

Original Research Paper

Alcohol in Teenagers of Amritsar District: A KAP Study

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Abstract

Today alcohol is widely available and aggressively promoted throughout society. And alcohol use continues to be regarded as normal part of growing up. Yet underage drinking is dangerous not only for the drinkers but also for society as evident by the number of alcohol involved motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicides and other injuries. As children move from adolescence to young adulthood, they encounter dramatic physical, emotional and lifestyle changes. They are at the threshold of adolescence and ready to step into adult role. They follow their peers and mimic their parents ultimately forming their own opinions. Experimentation with new things and ideas is the new mantra for living their lives. For some teens thrill seeking might include experimenting with alcohol. An adolescent who expects drinking to be a pleasurable experience is more likely to drink than one who does not. In the present study we have tried to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding alcohol in the students belonging to age group 17- 20years.

Key Words: Adolescent, Underage, Drinking, Knowledge, Opinion

Introduction:

Adolescence is an age of visuals and impressions. They are at the threshold of being called adults legally and at the same time are being treated as immature kids. Confusion leads to chaos which is the scenario these young adolescents have to handle.

They see their parents and their peers ultimately forming impressions that if it is right for them it is good for them too. Adolescence is marked by considerable existential conflicts as well as exposure and vulnerability to substance abuse. The legal age for drinking in India varies from 21 to 25 years but the recent studies have been proving that wrong.

Alcohol is a group of chemicals which are found in wide variety of products such as mouth washes, deodorants, body cleansers and beer, wine and spirits. There are four groups of alcohols namely:

1. Grain alcohol
2. Aromatic alcohol
3. Denatured alcohol
4. Fatty alcohol

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Grain alcohol also known as ethanol is made from fermentation of sugars and starches and is the type found in beer, wine and spirits.

Rest three types are used in health products or cosmetics. Alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence are not only adult problems but they also affect a significant number of adolescents and young adults between the ages of 12 and 20 even though drinking under the age of 21 is illegal. Majority of the people who consume alcohol view it as a means of unwinding after a long hard day at work or as a social drink. It is a common thought that alcohol helps us to relax.

It gives us confidence in unfamiliar situations and enables us to interact with others or is a means of celebrating an occasion. Even in small amounts, alcohol use has a number of consequences, such as risky sexual behaviour, increased suicide rate, violence, juvenile delinquency, familial conflicts, conflicts with friends, a greater risk of accidents and illicit drug use and is therefore considered a serious public health problem. [1-6]

Alcohol is the only psychotropic drug accepted and even encouraged by society, which allows early contact (even prior to 11 years of age) and increases the risk of future dependence. [7-9]

Materials and Methods:

A pretested proforma to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding alcohol in the young adults of Amritsar region was administered to 300 students who were freshly enrolled into courses in Sri Guru Ram

Dass Institute of Medical Sciences & Research, Engineering College running under the aegis of Global Institute & DAV College Amritsar. The students were informed about the purpose of study & their consent was taken after assuring them full confidentiality.

Aim and Objectives:

1. To study the knowledge and attitude regarding safe limits and practices about alcohol consumption in adolescents in the age group 17-20 years.

Observations and Discussion:

In the present study, 154(59.3%) students were males belonging to 17-19 years of age group while 106 (40.7%) students were females. Out of 40 students in the age group of 20-22 years, 19 (47.5%) were males and 21(52.5%) were females. (Table 1)

Out of the total 300 adolescents studied, 95 (31.6%) had consumed alcohol while 205 (68.3%) had not consumed alcohol. (Table 2)

In this study from the total of 95 who had consumed alcohol, 76.9% of adolescents had consumed alcohol on occasions such as weddings, farewell parties or birthday's etc. while 23.1% consumed it twice a week regularly. (Table 3) Our study showed that in the majority of cases, 53 (55.7%) said they were initiated into drinking by friends followed by cousins 17 (17.8%) while 16.8% of the teenagers studied had started on their own and 4% had been initiated by their fathers. (Table 4)

In this study 91.3% of the adolescents did not know about the quantity permissible for drinking while only 2% had the knowledge and 6.7% gave incorrect answer. (Table 5)

To assess the knowledge and attitude regarding alcohol, students were asked their opinion regarding whether they considered alcohol to be addictive, whether it is beneficial for health and whether it is acceptable if females consume alcohol.

About 53.6% of the teenagers were of the view that alcohol is addictive. 76.6% of the students were of the opinion that consuming alcohol is not good for health while 23.4% actually considered it healthy. 85% of the teenagers considered it a wrong practice for the girls to consume alcohol while only 15% of them considered it acceptable.

In Portugal, approximately 50% of adolescents report having experimented with alcohol. Studies carried out in Brazil report prevalence values of alcohol experimentation ranging from 48.3 to 71.4% in adolescence, as well as a 27.3% frequency of regular use, 22.1% frequency of drunkenness at some time in life

and 8.9% frequency of heavy use. [10] In the United States, it is estimated that 4.6% of adolescents between 12 and 17 years of age have a dependence on alcohol. [11]

In a study done by social development foundation of the Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry in India, 45% of intermediate students in metropolitan cities consumed alcohol excessively at least 5-6 times a month. The study surveyed over 2000 teenagers revealed that liquor consumption was most prevalent in Delhi & Mumbai followed by Chandigarh and Hyderabad.

The surveyed adolescents said that they took to drinking out of peer pressure. Others said they resorted to alcohol as they felt it distracted them from day to day problems.

Over 32% admitted to drinking when they were upset and 18% said they drank when alone. About 15% said they drank when they were bored while 45% consumed alcohol to get high. About 70% teens consumed alcohol at birthday parties, farewells and other such occasions. [12]

Conclusion:

From the above observations it is established that though there has been an exponential increase in the students or teenagers who start consuming alcohol at a tender age they are very much lagging behind in their knowledge about alcohol, its safe limits and attitude. Peer pressure and family environment certainly plays a very important role in determining the inclination, initiation and practices towards alcohol consumption.

These days road rage, zero tolerance towards each other and modern stresses have turned the youth towards habit forming drugs and drinks. This has further led to increase in drunken driving accidents. Rave parties where drugs and booze are served freely with no regard to the age of the consumer are now a commonly heard and read feature.

Lack of parental support, monitoring and communication has been significantly related to frequency of drinking. Parent's drinking behaviour and favourable attitudes about drinking have been positively associated with adolescents initiating and continuing drinking.

Children who were warned about alcohol by their parents and children who reported being closer to their parents were less likely to start drinking. Harsh inconsistent discipline and hostility or rejection towards children has also been found to significantly predict adolescent drinking.

Peer drinking and peer acceptance of drinking has also been associated. Alcohol consumption among teenagers in the age group of 15-19 years has increased due to absent parents, easy money and rising stress and depression. Support from one's family, school and society is essential to combating early alcohol use and its consequences.

There is need for educational and preventive programmes at individual, social and family level to tackle the growing menace of alcohol and substance abuse if we want to save our coming generations.

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Table 1: Distribution of Students According To Age and Sex

Age group (years)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
17-19	154 (59.3)	106 (40.7)	260(86.6)
20-22	19 (47.5)	21 (52.5)	40 (13.4)
Total	173 (58.7)	127 (42.3)	300 (100)

Table 2: According to Percentage of Students who have Consumed Alcohol

S. N.		Students	Percentage
1	Consumed alcohol	95	31.6%
2	Not Consumed Alcohol	205	68.33%
3	Total	300	100%

Table 3: According to Frequency of Consumption

S. N.	Frequency	Students	Percentage
1	On occasions	73	76.8%
2	Twice a week	22	23.1%
3	Total	95	100%

Table 4: According to Initiator of Alcohol to Them

S. N.	Initiator	Case	Percentage
1.	Cousins	17	17.8%
2.	Friends	53	55.7%
3.	Father	04	4%
4	Self	16	16.8%

Table 5: According to Knowledge Regarding Legal Permissible Limit of Alcohol

Knowledge Regarding Legal Permissible Limit	Students (%)
Know correctly	6(2.0)
Incorrect knowledge	20(6.6)
Do not know	274(91.3)
Total	300(100)

Table 6: According to Opinion about Alcohol Consumption

S. N.	Opinion about Alcohol Consumption	Students (%)
1	Addictive	161(53.6)
2	Good for health	70(23.3)
3	Acceptable for girls to drink	45(15)