

# A Pilot Study To Identify The Problems Faced By The Wives Of Persons With Alcohol Dependence

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## **Abstract:**

**Background:** Alcohol use is a public health issue worldwide and is a significant problem in India. Living with a person who has alcohol dependence is a family affair. Because it subjects all members of a household to constant stress and fears of various kinds, it has often been referred to as a "family illness." To one degree or another, all members of the family are affected specially the spouse. Problems faced by the wife involve various spheres.

**Aim:** To study the problems faced by the wives of persons with alcohol dependence

**Materials and methods:** Wives of 20 patients with alcohol dependence who were treated at Link De-addiction centre, Mangalore, Karnataka were the participants. The study was conducted over a period of one month. Alcohol dependence was diagnosed using ICD -10 criteria by the treating psychiatrist. Socio-demographic data and a questionnaire to assess problems in social, economic, psychological and relationship issues were used which was analyzed.

**Results:** Majority of the participants had crossed their middle age, were home makers, literate and their husband's had long years of drinking. Wives faced significant humiliation, economic problems, psychological and relationship issues due to husband's alcohol dependence.

**Conclusions:** Any society which is development oriented has to take steps to prevent alcoholism as well as to equip itself with support systems for the family and the dependent. This will be a significant step towards strengthening family, which is a basic unit of the society.

**Keywords:** Alcohol dependence, wife, drinking

## I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Alcohol use is a public health issue worldwide and is a significant problem in India. <sup>[1]</sup> Alcohol is widely used in our society. Alcohol dependence is characterized by tolerance; withdrawal; alcohol use in larger quantities or over a longer time period than intended; repeated unsuccessful efforts to cut down or stop drinking; greater time dedicated to alcohol-related activities; continued alcohol use despite alcohol-related health problems, and interference with recreational, occupational or social activities. <sup>[2]</sup> Alcohol consumption is associated with a wide range of adverse health and social consequences both acute and chronic. Some alcohol related problems affect individuals and few affect the society at large

and continue to impose staggering social and economic burdens. In addition to negatively affecting individual's health, a wide range of social ills including domestic violence, child abuse, and assault have all been linked to alcohol misuse. <sup>[3]</sup> The abuse of psychoactive substances is on the increase in our society today. The use of alcohol in some form or the other, as a stimulant, aesthetic, social lubricant and as a ceremonial substance has been in vague since time immemorial. We know that the psychoactive substance is an alarming problem affecting the people in various degrees and aspects. The physical, psychological, and economic damages are severe.

Alcohol dependence could affect the wellbeing of one's spouse and the family. Wives in that situation may face

domestic violence and threats of violence, emotional and sexual abuse, lack of confiding relationships, social isolation due to humiliation, financial hardships, chronic psychiatric or physical problems of the drinking husband directly related to alcohol abuse or secondary to alcohol abuse (e.g. depression), and marital disharmony which in turn could lead to perpetual psychological distress.<sup>[4]</sup>

Living with an alcoholic is a family affair. Because it subjects all members of a household to constant stress and fears of various kinds, it has often been referred to as a “family illness.” To one degree or another, all members of the family are affected specially the spouse. However, not all alcoholic families, nor all members of the same family, are affected in a similar manner.<sup>[5]</sup>

**AIM**

To study the problems faced by the wives of persons with alcohol dependence

**METHODS AND MATERIALS**

Random sampling method was used to select wives of 20 patients with alcohol dependence syndrome who were treated at Link De-addiction centre, Mangalore, Karnataka, India. The first author (lady) personally interviewed all the wives after establishing rapport with initial introductory sessions. All participants cooperated and participated in the assessments which took roughly 45 minutes for each participant. Written informed consent was taken from all the participants and their wives for the study which was conducted over a period of one month. Alcohol dependence was diagnosed using ICD -10 criteria by the treating psychiatrist. Socio-demographic data and a questionnaire to assess problems in social, economic, psychological and relationship issues were used which was analyzed.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study included married persons with alcohol dependence, majority of the participants were in their fourth decade which indicated their husband’s were older and drinking for long years. The persons in the alcohol dependence group were in the age group on 50-60 years.

Age of participants	Number of participants	Percentage
21-30	4	20
31-40	5	25
41-50	9	45
51-60	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 1: Age of the participants

**EDUCATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

Almost all the participants were literate and completed atleast their primary education.

Education of the participants	Number of participants	Percentage
Primary	8	40
High school	7	35
PUC	4	20
Graduate	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 2

**OCCUPATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

Table below shows that a vast majority of 15 respondents (75 percent) were home makers which imply that they are economically dependent on their husband’s for livelihood. Only one respondent was an employee, that is, a domestic worker while 20percent of the respondents were doing beedi rolling whose earnings are uncertain.

Occupation of participants	Number of participants	Percent
Home maker	15	75
Domestic help	1	5
Beedi roller	4	20
Total	20	100

Table 3

**NUMBER OF YEARS THE HUSBAND STARTED CONSUMING ALCOHOL**

A vast majority 60 percent of the husband’s have a history of taking alcohol since 10-30yrs. A significant number of persons with alcohol dependence were brought to Link de addiction centre have been consuming alcohol for a long periods.

How many years husband consumed alcohol	Number of responses	Percentage
No responses	2	10
0-10	3	15
11-20	4	20
21-30	8	40
31-40	3	15
Total	20	100

Table 4

**II. SOCIAL PROBLEM**

**HUMILIATION BY HUSBAND**

Table below shows that 16 participants (80 percent) have experienced humiliation by husband in front of others among whom a majority of (60 percent) of the respondents were only sometimes humiliated by their husbands and 4 respondents are always/mostly humiliated (20 percent). This shows the negative effect of alcohol dependence upon the social status and dignity of the wife.

Humiliation	Number of responses	Percent
Always humiliated	2	10
Most of the time	2	10
Sometimes	12	60

Never	4	20
Total	20	100

Table 5

### III. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

#### CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE

Table below shows that there are 9 participants (45 percent) husband's who provide money for house hold expenditure. Where as a majority of 11 participants (55 percent) husband's either sometimes provide or do not provide money for house hold expenditure. The finding reflects the uncertainty with regard to household expenditure faced by the wives of persons with alcohol dependence.

Money for house hold expenditure	Number of responses	Percent
Provided by husband	9	45
Sometimes provided	8	40
Not provided	3	15
Total	20	100

Table 6

#### CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURE

Table below shows that half of participant's husband's spend money for their child's education and the other half may be using the same money for drinking and putting the burden on their wife to manage the education of their children.

Educational expenditure	Number of responses	Percent
Provided	10	50
Sometimes	7	35
Not provided	3	11
Total	20	100

Table 7

#### DEBTS AMONG PARTICIPANTS

Table below shows that a significant majority of 17 participants (85 percent) are indebted and only 3 respondents (15 percent) are not indebted. The finding indicates that the families are taking loans to manage their expenses and leading to more financial stress.

Debt	Number of responses	Percent
Indebted	17	85
Not indebted	3	15
Total	20	100

Table 8

### IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS FACED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

#### DEPRESSION IN THE PARTICIPANTS

Depression was diagnosed clinically by the treating psychiatrist in half of the participants and many had sub-

syndromal symptoms. This is a significant finding and many would require active intervention from a mental health professional.

Depression in the participants	Number of responses	Percent
Yes	8	40
Sub-syndromal	10	50
No	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 9

#### VIOLENT BEHAVIOR OF HUSBAND AND FEAR OF THE PARTICIPANTS TO COMMUNICATE

65 percent of the participants reported of difficulty in communicating with their husband's and 60 percent reported verbal and physical abuse in the last one year.

### V. RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COUPLE

Table below shows that only 5 participants (25 percent) have a satisfactory relationship with their life partners and there are 14 participants (70 percent) whose relationship is strained and one participant has a poor relationship and in the verge of a divorce.

Relationship between the couple	Number of responses	Percent
Satisfactory	5	25
Strained	14	70
Poor	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 10

#### HUSBAND'S REACTION TOWARDS CHILDREN

Table below shows that only 10 participants (50 percent) husband's reaction towards children is good and 5 participants (25 percent) husbands' reaction towards children is indifferent, one participant's (5 percent) husband verbally abuse their children and 4 participants husband's physically abuse.

Husbands reaction towards children	Number of responses	Percent
Good	10	50
Indifferent	5	25
Verbal abuse	1	5
Physical abuse	4	20
Total	20	100

Table 11

An Indian study reported that more than half of the spouses of persons with alcohol dependence (65%) had a psychiatric disorder. Primarily mood and anxiety disorder were present. Major depressive disorder was present in 43%. Psychiatric morbidity, marital dissatisfaction in spouses and higher adverse consequences alcohol dependence in their husbands, were found to be significantly correlated with each

other and their association was robust particularly when problems in the physical, interpersonal and intrapersonal domains were high.<sup>[6]</sup> In a study from Sri Lanka the prevalence of depression among spouses of men who use alcohol is markedly higher than that has been observed among general Sri Lankan women from previous studies. The prevalence of depression in women seems to increase when their husbands are morning drinkers, and with increasing age.<sup>[3]</sup> Personality disorders are also high among persons with alcohol dependence, it was 30% in a hospital based South Indian study.<sup>[7]</sup> Alcohol dependence fathers' alcoholism was also associated with more negative father–infant interactions as indicated by lower paternal sensitivity, verbalizations, higher negative affect, and lower infant responsiveness among alcoholic fathers.<sup>[8]</sup>

Strengths of our study are ICD-10 diagnosed persons with alcohol dependence were recruited. Wives were interviewed after initial rapport building by a lady mental health professional. Wives were evaluated by a psychiatrist for psychiatric morbidity. Various domains were studied and assessed with significant results. Our findings are of interest, but several limitations must be noted. We recruited a small sample size from a de-addiction centre and which had married couples who were staying with their spouses. Individuals are not representative of the population sample and scales were not standard / structured.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The social effects of alcoholism are so severe that the wives and children experience significant problems. The economic conditions of the families were very much affected by the problem of husband's alcoholism.

This pilot study on “problems faced by the wives of alcohol dependents” has shown that alcoholism is a family problem that has many facets and needs an in depth analysis with a large sample and structured questionnaires. Alcoholism has a huge impact on the economic, social, and emotional effects on the entire family especially the wife.<sup>[9]</sup> Any society which is development oriented has to take steps to prevent alcoholism as well as to equip itself with support systems for

the family and the dependent. This will be a significant step towards strengthening family, which is a basic unit of the society.

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