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Effect of alcoholic parents on children personality

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Abstract

An alcoholic family's home environment and the manner in which family members interact may contribute to the risk of problems observed among children of alcoholics. Aims: To compare the personality and attribution style between normal children and children's of alcoholic parents. Sample: The study sample constituted of 100 children (50 children of alcoholic parents and rest 50 children of non alcoholic parents). Tools : Socio demographic and clinical data sheet, Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire (Edwards and Gross, 1976), General Health Questionnaire (Sunder et al, 1986), Sixteen personality Questionnaire (Hindi Adaptation) (S.D. Kapoor), The Attribution Style Questionnaire (Peterson, 1982) Conclusion : Finding of present study shows that children of alcoholic parents have significantly differed on personality characteristics in comparison to children of alcoholic parents have significantly differed on personality characteristics in comparison to children of non alcoholic parents.

Key words :- Personality, Children, Alcoholic Parents

Introduction

Growing up in a home here parents are mentally ill (i.e., suffer from chronic disorders like schizophrenia, affective disorder, or severe anxiety) or alcoholic causes severe problems for the children. Specifically, children of alcoholic parents have shown greater rates of hyperactivity and conduct disorder, substance abuse, delinquency, and truancy, cognitive dysfunctioning (Tarter, et al, 1984); social inadequacy and anxiety and depression (Tarter, et al, 1984). Studies have shown that adult children of alcoholics show greater rates of anxiety, poor self-esteem, and depression, A Number of influential clinicians (Black 1982) have described children of alcoholic's (COA's) as victims of an alcoholic family environment characterized by disruption, deviant parental role models, inadequate parenting and disturbed parent-child relationships. These family related variables are thought to undermine normal psycho-logical development and to cause distress and impaired interpersonal functioning both acutely and chronically. Most of the descriptions of COA's however, have been based primarily on anecdotal reports of people seeking help for any number of psychological or behavioral problems. The personality characteristics of COA's have been a focus of the alcohol research community because influential theorists (Cloninger et al 1987) have speculated that much of the heritability for alcoholism is mediated by personality traits. In other words, COA's might be expected to differ from non-COA on key personality dimension, differences that might explain the COA's risk for alcoholism and other behavioral problems. Although personality-based explanations of psychopathology have existed since ancient times, the emphasis on behavioral models among psychologists and the focus in medical or biological models among psychiatric researchers marginalized these explanations for a number of years. A resurgence of interest currently exists; however, in the relationship between personality and psychopathology, many theorists now view personality as a key to understanding a range of common psychological disorders (Watson et al 1994). This view is compatible with both biological and behavioral perspectives. There is a paucity of work in this regard especially in Indian setup. Keeping this view present study was carried out with aim to compare the personality factors and attribution style between children of alcoholic parents and normal parents.

Venue of the study

It is cross sectional correlation study, which was conducted at different rural as well as urban area of habitat.

Sample

The study was conducted in different region of Patna district (Bihar). The study sample constituted of 100 children (50 children of alcoholic parents and rest 50 children of non alcoholic

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parents). Children of alcoholic parents constituted control group for the study. Following inclusion and exclusion criteria were taken under consideration during sample selection.

Inclusion criteria for children's of alcoholic parents

- Children within the age range of 16-25 yrs.
- Children of either sex.
- Either parent has history of alcohol intake and dependence (minimum duration of alcohol intake is 5 yr).
- Children educated minimum up to 10th level and able to comprehend the test item.

Exclusion criteria for Children's of alcoholic parents

- Children who were not co-operative for the study
- Children with parents having more than one severe illness apart from alcohol dependence

Inclusion criteria for children's of non alcoholic parents

- Children within the age range of 16-25 yrs
- Children of either sex
- Either parents have no history intake and dependence and score below cut off point in GHQ-5
- Children educated up to minimum 10th level and able to comprehend the test items

Inclusion criteria for children's of alcoholic parents

- Children who were not co-operative for the study
- Children with parents having no history of any severe illness

Tools

The Following tools were used for the study:

- Socio demographic and clinical data sheet
- Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire (Edwards and Gross, 1976)
- General Health Questionnaire (Suder et al, 1986)
- Sixteen personality Questionnaire (Hindi Adaptation) (S.D. Kapoor)
- The Attribution Study Questionnaire (ASQ : Peterson , Semmel, et al., 1982)

Procedure for data collection

An overall assessment of the child requires the combination of several current approaches to the measurement of child's behavior but as a first step in the evaluation, questionnaire has an important place especially for screening or survey purposes. First of all, the parents of the experimental and control group were contacted. Then prior permission was sought to undertake the study in their respective homes. They were made acquainted with the aims and objective of the study. Children's of those parents who consume alcohol regularly was screened for alcohol dependence, using the Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire, as well as the children's of those parents who were diagnosed as Alcohol Dependence Syndrome according to ICD-10 diagnostic criteria and were admitted for treatment in De addiction Centre, Patna, were taken for the study. Then all the children were further assessed using the GHQ-5. All the children who were scored below cut off point on GHQ were selected for the study. The children were matched with age, sex and socio economic status. Then on subjects of both groups' sixteen personality factor questionnaires was administered according to manual.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical package for social science for win version 13.0 was used. Data of the present study is described using, mean, SD for continuous variable and number and percentage for category variable. Group comparison for children of alcoholic and non alcoholic was done by t-test for continuous variables.

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Result

Socio demographic characteristics of children

Both groups were comparable on age and education variables (Mean age of experiment group is 18.05 ± 40 and control group is 18.07 ± 39 and Mean age of education in experimental group is 10.50 ± 60 and in control group is 10.70 ± 29 in both group majority of sample were male sex, belongs to Hindu religion and general categories of caste. Majority of the subjects were belongs to family with monthly income more than up to 15000, and nuclear family. Most of the subjects of both groups have less than 3 siblings.

Clinical characteristics of alcoholic parents

Most of the alcoholic parents have more than 8 yrs of history of alcohol intake (83.01%) and severe level of severity of alcohol intake (72%).

Table-1
Comparison of Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire between children of alcoholic parents and Children of non- alcoholic parents

Factors	Children of alcoholic parents (Experimental gr.) N=50 M ± SD		Children of non- alcoholic parents (Control Gr.) N=50 M±SD		t- ratio
	M	SD	M	SD	
A	5.45	1.2	5.41	1.4	.29
B	4.7	1.04	4.9	4.2	.35
C	2.34	060	5.98	1.2	26.6*
E	4.05	2.15	4.25	1.4	1.17
F	3.99	1.98	4.12	1.85	.75
G	3.54	.50	5.98	.90	61.85*
H	4.76	1.05	6.18	1.2	27.10**
I	5.9	1.4	5.85	1.12	.42
L	5.34	.95	6.50	1.5	8.89**
M	5.35	1.4	5.7	1.65	.80
N	3.68	2.1	4.07	2.12	.95
O	2.98	.98	6.65	.70	9.67**
Q ₁	4.50	1.40	5.5	6.14	2.4
Q ₂	5.70	1.98	6.01	1.78	4.4
Q ₃	4.10	0.45	4.70	1.98	17.06**
Q ₄	7.75	1.15	5.36	.48	16.1**

** .01 significant level

Table-2
Comparison of attribution style between children of alcoholic parents and Children of Non-alcoholic parents

Factors.	Children of alcoholic parents (Experimental gr.) N=50 M ± SD		Children of non- alcoholic parents (Control Gr.) N=50 M±SD		t- ratio
	M	SD	M	SD	
IP	5.31	.56	5.39	.70	.29

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IN	4.23	.68	4.02	.87	.35
CP	16.76	1.60	15.89	1.2	.34
CN	12.45	2.15	11.65	1.43	.67

IP = internal ascription for positive item IN= internal ascription for negative item CP= Composite ascription for positive item CN=Composite ascription for negative item Result shows that there is no significant difference between two groups regard to their attribution style.

Discussion

One of the primary goals of this study was to investigate the differences in personality profile of children of alcoholic and non alcoholic parents, because earlier research done in this regard gives controversial result. This study found that both group significantly differed to each other on factor-C (Affected by feelings-Emotionally stable), factor-G (Expedient-Conscientious), Factor-H (Shy-Venturesome), Factor-L (trust-mistrust), factor-O (Untroubled adequacy-guilt proneness), factor-Q3 (Law self sentiment integration-high self sentiment) an Q4 (Relaxed-Tense).

It suggest that children of alcoholic parents were emotionally more unstable, easily affected by feelings, easily upset in emotional stress. They tends to be low in frustration tolerance for unsatisfactory condition, changeable and plastic, evading necessary reality demands, neurotically fatigued, active in dissatisfaction. In other hand children of non alcoholic parents were more emotionally mature, realistic and adjustable. It has been noted that children of substance abuser has poor morale of the emotional type with feelings of uselessness and inability to assume of the emotional type with feelings of uselessness and inability to assume a normal optimism with regard to the future. The children are living in a constant stress, which develops a tendency to worry, narrowness of interest and introversion. They also reported low self- confidence as compared to the children of nonusers. It has been clear from the cross culture researchers, that when one or both parents are dependent on alcohol or any other substance, their children are at risk for a range of cognitive emotional and behavioral problem. They suffer more from depression than children of nonusers (Chassin, et al, 1999) These children become hidden children (Leenders, 1992) and they do not share their feelings with others. Due to the financial

and economic problem they develop feelings of helplessness and hopelessness as well. A recent study by Johnson and Rolf, (1998) noted that children of alcoholics show more depressive effect than children of non alcoholics.

Result also shows that children of alcoholic parent was significantly scored lower range side in comparison to children of non-alcoholic parents ($t= 61.85, p <.01$). It shows that children of alcoholic parents were expedient and disregard rules. In the other hand children of non alcoholic were significantly more exacting in character, dominated by sense of duty, preserving, responsible & playful. They are usually conscientious and moralistic, and prefer hard working people to witty companions.

There is significant difference found between children of alcoholic parents and Children of non-alcoholic parent on factor-H (Shy-Venturesome) ($t=27.10, p<.01$). Children of alcoholic parents were significant more sociable, spontaneous, and abundant in emotional response. Their thick skinniness enables him to face were and tear in dealing with people and grueling emotional situation, without fatigue. However, they are careless of details, ignore danger signals, and consume much time talking. Some of the study findings support the finding of present study and some are given opposite picture. Adult children of substance addicts have a tendency to withdraw from social contact with others This may be due to their father's a social behavior that they try to avoid facing people. Fear of shame and stigmatization motivate them to use the defense mechanism of avoidance and they Ahrens (1993) who found that substance addicts and their sons are more characterized by negative mood, less flexibility and a greater propensity for social withdrawal, as compared with non addicts fathers and their sons. Another factor that was related to alcoholism of the parent was factor-L (Trusting and suspiciousness). Most of the subjects of non alcoholic parents scored lower higher range side. It indicates that characteristics like pretension, jealousy, dogmatism, suspiciousness of interferences, irritability were found more be identified with the persistent adoption of a particular defense mechanism (True projection). Children of alcoholic parents were often involved in their internal mental life. They are usually deliberate in their

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actions and unconcerned about other people. They are more suspicious, over sensitive and have delusions of persecution. Although apparently these children seem to be normal, but test results indicate that they have symptoms of paranoia. Living in a threatening environment facing often lose their trust not only on them but also on others. The sense of safety and trust is difficult to reestablish. Somewhat similar findings were also noted in studies of the western countries. Hibbard (1993) found that adult children of alcoholics suffer from narcissistic disturbance and grandiosity. There is significant difference found between children of alcoholic parents and Children of non- alcoholic parents on factor-O (Untroubled adequacy-guilt proneness) ($t= 9.67$ $p<.01$) and factor Q3 (Low self sentiment integration – high self sentiment). Children of alcoholic parents were significantly more self assured, placid, secure complacent and serene in comparison to children of non alcoholic parents. Children of alcoholic parents were significantly more undisciplined, self conflict, lax, follow by own urges and careless about social rules in comparison to children of non alcoholic parents were significantly more undisciplined, self conflict, lax, follow by own urges and careless about social rules in comparison to children of non alcoholic parents. Findings of other previous study also support the finding. They have lack of deep emotional response, inability to profit from experience and disregard of social mores. They frequently exhibit such problems as stealing, alcohol or drug addiction and other social behavior. Male children of alcoholics and higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse and reports more antisocial symptoms than did female children of alcoholic (Mathew, Wilson, Blazer, and George, 1993). These children exhibit such problems as lying, stealing, fighting, truancy and school behavior problems. They often are diagnosed as having conduct disorders (West and Prinz 1987 : Gabel and Shindledecker, 1993). Children of alcoholic parents were scored higher range score than children of non alcoholic parents on Q4 factor ($t=16.13$, $p<.01$). It shows that more tense, restless excitable, fretful and impatient. On the other hand compliant were more relaxed, tranquil and composed in nature.

Conclusion

Children of alcoholic parents have significantly differed in their personality characteristics of children of non alcoholic parents.

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