

# Impact of Alcohol Use Disorders on Partners of the Addicts - A Reflection from Kerala, India

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**Abstract** - The main aim of this work was to assess link between alcoholism and intimate partner violence in Kerala, India. The intensity of the relation was verified by comparing the abuses of alcohol addicts against their partners and against their other close relatives like parents and children. Similarly, the prevalence of the problem family break ups, suicidal tendency and suicidal attempts among alcoholics also verified in the study. A cross-sectional study was conducted in which 210 alcoholic respondents were selected from different parts of the state. In this study, we observed a direct relation of alcoholism and partner abuse. The mean score of partner abuse reveals that partners had to suffer more physical and mental abuse from the alcoholics than parents and children. Besides, the study also revealed a strong association between family breakups and heavy drinking of the alcoholics. Apart from this, the study shows higher tendency as well as higher attempt to commit suicide among the partners of alcoholics. Thus, alcoholism has led to a negative impact on the partners of alcoholics.

**Key words** - Alcoholism, Close relatives, Domestic abuse, Emotional abuse, Physical abuse.

## Introduction

Alcoholism had manifold negative impacts at individual, family and societal level. Hence, it is considered as a social evil. Clinically, alcoholism known as alcohol use disorder (AUD). It is a pattern of alcohol consumption that leads to substantive sufferings and trauma to the drinker. An AUD drinker, even if well informed with the negative consequences of alcohol consumption on his life, could not stay away from consumption of alcohol (USNLM 2021). AUD is characterized by cravings, or strong urges to drink, a loss of control over your alcohol use, and negative emotions when you're not drinking (USNLM 2021). All excessive drinkers necessarily do not have an AUD, but over time binge drinking increase the risk of AUD. Diagnostic criteria of AUD is chronic heavy alcohol use which ultimately lead to alcohol dependence. Under alcohol dependence, body of the drinker adapted to the substance. Such a person requires the substance for his normal functioning. When the dependent drinker keeps away from consumption, he will experience withdrawal symptom and the problem will be resolved only after consuming enough dose of alcohol (MedlinePlus 2019). This can fuel a cycle of alcohol misuse which may in turn lead to an AUD (USNLM 2021, CDCP 2021).

Alcohol addiction has manifold effects on the family of addicts and his/ her own close relatives. Emotional and physical abuse on intimate partners or on other family members are a usual phenomenon. Intimate partner violence (IPV) or domestic violence, has emerged as one of the most common forms of gender-based violence around the world (Abramsky et al., 2011). Intimate partner violence refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in that relationship. It includes acts of physical aggression like slapping, hitting, kicking or beating, psychological abuse like intimidation, constant belittling or humiliation, forced sexual intercourse or any other controlling behaviour such as isolating a person from family and friends, monitoring their movements and restricting access to information or assistance (Krug et al., 2002, Zilberman& Blume 2005). Intimate partner violence (IPV) affects 30% of women worldwide, constituting a major global public health and human rights issue (WHO, 2013)

Hazardous alcohol consumption is a major catalyst in the happening of domestic violence. There are number of studies that supports strong link between alcohol consumption and possibility of intimate partner violence. Studies shows that there is a strong positive correlation between alcohol consumption and the occurrence and severity of intimate partner violence (Leonard and Quigley, 1999, Brecklin LR ,2002, Testa et al, 2003). Studies have shown that intimate partner violence, or domestic violence, commonly co-occurs with substance use disorders (SUDs) like alcoholism (WHO 2006). There is dispute with regard to the direct effects of alcohol consumption on intimate partner violence. Such studies were also admitted indirect effects of alcohol as an additional compensatory factor for domestic violence (MAHR,2003, Leonard KE, 2005). At the same time, there is number of disputes about the influence of alcohol consumption on intimate partner violence. Studies pessimistic that alcohol alone initiate domestic violence. There are certain

studies which argues that alcohol consumption as an excuse for violent behaviour (Field et al, 2004). However, number of works exemplified that binge drinking is strongly associated with severe intimate partner violence among men with antisocial personality disorder (Fals-Stewart et al., 2005).

Researchers shown that larger proportion of people who trigger violence against partners also abuse substances. Earlier research works in the field coherently reproduced a strong direct relationship between alcohol consumption and domestic violence. The positive relationship established in the general population (Caetano et al., 2005), clinical populations (Fals-Stewart et al., 2005), and among college students (Nicholson et al., 1998; Shook et al., 2000; Williams and Smith, 1994). Peoples with alcohol use disorders were more probability to commit aggressive behaviour against their intimate partners (Cogan and Ballinger, 2006). Domestic aggressors are five times more likely to consume alcohol than non-aggressors (Luthra and Gidycz, 2006; Riggs and O'Leary, 1989, 1996). Similarly, male-to-female assault was 11 times more possibility to happen on days when intruders were drinking alcohol. Sixty percent of these abusive incidents happened within 2 hours of the aggressors' consumption of alcohol (Fals-Stewart et al., 2005). Besides, among the perpetrators, alcohol consuming perpetrators were more dangerous than sober perpetrators. The formers caused to significant physical injury to their partners than the latter (Thompson and Kingree, 2006). Many well documented studies across multiple disciplines have constantly established relation between alcohol use and assault in general, and alcohol use and partner violence in particular (Foran & O'Leary, 2008; Klostermann & Fals-Stewart, 2006; Peralta et al., 2010). One of the studies found that the partners who were *sometimes* or *often* drunk had significantly higher odds of experiencing physical, emotional, and sexual violence. The study also showed that all types of violence against wife associated with an increase in the perceived frequency of husband's drunkenness (Parekh A, et al 2022).

Majority of the studies that discussed relationship between domestic violence and alcohol consumption employed secondary information. Moreover, almost all the studies concerned with the nature, severity and frequency of atrocities to the partners among alcohol consumers. Unlike those studies, the present work employs primary data collected from retrieved alcoholics. Besides, this study compares various type of violence of alcoholics against their partners and also against their close relatives. That is, the present study compares interpersonal violence of alcoholics against their intimate partners and other close relatives. Similarly, most other studies discussed how much alcoholics were there among the domestic perpetrators. But in the present study we deal with reverse order. That is, among the alcoholics how many persons had the problem of domestic violence. Objective of the present paper is to assess the type of domestic violence among the alcoholics. The paper also compares emotional and physical violence of alcoholics against their intimate partners and against their close relatives like parents and children.

## Methods

This study is conducted in one of the southern states of India, Kerala. A cross-sectional study of various Alcoholics Anonymous (hereafter A.A.) groups was conducted using structured questionnaires during the latter half of 2018 and the former half of 2019. The study used only primary information from members of different A.A groups all over Kerala for analyzing the issue. Hence 2600 members of A. A from 236 groups is considered as the population of the study. To find out the required number of respondents, a multi-stage sampling technique has been employed in this paper. In the first stage, Kerala is selected for the study since the per-capita alcohol consumption of the state is very high. In the second stage, the state is further divided into three geographical regions viz, south, central and north Kerala by geographic location and distinct living conditions. In the third stage, some A.A groups were identified from the respective regions through snowball sampling. In the final step, alcohol addicts, that is, the sampling units, were identified through simple random sampling from each of these groups. The number of alcoholics selected from a particular group was decided based on the total number of members in a group so that more addicts were selected from larger groups and less addicts from smaller groups. A total of 210 addicts were selected for the study with a criterion of a minimum of 70 alcoholics from a particular region to ensure proper representation of each region (Hyderali, 2019). The collected information was analyzed using quantitative techniques like frequency, crosstab, Wilcoxon test, paired sample t-test, etc.

The assessment and measurement of different kinds of abuses by the alcoholics is conducted on the basis of response of the alcoholics. Wilcoxon test, alternative to paired sample t-test, is used to compare the severity of the abuses against different categories. The response on abuse is measured on a five-point scale starting from "never" to "always". A score has provided in such a way that 1 for "never", 2 for "rare" and so on. Maximum score is 5, which is assigned to "always". A mean score of above 2.5 indicates more abuse from the alcoholics to that category and vice versa

## Results

### Emotional Abuse on Close Relatives by the Alcoholics

Here, we analyse the difference in emotional abuse on close relatives by the alcoholics. The abuse is measured on the basis of the response of alcoholics. Summary statistics of emotional abuse of alcoholics on their close relatives is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary Statistics of Emotional Abuse on Close relatives by Alcoholics

Sl. No.	Relation With Alcoholic	No. of Respondents	Mean	Median	St. Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
1	Spouse	210	4.06	5	1.59	-0.143	-1.303
2	Parents	210	2.27	1	1.76	-1.325	0.754
3	Children	210	2.16	1	1.74	-1.098	0.902

Source: Primary Survey

The table compared the emotional abuse of the alcoholics on their close relatives. On average, the emotional abuse of alcoholics was more on partners (Mean = 4.06) than their parents (Mean = 2.27) or children (Mean = 2.16). Wilcoxon test has been used to test whether there is any significant difference between emotional abuse of alcoholics against partners, parents and their children. The test result indicates that there was a significantly higher emotional abuse against partner than against parents,  $W = 1289.50$ ,  $z = -8.285$ ,  $p < .001$ . The median score for emotional abuse against partners was estimated as 5 is greater than the estimated median value 1 for emotional abuse against parents. This implies that more than half of the partners *always* suffer emotional abuse, while more than half of the parents *never* had the emotional abuse. In short, comparing with the emotional abuse faced by the parents, the abuse against intimate partners was very high. Similarly, the test result also indicates that there was a significantly higher emotional abuse against partners than against children,  $W = 93$ ,  $z = -9.686$ ,  $p < .001$ . The median score for emotional abuse against partners was estimated as 5 is greater than the estimated median value 1 for emotional abuse against children. This implies that more than half of the partners *always* suffer emotional abuse, while more than half of the children *never* had the emotional abuse. In short, comparing with the emotional abuse faced by the children, the abuse against intimate partners was very high.

#### Physical Abuse on Close Relatives by the Alcoholics

Here, we discuss the difference in physical abuse on close relatives by the alcoholics. The abuse is measured on the basis of the response of alcoholics. Summary statistics of physical abuse of alcoholics on their close relatives is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Summary Statistics of Physical Abuse on Close relatives by Alcoholics

Sl. No.	Relation With Alcoholic	No. of Respondents	Mean	Median	St. Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
1	Spouse	210	3.08	4	1.88	-1.90	-0.12
2	Parents	210	1.46	1	1.17	4.35	2.43
3	Children	210	1.64	1	1.37	1.55	1.82

Source: Primary Survey

The table shows the physical abuse of the alcoholics on their close relatives. On average, the physical abuse of alcoholics was more on partners (Mean = 3.08) than their parents (Mean = 1.46) or children (Mean = 1.64). Wilcoxon test has been used to test whether there is any significant difference between physical abuse of alcoholics against partners, parents and their children. The test result indicates that there was a significantly higher physical abuse against partner than against parents,  $W = 496.50$ ,  $z = -8.375$ ,  $p < .001$ . The median score for physical abuse against partners was estimated as 4 is greater than the estimated median value 1 for physical abuse against parents. This implies that more than half of the partners *usually* suffer physical abuse, while more than half of the parents *never* had the physical abuse. In other words, comparing with the physical abuse faced by the parents, the abuse against intimate partners was very high. Similarly, the test result also indicates that there was a significantly higher physical abuse against partners than against children,  $W = 0.00$ ,  $z = -8.644$ ,  $p < .001$ . The median score for physical abuse against partners was estimated as 4 is greater than the estimated median value 1 for physical abuse against children. This implies that more than half of the partners *usually* suffer physical abuse, while more than half of the parents *never* had the physical abuse. In other words, comparing with the physical abuse faced by the parents, the abuse against intimate partners was very high.

## Family Breakups

The incessant abuse from the part of the alcoholics may led to the frequent breakups with their partners. The frequency of occurrence of family breakups of alcoholics and the association between breakups and drinking as a reason for breakups is presented in Table 3

Table 3 Family Breakup and Drinking as a Reason for Breakup

Family Breakup		Drinking as a Reason for Breakup		Total
		Yes	No	
Never	Count	0	79	79
	%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Sometimes	Count	84	1	85
	%	98.8%	1.2%	100.0%
Always	Count	46	0	46
	%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	130	80	210
	%	61.9%	38.1%	100.0%

Source: Primary Survey

The table shows that more than 62 percent of the family of alcoholics were troubled with breakups. Out of these families, nearly 22 percent of the families *always* suffered the problem. Now, it is important to verify that whether the family breakups were due to the drinking habit or not. The table also shows that the reason for breakups in almost all families were the drinking habits of alcoholic. Chi-square test has been performed to examine whether there was any significant association between family breakups and drinking as a reason for family breakups. The test results indicate that there was a statistically significant association between family breakups and drinking as a reason for family breakups,  $\chi^2(2) = 205.81, p < .001$ . moreover, the degree of association between family breakups and drinking as a reason was very strong, Cramer's  $v = .99, p < .001$ . thus, from the results it can be inferred that family breakups were a usual condition among the families of alcoholics and the sole reason for the breakups was the drinking habit of the alcoholics.

## Suicidal Tendency and Attempt

As a result of persistent abuse and family breakups, there may be possibility for suicidal tendency and suicidal attempt among the partners of alcoholics. The suicidal tendency and attempt among the spouses of alcoholics are verified and presented in Table 4 and Table 5 respectively.

Table 4 Suicidal Tendency Among the Partners of Alcoholics

Sl. No.	Suicidal Tendency	No. of Spouses	Percentage
1	Never	71	33.8
2	Rare	16	7.6
3	Moderate	48	22.9
4	Usual	24	11.4
5	Always	51	24.3
Total		210	100.0

Source: Primary Survey

Table 5 Suicidal Attempt by the Partners of Alcoholics

Sl. No.	Suicidal Attempts	No. of Spouses	Percentage
1	Not at all attempted	127	60.5
2	1 to 2 Attempts	79	37.6
3	More than 2 attempts	4	1.9
Total		210	100.0

Source: Primary Survey

The table 4 shows that around two-third of the spouses of alcoholics had the tendency for committing suicide. More than one-third of them usually or always had the tendency to commit suicide. The table 5 shows that nearly 40 percent of the partners of alcoholics actually attempted to commit suicide. The terrible situation is that majority of them attempted more than once. Thus, the tables show that majority of the partners of alcoholics either had a tendency to commit suicide or did an attempt to commit suicide.

A three-variable regression model has been estimated, using OLS method, to find out the influence of emotional abuse against partners and physical abuse against partners on suicidal tendency of the partners. The response on abuse and suicidal tendency is measured on a five-point scale starting from “never” to “always”. A score has provided in such a way that 1 for “never”, 2 for “rare” and so on. Maximum score is 5, which is assigned to “always”. The model takes the form

$$\hat{Y} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2$$

Where, Y = Suicidal tendency of partners of alcoholics,  $X_1$  = Emotional abuses on partners of alcoholics and  $X_2$  = Physical abuses on partners of alcoholics.

The estimated regression model and the  $R^2$  was statistically significant,  $F(2, 207) = 13.636$ ,  $p < .001$ , and explained approximately 11.6 % of the variance in suicidal tendency ( $R^2 = .116$ ). The resulting regression equation is:

$$\hat{Y} = 1.545 + 0.22 X_1 + 0.134 X_2$$

Where, 1.545 is the intercept ( $p < .001$ ), 0.22 is the coefficient of emotional abuse against partners ( $p = .007$ ) and 0.134 is the coefficient of physical abuse against partners ( $p = .05$ ). The results suggest that suicidal tendency of the partners of alcoholics are positively related to emotional and physical abuses on them. That is, as the emotional and physical abuses increases, the suicidal tendency among the spouses of alcoholics also increases. The model adequacy tests revealed that the estimated model was free from the violations of the major OLS assumptions (VIF = 1.556, White’s test,  $\chi^2(5) = 2.781$ ,  $p = 0.734$  and RESET test,  $F(2, 205) = 1.869$ ,  $p = 0.157$ ).

Similar way, a three-variable regression model also has been estimated to find out the influence of emotional abuse against partners and physical abuse against partners on suicidal attempt of the partners. The estimated regression model and the  $R^2$  was statistically significant,  $F(2, 207) = 9.328$ ,  $p < .001$ , and explained approximately 8.27 % of the variance in suicidal attempt ( $R^2 = .0827$ ). The resulting regression equation is:

$$\hat{Y} = 0.032 + 0.056 X_1 + 0.065 X_2$$

Where, 0.032 is the intercept ( $p = .672$ ), 0.056 is the coefficient of emotional abuse against partners ( $X_1$ ), ( $p = .017$ ) and 0.065 is the coefficient of physical abuse against partners ( $X_2$ ), ( $p = .018$ ). The results suggest that suicidal attempt ( $\hat{Y}$ ) of the partners of alcoholics are positively related to emotional and physical abuses on them. That is, as the emotional and physical abuses increases, the suicidal attempt among the spouses of alcoholics also increases. The model adequacy tests revealed that the estimated model was free from the violations of the major OLS assumptions (VIF = 1.556, White’s test,  $\chi^2(5) = 10.124$ ,  $p = 0.072$  and RESET test,  $F(2, 205) = 0.611$ ,  $p = .544$ ).

## Discussion

The paper used to conduct a discussion on impacts of alcohol use disorders on close relatives of the addicts on the basis of emotional and physical abuses on close relatives of the alcoholics, family break ups, and suicidal tendency and attempts of spouses of alcoholics. The paper is in conformity with the findings of Parekh et al., (2022), K.M. Devries et al. (2011), and M. Ellsberg et al. (2008) with respect to the physical and mental violence against intimate partners of alcoholics. The analysis reveals that both physical and emotional abuses on the spouses of alcoholics were severe and heavier than on other close relatives. Both physical and emotional abuse against partners of alcoholics was twice higher than that of parents or children of alcoholics. Similarly, verification of family break ups of alcoholics is similar to the findings of Leonard & Eiden (2007) and Marshal (2003). Two-thirds of the alcoholics faced with the problem of family break-ups, of which majority of the families were broken due to the severe drinking habit of the alcoholics. The assessment of the suicidal tendency and attempts among the spouses of alcoholics has strong similarity to the findings of Pompili, M et al. (2010), Flensburg et al., (2009), and Conner & Duberstein (2004) upon the link between alcohol and suicide. The analysis indicates that more

than two-thirds of the spouse of addicts had a tendency to commit suicide. The awkward part of the result is that more than one-third of the spouses of addicts were actually attempted to commit suicide. The overall response of the work is that alcoholism is a significant catalyst for physical and emotional violence, family detachment and also will lead to suicidal tendency and attempts of spouses of alcoholics. Thus, the study is consistent with many other studies on domestic violence (Abramsky et al., 2011; Devries et al., 2010; M. Ellsberg et al. (2008); Parekh et al., (2022).

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