



A Study to Assess The Level of Moral Stress and Coping Strategies of Spouses of Alcohol Dependents in Selected Areas of Mangalore

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ABSTRACT

Background of the Study : Alcohol dependence is a deadly virus that has spread its tentacles significantly over the decades. The spouses of alcohol dependents use various adaptive and maladaptive coping behaviors to relieve stress. In this study, moral stress and coping strategies of spouses of alcohol dependents, were spouses of alcohol dependents always face a dilemma in taking necessary actions. Materials and method: A descriptive study design with purposive sampling method used to collect 100 spouses of alcohol dependents. The data collected by using baseline proforma, moral stress scale and coping strategies questionnaire and analyzed using frequency distribution, Karl Pearson Correlation Co-efficiency and Chi-Square test. Results: The 54% of the spouses have moderate, 31% have severe moral stress. The 64% of participants have adaptive, whereas 36% have maladaptive coping strategies scores. There is a weak negative correlation between moral stress and coping strategies ($r = -0.32, p = .001$). Conclusion: The spouses of alcohol dependents are morally stressed.

KEYWORDS : MORAL STRESS; COPING STRATEGY; SPOUSES; ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE.

Introduction: Alcohol abuse is a major health problem in India and world at large. In the last 30 to 40 years, alcohol consumption has increased tremendously. The problems that the alcohol dependent person inflicts on his/her family members include domestic violence, sexual abuse and ill-treating of the children. When these factors become an over burden for the spouses of alcohol dependents, the stress level will be beyond tolerance and the inadequate coping strategies they adopt may not be helpful in overcoming their stress.

Normally family members of alcoholics' compromise a lot while reacting to the alcohol dependent persons behavior, so as to avoid provoking them to start another bout of drinking. The main problem of alcohol dependence is that, it not only affects the individual in a negative way, but also affects their innocent family members. In such a situation, the family members of the alcohol dependent persons face a moral dilemma, whether to shun them or to take a lot of trouble in helping them mend their ways. As this continues, they neglect their own self care and begin to suffer a serious decline with their physiological and emotional health and the family members suffer from a huge problem called moral stress. Here the word "moral stress" means, confusion occurs when one knows the ethically correct action to take, but feels powerless to take that action.¹

Objectives:

- To assess the level of moral stress among the spouses of alcohol dependents.
- To assess the coping strategies among the spouses of alcohol dependents.
- To assess the relationship between moral stress and coping strategies of spouses.
- To determine the association of level of moral stress and coping strategies of spouses of alcohol dependents with selected demographic variables.

Material and method:

Setting: Surathkal, Mangalore.

Research approach: Descriptive approach

Research design: Descriptive design.

Sample: 100 spouses of alcohol dependents

Sampling technique: Purposive sampling technique

Data collection instrument: Baseline proforma, structured moral stress scale and coping strategies questionnaire.

Data collection: study was conducted in Surathkal, Mangalore. 100 spouses of alcohol dependents were selected by purposive sampling. The formal permission was obtained from the ethical committee and concerned authority of district health care office. Prior to the data collection, the investigator explained to the subjects regarding the purpose of conducting the study. An informed consent was taken from the subjects. Finally, moral stress scale was given to the spouses and the coping strategy questionnaire was administered.

Data analysis:

Section I: Description of the Baseline Characteristics.

Section II: Distribution of Spouses according to their level of Moral Stress.

Section III: Distribution of Spouses according to their Coping Strategies.

Section IV: Relationship between Level of Moral Stress and Coping strategies of spouses of alcohol dependents.

Section V:

1. Association of levels of moral stress and selected demographic variables.
2. Association of the coping strategies and selected demographic variables of spouses of alcohol dependents.

Major findings of the study:

Section I: Description of the Baseline Characteristics.

All the subjects were females (100%) and the majority (61%) were under age group of 26 – 35 years, and 53% subjects belong to Hindu. Similarly, 24% have lower primary education, 29% participants were home makers and 68% of subjects are belongs to nuclear family.

Section II: Distribution of Spouses according to their level of Moral Stress.

It shows that 54% of the spouses perceived moderate moral stress, 31% severe stress and remaining 15% were under mild moral stress. The most of subjects have highest score of level of moral stress in the area of psychological with mean percentage of 67.75 and the lowest score in familial domain with mean percentage of 54.37 (figure 1).

Section III: Distribution of Spouses according to their Coping Strategies.

The result shows that the majority (64%) of spouses have adaptive whereas 36% have maladaptive coping strategies scores. The highest area of coping strategy is used by the subjects are social with mean percentage of 65.93, followed by denial area with mean percentage of 65.91 (table 1).

Section IV: Relationship between Level of Moral Stress and Coping strategies of spouses of alcohol dependents.

There is a weak negative correlation between level of moral stress and coping strategies ($r = -0.32$, $p = .001$). Since calculated 'p' value is less than 0.05, it shows that there is a significant relationship between level of moral stress and coping strategies of spouses of alcohol dependents. Hence research hypotheses accepted (table 2).

Section V: 1. Association of levels of moral stress and selected demographic variables.

It shows that, there is a significant association between perceived level of moral stress and demographic variables as calculated p value is less than 0.05 in areas such as type of family ($p = 0.009$) and duration of spouses alcoholism ($p = 0.013$).

Association of the coping strategies and selected demographic variables of spouses of alcohol dependents.

It shows significant association between coping strategy used and demographic variables as calculated p value is less than 0.05 in the area of religion ($p = 0.005$), education level ($p = 0.006$), occupation ($p = 0.024$).

Discussion:

This study shows that most of the subjects have highest score of moral stress in the area of psychological with mean percentage of 67.75 and the lowest score of moral stress in the area of familial with mean percentage of 54.37. The majority (69%) of subjects would curse for spouse for their spousal drinking and 73% subjects avoided being to be in public. The 68% participants refused to talk when spouses drunk. Similarly, another descriptive study was conducted to assess the psychological problems experienced by 100 wives of alcohol dependents in Chennai. The result shows that 90% were having psychological problems in severe level, 64% under social problems.²

The present study finding shows that the spouses of alcohol dependents coping behaviours shows that majority of spouses used adaptive coping behaviours in the areas like: planful problem solving (63.6%), seeking social/friends/family support (65.93%), avoidance (65.91%), and self-controlling (63.75%). But maladaptive coping strategy was seen only in emotional area with 58%. The 46% of subjects were used trying to get professional help for their spouse facing situation, 73% subjects avoided being to be in public and 68% refused to talk to their spouse when drunk as coping strategy. Another descriptive study conducted to assess the coping behaviour of 30 wives of alcohol dependents in CMC, Vellore, revealed that 82.7% indulgence, 70.5% fearful withdrawal, 68.9% avoidance and 68% discord type of coping.³

The present study found that there is a weak negative correlation between the adaptive coping strategies and moral stress perception of spouses of alcohol dependents. Another study was conducted to assess the level of stress and coping strategies among 70 wives of alcohol dependents in Chennai, and it shows there was a positive correlation.⁴ Similarly, the present study findings support the study was conducted to assess the psychological problems experienced by 100 wives of alcohol dependents in Chennai and statistically study showed significant association selected demographic variables ($p < 0.001$).²

Thus nurses having idea about the back ground of the alcohol dependent families will help in identifying the high risk spouses of alcohol dependents and teach them the effective coping strategies. The nurses can contribute in preventive aspect of alcoholism by con-

ducting community awareness and school health programmes. The one who having knowledge in the area of moral stress and coping strategies of spouses of alcohol dependents will help in better management of their stress and training in adaptive coping strategies. The nursing administrators can plan and organize various hospital and community based awareness programmes, guidance and counselling programmes for target population, which helps in using adaptive coping strategy in reducing stress.

Conclusion:

Alcohol is a family disease i.e., it has effects on the person consuming alcohol and the whole family. Alcoholism affects emotional, physical, social and psychological aspects of the family and family members, where spouses feel difficult to manage their married life and are hence totally stressed out. The spouses of alcohol dependents are morally stressed due to the consequence of alcoholism in family. Alcoholism can hamper marital life, results in lack of care of children, brings out negative attitude towards husband, and can cause loss of respect and dignity of the individual and family. Hence, it is our responsibility to take initiative in finding out the problem of spouses of alcohol dependents and educate them on how to cope with the situation in adaptive manner.

Figure 1: Bar diagram showing the distribution of level of moral stress according to the area wise.

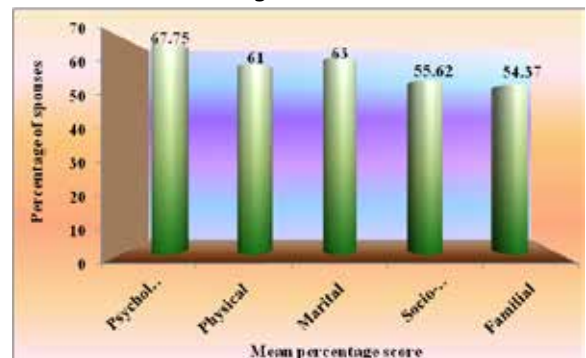


Table 1: Area wise distribution of coping strategies used by spouses of alcohol dependents N=100

Type of coping used	Item	Max score	Range	Mean \pm S.D	Mean percentage Score (%)
Planful problem solving	5	20	5 – 20	12.72 \pm 2.44	63.6
Seeking social / friends / family support	4	16	4 – 16	10.55 \pm 2.19	65.93
Avoidance	6	24	6 – 24	15.82 \pm 2.31	65.91
Emotional	2	08	2 – 8	4.64 \pm 1.93	58
Self- controlling	3	12	3 – 12	7.65 \pm 1.52	63.75

Maximum score = 80

Table 2: Correlation between level of moral stress and coping strategy scores. N=100

VARIABLES	MEAN \pm S.D	r	p
Perceived level of moral stress	37.310 \pm 6.582	-0.32	.001*
Coping strategies	51.380 \pm 6.121		

***significant**

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