

Factors and Impact of Alcohol Drinking Behaviour among Government College Students in Aizawl

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Abstract

Alcohol use and its misuse is becoming rampant among the college students. Its misuse not only affects their personal life and health, it also leads to various repercussions that most of the students may not imagine. The present study aims to study the factors that lead the college students towards alcohol and also the consequences they have to face due to alcohol misuse. This study uses the descriptive survey research to find out the pattern, causes and effects of alcohol drinking among the Mizo college students. The sample consisted of 60 students enrolled in Bachelor of Arts programme in one of the colleges situated in Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. The data was collected using a set developed questionnaire. The analysis of the data showed that all the students had the experience of drinking and many of the students drank everyday. The major factor associated with their initiation to alcohol was their desire to have good time and peer pressure. The impact of their drinking habit was reflected in their low academic scores and depleting financial resources.

Key words: Alcohol, College students, Alcohol drinking behaviour, Aizawl.

Introduction

Alcohol is one of the drinks that youths get attracted to very easily. While alcohol in itself is not harmful as it has medicinal value also and small amount of alcohol may actually cure many health ailments (Aira et al. 2008), its overuse or getting addicted to its consumption for sheer pleasure or to avoid or forget the outside world or to simply alleviate one's stress is what makes this a cause of concern. In such scenario, the youths may not be mindful of the negative impacts that it can have on their overall well being. Their dependence on alcohol to ease out the stress or to have good time may itself become means of accelerating their stress and various health related problems. The negative repercussion of alcohol use are associated with various aspects of one's life - health risks, morbidity and fatality. Besides, this also has negative consequences for family, friends and the society (Sudhinaraset et al. ,2016).

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As per the WHO report, alcohol misuse results in 3 million casualty every year worldwide and around 1,800 of those succumbing to alcohol related fatality are college students(Quinn and Fromee, 2011).

The studies conducted in this area indicate the various causes and harmful effects that alcohol drinking has on college students. Due to their addiction to alcohol many students neglect their studies and drop out (Howland, et al. 2010; Matt, Shannon & Oliver, 2012; Qi, Matthew &Hustad, 2014). While the drinking of alcohol leads to the students having less friends or being casted out of their groups, this also hinders their relationship building process. Besides, it also has an effect on their physical and mental health. Many of the students meet with an accident under alcohol influence and injure or impair themselves (Jaisoorya et al.,2009; Korlakunta et al. (2019). At the same time, the drinking habit also leads to their stress and anxiety when they do not have access to alcoholic drinks.

Mizoram and status of alcohol

Mizoram which has nearly twelve lakh population has an ambivalent association with alcohol. Alcohol was an integral part of ancient Mizo society and culture- all religious and cultural ceremonies and festivals required it (Fanai & AG, 2022). However, after the advent of Christianity, alcohol has been considered an evil and undesirable from a moral and ethical ground.. While most of the churches admonish alcohol consumption and want to curb its use, its abuse still pervade the people in general and Mizo youth in particular (Lalrinmawia, 2002, as cited in Fanai & AG, 2022).

Mizoram was a dry state for 18 years until 2015 when the Congress government lifted the ban on sale and consumption of alcohol. However, once The Mizo National Front government came to power in 2019, it reimposed the liquor ban and also passed the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Bill 2019. Although the alcohol is normally consumed by the Mizos on special occasions and its consumption occasionally is not censured, yet the exposure of youth to alcohol even on special occasions have far reaching consequences permeating to their personal, social, emotional and academic arena.

At a time, when the college students need to focus more on harnessing and fostering their skills related to the different aspects of life to lead a happy and healthy life, they give themselves to alcohol. Overuse of alcohol is not only harmful to students as an individual but also to the society in general. Therefore, it is very important to study factors that influence the students towards alcohol and the varying impacts alcohol consumption has on college students. By studying the causes and effects, the college authority and the teachers can help in sensitising the students and give them proper guidance at right time.

Objectives

The following are the main objectives of the present study:-

1. To examine the alcohol drinking behaviour among college students.
2. To analyse the factors behind alcohol consumption among college students.
3. To find out the effect of alcohol consumption on college students.

Method and Procedure

The study uses the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises college students who are enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts programme in the Government colleges situated in Mizoram. For the purpose of this study, students of government colleges in Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram state were taken as a sample of the study. Using the cluster sampling technique, 60 students who were enrolled in I, III and V semesters of Bachelor of Arts programme in one of the Government colleges in Aizawl were selected as the sample of the study.

Tool of data collection

A self developed questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire has three sections- the first section surveys the demographic profile of the students. Besides, the section also has questions related to their drinking habits and patterns. The second section of the questionnaire has questions related to the factors that propelled them to alcohol. This section has ten questions with yes and no option. Besides, the section also has one free response type question to list them the factors that led them to alcohol. The third section is related to the consequences of alcohol on students. This section also has ten questions with two options of agree and disagree. The section also has one free response question for the students to state any other impact or consequences they had to face due to the misuse of alcohol.

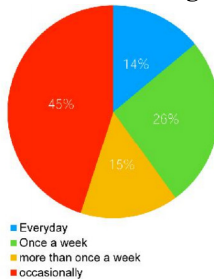
Analysis and interpretation of data

The data have been analysed in percentage and presented in tables and through charts. The number of students who participated in the study is 60. Out of sixty students, 11 were girls and 49 were boys. Further, out of 60 students who participated in the study, 21 were enrolled in 1st semester, 18 were enrolled in 3rd semester and 21 were enrolled in the 5th semester of Bachelor of Arts programme.

Alcohol drinking behaviour among college students

In the present study, data were collected from students from one of the government colleges. It was found that all the students had tasted alcohol. Most of the students had taken alcohol as early as in their high school itself. Out of the total students who consumed alcohol, 87 per cent were male and 13 per cent were female.

Fig. 1
Students' alcohol drinking behaviour



All the respondents had the experience of drinking alcohol. With regard to frequency, data shows that 45 per cent of the respondents drank on certain occasions, 26 per cent once a week, 15 per cent of them consumed it more than once a week and 14 per cent of the students drank every day.

Factors behind alcohol consumption among college students

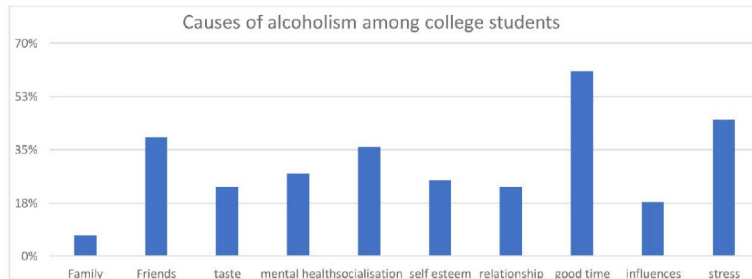


Fig.2

From the above chart, it can be observed that the biggest factor which leads the students to alcohol is their desire to have good times with others. 61 per cent of the respondents said that they started drinking because they wanted to have great time.

The next biggest reason why the students started drinking was to cope with stress as this was reported by 45 per cent of the respondents.

The third reason for the students to start drinking was because their friends drink alcohol. 39 per cent of the respondents said that they started drinking because of their friends.

The fourth biggest reason why the students started drinking was to enhance sociability as 36 per cent of the respondents said that they started drinking to enhance sociability.

Mental health issue was the fifth reason why the students started drinking as revealed by the responses of 27 per cent of the respondents.

The sixth reason why the students started drinking was low-self esteem. This was reported by 25 per cent of the respondents.

Relationship problem was the next reason why the students started drinking and this was reported by 23 per cent of the respondents.

The eight reason why the students started drinking was social influences and 18 per cent of the respondents said that they started drinking because of social influences.

The last factor why the students started drinking alcohol was parents/family influence. However, only 7 per cent of the students mentioned this as the reason why they started drinking alcohol.

The most common factor to start alcohol consumption included peer pressure and social activities. The students consume alcohol for pleasure and parent’s drinking habits influenced only a small section of the students to start alcohol consumption at early age.

Impact of alcohol drinking behaviour among college students

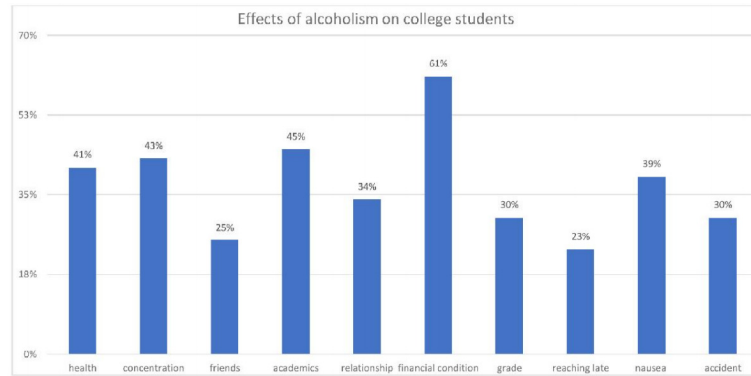


Fig.3

As it can be observed from the chart displayed above, the responses of 60 students showed the impact of alcohol on their lives.

The most affected aspect of students life was their financial condition. 61 per cent of the respondents said that spending money on alcohol had affected their financial condition.

The second most affected area due to alcoholism was academic achievement as 45 per cent of the respondents said so.

The third most affected area due to alcohol consumption was their study concentration. 43 per cent of the respondents said that it had affected their concentration on the study.

The fourth affected area of alcohol consumption was their physical health and mental health as 41% of the respondents reported so.

The fifth major effect that emerged due to alcohol consumption was that they got nauseated and vomited. 39 per cent of the students said so.

The sixth area which was impacted due to alcohol consumption was their relationship- 34 per cent of the students said that it affected their relationship with their boyfriend/girlfriend. Their alcohol drinking behaviour had turned their relationship sour with their love interest.

The seventh affected area was that the students' got a lower grade- 30 per cent of the students said that due to alcohol consumption, they got lower grades.

The eighth affected area was that under alcohol influence they met with accident- 30 per cent of respondents students met with accident due to heavy alcohol consumption.

The second last effect the alcohol consumption caused was that their friends became distant to them- This was reported by 25 per cent of the respondent students.

The last effect the alcohol consumption caused was that they reached late for the classes- 23 per cent of the respondents stated that they reached late for the classes due to alcohol consumption.

So, the analysis reveals that alcohol has far reaching negative effects on students' lives- physically, mentally, socially and academically. Many students are trapped into the consumption of alcohol which spoil their lives and affect their careers.

Discussion and conclusion

The prevalence of alcohol consumption among college students in Aizawl city is very high. Irrespective of their gender, college students are attracted to consume alcohol. Although majority of the students take alcohol occasionally, there are good percentage of students who take it daily or more than twice a week.

So far the factors that lead the students towards alcohol are concerned, it is their desire to have good time with their friends or others is the leading factor. Besides, they also start drinking to deal with their stress. Socialization and peer pressure are the other major factors that push the students towards alcohol. The alcohol consumption by the parents or relatives was the least influencing factor on students' inclination towards alcohol.

As far as the consequences of alcohol misuse is concerned, the most common impact of alcohol on students was their financial condition. The next affected area of their life is their academics only. Most of the students stated that due to alcohol, their concentration in studies is affected. They are lagging behind in their studies and getting lower grades. Moreover, their health- both physical and mental health was also compromised due to alcohol. Besides, due to heavy alcohol consumption, some of them have met with accidents which have caused injuries to them as well as to others. Many students are trapped into the consumption of alcohol which spoil their life and affect their careers. The negative consequences that result from excessive drinking range from minor morbidity to mortality.

The findings of the study suggest that that the students who enter the colleges want to explore new world with their friends which is normally not possible in the constrained and

disciplined environment of school life. The new found independence and expanding social circle primarily lead them to experiment with new food and beverages and alcohol is one among the experiments that students do when they reach colleges. It also suggests that the other family members' alcoholism is not a major factor behind their attraction to alcohol. It is their own desire to taste alcohol and have new social circle which push them to alcohol. The findings of the study also suggest that the college students' experiment with alcohol and their addiction to alcohol cost them dearly as they not only suffer from financial issues but also start lagging behind in their studies. They are affected to have many problems like academic problems, personal life, social life and mental health problem.

Initially students may not notice the negative effects of alcohol in their life, later they may come in so much grip of alcoholism that it starts affecting their lives- personal, social as well as academic. Hence, it is required that as soon as the students take admission into the undergraduate programme, some sensitization programmes and workshops are conducted. Besides, in the beginning of each academic year also such programmes should be run, so that the students are aware of the impacts of their choices made in regard to their alcohol consumption and behaviour. This way, the drop out rates, low academic achievement can be countered and good physical and mental health of the students can be ensured. Teachers should equally be sensitized about the trend of alcohol among the college students, so, they can give proper guidance to the students. Family guidance and awareness programme is also very much required.

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