

Impacts of Alcoholism on the Indian Society

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Abstract: Alcohol has had a significant impact on society. The research clearly shows that alcohol affects an individual mind as well as physically. The physical and the psychological consequences are too dangerous and can lead to severe problems even death. Cases of domestic violence, rape, and all the other inhuman activities are reported daily which have been caused due to the influence of alcohol. An online survey was used to analyze the drinking patterns of people which clearly show that around 85% of people are influenced by alcohol due to some of the other reasons, the main one being the urge to socialize. The survey was conducted with an equal ratio of the male and female populations. The main problem lies in the fact that there are still some people who are not aware of the consequences of alcohol which spots the loopholes in the administration. Also, around 80% of the people have started drinking at an illegal early age highlighting the incompetence of the government again. The problem lies in the corrupted practices of the government which grants permissions to liquor shops and restaurants to serve alcohol to underage people. Also, there is this culture in some houses where the kids start drinking an early age due to the influence of their parents. To get rid of all the societal problems and save the future pillars of the country from the destroying effects of alcohol, we all have to change our mentalities and a change has to be brought about with the government playing an important role.

Keywords: Psychological, Domestic violence, Mentalities.

1. Introduction

Alcoholism has been prevalent in our country for quite a while now. Alcohol has been an integral part of most of the celebrations in our country. Citizens from almost all the age groups are consuming alcohol these days. Social gatherings are not complete without the taste of alcohol. The reason alcohol has become such an easy thing to get is that people don't really consider it as one of the destroyers of the physical and mental health of a person.

Alcoholism has led to an end number of problems in Indian society and has ruined a lot of lives and families. Addiction to alcohol is one of the major problems in our country and needs to be looked after. Not only has alcoholism led to physical problems such as liver failure, but it has affected the mental health of our society as well leading to problems such as depression.

In today's progressive world mental health is considered as important as the physical one. Alcohol has vandalized the mental state of a huge population in our country. Surprisingly,

most of the people who have an abhorrence towards the habits of alcoholism consider it as a sign of bad character and personality. Well, it doesn't really determine the character of an individual who is consuming it, but it can determine his physical and mental health without any doubts.

Youngsters as well the citizens falling under the senior category who consume alcohol are very casual to alcoholism and are oblivious towards its chronic consequences. They are mainly responsible for getting the tag of 'silent killer' to alcohol, silent adds up as a prefix before "killer" as the people talked about above turn a blind eye towards the eyebrow-raising issue.

Alcoholism has acted as a predator in the lives of all the classes of our society. It is generally a slow killer which is not taken seriously by the people of our country and is often overshadowed by the more highlighted hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, etc. This research paper explains to us the importance of tackling this problem in our society and recommends the ways in which it can be done.

2. Data Collection and Data Sampling

An online survey was conducted amongst a group of approximately 110 people. The main purpose of the survey was to find out the age group which consumes the maximum amount of alcohol and to know the drinking habits of the people in terms of the frequency of drinking and factors influencing them to drink. Google analytical tool was used to get the statistics of the responses.

3. Objective of Study

- To put light on the mental and physical damages done by alcohol and how excessive drinking problems have destroyed individuals and families in the nation.
- Highlighting people's approach towards consumption of alcohol
- Bursting myths related to alcohol consumption.

4. Methodology Used

Online survey was conducted in which people from all parts of the country were asked about their alcohol habits. Also, the secondary data which told us about the physical and

psychological changes brought about by alcohol was taken through the method of reference from different journals and articles about alcoholism. Surveys conducted by the government gave us information about the problems caused in society due to alcoholism and what ill practices are being followed such as domestic violence.

5. Background

Alcoholism has had its effects on all sectors of our society. It has dented the lifestyles of people of all age groups and backgrounds.

Let's have a look at the physical damages caused due to alcoholism first. Alcoholism directly or indirectly leads to a huge number of problems.

Chronic Diseases and Conditions for which Alcohol Consumption is one of the reasons, identified by Various Meta-Analyses and Reviews and Listed in the 2005 Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study.

- Ischemic stroke,
- Cerebrovascular diseases
- Ischemic heart disease
- Hypertensive heart disease
- Cardiovascular and circulatory disease
- Alzheimer's disease and other dementias
- Neurological conditions
- Unipolar depressive disorders
- Diabetes
- Other neoplasms
- Non-Hodgkins lymphoma
- Hodgkins lymphoma
- Kidney and other organ cancers
- Breast Cancer
- Trachea, bronchus and lung cancers
- Larynx Cancer
- Liver cancer
- Colon and rectum cancers
- Stomach cancer
- Esophagus Cancer
- Nasopharynx cancer and other pharynx cancer
- Malignant neoplasm

A. Lethal Diseases caused due to alcoholism

Liver Disease: Alcohol is mostly metabolized in the liver, which is why the liver is particularly at risk of problems. Alcohol is metabolized into acetaldehyde, a substance that is both toxic and carcinogenic.

Alcoholic liver disease is directly proportional to the amount and duration of alcohol abuse. Heavy drinking poses a comprehensive risk for its development.

Drinking heavily majorly increases the risk of alcoholic fatty liver, an early and reversible consequence of excessive alcohol intake. Chronic drinking alters the liver's metabolism of fats, and excess fat is collected in the liver.

Long term inflation of the liver is called alcoholic hepatitis. This can lead to scar tissue.

Over a time period ranging from several years to decades, the scarring can completely invade the liver, causing it to be hard and nodular. This is known as cirrhosis.

If the liver cannot perform its life-sustaining functions, multiple organ failure will occur. Symptoms often develop only after extensive damage has already been recorded.

Pancreatitis: Overconsumption of alcohol can cause pancreatitis, a painful inflammation of the pancreas that usually requires hospitalization.

The inflammation is mostly related to premature activation of proenzymes to pancreatic enzymes and chronic exposure towards acetaldehyde, and other chemical activities in the pancreas caused due to alcohol injury.

Around 70% of cases of pancreatitis are related to the people who have heavy alcohol consumption.

Cancer: Cancer is often related to the habit of smoking, but chronic alcohol consumption can increase the risk of developing different cancers, including cancers of the mouth, esophagus, larynx, stomach, liver, colon, rectum, and breast. Both acetaldehyde and alcohol contribute to heightened risk.

Ulcers and gastrointestinal problems: Heavy drinking can play with the digestive system, and lead to problems such as stomach ulcers, acid reflux, heartburn, and inflammation of the stomach lining, known as gastritis.

As alcohol initially passes through the gastrointestinal tract, it begins to exert its harmful effects. Damage to the digestive system can also cause dangerous internal bleeding from enlarged veins in the esophagus related to chronic liver disease.

Alcohol interferes with gastric acid secretion. It can defer gastric emptying, and it can impair the muscle movements in the entire bowel.

The gastrointestinal tract faces a substantial amount of damage from alcohol.

Immune System Dysfunction: Drinking too much makes the immune system weak, making the body vulnerable to infectious diseases, like pneumonia and tuberculosis.

Alcohol can cause a change in red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets.

A drop in the white blood cell count can happen due to alcoholism. This happens because the body's production of white blood cells is suppressed, and the cells become trapped in the spleen.

Each episode of heavy drinking causes a reduction in the body's ability to ward off infections. Consumption of alcohol in chronic and large amounts will adversely affect white blood cell production and function over time.

There will be a heavy risk of pneumonia, tuberculosis (TB), HIV infection, and other conditions.

Brain Damage: Alcohol can lead to blurred vision, memory lapses, slurred speech, difficulty walking, and slowed reaction time. These are all due to its effects on the brain. It alters the brain receptors and neurotransmitters, and it interferes with a person's cognitive function, moods, emotions, and reactions on multiple levels.

Because alcohol is a central nervous system (CNS) depressant, it causes problems processing information and poses challenges with solving simple problems.

Alcohol's effect on serotonin and GABA receptors may lead to neurological changes that could cause a reduction in a person's normal fear of consequences to their own actions, contributing to risk-taking or violent behaviors.

Alcohol also disrupts fine motor coordination and balance, mostly leading to injuries from falls. Excessive drinking sometimes causes "blackouts" or the inability to remember events. Long-term heavy drinking can increase the speed of the normal aging process, resulting in early and permanent dementia. As a consequence of that, young people are specifically exposed to the destructive effects of alcohol.

Malnourishment and Vitamin Deficiencies: Dysfunctional drinking leads to malnourishment and lack of vitamins.

This may be due to a poor diet, but also because nutrients are not broken down properly. They are not sufficiently absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract into the blood, and they are not utilized effectively by the body's cells.

Also, alcohol's ability to interrupt red blood cell production and to cause bleeding from gastric ulcers may lead to the development of anemia caused due to deficiency of iron.

Osteoporosis: Chronic heavy alcohol consumption, specifically during adolescence and young adulthood, can dramatically affect bone health, and it may increase the risk of developing osteoporosis, with a loss of bone mass, later on in life. Osteoporosis increases the chances of fractures, especially in the proximal femur of the hip. Alcohol interferes with the equation of calcium, Vitamin D production, and cortisol levels, adding to the potential weakening of the bone structure. People who drink excessively are more likely to fracture a vertebra than those who do not. Drinking high quantities of alcohol during adolescence can lead to an increase in the risk of osteoporosis later in life.

B. Psychological Effects

Drinking and Smoking are the two habits that have always gotten away on the grounds of being stress busters. These myths have been floating around for ages. Most of the people who are addicted to alcohol and tobacco started getting addicted to it because of believing that it will help them release stress.

It's time to burst all these myths about these silent and slow killers of our society. Alcoholism has never been considered a toxin which can affect our mental health to such a level which can subsequently lead to suicides.

1) Effects of alcohol on the chemistry of the brain

Our brains are dependent on a delicate balance of chemicals and processes. Alcohol is a depressant, which means it can

disrupt that equation, affecting our thoughts, feelings, and actions – and sometimes our long-term mental health. This is partly down to 'neurotransmitters', chemicals that help to transmit signals from one nerve (or neuron) in the brain to another.

The relaxed feeling and the calmness you might experience if you have an alcoholic drink is because of the chemical changes alcohol has caused in your brain. For some, a drink can help them feel more confident and less anxious. That's because it's starting to depress the part of the brain we relate or which is linked with inhibition.

But, as you drink more, more of the brain starts to get affected. It doesn't matter what mood you're in to start with, when high levels of alcohol are involved, instead of pleasurable effects increasing, and it is possible that a negative emotional response will take over. Alcohol can be linked to aggression. You could become angry, aggressive, and anxious, or depressed.

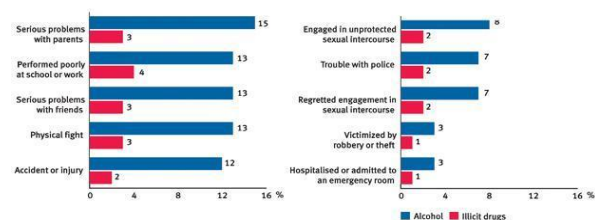
Let's discuss the short and long term effects of alcohol:

- Short-term psychological effects:
 1. Difficulty focusing
 2. Relaxation and diminished stress
 3. Reduced inhibitions
 4. Damaged memory
 5. Poor vision, coordination, and reflexes
- Long-term psychological effects:
 1. Increased depression and anxiety
 2. Tolerance development and increased substance use
 3. Dependency, otherwise known as alcoholism
 4. Impaired learning and memory capacity
 5. Interrupted brain development

C. Social Effects of Alcohol

Alcoholism has not only affected the specific individual who is consuming it but also has a huge impact on the neighborhood.

Alcoholism leads to fights, brawls, and cases of domestic violence in the Indian Society. The number of road accidents has also increased because of the consumption of alcohol by people at the wrong time and places. The statistics below show that it has majorly damaged the society and strict measures must be taken.



Source: Times of Malta

Destroyed Relationships, Health Problems, Inability to quit are some of the signs that warn people of being headed towards alcoholism.

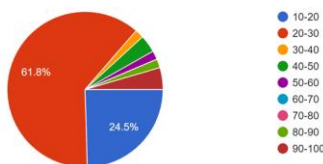
Stages of Alcoholism:

- **Binge Drinking:** This is the first stage of alcoholism. It involves drinking substantially for a short amount of time and usually takes place when the drinker is experimenting.
- **Drinking more often:** Includes more drinking, rather more excuses to drink. One might find themselves drinking every weekend which wasn't the case before.
- **Problem Drinking:** This is the phase in which one starts facing problems due to drinking. Such as missing meetings, being in a hangover, falling ill, irregular sleep, etc.
- **Dependence on Alcohol:** In this phase, people are unable to cope up with their sober life and face difficulties in resisting the withdrawal symptoms.
- **Addiction to Alcohol:** This is the last phase and the one which is the most harmful one. People start drinking not for pleasure but for survival as their brain starts telling them that something is not okay when they aren't consuming liquor.

Data Interpretation:

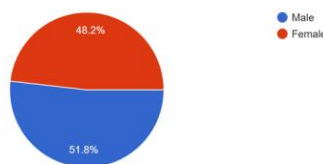
- The survey that we conducted had 61.8% of people falling under the age group of 20-30. The majority of the remaining crowd was from 10-20 years. Approximately there was an equal ratio of the male and female population participating in the survey with the latter one slightly edging the former one.

Age of the surveyed population
110 responses



Author's own source

Gender of the surveyed population
110 responses

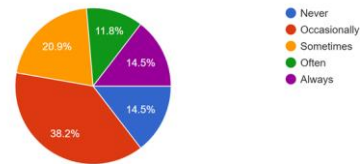


Author's own source

- Speaking about the frequency at which people drink, there were only 14.5% of people who were out of the influence of alcohol. The majority of the people were occasional drinkers who prefer drinking just at parties and social gatherings. The main purpose of consuming alcohol was found out to be the will to socialize. There

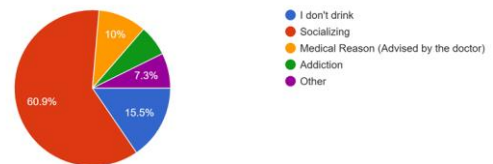
were some medical cases as well in which the doctor has advised these people to consume alcoholic drinks such as wine and brandy. 6.4% of people have admitted that they are addicted to alcohol. 6.4% can be considered as the minimum number of people who are addicted as not every individual openly admits to the fact of being addicted to alcohol.

Drinking habits of the surveyed population.
110 responses



Author's own source

Reasons for drinking stated by the surveyed people
110 responses



Author's own source

- Upon the observation, it was found out that around 58.2% of the people started drinking before they turned 20. The legal age for consumption of alcohol in India is 21.
- The survey also showed that 88.2% of people are aware of the consequences of alcohol and 31.8% of them have faced problems due to alcohol as well. But, they still wish to continue with their drinking habits.

6. Suggestions and Conclusion

Scrutinizing the effects and consequences of alcohol and also after conducting surveys about the drinking patterns of the people of our society, we can say that there are a lot of changes which can be brought by the government in our society to control the problems caused because of excessive drinking habits. The government has made some alterations in the alcohol consumption rules near the highways and freeways, but we don't think that is sufficient:

- The government launched its scheme for protection and prevention of alcoholism and drug abuse and for social defense services which was active from the 1st of April, 2018. The scheme had laid down its objectives mainly to protect the youth from getting addicted to alcohol and build de-addiction camps for the addicted ones. It also included giving knowledge

to the people about alcohol consumption and how it can be harmful. This was a very good initiative taken up by the government but unfortunately, it hasn't been marketed that well. Also, we feel more of such schemes can be introduced by the government as there is some population that wants to quit alcohol. And, we believe that if these schemes are looked after in a good way, more people will be convinced to quit alcohol.

- The statistics obtained from the survey clearly show that most people started drinking at an illegal age. This simply shows that there are a lot of shops and restaurants in our country who are selling alcoholic products to underage people. This simply shows a lack of vigilance from the side of government and how the licenses of these restaurants and shops remain valid. There is a desperate need to control these malpractices and save the future generation from the influence of alcohol as they are the ones who are going to shape the future of the country.
- Cases of rape, domestic violence, and other life harming practices that take place with the involvement of alcohol are the alarming bells that tell us that we are not headed in the right direction. There has to be a control on all these life-threatening activities. The government should do regular patrolling in all the areas in which these cases are recorded the most. They should keep a check over the houses and make sure that peace is maintained in society.
- There is this mentality in some families especially the North-Indian ones in which alcohol is served as a tradition ignoring all its side effects at social gatherings and special occasions. This mentality has to be changed since a lot of kids taste alcohol for the first time in the presence and influence of their parents at a very early age. Special counseling and workshops can be organized by the government to control this as this is directly affecting the young generation of our country and playing a huge role in shaping their lives.

After looking at all the things which revolve around the problem of alcoholism, one can easily conclude that it is the most dangerous drug which is ignored and neglected the most. It can be termed as a "slow-killer" which is surrounded by myths which makes the consumption of it not a thing of concern. It is very clear; it has affected a lot of individuals and families directly and is affecting the development of our nation indirectly. If there is progress in our society, we have to put control over this problem and the government has the biggest role to play in it.

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