



MARITAL SATISFACTION AND MARITAL QUALITY AMONG SPOUSE OF ALCOHOL DEPENDENTS IN THIRUVALLUR DISTRICT (TAMIL NADU)

Social Science

Dr. M. Sudha	Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Mar Gregorios College of Arts & Science, Chennai.
Sugapriyanka. L. S	Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Mar Gregorios College of Arts & Science, Chennai.
Flowrence Francina.A	Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Shrimathi Devkumvar Nanalal Bhatt Vaishnav College for Women.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Alcohol dependence not only affects individuals but also has a significant impact on their families, particularly spouses. This study aims to explore the relationship between marital satisfaction and marital quality among wives of alcohol-dependent husbands and evaluate potential intervention programs to enhance their well-being. **Objectives:** The objectives are to analyze sociodemographic details, assess the health of the alcohol dependents, and measure marital satisfaction and quality. **Methodology:** A mixed-methods approach was used, with a sample size of 187 participants. The PHQ-9, MSI, and DAS scales were employed, and data were analyzed using SPSS software. Qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews with five participants and analyzed using thematic analysis. **Findings:** It indicates that the majority of respondents were young, Hindu, employed, and had arranged marriages. Many were unaware of their spouse's drinking habit, and poor health conditions, including depression, were reported. Marital satisfaction and quality were moderate. Duration of drinking showed significant associations with patient health and marital quality. **Suggestions:** The study suggests the need for effective support and intervention strategies for this population, focusing on improving marital satisfaction and overall well-being. Comprehensive programs tailored to the unique challenges faced by these wives should be developed. Further research and support programs are necessary to address their specific needs.

KEYWORDS

Alcohol dependency, marital satisfaction, marital Quality

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol dependence is a pervasive problem that not only affects individuals but also their families, particularly their spouses. The impact of alcohol dependence on marital satisfaction and life satisfaction of wives of alcohol-dependent husbands has been a topic of interest in recent research. Marital satisfaction is an important predictor of overall life satisfaction, and the potential negative consequences of alcohol dependence on both of these critical dimensions of women's lives highlight the need for further study on this topic. Therefore, this research aims to explore the relationship between marital satisfaction and marital quality of wives of alcohol dependence and evaluate any potential intervention programs to enhance their well-being. The findings could provide insight into the need for effective support and treatment strategies for wives who are struggling with the adverse effects of alcohol dependence on their lives.

Objectives of the Study

1. Study the socio demographic details of the respondents.
2. Analyse the health of the alcohol dependents
3. Measure the Marital satisfaction and marital quality of respondents.

METHODOLOGY

Six rehabilitation centres' situated in Thiruvallur District was the universe of the study. A sample size of 187. Mixed methodology was adapted. Quantitative Data - Consecutive sampling method (Non Probable) and questionnaire with scales was used. The PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire-9) developed by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B.W. Williams, Kurt Kroenke, The Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) developed by Donald H. Baucom, Caroll S. Gilchrist, and Norman B. Epstein in 1983. And Dyadic Adjustment Scale" (DAS) to measure marital quality was used. Data analysed using SPSS software. Qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews, with a sample size of 5 participants. Thematic analysis was employed for qualitative data analysis.

Review of Literature

Decreased life satisfaction: Alcohol addiction can lead to a decline in overall life satisfaction. This is because alcohol addiction can lead to physical health problems, financial problems, job loss, and social isolation. The negative consequences of addiction can make it difficult for individuals to enjoy life or feel a sense of fulfilment.

Diminished marital satisfaction: Alcohol addiction can put strain on

intimate relationships, including marriages. When one partner struggles with addiction, it can lead to feelings of resentment, fear, and mistrust from the other partner. The addict may also become less engaged in the relationship and less interested in spending time with their partner, which can lead to a decrease in marital satisfaction.

Communication problems: Alcohol addiction can interfere with effective communication between partners. When one partner is intoxicated or hungover, they may be irritable, argumentative, or emotionally unavailable. This can make it difficult for couples to resolve conflicts or express their emotional needs.

Infidelity: Alcohol addiction can lead to infidelity, as individuals may seek comfort or attention outside of their relationship when they are struggling with addiction. Infidelity can severely damage trust and intimacy in a marriage, leading to marital dissatisfaction.

"Alcohol and intimate partner violence: A meta-analytic review" by Foran, H. M. and O'Leary, K. D. (2008) - This study provides a meta-analysis of the research on the relationship between alcohol and intimate partner violence, including the factors that contribute to the link between the two.

"Alcohol and Domestic Violence: A review and Analysis of the Literature" by Gondolf, E. W. (2012) - This study provides a comprehensive review and analysis of the literature on alcohol and domestic violence, including the effects of alcohol on the victim and perpetrator and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention efforts.

The Relationship between Alcohol Dependence and Marital Satisfaction among Wives: A Quantitative Study" by Johnson, L. M. (2018). This quantitative study investigated the impact of alcohol dependence on marital satisfaction among wives. The study found that wives of alcohol-dependent husbands reported lower levels of marital satisfaction compared to wives of non-alcohol-dependent husbands.

"Psychological Factors and Marital Satisfaction among Wives of Alcohol-Dependent Husbands: A Qualitative Study" by Thompson, S. A. (2019). This qualitative study explored the role of psychological factors, such as mental health and coping strategies, in influencing marital satisfaction among wives of alcohol-dependent husbands. The study found that wives who had higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress reported lower marital satisfaction. Coping strategies, such as avoidance or denial, also impacted marital satisfaction negatively.

"Gender Roles and Marital Satisfaction among Wives of Alcohol-Dependent Husbands: A Cross-Cultural Study" by Lee, J. Y. (2017). This cross-cultural study explored the influence of gender roles and expectations on marital satisfaction among wives of alcohol-dependent husbands. The study found that societal norms and expectations of gender roles often placed a disproportionate burden on wives in managing the consequences of alcohol dependence, leading to increased stress and lower marital satisfaction.

"Treatment and Recovery Factors in Marital Satisfaction among Wives of Alcohol-Dependent Husbands: A Longitudinal Study" by Thompson, R. D. (2016). This longitudinal study investigated the role of treatment and recovery in influencing marital satisfaction among wives of alcohol-dependent husbands. The study found that access to appropriate treatment for alcohol dependence, as well as the husband's commitment to recovery, positively impacted marital satisfaction. On the other hand, relapses and lack of progress in recovery were associated with decreased marital satisfaction among wives.

Findings

1. **Age Distribution:** The majority of respondents (69%) fell within the age group of 25 to 31 year. This demographic pattern may reflect a specific stage in life where individuals are more likely to experience the challenges and consequences associated with alcohol addiction and its impact on marital satisfaction.
2. **Religious Affiliation:** The predominant religion among the respondents was Hinduism, with 79% of them following this faith. This information is important to consider in the context of cultural and religious influences on alcohol consumption, marital dynamics, and satisfaction. It may contribute to variations in attitudes, norms, and coping mechanisms within the studied population.
3. **Educational Attainment:** Only a quarter of the respondents (25%) had completed their graduation. The low percentage of respondents who had completed their graduation suggests that lower educational attainment might be associated with higher prevalence of alcohol addiction and its potential consequences on marital satisfaction. Further exploration of the relationship between education, socio-economic factors, and alcohol addiction could provide valuable insights.
4. **Employment Status:** A significant majority of the respondents (78%) were employed.
5. **Marital Duration:** More than half of the respondents (53%) had been married for more than 5 years but less than 10 years.
6. **Marriage Type:** A significant majority (more than three-thirds) of the respondents had arranged marriage. The duration of marriage, with a significant proportion falling between 5 and 10 years, may indicate a critical period where the impact of alcohol addiction on marital satisfaction becomes more apparent. Additionally, the prevalence of arranged marriages among the respondents raises questions about the influence of cultural factors, such as societal expectations and support systems, on the dynamics between alcohol addiction and marital satisfaction.
7. **Awareness of Spouse's Drinking Habit:** Surprisingly, almost half of the respondents (47%) were unaware of their spouse's drinking habit.
8. **Duration of Alcohol Dependency:** Among the spouses of the respondents, 60% had been dependent on alcohol for more than 5 years but less than 10 years.
9. **Health Condition:** When administered a health care questionnaire, only 10% of the respondents reported enjoying normal health. A notable proportion, 27%, experienced moderate to severe depression, while 15% reported severe depression. The reported health conditions, particularly the prevalence of moderate to severe depression, underscore the potential psychological consequences of alcohol addiction on individuals and their spouses. These findings align with existing research linking mental health issues and substance abuse.
10. **Marital Satisfaction:** Using the Marital Satisfaction Scale, it was found that 9% of the respondents reported low marital satisfaction, while 69% described it as moderate.
11. **Marital Quality:** According to the Marital Quality Scale, 11% of the respondents perceived their marital quality as low, while 65% described it as moderate. The moderate levels of marital satisfaction and marital quality reported by the respondents suggest a need for intervention and support to enhance relationship dynamics in the context of alcohol addiction.

Hypothesis:

1. H_0 - There is no association between duration of drinking and marital satisfaction.
2. H_0 - There is no association between duration of drinking and patient health.
3. H_0 - There is no association between patient health and marital quality.

The entire above hypothesis was tested using chi square. It was found that p value was first hypothesis was .001. Based on the first hypothesis (H_0) it was found that there is no association between the duration of drinking and marital satisfaction, the obtained p-value of 0.001 suggests a statistically significant association between these two variables.

Since the p-value (0.02) of H_0 - 2 is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we have evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is a statistically significant association between the duration of drinking and patient health. In practical terms, this means that the duration of drinking habits among patients is related to their health status. However, the p-value alone does not provide information about the direction or strength of this association.

Since the p-value (0.01) of H_0 - 3 is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we have evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is a statistically significant association between patient health and marital quality.

Patient Health

Four of the respondents reported that their husbands showed little interest in anything else apart from drinking. It was observed that their husbands had a strong dependency on alcohol and experienced difficulty sleeping without consuming it. Additionally, all the respondents mentioned that their husbands expressed feelings of having let down their families.

Marital Quality

Physical Harm- All of the respondents has experienced physical abuse at the hands of their husbands. However, only two of them expressed the opinion that such beatings were not acceptable, while the remaining respondents believed that it was permissible to be subjected to such violence. This discrepancy in viewpoints may be attributed to cultural factors.

Sexual Pleasure- he respondents expressed a certain level of shyness when it came to discussing sexual pleasure. However, the younger respondents were comparatively less hesitant to talk about this topic. They revealed that their sexual engagement was primarily driven by their husbands' desires rather than their own. Moreover, they expressed unhappiness about engaging in sexual activities under the influence of alcohol. None of the respondents reported discussing their sexual feelings with their partners, and there were instances where they felt embarrassed in front of their children due to these situations.

Fidelity- All of the respondents shared that their husbands suspected them of infidelity. However, only one of the respondents disclosed that her husband had been unfaithful.

Disagreement- The majority of the disagreements among the respondents were related to managing financial matters and issues concerning their children. These two areas appeared to be the primary sources of conflict in their relationship.

Marital satisfaction- It is evident that, despite women contributing to the family's finances, husbands have the ultimate decision-making authority. All the women interviewed expressed that their husbands are good as long as they do not drink. They would be extremely happy if their spouses could stop drinking. Unfortunately, their husbands' drinking habits prevent them from pursuing hobbies, spending time with friends, and visiting relatives. Additionally, two of the respondents mentioned that they would be content to have their current husbands as their partners in their next life as well.

DISCUSSION

The current findings of this study align with the studies included in the literature review conducted by Foran and O'Leary (2008), Gondolf (2012), Johnson (2018), Thompson (2019), and Lee (2017). These

studies emphasized the negative impact of alcohol addiction on various aspects of life and marital satisfaction, providing a foundation for comparing and contextualizing the current findings within the existing research.

Regarding decreased life satisfaction, the literature review highlighted the work of Foran and O'Leary (2008) and Gondolf (2012), who emphasized that alcohol addiction can lead to physical health problems, financial issues, job loss, and social isolation, all of which can contribute to a decline in overall life satisfaction. The current findings, in line with these studies, show that a significant proportion of respondents reported experiencing moderate to severe depression and poor health conditions, likely contributing to lower levels of life satisfaction among individuals struggling with alcohol addiction.

In terms of diminished marital satisfaction, the literature review discussed the studies by Johnson (2018), Thompson (2019), and Lee (2017), which consistently demonstrated a negative impact of alcohol addiction on marital relationships. These studies highlighted factors such as communication problems, infidelity, and the disproportionate burden placed on spouses in managing the consequences of alcohol dependence.

Comparing the current findings with the studies on wives of alcohol-dependent husbands by Johnson (2018), Thompson (2019), and Lee (2017), several similarities emerge. These studies identified factors such as psychological distress, gender roles, and societal expectations that negatively influence marital satisfaction among wives of alcohol-dependent husbands.

While the previous studies focused on wives of alcohol-dependent husbands, the current study provides a broader perspective by examining a specific demographic group. The demographic characteristics of the sample population, including age distribution, religious affiliation, educational attainment, employment status, and marital duration, contribute to variations in the experiences of alcohol addiction and its impact on marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, the current study's finding that nearly half of the respondents were unaware of their spouse's drinking habit aligns with the literature review's emphasis on communication problems and the potential for spouses to be unaware or in denial about their partner's addiction, as discussed by Johnson (2018) and Lee (2017).

Suggestions

Seek professional help: Encourage both partners to seek professional help either individually or as a couple. This may include addiction treatment or counseling to address relationship issues and improve communication. **Promote healthy habits:** Encourage the alcoholic spouse to seek support from groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous that promote sobriety and healthy habits. As a spouse, try to engage in healthy activities together, such as exercise, to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Find support and resources: Seek support from family, friends, or support groups specifically for spouses of alcoholics. These resources can provide emotional support and helpful tips for managing the challenges of living with an alcoholic spouse. **Foster open and honest communication:** Create a safe space for both partners to express their needs and concerns, and prioritize active listening and validation. **Practice empathy and understanding** for each other's perspectives.

Set boundaries: Setting healthy boundaries can help improve the quality of the relationship. Boundaries may involve establishing expectations around sobriety or behavior, but also include self-care and identifying when to seek personal support if needed. It's important to note that each relationship is unique, and strategies for improving marital quality and satisfaction may differ based on individual circumstances. Seeking professional help and support can assist in identifying the best strategies for the spouses in the specific situation.

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