by 65% and 40%, respectively, as the most important sources of information about alcohol in general.

A finding in Bangalore (8) shows that among 60 adolescents, 61 percent were having moderately adequate knowledge, 31.7 percent were having inadequate knowledge and only 6.7 percent were having adequate knowledge. Regarding attitude, majority 60% of the adolescents were having favorable attitude, 25% were having most favorable attitude and only 15% were having unfavorable attitude. There was a significant association observed between educational level of the father and Knowledge level. There was a significant association observed between age and educational level of the student and attitude level.

A cross sectional study(9) was conducted from June to September 2009 at selected residential tribal schools in Nagpur district, Central India in which 4.10% boys were smokers as compared to 1.57% girls. Although the proportion is more among boys, tribal girl students succumbing to the habit of smoking at the school age itself is a matter of concern.

The habit of smoking in these school children can be attributed to easy availability of *tendupatta* leaves (used to make bidis in India) and household stock of tobacco by the parents. Almost equal proportion of girls were indulging in smokeless tobacco consumption as that of the boys and this is because of the habit of using *masheri* (a form of smokeless tobacco) for cleaning the teeth every morning and *nus* (another form of smokeless tobacco) used for sniffing by the girl students. Habit of alcohol consumption in these tribal school students can be blamed to the local occupation of collecting *mahua* tree flowers for the preparation of country made liquor

Parents in some cultures(10) think it acceptable to offer their child a little wine at family dinners on special occasions, and in cultures where this is the practice the rates of alcohol-related problems are sometimes lower. However, problems with alcohol can develop when parents provide alcohol to youth without guidance or supervision. For this reason, if youth should start drinking—and it is recommended that they do not—it would be better for them to drink small amounts of alcohol in the company of their parents, if the parents demonstrate



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low-risk drinking. 25.3 % families felt that the drinker had less time with the family and 7.4 % felt neglected. 14% felt afraid of the man when he drinks. Around 18.7 % of families had quarrels because of the drinking habit of the man. 34 % of the families of alcohol users had experienced change in study pattern of their children's. So it shows that regardless of a family history of alcoholism, a lack of parental monitoring, severe and recurrent family conflict, and poor parent youth relationship can contribute to alcohol abuse in adolescents. One of the main causes of alcoholism is overdo drinking to forget life's struggles and problems. Many alcoholics drink in the hope that they will be able to forget their problems by drinking large quantities of alcohol. A person who drinks irresponsibly may develop alcohol tolerance in the long run. The more a person drinks, the more he or she becomes more alcohol tolerant. This can lead to greater alcohol consumption, and then later, to alcoholism.

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 380 out-of-school youth in motor parks in Lagos State, **Nigeria(11)** and reported that 92.6% of the respondents were aware of the harmful effects of alcohol and that 82.9% of the respondents were aware that it is not safe to drive a vehicle after consuming alcohol. A total of 357 respondents (93.7%) were aware that alcohol is associated with road traffic accidents, 299 (78.7%) were aware of alcohol's association with liver disease, 192 (50.5%) with cancer, and 251 (66.1%) with heart disease. 86.3% agreed that alcohol use among youth is a serious problem. Drinking and driving was identified as a serious problem by 329 respondents (86.6%). There were 196 respondents (51.6%) who held the opinion that alcohol helps boost one's reputation; 34.2% of the respondents believed that people who drink alcohol have more friends; 31.1% believed that without alcohol, a social gathering is incomplete; and 79.2% respondents were of the opinion that persons below 18 years of age should be restricted from purchasing alcohol. An assessment of the respondents' perceptions of the reasons for youth drinking revealed that about half (47.9%) thought that young people who drink do so because they want to have a good time at a party, while 45.8% believed they drink because they want to fit in or be accepted by friends. Nearly half (45.0%) of the current drinkers admitted to drinking alcohol before or during sexual intercourse. There were current drinkers of 63.5% who expressed a desire to stop drinking, while 45.5% had made unsuccessful attempts to stop drinking within the past year, and 31.1% did not think that they would be able to stop drinking without external assistance. Only 28.9% of the current drinkers had ever received any assistance with cessation of alcohol consumption; such assistance was primarily provided by family members, friends, and, to a slightly lesser extent, healthcare workers.

A study was conducted in **Ghana(12)**. Focus group discussions were held with 43 bus and minibus drivers in the capital city, Accra. Most of them said that drinking cause's relaxation, releases their inhibitions, and increases their confidence on the road. It helps them to socialise and they enjoy the taste. However, every group listed more problems associated with alcohol than good points, usually beginning with "hangovers", addiction, "accidents", and deaths. The most favored drinks were hard liquor. When asked what they think about the relative levels of risks associated with drinking and driving, most recognized the dangers were:

***"Drinking gives the driver false courage".***

***"Drinking affects one's sense of judgment".***

***"The drunk driver is always prone to over-speeding and accidents".***

***"The drunk driver does not exercise restraint at dangerous portions of the road".***

***"The drunk driver overtakes other vehicles unnecessarily"***

***"The drunk driver is a potential killer on the road"***

Pressure from friends or in some cases social practices, such as funerals, baby "out-doorings", and other social gatherings was the reason of drinking. At their eating places, some drivers take alcohol as appetizers. Other reasons assigned why commercial drivers drink and drive included medicinal purposes, addiction.

### CONCLUSION

Good family relations can impact favourably upon adolescent outcomes, including alcohol use(18,19), whilst poor and conflictual relations increase the likelihood of alcohol initiation and related problems(20,21). Thus parents



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should provide good environment at home. Health workers should give education regarding health hazards of alcohol among people. Public health campaigns, national policy and guidelines should be made relating to hazards of alcoholism and effective prevention strategies should be implemented. School-based educational programs should include information concerning addiction and forms of treatment as well as appropriate treatment services. School and public health programs must address the importance of alcohol cessation. There is need for spreading more awareness about treatment of alcohol abuse via school lectures, media and campaign at larger level.

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