

Original Article

Status of Alcoholism Among Dental Students: A Questionnaire-Based Study

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence and frequency of use of alcohol use among dental students in Saveetha Dental College. **Materials and Methods:** This was a questionnaire-based observational cross-sectional type of study including 500 dental students from Saveetha Dental College. A self-administered questionnaire was given to the students and was designed to collect data on year of study, gender, and use of alcohol among dental students. **Results:** The results of this survey reflect alcohol usage among dental students. In the present study, a high amount which is nearly 95% of the subjects had experimented with alcohol. In our survey, nearly 23.73% of the subjects were involved in binge drinking, which is similar to the study done by Andrade 27 *et al.* 19 (21.8%) in the year 2012. The finding of binge drinking in the current study was higher when compared to the study done by Gignon *et al.* 26 in the year 2015 among 255 s to 5th year medical students where it was 11%. **Conclusion:** Nearly two-third of all students were involved in alcohol drinking. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the educators to make sure to spread knowledge regarding substances abuse among the college students. Professional treatment programs should be comprehensive in approach, and should not entirely focus on substance abuse issues but should also include the treatment of dejection, apprehension, situational depression, and awareness about alcohol consumption among college students.

KEYWORDS: Alcohol, dental, drinking, students

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period characterized by substantial physiological and psychological changes; thus, making the youth more susceptible to external agents such as alcohol and other psychotropic substances.^[1] In recent years, the consumption of illicit (tobacco, alcohol), as well as illicit substances, has increased greatly throughout the world.^[2] The World Health Organization has estimated that tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs together contributed to 12.4% of all deaths worldwide.^[3] In India, alcohol use figures vary widely from 3.8% to 21.0%, with men 9.7 times more likely to regularly use alcohol as compared to women.^[4] Among college students, heavy alcohol consumption is also associated with increased likelihood of use of licit and illicit drugs.^[5] College duration is a sensitive and

critical period because substance abuse could be seen, especially among students under academic pressure, peer group effects, popularity, and easy access to common substances.^[6] This study was conducted to estimate the status of alcoholism among dental students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a questionnaire-based observational cross-sectional type of study comprising of 500 dental students from Saveetha Dental College. A self-administered questionnaire was given to the students and was designed to collect data on year of study, gender, and use of alcohol among dental students.

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Inclusion criteria

Subjects who were present at the day of the survey.

Exclusion criteria

Subjects who were not willing to participate in the study.

Permission and ethical clearance were taken from the concerned authorities of the college. Since it was a questionnaire-based study and no invasive procedure was carried out, and verbal consent was taken from the participants.

The anonymity of participants was essential, and therefore, no name or ethnic group was requested. Confidentiality was strictly maintained with all completed questionnaires being seen exclusively by the survey organizer.

RESULTS

The total number of students tested in this study was 500. Out of that number, 357 (71.4%) subjects were females, and 142 were males (28.6%). The mean age for all tested students were 23.51 (standard deviation [SD] 2.10), whereas the mean value of years of study for all students tested was 3.35 (SD 1.67).

Students were asked to choose 1 of 5 offered statements related to their habits (never drank, tried only 1–2 times, past drinking, drink occasionally and drink every day) and what alcoholic beverages was preferred by them (beer, wine, and spirits). It was found that 71.7% of students drink alcohol occasionally, 4.6% of them consumed it daily. Of these, 74.7% of males and 63.8% of females drank alcohol occasionally, while constant drinking was reported by 6.3% of males and 4.6% of females.

Nearly 5.1% of the individuals never drank before. Past drinking was observed in 15.7% of them whereas drinking 1–2 times was seen among 12.9% of the individuals.

Among these students, beer was preferred mostly by males (67.3%). Whereas, spirits and wine were mostly preferred by females (54.8%).

According to the type of students' accommodation, students were divided into four groups: 31.5% of students lived with their parents, 52.8% of students lived in students' hostel, and 10.9% of them lived in rented flats or had some other kind of accommodation (4.8% of them).

There was no statistically significant difference among genders with respect to the type of students' accommodation.

When also asked the reason for drinking 68.4% of them said it was due to stress, 29.7% due to peer pressure,

28.2% due to social reasons and 10.5% due to habitual drinking.

Nearly 52.4% of the individuals were not sure if they were willing to quit the habit, whereas only 20.5% of them gave positive replies.

DISCUSSION

Heavy and/or problematic alcohol use among college students represents a major public health concern. Although problematic alcohol use occurs across many age groups, young adults aged 18–24 years show the highest rates of alcohol use and have the greatest percentage of problem drinkers.^[7] One difficulty with examining college problem drinking is the lack of a standard operational definition of “problem drinking” making it difficult to directly compare studies.^[8] The pattern of young adult drinking is unique because it seems to be relatively variable and have a transitory course with only a subset of students exhibiting heavy drinking patterns consistently across time into adulthood.^[9] After an initial increase in alcohol consumption, many students show a gradual reduction in alcohol consumption to a more moderate level throughout later years in college and following college. This phenomenon, often called “maturing out” or “developmentally limited alcoholism.”^[10] According to Hallett *et al.*^[11] more than one-third of university students drank to harmful levels. Their study also found that tertiary students drank more heavily than their nonstudent peers yet are often unaware their drinking is risky. They also found that the youngest students are the heaviest drinkers in the population and are the “main target” of the alcohol industry.^[12]

In the study of Roche and Watt^[13] it was found that 94% of students drank alcohol and 54% drank 5 or more drinks on a typical drinking occasion. Another study revealed that 88% of students drank alcohol, with 45% drinking weekly and over 40% drinking 5 or more drinks in a single session.^[14] Several studies also have reported alarming rates of alcohol abuse in student populations.^[15,16]

Demographic factors, particularly gender, have been frequently cited as variables associated with problematic drinking in college students, perhaps due to the number of large epidemiological studies on college drinking that have such demographic factors as gender and ethnicity easily accessible.^[11]

And most problematic drinking in college has been documented among men. Overall, male students tend to drink alcohol more frequently and in larger quantities than female students.^[8,17]

Overall, it appears that male drinking college students have more alcohol-related negative consequences than

females, but this may not be true when damage to self and more private consequences (i.e., poor academic performance, unintended sexual activity, memory loss, hangovers, nausea, blackouts, and injury to self) is considered.^[18]

Personality factors have been used to try to explain a variety of human behaviors, including risky behaviors). Research on personality and problematic alcohol use in college students has tended to focus on two general personality dimensions found to be associated with problematic drinking: Traits labeled as sensation seeking, impulsivity, or novelty seeking and traits labeled as neuroticism, emotionality, or negative affect.^[19]

Research has shown that enhancement of social and physical pleasure (e.g., “drinking makes me feel good” and “drinking adds a certain warmth to social occasions”) is an expectancy of some college students who are frequent drinkers. Social and physical pleasure expectancies correlated significantly with alcohol use and alcohol consumption has been found to predict social/physical pleasure expectancies.^[20,21]

Expectancy of depression (e.g., feeling sad and feeling sleepy) has been found associated with more alcohol problems, but not with alcohol use frequency, in college students.^[22]

This suggests that such expectancy may be associated with a more problematic form of drinking. This finding implies that the belief one will experience depressive effects from alcohol was not viewed as negative by problem drinkers.^[23]

There have been several studies indicating a positive relationship between stress and problematic drinking in college. For instance, college students with at least a moderate level of stress have greater increases in problem drinking in the previous 3 months than low-stress college students.^[24]

As college drinking behavior is unique and tends to remit following college, it is often presumed that the environment and “peer pressure” are important influences in problem drinking.^[25]

The results of this survey reflect alcohol usage among dental students. In the present study, a high amount which is nearly 95% of the subjects had experimented with alcohol. In our survey, nearly 23.73% of the subjects were involved in binge drinking, which is similar to the study done by Andrade *et al.* 19 (21.8%) in the year 2012. The finding of binge drinking in the current study was higher when compared to the study 2 done by Gignon *et al.* 26 in the year 2015 among 255 6th year medical students where it was 11%.

CONCLUSION

Nearly two-third of all students was involved in alcohol drinking. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the educators to make sure to spread knowledge regarding substances abuse among the college students. Professional treatment programs should be comprehensive in approach, and should not entirely focus on substance abuse issues but should also include the treatment of dejection, apprehension, situational depression, and awareness about alcohol consumption among college students.

Although there has been a plethora of research investigating college drinking, there is still some ambiguity in the pursuit for a comprehensive understanding of problem college drinking. Many psychosocial factors seem interrelated, and it is difficult to determine etiological factors. Understanding the variables related to problem drinking is essential in identifying those in need of services and in informing prevention and intervention strategies.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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