



## ALCOHOLISM AMONG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS OF TADONG IN EAST SIKKIM

**Ankur Barua**

*Department of Community Medicine, International Medical University, Malaysia<sup>1</sup>*

**Shuva Dasgupta**

*College of Nursing, Sikkim-Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences (SMIMS), Sikkim, India*

**Bani Mitra**

*College of Nursing, Sikkim-Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences (SMIMS), Sikkim, India*

**Passang Chiki Sherpa**

*College of Nursing, Sikkim-Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences (SMIMS), Sikkim, India*

**Milan Tirwa**

*College of Nursing, Sikkim-Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences (SMIMS), Sikkim, India*

**Kumaraswamy Kademane**

*International Medical University (IMU), Malaysia*

**Kumar Shiva Gubbiyappa**

*International Medical University (IMU), Malaysia*

**Rohit Kumar Verma**

*International Medical University (IMU), Malaysia*

**Muhammad Shahid Iqbal**

*International Medical University (IMU), Malaysia*

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### ABSTRACT

*Background: Adolescents often indulge in alcohol consumption either on peer pressure or for enjoyment. A few studies were conducted on alcoholism among adolescent students in Indian settings.*

*Materials & Methods: A Cross- Sectional study was conducted during January-March 2005 for three months on 226 adolescent students in the age group of 15 to 18 years belonging to two senior secondary schools in Tadong area of East Sikkim. Simple Random Sampling Technique was applied after obtaining informed written consent for the selection of respondents. A pre-tested interview schedule was used to study the association between Knowledge, Attitude and Practice in relation with alcoholism. CAGE questionnaire was used to assess alcohol abuse. The collected data were tabulated and analysed by using the statistical package SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 10.0 for Windows. Findings were described in terms of proportions.*

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*Results & Conclusions: In this study, stress reduction, relaxing effect and mere pleasure were considered by the participants to be the major reasons for alcohol consumption. Though 66.4% of respondents were found to consume alcohol regularly, 33.3% of them wanted to give up the habit. Among the regular alcohol consumers who had developed alcohol abuse (68%), majority (65.3%) felt the need to cut down on drinking while 58.7% felt guilty about drinking.*

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**Keywords:** Alcohol, Abuse, Adolescent, Alcoholism, Questionnaire.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Alcohol is a worldwide social and medical problem. Over the past four decades alcohol consumption has increased in quantity and frequency. The age at which people initiate consuming alcohol has also declined (Park, 2002). Unipolar major depression, alcohol abuse, bipolar affective disorder (manic-depression), schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder are among the 10 leading causes of disability worldwide since 1990. (World Health report: Mental Health, 2001) In a study conducted by Hämäläinen *et al.* (1996-2001) [Finland] it was found that alcohol consumption was an important risk factor for major depressive episode. Adolescents often indulge in alcohol consumption either on peer pressure or for enjoyment (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1994; Dorsey *et al.*, 2006). Alcohol use during late childhood and adolescence can lead to poor performances in academics, as well as social and emotional disturbances and often leads to high risk behaviour and impairment in psychosocial development (Demmie *et al.*, 1974; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1994; Dorsey *et al.*, 2006).

Alcohol consumption is a common practice in the population of East Sikkim in India. It is also socially accepted by some local communities during festive occasions. Though alcohol consumption is considered to be a social problem in India, but only a few studies were conducted on alcohol use among adolescent students in Indian settings. With this background, the present study was undertaken in East Sikkim for the first time to assess the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of adolescent school children regarding the effect of alcohol consumption on health and also to determine the proportion of alcohol abuse among the alcohol consumers.

## 2. MATERIALS & METHODS

A Cross- Sectional study was conducted during January-March 2005 for three months on 226 adolescent students in the age group of 15 to 18 years belonging to two senior secondary schools in Tadong area of East Sikkim. Due to feasibility constraints, only two senior secondary schools in Tadong area of East Sikkim, India were selected for this study. After obtaining informed written consent, Simple Random Sampling Technique was applied by lottery method using the random number table for selection of respondents according to their registration numbers. A pre-tested interview schedule was used to study the Knowledge Attitude and Practice of the participants with respect to alcohol consumption. The Cronbach's alpha score for this instrument was found to be 0.896. The CAGE questionnaire was used to assess alcohol abuse. This CAGE questionnaire had been extensively validated for use in detecting alcoholism. A study had reported CAGE test scores  $\geq 2$  had a sensitivity of 93% and a specificity of 76% for the identification of problem drinkers.<sup>6</sup> The most important question identified in the CAGE questionnaire is the use of a drink as an Eye

Opener. The use of an alcoholic drink as an Eye Opener denotes abuse as the patient is going through withdrawal in the morning. Hence, some clinicians often use "yes" to this question alone as a positive to the questionnaire. However, it is not valid for diagnosis of other substance use disorders.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.1. Statistical Analysis

The collected data were tabulated and analysed by using the statistical package SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 10.0 for Windows. Findings were described in terms of proportions.

## 2.2. Operational Definition of Alcohol Consumption

Regular – Consuming at least 1 drink/day for at least once a week.

Alcohol consumer in the past – Did not consume a drink in the last 1 year.

Occasional – Consuming at least 1 drink/day for less than 4 times a month.

Non-consumer of alcohol – Never consumed alcohol in life.

The definitions of alcohol consumption were adapted and modified from the criteria described by [Hämäläinen \*et al.\* \(1996-2001\)](#) [Finland].

## 2.3. Results

In this study, 57.5% of the respondents were males, while 42.5% were females. The findings revealed that 69.9% of adolescent student population had adequate knowledge regarding various alcoholic beverages. Stress reduction, relaxing effect & mere pleasure were considered to be the major reasons for alcohol consumption.

Poverty, marital disharmony, antisocial activities and sex crimes were considered as major social problems related to alcohol consumption. It was found that 85% of respondents were willing to encourage others to stop alcohol consumption. Though 66.4% of respondents had reported to consume alcohol regularly, 33.3% of them wanted to give up the habit. Among the regular consumers of alcohol, there were 70.3% males and 29.7% females. Among the regular alcohol consumers who had developed abuse (68%) on alcohol, 65.3% of them felt the need to cut down on drinking while 58.7% felt guilty about drinking. Here, 85.8% of respondents gave their personal opinion that alcohol consumption increases crime rate while 81.4% recommended that government should take strict measures to ban alcohol.

## 3. CONCLUSION

The individuals, who were found to have developed alcohol abuse, were confidentially referred to the psychiatrists for free consultation and evaluation at Central Referral Hospital (CRH) of East Sikkim. They were later detoxified in the de-addiction clinic of this hospital. This study could be replicated in various other schools in Sikkim to identify the adolescents who had developed alcoholism and motivate them to visit de-addiction clinics. Health education intervention on prevention of alcohol consumption could be incorporated to generate awareness and to bring about

a change in attitude in these adolescents (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1994; Dorsey *et al.*, 2006).

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