

NATURE AND PATTERN OF ALCOHOL USE AMONG RURAL YOUTH- A STUDY OF KAITHAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The harmful use of alcohol is a worldwide problem resulting in millions of deaths, including hundreds of thousands of young lives lost. It is not only a causal factor in many diseases, but also a precursor to injury and violence. Furthermore, its negative impacts can spread throughout a community or a country, and beyond, by influencing levels and patterns of alcohol consumption across borders.

The increase in the consumption of alcohol especially in rural areas posed a major socio-economic problem, which effected community and family life of every village and household. A large part of family income was siphoned off to the licensed liquor shops or liquor traders, resulting to a lot of suffering especially for women and children.

The present work was undertaken with the aim to ascertain the nature and pattern of alcohol use among rural youth in Kaithal district of Haryana State. The study indicates that most of the alcoholic youth start consuming alcohol in their early age and in the company of friends. All the rules related to licensing system for sale of alcoholic products, location, time of availability and quantities are poorly implemented. Policy for providing facilities for youth such as youth clubs, health clubs, libraries etc. should be formulated and properly implemented to deal with this serious problem especially in the rural areas.

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INTRODUCTION

Alcohol consumption among youth periodically becomes the focus for public concern and mass media attention. During recent years extensive publicity has been accorded to the various brands of alcohol and to the mood changing effects of drinking which attract the young population, especially males.

Since the earliest times; alcohol has been employed for mainly three different reasons- religious, recreational and medicinal. The drinker thinks that alcohol will reduce his tension, anxiety and frustration but the fact is that it reduces his operational efficiency, impairs the health of the drinker and probably shortens his life span. Seriously injuring his ability to work, alcohol breaks down on individual participation in association and thus weakens the individual. It impairs socially valuable ideas. Alcohol related problems, therefore, are not new.

Further in the modern society, liquor has gradually an accepted status and has become a distinctive symbol of social affability. Often a community confers distinction of a host who is able to provide for his guests liquor of a high quality. This is the basic feature of the psychological value of alcoholic beverage making itself a highly successful drink welcome by man in all cultural stages.

PRESENT TRENDS

India is one of the largest producers of alcohol in the world and there has been a steady increase in its production over the last 15 years. India is a dominant producer of alcohol in the south-east Asian region with 65 percent of the total share and contributes to around seven percent of the total beverage import into the region. According to figures in the newly compiled 'Alcohol Atlas of India' more than two third of the total beverage alcohol consumption within the region is in India.

As per WHO's Global Status Report on Alcohol, India occupies the 150th position among the 184 countries when it comes to alcohol consumption. That may not look bad but the fact is that more and more people especially the youngsters are using alcohol these days.

In India, about 15 to 20 percent of the people take alcohol. According to a study conducted by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, over the past 20 years, the number of drinkers in our country has increased from one in 300 to one in 20. However, alcoholics comprise 5 percent (The Hindustan Times, April 15, 1997). According to industry source, in India, the intake of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) is growing at the rate of 15 percent

per annum. It has also been found that about 65 percent of the Indian liquor market is controlled by whiskey (The Hindustan Times, July 14, 1995).

In the WHO Global Survey on Alcohol and Health (2008), the five-year trend of under-age drinking was assessed: out of 73 responding countries, 71% indicated an increase, 4% a decrease, 8% were stable and 16% showed inconclusive trends. The five-year trend of drinking among 18–25 year olds indicated that, out of 82 responding countries, 80% showed an increase, 11% a decrease, 6% were stable and 12% showed inconclusive trends. Overall, hazardous and harmful drinking patterns, such as drinking to intoxication and binge drinking, seem to be on the rise among adolescents and young adults (WHO, 2007; McAllister, 2003; Lancet, 2008).

Alcohol production is increasing very rapidly. It is produced in many settings such as licensed industries, illicit home brewing etc. Indian Made Foreign Liquor is made by large industrial houses and the country liquor is made by small manufacturers, which is marketed locally. These are cheap and easily available alcoholic drinks, So much popular among masses and consumed in large quantities all over the country. Illicit liquor is also produced in small and domestic distilleries, because of illegal production no tax & excise duty is paid on these alcoholic beverages. Therefore, they are cheaper than even that the country liquor, hence extremely popular in rural and tribal areas. This increase in the production and availability of alcohol gives way to increase in its consumption also.

In recent years the problem of alcohol use/abuse has emerged as one of the very serious social problems which needs an in depth study so as to enable the experts to suggest suitable preventive and operative measures?

So keeping in view the above the present work on “Nature and Pattern of Alcohol Use among Rural Youth – A Study of Kaithal Disrtict” is an attempt to study the source of introduction, age at the time of first use, frequency of alcohol use, reasons for first intake, source of supply, places of consumption, company in which the alcohol is used, timing of alcohol use, duration of alcohol use, expenditure on alcohol, quantity of alcohol use in a week among rural youth in the five blocks of Kaithal district of Haryana state.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The universe of the study is the youth (15-35years) of kaithal district of Haryana state. In the present descriptive study, multistage sampling has been adopted for the selection of alcoholic youth.

At the first stage Kaithal district of Haryana state was purposively selected for the study because Kaithal is one of the highest alcohol consuming districts in Ambala division of Haryana state.

At the second stage 25 villages (on the basis of 10% of total 263 villages) were selected randomly by using stratified random sampling from the five blocks namely Kaithal, Pundri, Guhla, Rajound, Kalayat on the basis of the list supplied by District Development and Panchayat Officer (D.D.P.O.) Kaithal

At the third stage a list of youth using alcohol more than three years aged between 15 to 35 was prepared with the help of village doctors, villagers and neighbours by using snowball sampling method. After that 20 percent of the listed alcoholic youth were drawn randomly, in which a list of all 500 alcoholic youth was prepared.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

The study was based on both types of sources of data; primary and secondary. Interview schedule had been used as the main tool for data collection. The interview schedule was prepared with the help of experts and all due care in comprehensiveness before its use. Along with interview schedule, observation and discussion methods were also used for data collection

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents major finding regarding nature and pattern of alcohol use, frequency of alcohol use, source of supply, places of consumption, company in which the alcohol is used, timing of alcohol use and relationship between quantity and duration of alcohol use.

Reasons for first intake

The table 1.1 gives the information as to which factors initiated the respondents to take alcohol. It was found that among the alcohol using rural youth a vast majority (60.80 percent) first used the alcohol while enjoying in their friends' or under group pressure and curiosity. In India, especially in rural areas, there is a common practice of using alcohol to enjoy. Usually, it is found in the countryside that outside home, at farm or at the cattle shed a group of people come together in the evening and start using alcohol. They build fire, cook meat and drink liquor. Many other reasons were also explained by the respondents and 16.60 percent cited "dispute with family members as the major reason for their first use. Religious customs accounted for 07.00 percent and indebtedness for 02.80 percent. Some other reasons were also explained by the respondents such as disappointment in love (01.40 percent), economic loss (01.60 percent), treatment of health problems (01.40 percent) and 00.80 percent were

categorized under any other reasons (loneliness, social recognition etc.). From the data it was also found that a good number (07.60 percent) of respondents were not aware about the reason for first intake.

TABLE 1.1
Incidence which initiated the respondents to take alcohol

N=500

Sr. No.	Incidence	No. of workers	Percentage
1.	Curiosity	145	29.00
2.	Religious customs	35	07.00
3.	Treatment of health problems	07	01.40
4.	Economic loss	08	01.60
5.	Disputes with family members	83	16.60
6.	Disappointed in love	07	01.40
7.	Indebtedness	14	02.80
8.	To be sociable or have fun	159	31.80
9.	Any other	04	00.80
10.	Don't know	38	07.60
TOTAL		500	100.00

The data indicates that friends company or group pressure is the main reason for the first use of alcohol. So far as the individual's drinking habits are concerned, it has been observed that such habits often change at different stages of life. Some young people, who start drinking with the peer group pressure, may continue drinking for a short time but after some time lead to drink heavily in a potentially risky way. Some suffer adverse consequences because of this. This may be true for any of the above stated reasons and for many probably for most of such individuals, this is simply, a step along a trajectory or 'drinking career'.

A common thinking about drinking is that heavy alcohol consumption amongst youth is changed in a much lighter consumption later in life, especially following marriage or with other responsibilities. But it is not a case, for example, teenagers who drink heavily will inevitably remain heavy drinkers or more on to develop chronic drinking problems (Plant et. al 1985; Fillmore, 1988).

During this study it was found that the above said reasons for the first use of alcohol proved risky and after some time these casual users of alcohol began to drink heavily with increasing regularity.

Frequency of alcohol use

When it is a question of the frequency of using alcohol, it becomes apparent that essentially the users take it regularly at almost the appointed time. The question is what the interval between the intakes is. It varies from once a week to several times a day.

The data reveals that among the alcohol using rural youth the highest number (53.00 percent) is that of the several times a week users, next to it are daily users (27.40 percent), other categories are once a week (07.00 percent), only social/religious functions (07.20 percent), in a month (04.20 percent) and several times a day (01.20 percent) as shown by table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2
Frequency of alcohol use

N=500

Sr. No.	Frequency of use	No. of workers	Percentage
1.	Once a week	35	07.00
2.	Several times a week	265	53.00
3.	Daily	137	27.40
4.	Several times a day	06	01.20
5.	In a month	21	04.20
6.	Only social/religious function.	36	07.20
TOTAL		500	100.00

This information is very important and worth attention because the use of daily or several times a week is very dangerous and is responsible for various types of health problems and socio-economic problems. It directly affects the work performance of the youth in their respective field, agriculture, private sector etc. and seriously affecting the income of the user and his/her family

Source of supply

During discussion with users some of them told about the place and name of the suppliers from where they usually get it and also told that as it is easily available from wine shop and sub shops (Khurja)^{*} etc.

An analysis of the source of supply of alcohol indicates that the main source of supply (87.80 percent) is friend(s) acquaintance. It is followed by the co-workers (08.00 percent). Parents, brothers and relatives were found only 03.40 percent. Only 00.80 percent reported other sources such as religious places (such as Guga Madi, Mata Mandir etc.).

It is generally observed that in some villages due to some myths and superstitions people devote alcohol on Guga Madi, Mata Mandir and other religious places. From these places people get alcohol very easily by spending a little amount or may be free of cost.

TABLE 1.3
Source of supply of alcohol

N=500

Sr. No.	Sources	No. of workers	Percentage
1.	Parent(s)/Brother(s)/Relatives	17	03.40
2.	Friends(s)/acquaintance	439	87.80
3.	Co-worker(s)	40	08.00
4.	Any other (specify)	04	00.80
TOTAL		500	100.00

After discussion with the respondents it was noted that the sub wine shops (Khurja) play a very important role in supply of alcohol because of easily availability in every street of the village and the supplier also gives it after some guarantee (we can get it by giving something).

During discussion it was also noted that some respondents also give their household things to the suppliers for alcohol. It was interested to note that some respondents try to get alcohol from wine shop owner by giving a very small amount (five rupees, ten rupees etc.).

Company in which the alcohol is used

The place and company of the users are very much related to each other. The analysis of data (Table 1.4) indicated that the highest percentage (65.40 percent) of users take alcohol in the company of friends. There are 14.00 percent respondents who reported that they don't take alcohol in any company and always take it alone, 11.60 percent respondents reported that they take it with co-workers and rest of them respond that they use it with parents/brothers and relatives and it totally depends upon time and situation.

TABLE 1.4
Company in which the alcohol is used

N=500

Sr. No.	Company	No. of workers	Percentage
1.	Alone	70	14.00
2.	With friends	327	65.40
3.	With parents/friends/relatives	42	08.40
4.	With co-workers	58	11.60
5.	Any other (specify)	03	00.60
TOTAL		500	100.00

After discussing with the respondents it was found that most of them in the beginning take it with friends and looked for occasions as well as company for taking alcohol and after some time the physical and any psychological compulsions over power the social and situational reasons for use of alcohol. It was also observed during discussion with the subjects and symptoms explained by them clearly indicated towards increase in dependence on alcohol.

In India, there are customs in some societies where the use of alcohol had been the part of their celebrations such as marriage, birth of male child, on the purchase of property and even at the death of the elderly member of the family. These celebrations are not considered complete till the alcohol is not served. Some religious celebrations among the Hindus are also associated with the special type of intoxication such as offering of alcohol to the deities and bhang (Cannabis) to Shiva on the festival of Shivarathri and Holi.

Such type of practices encourage group drinking which later on results to the continuous use of alcohol by some of the people. In this study, a good number of respondents explained that it is also because of such customs, the person becomes a regular drinker. “;fn esgeku dks lkekftd dk;Zdzeksa ds volj ij efnjkiku djok;k tkrk gS rks cgqr lsok dh] ;fn ugha rks yksx dgrs gS ^f<Yyk izksxzke Fkk”

Timing of alcohol use

The analysis of the data shows that most of the respondents (73.40 percent) use alcohol in the evening, followed by use at late night (08.20 percent). 08.00 percent of the respondents reported that they use alcohol in the afternoon. A 06.40 percent of the respondents replied that the use of alcohol depends upon circumstances and company of the user and they use it at any time.

The respondents who use alcohol in morning were found only 04.00 percent. When they were asked why they use alcohol in the morning, the response was that it becomes difficult for them to start routine work if they don't use alcohol.(blds fcuk dke 'kq: gh ugha dj ldrsA 'kjhj VwVk jgrk gS] dke 'kq: djus dks eu ugha djrkA)

TABLE 1.5
Timing of alcohol use

N=500

Sr. No.	Timing	No. of workers	Percentage
1.	Morning	20	04.00
2.	Afternoon	40	08.00
3.	Evening	367	73.40
4.	Late night	41	08.20
5.	Any time	32	06.40
TOTAL		500	100.00

While discussing with the respondents about the time of use it was observed that the respondents used alcohol according to the occasion and circumstances. During marriage and marriage related functions and other social ceremonies they start using it even in the morning. The labour class persons generally use it in the evening or late night. While discussing with students it was found that they use it according to occasion and circumstances.

It was observed that the timings of alcohol use depend upon duration of its use also. Those who have been using alcohol for a long time were found using it any time (day or night) and continue using alcohol for months without stop. When health condition deteriorates then they are hospitalized and after a gap of two to six months they start again with the same behaviour.

Relationship between quantity of alcohol use and duration of alcohol use

In the present study an attempt has been made to find out whether there is any relationship between quantity of alcohol use and duration of alcohol use(see Table 1.6) and it was found that among the respondents who have been using alcohol for more than four years (183 in number), 35.52 percent take five to seven drinks in a week, 27.32 percent more than twelve drinks, 20.22 percent five to seven drinks, 16.39 percent three to for drinks and only 0.55 percent take one to two drinks in a week.

Among the respondents who have been using alcohol for last four years (80 in number), 35 percent take five to seven drinks, 27.50 percent eight to twelve drinks, 20 percent more than

twelve drinks, 15 percent three to four drinks and only 02.05 percent respondents take one to two drinks.

Among the respondents who have been using alcohol for last three years (115 in number), 39.13 percent take five to seven drinks, 33.04 percent three to four drinks, 15.65 percent eight to twelve drinks, 09.56 percent more than twelve drinks and only 02.61 percent take one to two drink in a week.

The respondents who have been using alcohol for last two years (110 in number), 29.09 percent take one to two drinks in a week, 25.45 percent three to four drinks, 23.64 percent five to seven drinks, 13.64 percent eight to twelve drinks and only 08.18 percent take more than twelve drinks in a week. The respondents who have been using alcohol for last one year or less (12 in number) 33.4 percent take one to two drinks and 25 percent three to four drinks and the same number (25percent) take five to seven drinks. And the 16.67 percent take eight to twelve drinks while none was found taking more than twelve drinks. The table 1.3 shows that with the duration of alcohol use the quantity of alcohol use also increased. Those who have been consuming alcohol for a short period (for one year or less) they take one to four drinks and those who have been taking alcohol for more than three or four years take eight to twelve or more drinks which is a very serious effect leading to many types of social, health and family problems for the alcohol users.

Table No-1.6
Relationship between quantity and duration of alcohol use

Sr. No.	Duration	One to two drink	Three to four drinks	Five to seven drinks	Eight to Twelve drinks	More than twelve drinks	Total
1	For one last one year or less	04(33.34%)	03(25.00%)	03(25.00%)	02(16.67%)	-----	12(02.40%)
2	For last two years	32(29.09%)	28(25.45%)	26(23.64%)	15(13.64%)	09(08.18%)	110(22.0%)
3	For last three years	03(02.61%)	38(33.04%)	45(39.13%)	18(15.65%)	11(09.56%)	115(23.0%)
4	For last four years	02(02.50%)	12(15.00%)	28(35%)	22(27.50%)	16(20.00%)	80(16.00%)
5	More than four years	01(00.55%)	30(16.39%)	37(20.22%)	65(35.52%)	50(27.32%)	183(36.6%)
	Total	42(08.40%)	111(22.20%)	139(27.80%)	122(24.4%)	86(17.20%)	500(100%)

MAIN FINDINGS

- From the study it was found that alcohol use usually begins as ‘experimentation’ often occurring within the family on social occasions such as birthdays or marriages. Alcohol experimentation starts in groups of friends. Some young people move from experimentation to regular consumption and some to harmful consumption of alcohol.
- The place of alcohol use was not restricted to one place but it was shifted from home to common and public places. This increase in the level of drinking was found linked with the change of place of alcohol use.
- It was found that frequency of using alcohol was highest (53.00 percent) among the users several times a week and most of the respondents (35.20 percent) take five to seven drinks in a week followed by three to four drinks (31.80 percent) and it was also noted that the prevalence rate of alcohol use has been found high in those areas where alcohol is easily accessible.
- The analysis of the source of supply of alcohol indicates that main source of supply (87.80 percent) is friend’s acquaintance. Easy and cheap availability of alcohol in villages is a major reason for the problem of alcoholism among rural youth.
- It was found that 76.40 percent of the users consume alcohol at friends place followed by 14.40 percent at work place and most of them (73.40 percent) use alcohol in the evening, followed by use at late night (08.20 percent).
- From the study it was found that majority of the respondents use hand made locally brewed liquor (deassi daru).
- There are various myths and misconceptions about the use, composition and effects of alcohol prevailing in society, due to which the youth are misguided and it leads to increase in the use of alcohol.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from the findings that alcohol use/abuse is a very serious problem in the society, which affects the youth many ways. Fighting with the problem requires serious efforts from all sections in which government has a very important role to play. There is a need to formulate and implement alcohol policy, which should focus on alcohol related problems. This policy should make clear reference to alcohol problems. Central government/state government must have a commitment to tackle the alcohol problems and not to denounce it on the one hand and promote on the other.

The study led to the following recommendations for Central and State governments:

- ❖ Licensing system that limits the number and location for sale, time of availability and the size are introduced in one or the other form but these are very loosely implemented. Rampant corruption is a hindrance in proper implementation. It leads to increase in the harmful use of alcohol, which affects the individual, community and the family. Therefore, all the rules related to licensing system for sale of alcoholic products, location for sale, time of availability and size should be strictly implemented throughout the country.
- ❖ Extensive educational programmes should be introduced to inform the youth about the consequences of alcohol consumption on health, family and society and of the effective measures that can be taken to prevent and minimize harm from alcohol.
- ❖ Policy for providing facilities related to leisure time activities such as youth clubs, health clubs, libraries etc. should be formulated and properly implemented especially at the village level.

Intervention and assistance for youth affected by alcoholism/alcohol dependence/problem drinking

- ❖ Drinking of alcohol and harmful use of alcohol linked with various myths and misconceptions in India. It is a big hurdle in recognizing that harmful alcohol use and alcohol dependence can harm the physical condition, development and well being of the youth. Hence, efforts should be made to educate the youth in general and the effected people in particular about the pharmacology, characteristics and effects of alcohol consumption.
- ❖ A comprehensive community based system, which includes close co-operation between the police, social workers, the courts, and judicial system, NGOs and professional diagnostic and counseling services should be developed for the youth who suffer from alcohol related problems.
- ❖ Training and support programmes should be developed to expend skills of health workers, primary care provides, volunteers working with support groups for initial intervention for the hazardous and harmful alcohol use and the families affected.

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