ADJUSTMENT AND DEPRESSION AMONG WIVES OF ALCOHOLICS AND NON-ALCOHOLICS

A. Velayudhan*, Priyanka M.S.** and Justine K. James***

ABSTRACT

The goals of this study were to find out (i) the difference in Adjustment among wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics, (ii) the difference in Depression among wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics and (iii) the relationship between Adjustment and Depression. The study was done on 120 wives of which 60 are wives of Alcoholics and 60 are wives of Non-alcoholics. Indian adaptation of Bell’s Adjustment Inventory by Dr. Lalitha Sharma was used to assess the Adjustment (Family Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment and Health Adjustment) and Beck’s Depression Inventory by Aaron T Beck was used to assess the Depression. The results indicated a significant difference between wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics in each areas of Adjustment (Family Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment and Health Adjustment) and in Depression. The results also showed that there was a linear relationship between Adjustment and Depression. Wives of Alcoholics were poorly adjusted than Non-alcoholics. The level of Depression is high in Wives of Alcoholics and it is found that there is a relationship between Depression and Adjustment.

Key Words: Alcoholism, Adjustment, Family Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment, Health Adjustment, Depression.

* Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore 46.
** Post Graduate Student, Department of Psychology, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore 46.
*** Doctoral Scholar, Department of Psychology, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore 46.
According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) there are at least 140 million alcoholics in the world, and the majority of them are not treated. Heavy drinking is associated with psycho-socio-occupational impairment (Shepherd and Brickley, 1996; Pickworth et al., 1997; Hunt, 1993). Substance use disorders affect not only the identified client but significant others as well. Large proportion of young children are exposed to illicit drugs primarily through use of these drugs by family members (James et al., 2003; Bevan and Higgins, 2002; Dawson et al., 2006) and India is not different from others in alcoholism and related family problems (D’costa et al., 2007). The evolution of the research and professional literature on wives of alcoholics covers a continuum of theories from a psychoanalytic orientation regarding the psychopathology of wives, to a sociological approach describing the stress encountered while living with alcoholic, to a focus on family systems and interaction patterns within the alcoholic family. Alcohol consumption of spouse severely affects mental health of women and the women who experienced partner violence due to alcoholism are at increased risk of not receiving needed mental health care (Lipsky and Caetano, 2007).

Alcoholic families have more family conflict (Aekplakorn and Kongsakon, 2007) and less marital satisfaction than non-alcoholic families (Nicola et al., 1994). Marital quality is found to be varied as a function of current heavy drinking and alcohol dependence such that members of couples in which neither spouse drank heavily reported better marital quality than other couples (McLeod, 2007). The nature of family interactions was related to both alcoholism type and alcohol consumption. The marital interaction of alcoholism types could be differentiated on the basis of the frequency and sequential structure of negative exchanges (Jacob et al., 2001). Alcoholic families were characterised by poor communication patterns, lack of mutual warmth and support, spouse abuse and poor role functioning. The spouses of alcoholics expressed greater dissatisfaction in all areas of family functioning. (Suman and Nagalakshmi, 1995)

Interpersonal Violence is also found to be high among alcoholics (Weisman and Taylor, 1994). Hostility of couples with an anti-social alcoholic husband had higher levels of hostile behaviour regardless of wives’ alcoholism status (Floyd et al., 2006). Wives of alcoholics as a group had higher levels of conflict, perceived more danger and experienced more apprehension in relating with their spouses. Alcoholics and couples with marital conflict did not differ and both groups of problem couples showed greater relationship distress than non-conflicted couples on measures of marital stability, change desired, interpersonal violence homicides and positive communication behaviours (Farrell and Birchley, 2007; Greenfield et al., 1998; Stanley, 2008). Causal effect of alcohol on aggression is a well studied fact (Chermack and Taylor, 1995; Wells and Graham, 1998). Alcohol consumption does not increase aggression in all persons and in all situations (Giancola, Saucier and Gussler-Burkhardt, 2003). Aggressive personality

Vol. 8, No. 1, September, 2013
traits are also found to be effective predictor of aggressive behaviour of alcoholics (Giancola and Zeichner, 1995; Parrott and Zeichner, 2002). These kind of stressful marriages and relationships are stronger predictor of divorce (Farrell et al., 2006).

Apart from the disruption in family health, while focusing on wives of alcoholics, unhealthy psycho-social status could be found out. Alcoholic’s wives are found to be codependent and having lower coping resources and social support (Pameela, 2002). Alcohol abuse is associated with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) of Adolescence (Deykin et al., 1987; Lutz and Snow, 2002). Suicidal ideation and attempt in cannabis dependent were 2.5 to 2.9 times more than their non-cannabis-dependent cotwin. Early onset cannabis use may predispose to suicide attempt (Lynskey et al., 2004). Pfaff et al. (2007) found that people who use alcohol less frequently but in greater quantities (i.e. binge drinking) are more likely to have a history of suicide attempts.

Depression ranks high among the mental disorders often comorbid with alcoholism, but not since alcohol is a depressant (Kranzler et al., 1997). Husband’s alcoholic problems can influence wives depressive symptoms (Homish et al., 2006). Both depression and alcohol problems may be different expressions of an underlying risk factor (such as difficulty with emotion regulation, poor family relationships, etc.), a shared comorbid condition, or a shared genetic diathesis (Nurnberger et al., 2002).

The current study focuses mainly on variation in Depression and Adjustment among Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics which may throw light on need for counselling and training for wives of alcoholics for a stable marital life. The advance practice nurses have the opportunity to successfully intervene with individuals and their family with alcohol dependence, depression and their comorbidity. These complex health conditions need to be screened for, treated and evaluated to ensure positive outcomes for the individual and their family system (Fowler and Tracey, 2006). Omer et al. (2005) found that participation of the family in the treatment process as group members and by assuming a supportive role are assets in terms of preventing relapse and extending clean time and also very important for solving conflicts that give rise to abuse of alcohol or substances. As this study also investigates the relationship that Adjustment has on Depression this will help to rule out the particular area of Adjustment which is contributing more to Depression. The hypotheses developed are:

$H1$: Adjustment would be a significant predictor of Depression among Wives.

$H2$: There would be a significant difference between Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics in their Family Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment, Health Adjustment, Depression.
METHOD

Sample

The sample size of the present study is 120 consisting 60 Wives of Alcoholics and 60 Wives of Non-alcoholics. The Wives of Non-alcoholics are selected randomly from various hospitals of Thrissur District, Kerala. Wives of alcoholics are selected based on following criteria: The subjects included are having a minimum education of SSLC and the wives of occasional drinkers are not included.

Tools

Indian Adaptation of Bell’s Adjustment Inventory was developed by Dr. Lalitha Sharma (1987) consists of 80 items which covers all the four areas (Family Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment and Health Adjustment) exclusively. All the items are of Yes/No format. Test retest reliability on a sample of 120 employees in government services (both males and females) within a time interval of two weeks was 0.77, 0.88, 0.72 and 0.81 for Family Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment and Health Adjustment respectively. The test has been validated against MMI. The correlation between general adjustment and the total score of the five component scores (Occupational Adjustment is no considered in the present study) of the present inventory have been obtained. These are found to vary between 0.69 and 0.73.

Beck’s Depression Inventory (BDI) developed by Aaron T Beck (Beck et al, 1961) is a 21-item test presented in multiple choice format which purports to measure presence and degree of depression in adolescents and adults. Each of the 21-items of BDI attempts to assess a specific symptom or attitude “which appears to be specific to depressed patients and which are consistent with descriptions of the depression contained in the psychiatric literature. The reliability figures here were above 0.90. Internal consistency demonstrated a correlation coefficient of 0.86 for the test items. Content validity would seem to be quite high since the BDI appears to evaluate a wide variety of symptoms and attitudes associated with depression. Concurrent validity demonstrated a correlation of 0.77 between the inventory and psychiatric rating using university students as subjects. Beck reports similar studies in which coefficients of 0.65 and 0.67 were obtained in comparing results of the BDI with psychiatric ratings of patients (Ambrosini et al, 1991).

Procedure

Tools were administered individually after establishing working rapport with the participants. Response sheets were scored as per the instructions given in the respective manuals.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data was analysed using two statistical measures: Stepwise Linear Regression Analysis was used to test the causal relationship between Adjustment and Depression. The data collected was analysed using the Mean, Standard Deviation and the ‘t’ test to test the significant difference in each areas of Adjustment and Depression among Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics.

Stepwise linear regression results for each of the four Adjustment variables with depression are presented in Table 1. Result reveals a significant model \[ F(3,116)= 62.13 \] for prediction of Depression based on Adjustment. The model explains 60% of the variation in Depression with the Family Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment and Health Adjustment. Therefore the Hypothesis, “There would be significant relationship between Adjustment and Depression”, is accepted. Beta coefficient of Family Adjustment (0.52), Emotional Adjustment (0.27) and Health Adjustment (0.16) are found to be significant at 0.01 level. The literature reveals that family adjustment is associated with mental health (Waring and Patton, 1984), somatic health (Chowanec and Binik, 1989), and Depression (Stravynski, Tremblay and Verreault, 1995). Marital adjustment is also an important predictor of family functioning (Deal, 1996). Present study, similar to the earlier studies, also reports that Family Adjustment and Emotional Adjustment are the important factors which significantly contribute to Depression. Thus the regression equation can be given as

\[
\text{Depression} = 3.19 + .52(\text{F.A.}) + .27(\text{E.A.}) + .16 (\text{H.A.})
\]

Table 1: Regression results for Adjustment Variables and Depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S. E</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Adjustment</td>
<td>.716</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.739**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Adjustment</td>
<td>.517</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.533**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Adjustment</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.301**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Adjustment</td>
<td>.500</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.516**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Adjustment</td>
<td>.347</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.271**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Adjustment</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.156**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ R^2 = .54 \text{ for step 1; } R^2 = .58 \text{ for step 2; } R^2 = .60 \text{ for step 3. } N=120. \]

The Alcoholics uses a style of communication characterised by responsibility avoidance, when interacting with wife and interaction among them is marked by an inability to function as a unit for mutual benefit (Gorad, 2004). Family Adjustment, one of the important contributor to depression of wives, is found to be higher for wives of Non-alcoholics \( t = 12.41, P < 0.01 \). Therefore the Hypothesis, “There would be significant difference between Wives of Alcoholics...
and Non-alcoholics in their Family Adjustment”, is accepted. Alcoholic families were characterised by poor communication patterns, lack of mutual warmth and support, spouse abuse and poor role functioning. The Spouses of Alcoholics expressed greater dissatisfaction in all the areas of family functioning, than the Non-alcoholics. Non-alcoholic families were characterised by free and open communication, mutual warmth and satisfaction and sharing of responsibilities (Suman and Nagalakshmi, 1995).

Wives of individuals with drug and alcohol dependence are found to be having lower coping resources and social support (Pameela, 2002). Generally the alcoholics may create problems in the family and marital life. Drinking habit of husband is positively correlated to verbal aggression (O’Farrell et al, 2000) and these kind of behaviour tend to decrease the social support towards their family. Results of present study also support these findings. Social adjustment of wives of alcoholics are found to be lower than that of wives of Non-alcoholics (t=11.83, P <0.01). Therefore the Hypothesis “There would be significant difference between Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics in their Social Adjustment” is accepted.

Table 2: ‘t’ test results for Adjustment and Depression of Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Adjustment</td>
<td>Alcoholics</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>12.41 **</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non alcoholic</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Adjustment</td>
<td>Alcoholics</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>11.83**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non alcoholic</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Adjustment</td>
<td>Alcoholics</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>9.98**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non alcoholic</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Adjustment</td>
<td>Alcoholics</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>3.81**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non alcoholic</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Alcoholics</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10.17</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>12.61**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non alcoholic</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**P<0.01; df= 118.

Results (t=9.98, P <0.01) indicate a significant difference in Emotional Adjustment of Wives of Alcoholics and Wives of Non-alcoholics. Stanley (2008) found out that the Wives of Alcoholics as a group had higher levels of conflict, perceived more danger and experienced more apprehension in relating with their spouses, than the subjects of the reference group. Thus Wives of Alcoholics may have many internal conflicts within them which may affect their emotional stability. Thus the hypothesis “There would be significant difference between Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics in their Emotional Adjustment” is accepted.
The 't' value of 3.81 is significant at 0.01 level for the Health Adjustment among Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics is significantly different. Thus the Hypothesis, “There would be significant difference between Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics in their Health Adjustment” is accepted. Research suggesting that alcohol use, intoxication, or both may be related to spousal violence (Leonard et al., 1985). Repeated physical assaults may directly increase risk of injuries or some chronic diseases, such as chronic pain, osteoarthritis, and severe headaches (Campbell, 1997; Plichta, 1997; Coker, 2000). Health care professional are less informed about these problems and their response to health problems related interpersonal violence is not satisfactory (Tower, 2007). Decreased mental health is related to several chronic physical problems (Nicolaidis, Curry, McFarland and Gerrity, 2004). The mental health of wives of alcoholics are found to be poor (Golding, 1999), which is an important factor for adequate adjustment.

Wives of Alcoholics are found to be more depressed than Wives of Non-alcoholics (t= 12.61, \( P < 0.01 \)). Thus the Hypothesis, “There would be significant difference between Wives of Alcoholics and Non-alcoholics in their Depression” is accepted. Research shows that Family Violence was associated with depressive symptoms or with at least six chronic physical symptoms (Nicolaidis, Curry, McFarland and Gerrity, 2004). Alcohol abuse of husbands’ can directly cause depressive symptoms in the wives and both husbands’ and wives’ marital alcohol problems were associated with wives’ depressive symptoms (Homish, Leonard and Bodkin, 2006). The Wives of Alcoholics may be more Sensitive, Anxious and Worried. This may affect the emotional stability which may in turn affects the areas of decision-making, responsibility, interaction patterns, sleep, etc. The spouses of alcoholics expressed greater dissatisfaction in all areas of family functioning. (Suman and Nagalakshmi, 1995). The problems in these areas will easily contribute to depression.

**CONCLUSIONS**

A linear relationship between Depression and Adjustment was found and also it reveals that Family Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment and Health Adjustment are significantly contributing to Depression than Social Adjustment. Wives of Non-alcoholics is found to be more adjusted in all areas of Adjustment (Family Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment and Health Adjustment) than Wives of Alcoholics. Depression is also high in Wives of Alcoholics and less in Wives of Non-alcoholics.

**REFERENCES**


*Journal of Indian Health Psychology*


