

Psycho-Social Perspective of Substance Abuse in India: Retrospect & Prospect

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Magnitude of the problem: Active efforts have been made in the recent past thoroughly to estimate the size of the Substance abuser's population Based on a household survey (Ray, 2004) with a sufficiently large sample 40,697, focusing males in the age range of 12 to 60 years, prevalence rate was reported for Alcohol, Cannabis & Opiates.

A comprehensive survey at national level (Ambekar et.al. 2019) covered all states and Union territories; included 4,73, 56 9 Ss in the age range of 10 to 75 years. Apart from household survey, respondent based data was also added as they were part of the studied sample group. Prevalence was reported on a wide range of substances i.e. Alcohol, Cannabis, Opioids, Inhalants, Stimulants & Sedatives.

Few other nationwide surveys innovatively reported the burden of Tobacco and Alcohol use in the general population, known as 'National Mental Health Survey of India': 2015-2016 (Murthy, 2017). A treatment gap was as per these surveys was noted to be 80% (Ambekar, et. al. 2019; Murthy, 2017) which is an issue of concern. Currently prevalence reported for Alcohol use 14.6% with noted dependence in 2.7%: Cannabis use 2.8%: harmful use and dependence of substances like Sedatives 1.13%; Inhalants 0.06% and Cocaine 0.12%.

In a recent review of these nationwide surveys (Parmar et.al., 2023) authors advocated that there is dearth of nationwide representative systematic research on the Epidemiology of Substance Abuse in India. Authors felt the need to generate data based on nationwide epidemiological data involving specific population groups i.e. women, adolescents, the elderly and under-represented vulnerable groups. In their review authors also indicated the need for up scaling of prevention programmes & available treatment facilities along with capacity building initiatives to minimize burden of disease arising out of substance use and its related complications.

Retrospect: Substance abuse is known to be a Bio psychosocial problem which emphasises management of this problem with the help of a multidisciplinary team including family, community and state. In the Golden Jubilee year of IJCP, retrospectively taking into account the contributions of Clinical Psychologists as Mental Health Professionals in this area has a relevance. So that priority areas of service delivery with more effective awareness generation programmes for the families and community with a focus on rehabilitation are promoted in our future work.

Intention of the author is to take into account the contribution of Clinical Psychologists in the last 5 decades; conveyed as Psycho-social Perspective in the current context. Which includes Evidence based Diagnostic/ Psychosocial assessment, Therapeutic Approaches (Supportive, Behavioural, Psych educative and Counselling to assist clients and their families); Relapse Prevention, training and updating skills of Clinical Psychologists to work in this area, an exploration of protective factors and personality characteristics of substance users.

An account of published work in IJCP by Verma (1984), after a decade of publication of IJCP, Nathawat (1998), in the Silver Jubilee Year Issue and Nathawat (2001), in a special issue on: research paper published (abstracts) from 1974 to 2000, portray the work done by Clinical Psychologists in this area. Few researches published in other journals by CPs are also included here. In 25 years from 1974 to 1998; total 32 contributions on drug addiction (out of 750) were published (Nathawat, 1998).

In the early years of the beginning of IJCP focus of a large number of studies published was on Psych diagnostics/Psychological Tests and Psychometry. Efforts were made during this period (70s & 80s) to study personality profiles of substance users administering MMPI (Sinha & Sharma, 1999); Rorschach (Arora, 1982) with exploration of frustration patterns and personality characteristics (Rajmohan, 1982; Singh & Chopra, 1979) applying other measures. Study sample included Smokers (including chain smokers), Alcoholics, Cannabis, Opiate & Narcotic drug users. These Psychological Assessment based studies used small samples and a control group of normal matched on relevant variables like age, sex, education and locale.

Another set of studies discussed adjustment and drug use behaviour, (Singh et.al., 1983) birth order and drug use (Singh, 1979), smoking and orality (Krishna, 1983); Smoker's Temperament & Sex roles (Augustine & Mrinal, 1996); this was followed by study of cognitive functions and dysfunctions (Vaya et.al., 1986; Rajendran & Cherian, 1990).

Behavioural treatment of drug addiction (Kumaraiah, 1979), Behavioural intervention related issues (Rao & Mishra, 1992) and Families of Alcoholics including wives and children (Kodandaram, 1996a, 1996b; Suman & Nagalalaxmi, 1996; Rejani & Kodandaram 2002; Jeevithat & Suman, 2010). There was also a mention of 'preventive intervention' (Dubey, 1988). An

account of 5 years initial experience in a Clinic for substance abusers was shared with the readers (Varma, et.al., 1985). Authors reported Sociodemographic details, diagnosis, treatment & follow up of 167 cases. Injection drug abuse & HIV Prevention was also looked into during this phase (Needle et.al. 1996).

In a later stage around and after 2000 some priority areas emerged and study reports published in IJCP included i.e. Relapse prevention(Kodandaram,2000), Involving families in the intervention programme (Ahluwalia et.al.2018; Cognition of Alcohol, Cannabis and Injecting Drug Users (Mathew, et.al. 2012), Attention Rehabilitation to improve attention of Alcoholics (Pandey,2012), Drug Dependence, Alcoholism and HIV AIDS (Choudhary & Mishra, 2013),Tobacco cessation (Jena et.al.2004), hospital based study of tribal population(Narayan et.al.2019), Study of P 300 waves among Alcoholics and their first degree relatives (Arora,2019) and training of Clinical Psychologists with a prime focus on addiction (Suman et. al. 2020).

Among children and adolescents street children in slums need attention on priority basis (Ram Chulam et.al.2016). There have been several media reports in the last two decades published in various popular periodicals and magazines.

Lockdown during COVID-19 had an impact on the substance use habit of abusers, due to disrupted supply of drugs. Availability, access and purity of substance used. There was an increase in the intake of substance/s but that was transient. During the second phase of lockdown recovering trends were observed (Arya et.al.2022).

In the initial phase of progress of the discipline of Clinical Psychology, apart from psychological assessment based studies (Singh & Chopra, 1979; Arora, 1982, Arya Mohan.1982; Sinha & Sharma, 1999), therapeutic efforts made to help this group were useful and replicable. Kumaraiah (1979): reported successful treatment of two drug addicts using multifaceted behavioural approach i.e. Aversion Therapy, Relaxation Technique and Assertive training.

Rao & Mishra (1992) mentioned difficulties faced in delivering treatment services to Alcohol dependent individuals, like irregularity in attending daily sessions, occupational hazards, high dropout rate, insistence on drug therapy & poor motivation for treatment.

Therapeutic efforts made to assist families of Alcohol dependent individuals, including their wives and children were also reported (Kodandaram, 1996; Nagalaxmi & Suman 1996).

Prospect: Needs and Priorities

The District Mental Health Programme has emerged as an effective service model for the mental health delivery system nationwide, in the current context; with wider coverage. A team of mental health professionals including Clinical Psychologists are working at these centres; There is a need to generate data based on the service delivery by the professionals working at these centres. Although we are well informed about prevalence and incidence of substance abuse in our country, as nationwide surveys conducted in the recent past were highly informative and insightful. Set of data made available through DMHP centres will be able to tell us the distribution of prevalence in specific groups like adolescents, females, adults, aged people & tribal population.

Further role of sociocultural factors contributing to the problem of substance abuse will be substantially visible in the DMHP set up like increase in consumption of Alcohol and Marihuana during celebration of festivals like Holi, Christmas and New Year celebration. Use of Marihuana and Alcohol in the worship of god and goddesses in the village or community as a whole; as socially and culturally sanctioned behaviour.

Group approaches in therapy of substance abusers e.g 'Alcoholic Anonymous' are under-reported. This needs to be addressed in DMHP setup; with exploration of protective factors (Kaloiya, 2022) to promote prevention of substance abuse and intervention in treatment programme/s for substance abusers.

Multilingual awareness material for the community and treatment guidelines (Govt. of India, 2020) for professionals needs to be disseminated with updated information. Which also prevents substance abusers from getting treatment like criminals in place of a patient; who is in need of treatment.

There is a mention of 'training of Clinical Psychologists (Suman, et.al. 2020) with a prime focus on addiction and Preventive Intervention (Dubey, 1988). These trends of updating the knowledge and skills of the professionals should be a regular activity, time to time for the benefit of the professionals and their patients suffering from Substance Use Disorders.

Efforts to explore the Telemedicine mediated service delivery for substance use disorders (Basu, 2022) is a priority and demand of the day to expand quality service delivery with a wider coverage. Menon & Kandasamy (2018), based on a review identified determinants of Relapse, i.e. self efficacy, outcome expectancies, emotional states, coping, craving & motivation. These determinants should be looked into while dealing with cases of relapse prevention.

This special issue of IJCP takes a stock of the situation i.e. what has been done in this area by Mental Health Professionals with a focus on contribution of Clinical Psychologists, with a mention of future direction. The issues addressed in the included articles include Cannabis abuse, Evidence based Psycho-Social Assessment, Adolescents as an addicted group, Recovery & Relapse: role of self efficacy and Knowledge, attitude and belief and risk taking behaviour.

Another form of addiction seen now a days is use of screen to the addiction level i.e. Internet gaming disorder, Pornography among adults, Online problematic and non problematic gamers, Adolescents indulging in Internet Addiction; have also been addressed in this issue.

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