



Screening and Referral: Substance Abuse among Adolescents

Vithya Lakshmi

Lecturer, Vinayaka Mission's college of Nursing, VMRF, Puducherry, India.

Email ID : vithyalakshmi.u@vmcnpy.edu.in

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted with the key objective of identifying the factors responsible for the addictive behavior, among the adolescents who scored dependence level with AUDIT score. As a part of doctoral research work, the researcher screened 326 adolescents in selected colleges at Puducherry. Researcher used the tool of AUDIT – to screen the level of risk for alcohol use among adolescents. In-depth interviews were used, to identify the main factors accessing for alcohol dependence among adolescents who had scored between 20 -40 with AUDIT –tool. Samples included in the study were late adolescents studying in various arts, science and engineering colleges with the age group of 18-19 yrs. The results of the study showed that among samples, 93.5 % belongs to the various categories of low risk, risk, and high risk level and 6 % belongs to the dependence score level. Through telephonic structured interview with samples scored with dependence level, the main reason identified for the addictive behavior is due to love failure, stress and peer pressure. Followed by the interview session, the adolescents who belongs to the dependence level were motivated and referred to nearby state and central hospitals functioning with de addiction services. Privacy and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

Keywords: AUDIT, Adolescents, substance abuse, alcohol dependence

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there are about 2 billion people worldwide who consume alcoholic beverages and 76.3 million with diagnosable alcohol use disorders (1). The worldwide per capita consumption of alcoholic beverages in 2010 was equal to 6.2 liters of pure alcohol consumed by every person aged 15 years or older. Approximately 2.3 million people die each year from the harmful use of alcohol, accounting for 3.8% of all deaths worldwide (2).

In India use of alcohol is higher in deprived communities contributing to thirty Percent of use to the male population and five percent of use to female population .And in recent years the alcohol use of young people is increased and as their age increases their quantity and frequency of intake has also been increased(3).

The incidence of substance use is notable at adolescents because adolescence is the time for experimentation and identity formation. Since adolescents and young adults are at the stage of transition and occupy the delicate and sensitive position in the society, it is important to look at various factors associated with substance abuse [4].

Alcohol use is one of the main causes leading to morbidity and mortality among adolescents (DHHS, 2007). Underage binge drinking is strongly correlated with other health risks such as physical problems, unprotected sexual activity, physical and sexual assault, higher risk for suicide and homicide, memory problems, changes in brain development, and even death from alcohol poisoning(5). In addition to health problems, substance use also puts adolescents at high risks of poor academic performance, increased school drop-outs (6),increased peer substance use (7&8) and high risk behaviours, namely road accidents, violence , crime, self-harm behavior and risky sexual behavior (9).

According to the report of the Indian Council of Medical Research: The highest rates of alcohol consumption in adult life are associated with the onset of regular use of alcohol in the period of late childhood and early adolescence.

These reports suggest that substance abuse is fast becoming a public health problem among the children and adolescents of India. And the researcher adds ups that, Since Pondicherry being Union Territory the alcohol is easily available and accessible than any other states in India and due to the availability of

international brands at much lower prices, it makes the risk of alcohol consumption high among the population particularly among adolescents.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in selected colleges, affiliated to Pondicherry university, at Puducherry. Permission was taken from the respective head of the institution prior to data collection.

Totally 326 male students were screened for the risk of alcoholic use among adolescents in different colleges. A day was fixed for the data collection. Researcher used AUDIT tool to assess the level of alcoholic use among adolescents. The investigator gave a briefing on the questionnaire attached with the table of standard drinks. When the consent forms were filled and returned, the samples were told the procedure of filling up of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were to be filled in the classroom itself and not to be filled outside or to be taken to their residences. The students were requested to answer honestly without any fear or shyness. Among the samples, majority 93.5% (scored between 0-19) and belongs to the category of low risk, risk, and high risk level and 6 % belongs to the dependence level. Brief interventions with regular follow up visits were administered to the samples who scored between 0-19 with AUDIT. In-depth interviews through telephonic conversation were taken from the samples who falls under the category of dependence level of alcohol use with AUDIT Score (above 19). Privacy and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

Data Presentation and Analysis

For dependence users:

Samples were initially interviewed through phone about: What kind of alcohol do you take? Reason behind the use /addiction of alcohol?		
Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)
1. Have u started using alcohol before entering college?	100	-
2. Do you have the Family history of alcohol use?	95	5
3. Do you perceive any negative effect of alcohol use on your academics?	98	2
4. Do you perceive any negative effect of alcohol use on your health?	80	20
5. Do you perceive any negative effect of alcohol use on your relationships?	60	40
6. Do you wish to get treatment for this problem (addiction)?	40	60

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All the samples have initiated the use of alcohol before entering the college level, the reason behind the first use of alcohol in majority of the cases was that they took once just for a trial, as to how it Taste and feels and to know the curiosity behind why majority peoples take substance [10].

Majority of the samples reported that they have addicted to the alcohol for the reason of love affair or relationship gets affected or breaks up, academic failures, stress and peer pressure. Regarding the effect on studies, most of the samples had poor concentration, not willing to continue their studies, shows dislike towards the submission of academic requirements and university exams. Regarding the effect on health, most of the samples reported that they have gastric disturbances and sleep disturbances, and some samples had the complaints of hangover, black outs and loss of control and muscle coordination. Samples have also added that still they feel physically strong after consuming the alcohol. And regarding the effect on relationship, majority of the samples had experienced the break ups in their previous relationship due to alcohol use. The samples have added that the use of alcohol in their life is very essential, as it plays an important role in the relief of stress and for peer group identity. Some of the Samples reported that both positive and negative situations and circumstances make them to think and go for a drink. Regarding the willingness for treatment, most of the samples reported that though it relieves psychological pressure, they feel guilty sometimes and want to recover from this habit, but showed the concern of unwillingness to get hospital services. The reason behind is, they perceive that they are not addicted to alcohol and strongly believed they have enough will power to get rid of the habit at any time they wished to [11, 12]. From this we can interpret that once it became a habit, it is difficult to get rid of it, and then any kind of excuses may be generated to misuse substance by adolescents. But still, the researcher motivated the students and helped them to realize that it is the self harm behavior and referred to hospital services.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions from interview responses are, Students from arts and science undergraduate students are more addicted than engineering students, Brandy and beer are the most common substance use/ abuse among the students, Factors like love affair or relationship gets affected or breaks up, academic failure,

stress and peer group pressure play major roles in impacting the students positively towards substance abuse, According to the majority of the respondents, the reported age for the initiation of alcohol use was before the age of 17, Students accepted the negative impacts of alcohol use on their health, academic and relationships, Students have not perceived that it is problem and have no plan to abstain from the alcohol, Easy accessibility and availability of alcohol at cheapest price is an important contributing factor for alcohol use / abuse among adolescents.

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