STRESS AMONG ALCOHOLICS

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ABSTRACT

Addiction to alcohol or other drugs (AODs) is a complex problem determined by multiple factors, including psychological and physiological components. Stress is considered a major contributor to the initiation and continuation of AOD use as well as to relapse. Many studies that have demonstrated an association between AOD use and stress have been unable to establish a causal relationship between the two. However, stress and the body's response to it most likely play a role in the vulnerability to initial AOD use, initiation of AOD abuse treatment, and relapse in recovering AOD users. Stress among alcoholics is a complex and significant issue that impacts both mental and physical health. This study explores the relationship between stress and alcoholism, examining how stress can contribute to the development and perpetuation of alcohol use disorders. Factors such as coping mechanisms, social support, and underlying psychological conditions are considered in understanding the intricate interplay between stress and alcoholism. By shedding light on this relationship, interventions and treatment strategies can be tailored to address the specific needs of individuals struggling with both stress and alcohol addiction.

Keywords: *Stress, alcoholics, alcoholism, coping mechanisms, mental health, physical health, addiction, treatment strategies, social support, psychological conditions.*

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol has been consumed in India for centuries. Several mythological and religious books have highlighted the role it played in society. The pattern of drinking in India has undergone a change from occasional and ritualistic use to being a social event. Today, the common purpose of consuming alcohol is to get drunk. These developments have raised concerns about the health and social consequences of excessive drinking Most stress research historians agree that the French physiologist, Claude Bernard (1865), was the first to recognize a key element in the stress response—the phenomenon now known as feedback regulation. Bernard noticed that the internal environment of cells ("milieu intérieur") is tightly regulated and largely dependent on feedback it receives from the periphery or "external environment" (Goldstein and Kopin 2007). Some 65 years later, Sir Walter Cannon coined the term "homeostasis" to capture the "coordinated physiological processes that maintain most of the steady states of the organism" (Cannon 1929 as cited by Goldstein and McEwen 2002, p. 55).

From Cannon's perspective, which derived from his study of the sympathetic nervous system (he also coined the phrase "fight-or-flight responses"), all organisms adjusted to challenges to their internal environments by making compensatory responses intended to restore homeostasis. By accomplishing such, the organism's chances for survival improved because the homeostatic or steady state was viewed as optimal and fixed at some preordained, stable level (Goldstein and Kopin 2007; Neylan 1998).

SPOUSES OF ALCOHOLICS

Stress among spouses of alcoholics is a common phenomenon, resulting from the emotional, financial, and social burdens of living with a partner struggling with addiction. Research has shown that spouses of alcoholics experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression compared to the general population (Kirby et al., 2010). The unpredictable nature of alcoholic behavior, combined with feelings of shame, guilt, and helplessness, can create a stressful environment for spouses (Larson et al., 2010). Furthermore, spouses may assume a caregiving role, leading to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Brown et al., 2010).

Spouses of alcoholics often experience chronic stress, leading to emotional and physical health problems (Jayaram et al., 2015). The stressors include financial strain, social isolation, and emotional turmoil (Templeton et al., 2015). Furthermore, spouses may engage in enabling behaviors, attempting to control or protect their partner, which can exacerbate stress and burnout (Orford et al., 2015). Research has also shown that spouses' stress levels are linked to the severity of their partner's alcohol use disorder (AUD) symptoms (Kirst et al., 2015). Additionally, spouses' mental health and well-being can benefit from seeking support, such as Al-Anon or counseling, to cope with the stress of living with an alcoholic partner (Tonigan et al., 2015).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kornreich, C., Delle-Vigne, D., Knittel, J., Nerincx, A., Campanella, S., Noel, X., Hanak, C., Verbanck, P., & Ermer, E. (2011) conducted a study to investigate the "social brain" in alcoholics by examining social contract reasoning, theory of mind, and emotional intelligence. In this research, a behavioral study was designed to compare recently detoxified alcoholics with normal, healthy controls. The study focused on exploring whether deficits in emotional intelligence and the decoding of emotional non-verbal cues observed in alcoholics extend to conditional reasoning about social contracts. The participants included 25 recently detoxified alcoholics (17 men and 8 women) compared to 25 normal controls (17 men and 8 women) matched for sex, age, and education level. Various measurements were employed, such as the Wason Selection Task for conditional reasoning, the Revised Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (modified version), and additional control measures. The findings revealed impaired conditional reasoning in alcoholics, with performance on descriptive rules not exceeding chance levels. Although reasoning performance was better on social contract and precautionary rules, it was still significantly lower than in the control group. Emotional intelligence measures were also lower in alcoholics compared to controls, but these measures did not correlate with reasoning performance. This study sheds light on the complex interplay between alcoholism, social cognition, and emotional intelligence.

Karma Dolma, Saraswathi K.N., Sheela Williams (2017) conducted the study to assess the effectiveness of guided imagery on stress among police personnel at selected police regiment in Mysore". In the pretest, among the experimental group majority 16(53.33%) had moderate stress and 14(46.66%) had severe stress. In the post test among the experimental group majority 17(56.66%) had mild stress and 12(40%) had moderate stress. In the pre test, among the control group majority 19(63.33%) had moderate stress 10(33.33%) had severe stress. In post test, among the control group majority 17(56.66%) had severe stress and 13(43.33%) had moderate stress. The mean pre test stress level score is 190.9 with a standard deviation of ±36.40 in experimental group and 185.5 with a standard deviation of ±28.087 in control group. The mean post test stress level score is 140.96 with a standard deviation ±36.21 in experimental group and 209.1with a standard deviation ±27.8 in control group. The significance of difference in mean pre test stress level scores among experimental and control group, computed an independent 't' value'(58)=0.66 $p>0.05$ was found to be not significant. With regards to association between stress level scores and demographic variables of police personnel, age of police personnel was found to be significant and other variables such as educational status , marital status, number of members in family, type of family designation , monthly income , years of experiences and any physiological illness were found to be non significant at $p<0.05$. The findings of the study revealed that there is guided imagery video show was effective in reducing the level of stress among police personnel.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, stress is a significant trigger for alcoholics, leading to relapse and exacerbating addiction. Chronic stress can alter brain chemistry, increasing cravings and vulnerability to alcohol. Effective stress management techniques, such as mindfulness, therapy, and support groups, are crucial for recovery. Addressing underlying stressors and developing coping mechanisms can help alcoholics maintain sobriety, reduce relapse rates, and improve overall well-being, leading to a more sustainable and healthier recovery journey.

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