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COPING BEHAVIOURS IN THE WIVES OF ALCOHOLIC SPOUSES – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Alcoholism stands as the world's third risk factor for disease burden and has become the very important problem of global concern. It is clear that the problematic consumption of alcohol affects millions of families. The constant exposures to the negative environment and experiences because of the alcoholic spouses, the wives are compelled to be pessimistic in their attitude towards life. In view of dearth of information in Indian setting, the present study was undertaken to assess the nature and extent of coping behaviours used by the wives towards their spouses' alcoholism and to study the relationship between coping behaviours and socio-demographic variables. The wives of the alcoholic spouses are forced to play multiple roles and are not able to stand

the demands of life. As they themselves are sick at all levels and are unable to direct their life and the family. They tend to adapt to negative coping strategies like quarrel, withdrawal, punishment, aversion etc. The researchers used descriptive research design for the study. By using the simple random method the researchers selected 50 wives of alcoholic spouses. The data was collected through Coping Strategies Inventory by David L. Tobin (1984, 2001) designed to assess coping thoughts and behaviours in response to a specific stressor.

KEYWORDS: Alcoholic spouse, Wives of alcoholic spouse, Coping strategies.

INTRODUCTION :

Alcoholism thrives in shadows, secrets and silence. Reactions to alcoholism range from venomous gossip to sighs of utter hopelessness. Alcoholism is a broad term for problems with alcohol and generally used to mean compulsive and uncontrolled consumption of alcoholic beverages detrimental to their own health, personal relationship and social standing (Townsend.C..M., 2007). Alcoholism stands as the world's third risk factor for disease burden and has become the very important problem of global concern. Alcohol addiction is not only a problem of the physical health of the individual but also the people who are co-habituating with him. The research studies on the problems of wives of alcoholic spouse have revealed that the wife develops dysfunctional



coping behaviour. Marital conflict and lack of coping mechanisms are more frequent in these families. Various studies were conducted in different parts of the world to get an idea on different coping styles used by wives of alcoholics. A study on the coping behaviours of wives of alcoholics was conducted by Satyanarayana Rao and K Kuruvilla among 30 wives of alcoholics who attended the department of psychiatry CMC Vellore and the results indicated that 82.7% of the sample used Indulgence as coping strategy, followed by Fearful withdrawal (70.5%), Avoidance (68.9%) and Discord (68%) (Harikrishnan.R, 2013). The wife has to cope with the bewildering unpredictability and frequent unpleasantness of life with a chronic alcoholic spouse. The more serious an alcohol problem, the less able a person is likely to be to perform competently, or at all, the various roles and responsibilities of a spouse and parent.

It is clear that the problematic consumption of alcohol affects millions of families. The studies in this area have made the observation that the wives are the victims in all dimensions of health to the alcoholic nature of the husbands. In view of dearth of information in Indian setting, the present study was undertaken to assess the nature and extent of coping behaviours used by the wives towards their spouses' alcoholism and to study the relationship between coping behaviours and socio-demographic variables.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

S.Revathi (2009) assessed the ways of coping among the wives of alcoholics. This research adapted cross sectional descriptive research design. Convenience sampling was used to select 200 wives of alcoholics who were staying with the husbands during de-addiction treatment. Coping among the wives of alcoholics was measured by ways of coping questionnaire, a 66-item scale (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). This instrument measures the thoughts and actions used by the WOA to cope with stressful encounters of everyday living.

Majority of the wives of alcoholics used positive reappraisal (83.5%), painful problem solving coping (82.5%), escaping avoidance (74.5%), accepting responsibility (72%), confrontive coping (68.5%), self controlling (64%), and seeking social support coping moderately (58.5%) to cope up with the stressful situations; 45% and 53.5% of them used distancing coping moderately and minimally respectively. Varghese (1998) and Sree Devi, et al. (2001) reported that discord, avoidance, assertion, fearful withdrawal and marital breakdown were most frequently used coping patterns among the wives of alcoholics at National Institute of Mental Health & Allied Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore.

Prof. Dr. Arindam Kanta Banerjee et.al.,(2015) conducted a study to assess the psychosocial problems and coping of women with alcoholic spouses in rural Malwa area, Ludhiana, Punjab. An exploratory approach and non experimental research design was used for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used and 60 women with alcoholic husbands were interviewed. The study found that majority of women had physiological problems (13.13%) followed by psychological problems (12.79%) and psychosocial problems (7.40%). While 6.6% women had financial problems, only 3.92 stated to have sexual problems. 71.1% women had adaptive and 28.3% showed mal-adaptive coping.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The contemporary world today regards alcoholism as a primary illness, which affects the whole family. The wives of alcoholic spouses face numerous psychological problems because of their husband's drinking behavior. The constant exposures to the negative environment and experiences because of the alcoholic spouses, the wives are compelled to be pessimistic in their attitude towards

life. The wives of the alcoholic spouses are forced to play multiple roles and are not able to stand the demands of life. As they themselves are sick at all levels and are unable to direct their life and the family. They tend to adapt to negative coping strategies like quarrel, withdrawal, punishment, aversion etc... They are not aware of why they behave this way? A systematic study is needed to bring out the poor coping methods of the wives of alcoholic spouses. They need help and they need treatment. This finding of the study could highlight the need for an effective psychological treatment to these victims.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.To study the demographic features of the wives of alcoholics
- 2.To analyse the various coping strategies of the wives of alcoholics
- 3.To provide effective coping strategies.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Alcoholic Spouse

It refers to a person (married male) who indulges in drinking alcohol excessively on a daily basis. A good number of them begin their day with a drink and end the day with heavy consumption of alcohol. He suffers from alcoholism and becomes dependant on alcohol for his existence.

Wife of an alcoholic spouse

It refers to wife of alcoholic spouse who are living with their alcoholic husband for more than two years and the age between 20-60 years.

Coping Strategies

In this study it refers to a set of behaviours like, confronting coping, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, avoidance, problem focused coping, spirituality, assertion, sexual withdrawal, protector, blaming, taking special action and keeping to self which are used by the wives of alcoholics to adjust with their husbands.

Method of Data Collection

The present study is done among wives of alcoholic spouses who accompanied their husband for treatment at SOCSEAD (Sisters of the Cross Society for Education and Development) Trichy from May 2016 to August 2016. The sample consisted of 50 wives of alcoholics who accompanied their husband to SOCSEAD for the treatment of their husbands. The researcher selected the 50 wives of alcoholic spouses (n=50) using Simple Random Method. The researcher adapted descriptive research design for the study.

Instrument Used

Coping Strategies Inventory by David L. Tobin (1984, 2001) is a 72-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess coping thoughts and behaviours in response to a specific stressor. There are 14 subscales on the Coping Strategies Inventory including eight primary scales, four secondary scales and two tertiary scales.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No - 1
Personal profile of wives of alcoholic

Particulars	No.of respondents (n=50)	Percentage (100%)
Age		
20 to 30 yrs	16	32.0
31 to 40 yrs	17	34.0
41 to 50 yrs	15	30.0
51 to 60 yrs	2	4.0
Religion		
Hindu	45	90.0
Muslim	2	4.0
Christian	3	6.0
Domicile		
Rural	3	6.0
Urban	45	90.0
Semi-Urban	2	4.0
Educational Qualification		
Illiterate	9	18.0
Upto 8 th std	20	40.0
High School	13	26.0
12 th std	4	8.0
Graduates	2	4.0
Others	2	4.0
Occupation		
Govt.	2	4.0
Private	3	6.0
Business	2	4.0
No job	23	46.0
Others	20	40.0
Respondent's Monthly Income		
Below Rs.2000	8	16.0
Rs.2000 to 5000	10	20.0
Rs.5000 to 10000	6	12.0
Above Rs.10000	2	4.0
Nil	24	48.0
Family Monthly Income		
Below Rs.2000	2	4.0
Rs.2000 to 5000	11	22.0
Rs.5000 to 10000	26	52.0
Above Rs.10000	11	22.0
Duration of alcoholic behavior in spouse		
Below 5 yrs	4	8.0
5 to 10 yrs	10	20.0
Above 10 yrs	36	72.0
Amount spent per day		
Below Rs.200	10	20.0
Rs.200 to 500	13	26.0
Above Rs.500	27	54.0
Total family members		
2	5	10.0
3	16	32.0
4	25	50.0
5	4	8.0

Source Primary data

From the above table it is inferred that one third (34 per cent) of the respondents were in the age group of 31 to 40 years. A vast majority (90 per cent) of the respondents were Hindus and from urban area. 40% of the respondents studied only up to 8th standard. More than half (52 per cent) of the respondents received Rs.5000/- to 10000/- as their monthly family income. It was also observed that vast majority (72 per cent) of the respondents' husbands consumed alcohol for more than 10years.

Table No – 2

Research hypothesis (H₁):

There is a significant relationship between age of the respondents and their overall Coping Strategies

Null hypothesis (H₀):

There is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their overall Coping Strategies

Age	Correlation value	Statistical inference
Problem solving	-.179	p>0.05 Not Significant
Cognitive restructuring	-.124	p>0.05 Not Significant
Express emotions	-.098	p>0.05 Not Significant
Social support	.013	p>0.05 Not Significant
Problem avoidance	.056	p>0.05 Not Significant
Wishful thinking	.004	p>0.05 Not Significant
Self criticism	.059	p>0.05 Not Significant
Social withdrawal	-.122	p>0.05 Not Significant
Overall Coping Strategies Inventory	-.083	p>0.05 Not Significant

Statistical test: Karl Pearson Coefficient Correlation test was used the above hypothesis

Inference: The study used the Karl Pearson's Co-efficient correlation test to find out the significant relationship between the age and the overall coping strategies. The above table shows that there is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their overall Coping Strategies. Hence, the calculated value is greater than the table value (p>0.05). So the research hypothesis (H₁) is rejected and the null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted. The wives of alcoholics irrespective of their age suffer from negative coping methods like withdrawal, aversion etc.....

Table No - 3

Research hypothesis (H₁):

There is a significant relationship between family monthly income of the respondents and their overall Coping Strategies

Null hypothesis (H₀):

There is no significant relationship between family monthly income of the respondents and their overall Coping Strategies

Family monthly Income	Correlation value	Statistical inference
Problem solving	.129	p>0.05 Not Significant
Cognitive restructuring	-.157	p>0.05 Not Significant
Express emotions	.211	p>0.05 Not Significant
Social support	.189	p>0.05 Not Significant
Problem avoidance	.358(*)	p<0.05 Significant
Wishful thinking	.088	p>0.05 Not Significant
Self criticism	.021	p>0.05 Not Significant
Social withdrawal	-.010	p>0.05 Not Significant
Overall Coping Strategies Inventory	.202	p>0.05 Not Significant

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Statistical test: Karl Pearson's Coefficient Correlation test was used for the above hypothesis.

Inference: The above table shows that there is no significant relationship between family monthly income of the respondents and their overall Coping Strategies. Hence, the calculated value is greater than table value ($p > 0.05$). So the research hypothesis (H_1) is rejected and the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. The monthly family income does not contribute to the nature of coping behaviour of the wives of alcoholic spouses. 54% of the respondents mentioned that their husband spent more than Rs.500/- per day on alcohol. So this would result in huge financial constraints to meet the day today expenses in the family. The wives of alcoholic spouses adapt the negative coping methods to face the challenges of life.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS:

One third (34 per cent) of the respondents were in the age group of 31 to 40yrs wives of alcoholics. Vast majority (90 per cent) of the respondents were Hindus and were from urban area. More than one third (40 per cent) of the respondents studied upto 8th standard. More than half (52 per cent) of the respondents had Rs.5000 to 10000/- as the monthly family income. Vast majority (72 per cent) of the respondents' husbands consumed alcohol for more than 10 years. More than half (52 per cent) of the respondents did not express their emotions and they had controlled their emotions. More than half (52 per cent) of the respondents used low level problem avoidance strategy and remaining 48 per cent were high level in coping with the problems in their daily life. Majority (66 per cent) of the respondents had high level wishful thinking strategy and remaining 34 per cent were of low level. More than half (52 per cent) of the respondents made high level self criticism strategy and remaining 48 per cent made low level self criticism. More than half (56 per cent) of the respondents used high level social withdrawal strategy. More than half (52 per cent) of the respondents were high level of overall coping strategies and remaining 48 per cent had low level. It was inferred from the statistical analysis that there is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their overall Coping Strategies. Hence, the calculated value greater than table value ($p > 0.05$). There is no significant relationship between family's monthly income of the respondents and their overall Coping Strategies. Hence, the calculated value greater than table value ($p > 0.05$). Based on these findings the following suggestions were made,

- 1.The treatment plan of the alcoholic dependant persons must include systematic treatment plan for the wives.
- 2.The De-addiction treatment centres and hospitals must not only treat the wives of alcoholic spouses as mere caretakers but also persons with health problems.
- 3.The treatment for the wives of alcoholics must be given by a team of professionals namely a psychiatrist, psychologist and a social worker.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the data presented add to the growing evidence that alcoholism can have serious consequences on families, perhaps as important as the impact of alcoholism on the alcoholic dependant individual. An observation made in Indian families is that the wives are the victim in all dimensions of health to the alcoholic nature of their husbands. Avoidance resulting in inadequate communication with her husband, economic instability and medical problems of alcoholism itself shatters wife's expectations and she will undergo various physical, emotional and psychological stresses. Wives cope with the stress of husbands' alcoholism, differently depending on various factors.

The constant exposure to the negative environment compels the wives of alcoholic spouses to adapt strong negative coping strategies. This creates lots of emotional disturbances among the family members. Family is the primary unit of the society and the foundation for the life of an individual as well as the society. The importance of an extensive treatment design for the alcoholic husband, wife and the family is of paramount importance to strengthen the family unit.

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