



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Psychology

LOCUS OF CONTROL AMONG ADOLESCENTS WITH ALCOHOLIC FATHERS

KEY WORDS: Adolescent, alcoholic father, locus of control

Ms. Bertilla Vaz

Counselor, St. Xavier's College, Mapusa – Goa,

Dr. Tina D'Cunha*

Assistant Professor, Department of M. A. Psychology, St. Xavier's College, Mapusa – Goa, *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

A child being raised by an alcoholic parent or caregiver may have a variety of conflicting emotions that need to be addressed in order to avoid future problems. There is a belief that children with parents who abuse substances are at increased risk for negative consequences. It has been suggested that children of alcoholics express belief in a more external locus of control and have lower self-esteem than do children of nonalcoholics. The purpose of the present research was to assess the locus of control among adolescents of alcoholic fathers. The Hanna Levinson's Locus of Control scale by Dr. Sanjay Vhora was used. Percentage mapping of the types of control indicated that as adolescents of alcoholic fathers move from early to late adolescence, their locus of control changes from perceiving powerful others or chance factors, towards individual control to a certain extent in their lives.

INTRODUCTION

According to Alcoholics Anonymous UK alcoholism is described as a physical compulsion, together with a mental obsession towards the substance. Apart from having an enormous craving for alcohol, an alcoholic often yields to that craving at the worst possible times. An alcoholic knows neither when, nor how to stop drinking.

An alcoholic is a person, while alcoholism is the illness. One may also be at a greater risk for alcoholism if an individual is a young adult experiencing peer pressure, has low self-esteem, experiences a high level of stress and lives in a family or culture where alcohol use is common and accepted.

Alcoholics may engage in the behavior of drinking alone, drinking more to feel the effects of alcohol (having a high tolerance), becoming violent or hostile when asked about drinking, neglecting to eat or eating poorly, neglecting personal hygiene, missing work or school because of drinking, being unable to control alcohol intake, making excuses to drink and continuing to drink even when legal, social, or economic problems develop.

People with alcoholism may also experience the physical symptoms of alcohol cravings, withdrawal symptoms if drinking is stopped, including shaking, nausea, and vomiting, tremors in the morning after drinking and lapses in memory (blacking out) after a night of drinking along with illnesses such as alcoholic ketoacidosis (includes dehydration-type symptoms) or cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver.

Adolescence has been globally accepted to be a period of turbulence and a significant developmental milestone. Parental alcoholism could further compound and create a not so conducive domestic environment significantly impacting the adjustment and personality of the adolescent as he/she tries to come to grips with this tumultuous phase.

Some adolescents of alcoholics feel guilty, anxious, embarrassed, confused and angry and depressed. They learn to feel responsible for their parent's mood states. They believe they have to figure out how the parent will react to a situation ahead of time. If the parent feels bad, the child thinks it's their fault.

There is strong evidence to suggest that family dysfunction during childhood can negatively influence later life experiences and adjustment (Werner and Broida, 1991). Drinking behavior may interrupt normal family tasks, cause conflict and demand adaptive and adaptive responses from family members who do not know how to appropriately respond. In brief, alcoholism creates a series of escalating crises in family structure and function, which may bring the family to a system crisis. As a result, the members may develop dysfunctional coping behaviors observes Ranganathan (2004).

The dysfunctional family environment created due to the presence of parental alcoholism has an effect on the self esteem and locus of

control of children in the family. A study by Kelley et al. (2007), reveals that adult children of alcoholics reported more parentification, instrumental caregiving, emotional caregiving, and past unfairness in their families of origin as compared to children of non-alcoholics. Williams and Corrigan (1992), comment that growing up in a household with alcoholic parents is more likely to produce emotional disorders, increases the child's risk of health problems, physical abuse and neglect. Menees and Segrin (2000) observe that children of alcoholics are characterised as an at risk population because of the dysfunctional family environment that disrupts their psychosocial development. They often lack guidance and positive role modeling and live in an atmosphere of stress and family conflict. Mylant et al. (2002) found that adolescent children of alcoholics scored significantly lower on all psychosocial factors of family/personal strengths and school bonding and significantly higher on all factors of at-risk temperament, feelings, thoughts, and behaviours than non- children of alcoholics and that they were at risk for depression, suicide, eating disorders, chemical dependency, and teen pregnancy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

OBJECTIVES

To study the type of Locus of Control adolescents with an alcoholic father use as they move through the phases of adolescence.

Participants

The population comprised of male and female adolescents of alcoholic fathers, from the age group of 11-13, 14-17 and 18-20 years. A total of 60 adolescents (30 Male and 30 Female) were studied. Adolescents, whose father is an alcoholic, were included in the study. The alcoholic or lifestyle habits of the adolescents as an effect of the alcoholic parent were also taken into consideration. Most of the sample was derived through the adolescent groups of parents attending Alcoholic Anonymous and through personal contacts.

Materials

1. Personal data sheet:
The personal data sheet was used to obtain basic information of the adolescents of alcoholic parents.
2. Levinson's Locus of Control Scale

The Levinson's Locus of Control scale by Sanjay Vhora consists of 24 statements on dimensions of *individual control* (Belief about individual control. High scores indicate your belief that your outcomes are controlled by you-which your current situation rewards are direct outcomes of things you control), *power control* (Belief about control by powerful others. High Scores indicate that people control outcome) and *chance control* (Belief about chance control. High scores indicate that unordered, chance or random events control your outcomes). The Split Half Reliability of the scale was found to be 0.72 for P, 0.79 for C and 0.65 for I while the Test-Retest reliability was found to be 0.79, after one week interval.

Scoring

The Levinson's Locus of Control scale is a five point Likert type scale which is to be hand scored with a stencil scoring. Each answer carries either a score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. The scores are added separately for all three factors (P, C, I) and the total to be written in the space provided on the blank page of the test booklet.

Variables

1. Phases of adolescence
2. Locus of Control

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The method of frequency mapping was adopted in order to discuss the types of control that a percentage of adolescents use based on their phase of adolescence.

TABLE 1. Indicating the frequency mapping of Locus of control

Phases of Adolescence	Types of ControlTypes of Control	Percentage
EARLY ADOLESCENTS	Powerful Others	60%
	Chance Control	40%
MIDDLE ADOLESCENTS	Powerful Others	60%
	Chance Control	35%
	Individual Control	5%
LATE ADOLESCENTS	Powerful Others	40%
	Chance Control	40%
	Individual Control	20%

Table 1 indicates the percentage of adolescents perceiving and using the specific type of control at various phases of adolescence. During *early adolescence*, 60% adolescents are controlled by powerful others whereas 40% of the same believe that unordered, chance or random events control their outcomes. Early adolescence is a period wherein adolescents at this stage, boys as well as girls are just moving out from their childhood but have yet not developed full control by themselves. There is still a need to depend on powerful others, for example their parents, teachers or older siblings. Adolescents whose parent is an alcoholic will naturally seek the help of powerful others as they are not capable of resolving conflicts on their own. On the other hand 40% adolescents believe that the chance or luck factor works in most of their experiences. Many of these adolescents believe it is their bad luck that their parent is an alcoholic and want some miracle to happen. Alongside, society makes numerous demands on the individual and it is expected that these demands will be met within a very short period of time. These demands like achieving independence from the family; establishing satisfying give and take relationships with peers of both sexes; undertaking new tasks and social roles, and deciding on and preparing for a meaningful vocation are all sought for during the phase.

As the adolescent moves into *middle adolescence* 60% of individuals believe in control by powerful others, 35% believe in Chance control while 5% believe in individual control. This is a stage wherein the adolescent is experiencing the changes of puberty and wants to discover many issues of their lives. In the researchers interaction with the adolescents almost all adolescents stated that for them a strong form of pressure becomes the father, who is known to create several problems like massive strictness, abusive language or physical abuse of the mother and children which inturn does not allow the adolescent to protect their personal interest. They are many times forced to obey. However, most of the mothers of the adolescents have a positive power over their children which leads to better understanding and achievement at this stage. The adolescent start maturing at this age and begin to make sense out of things around them.

Late *Adolescents* from the age group of 18-20years reflected 40% of them believing in powerful others, 40% in Chance control whereas an increase is observed in the way children believe in individual control showing 20% of them having control over the situation. A gradual decrease is observed in the way people believe in powerful others and chance control because these adolescents facing critical situations almost on a daily basis begin to focus more on reality as compared to luck. Through the researchers interaction

it was noted that the adolescents at this period never fail to work hard and carry on with their career. Janet C. Churchill et. al (1990) conducted a study on the locus of control and self esteem of adult children of alcoholics. Many recent reports suggest that children of alcoholics express belief in a more external locus of control and have lower self-esteem than do children of non-alcoholic.

Research studies have indicated significant relationships between the presence of an alcoholic parent and its influences on their families. In one such study Suman and Nagalakshmi (1996) used Eysenck personality inventory and family index scale and found that 8 variables are significantly influenced. These include family functioning, emotional problem in children and discrepancy between spouses, role functioning of alcoholism, psychotocism, perception of self, love dimension and neuroticism. Mills (1991, 1992) using Rotter's Internal-External Locus of control scale found that children of alcoholics significantly differed on external locus of control from control group.

CONCLUSIONS

A study conducted by West & Prinz (2010) on parental alcoholism and child psychopathology revealed that adolescents experience problems that have been assumed to be related to parental alcoholism, includes school related problems, problems with police and courts, early marriage and unwanted pregnancies, as well as high incidence of alcohol and substance abuse. Identified behavioral problems among adolescent offspring's in alcoholic families include running, impaired emotional functioning such as poor academic achievements and school problems and conduct problems such as aggression, lying, stealing. It should be noted that adolescents represent the most important assets and wealth of a nation, and this wealth needs to be protected and nurtured. The family, community and country has an important responsibility in the well-being of adolescents, especially those who are at risk/vulnerable due to the irresponsible behavior of their parents. Children of substance abusing parents are both a large and multi-risk population deserving of effective services and hence the main purpose of the present research is the need to target these children and their families as a vulnerable group and to move them up on the health priorities of the state.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to acknowledge the support extended to this research study by each adolescent participant who willingly consented to be a part of it.

REFERENCES

1. Kourmou, N., Xythali, V., & Koutras, V. (2015). Reliability and Validity of the Multidimensional Locus of Control IPC. *Social Sciences*, 4, 1067-1078. 10.3390/socsci4041067.
2. Kelley, M. L., French, A., Bountress, K., Keefe, H. A., Schroeder, V., Steer, K., Fals-Stewart, W. & Gumienny, L. (2007). Parentification and family responsibility in the family of origin of adult children of alcoholics. *Addictive Behavior*, 32(4), 675-85.
3. Levenson, H. (1972). Distinctions within the concept of Internal-External Control: Development of a New Scale. *Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association*, 7, 261-262.
4. Menees, M. M. & Segrin, C. (2000). The specificity of disrupted processes in families of adult children of alcoholics. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 35(4), 361-367.
5. Mills, J. K. (1992). Locus of Control Orientation of Obese Adolescent Girls and Children of Alcoholics in Outpatient Treatment. *Psychological Reports*, 70(3), 1184-1186.
6. Mills, J. K. (1991). A Comparison between Locus of Control in Inpatient Alcoholics and Children of Alcoholics. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 36(3), 1-6.
7. Mylant, M. L., Ide, B., Cuevas, E. & Meehan, M. (2002). Adolescent children of alcoholics: Vulnerable or resilient? *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association*, 18(2), 57-64.
8. West, M. O., Prinz, R. J. (2010). Parental alcoholism and child psychopathology. *Psychological bulletin*. 102, 204-218.
9. Werner, E. (1986). Resilient offspring of alcoholics: A longitudinal study from birth to age 18. *Journal of studies on alcohol*. 47, 34-40. 10.15288/jsa.1986.47.34.
10. Werner, L. J. & Broida, J. P. (1991). Adult self-esteem and locus of control as a function of familial alcoholism and dysfunction. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 52(3), 249-252.
11. Williams, O. B. & Corrigan, P. W. (1992). The differential effects of parental alcoholism and mental illness on their adult children. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 48, 406-416.
12. Ranganathan, S. (2004). Families in Transition: Victims of Alcoholism and New Challenges Ahead. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 26(4), 399-405.
13. Suman, L. N., & Nagalakshmi, S. V. (1996). Family Dysfunction in Alcoholic Families. *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 23(1), 117-121.
14. Stanley, S., Vanitha, C. (2008). Psychosocial Correlates in Adolescent Children of Alcoholics-
15. Implications for Intervention. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*. 12 (2), 67-80