Exploring the Correlation between Alcohol Consumption, Risk- taking Behavior and Resilience in Young Adults

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The aim of the research is to explore the correlation between alcohol consumption, risk taking behavior and resilience among young adults in India. According to Collins & Kirouac (2013), alcohol consumption can be called as the act of consuming, usually orally-any beverage comprising of ethanol. Risk-taking behaviour can be defined as any deliberately or non-deliberately managed behaviour with a perceived uncertainty about its repercussions. Resilience refers to positive adaptation in the face of adversities. The current study aims to unknot the relationship between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behavior; alcohol consumption and resilience in young adults. Alcohol Consumption appears to be one of the unrivalled resolutions for dealing with life circumstances, getting acceptance from others, the desire to fit in and socializing with others for the youth. Young adults are enticed to engage in risky activities, such as rash driving, perilous uses of social media, illicit substance use as well as unprotected sexual activity which might have serious repercussions. To explore the relationship between alcohol consumption and risk-taking behavior as well as alcohol consumption and resilience, correlation was applied. To further understand the predictive value of alcohol consumption on risk-taking behaviour, regression analysis was carried out. The results showed that alcohol consumption is positively and significantly correlated with risk- taking behavior, but not significantly correlated with resilience. Also, alcohol consumption predicted 17% of the variance in risk- taking behavior.

Keywords: Alcohol Consumption, Risk- Taking Behaviour, Resilience

With the advent of college life, students enter into diverse environments which cause them to indulge in previously unexplored acts that may or may not have repercussions in the later life. Out of the different acts, alcohol consumption is one of the prominent habits admired by the youth that might direct towards serious concerns of substance abuse and health issues. A research conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2024) stated that 49.3% of the college students belonging to the age range of 18-22 years indulged in alcohol consumption during that phase. Alcohol intake primarily starts due to various reasons such as insecurity, peer pressure, etc. According to a study carried out by Joseph and Hemalata (2021), at least 57 million Indians (5.2% of the population) are dependent on alcohol and require treatment for alcohol abuse. This is a major gordian knot which is risking many students' life, thereby dawning into a dark life without any return. Also, today's youth faces enormous hardships in their life ranging from academic pressures to finding a place for themselves in this society. In the face of such adversities, certain protective factors like mental hardiness, flexibility acts as an internal shield to help human beings succeed in their life. This study mainly explores into the relationship between alcohol consumption and how it is linked to risk-taking behaviour and resilience in young adults.

Alcohol consumption, in layman's terms, could be defined as the utilization of any kind of alcoholic beverage, produced locally or in industries by the individuals in any volume ranging from days to months. When an individual's alcohol intake causes injury or harm, it results in a medical condition called 'Alcohol Use Disorder.' As per the guidelines proposed by the World Health Organization, alcohol consumption could be classified into three categories: hazardous drinking, harmful drinking and alcohol dependence. Hazardous drinking can be defined as a pattern of alcohol consumption which elevates the possibility of injurious consequences for the user or others. Harmful drinking can be defined as alcohol intake which might have detrimental impact on one's physical and mental health. Alcohol dependence could be defined as a bunch of cognitive, behavioural and physiological processes that may evolve after repeated alcohol intake (Babor, Biddle, Saunders and Monteiro, 2001).

Results of the National Drug Survey of 2019 released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2020) highlighted that the national prevalence of alcohol use of people aged between 10 years and 75 years is 27.3 per cent. Rehm et al., (2009) stated that alcohol constitutes world's third major risk factor for disease along with 4% of worldwide load of diseases. In metropolitan cities, alcohol usage has been seen as a way of socializing with people, getting acceptance in groups and as a means to relieve oneself from stress encountered in everyday life. The World Health Organization reported that 30% of India's population drinks alcohol on a regular basis. In recent times, due to easier availability of alcohol, inquisitiveness, perceiving alcohol usage as thrill- seeking behavior has led to change in the patterns of drinking among today's youth.

Impact of Alcohol Use

According to the World Health Organization (2004), excessive intake of alcohol might have major repercussions on an individual as well as social level. Some of the instances linked with excessive drinking and intoxication are as follows:

a) Psychological outcomes: Though people prefer drinking so that they feel relaxed and better, but alcohol can sometimes produce contradictory outcomes. As a person becomes intoxicated, ecstatic feelings arising out of alcoholism pave the way for darker emotions such as anger, irritability as well as aggression in human beings. Alcohol has been found to be linked with Anxiety as well as Depression. A research conducted by the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (2021) found that 20 percent of Americans with an Anxiety or mood disorder, were addicted to alcohol.

b) Road accidents- Alcohol use by young people is more linked with death than with an entire set of illegal psychoactive substances. It has been found that road accidents accounts for death amongst adolescents aged 16- 20 years. A study conducted at United States found that alcohol intake was related to drunk driving as well as hitchhiking with an intoxicated driver (McKinnon, O'rourke, Thompson and Berumen, 2004).

c) Impaired brain development- Alcohol usage can influence brain development of youth who are under the age of 25. The brains of adolescents are in a developing phase and the parts of the brain majorly affected due to intoxication are the Hippocampus and Frontal lobe. These regions are responsible for the functions of motivation, control of impulse as well as addiction to substances.

d) Serious harm or injury- Alcohol is a crucial factor in a varied range of risky situations such as drug overdose, self- harm, suicide, engaging in aggressive act, drowning and falls. According to World Health Organization (2004), 45 percent of the 1.8 million alcohol associated deaths, are caused solely by injuries.

Risk taking can be operationally defined as "any consciously, or non-consciously controlled behaviour with a perceived uncertainty about its outcome, and/ or about its possible benefits, or costs for the physical, economic or psycho- social well- being of oneself or others" (Trimpop, 1994). It begins during adolescence period, persists and intensifies one's reactivity to emotions over time (Reniers et al., 2016). The onset of numerous risky behaviours is marked by tobacco use, rash driving, engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse, alcohol intake and poor social relationships which might play an important role in shaping the behaviour of people at an early period of life.

In everyday situations, it is crucial for individuals to make use of coping mechanisms that would help them to counter problems related to stress, illnesses or any kind of changes in their lifestyle that can be a threat to them in the long run. Such a kind of personality characteristic called resilience could be operationally defined as "the capability of people to successfully modify their environment so as to protect them from the negative consequences of adverse events" (Rutter, 1987). According to Luthans (2002), it can be defined as the ability of people to 'bounce back' from adversity. This implies that people revitalize their lives after going through stressful/traumatic experiences or failures. Graber et al. (2016) stated that an understanding based on resilience provides information about developing one's strengths, positive choices, social skills that promotes responsible alcohol use as well as abstinence supported by explanations of

domain- specific resilience, dictated by cultural norms.

Certain characteristics which indicate one's resilience capacity are:

* Having control over the procedure of recalling traumatic experiences
* Amalgamation of one's emotions and memory
* One's self-esteem
* Internal solidarity of one's emotions, thoughts and behaviours
* Building secure linkages
* Being aware of the impact of the trauma
* Developing a positive connotation of events

Several studies have focused on three resilience models which emphasizes on the mechanisms of efficient adaptation. They are:

a) Compensatory model- This model views resilience as a feature that neutralizes the subjection to risks. Both compensatory and risk factors separately contributes to the prediction result. According to Werner & Smith (2019), four features that characterizes a resilient individual are: engaging in an active approach towards finding resolution to a problem, capability to view problems with a positive outlook even when one is going through hardships, ability to draw others' attention and having confidence in one's faith in order to maintain a positive outlook.

b) Challenge model- According to this model, any risk factor which is not severe, can improve a person's adaptation to adversities. In other words, such kind of situation makes an individual all set to deal with any future challenge (O'Leary, 1998).

c) Protective factor model- This model posits that there is an interplay between risk as well as protective factors which help reduce the possibilities of hazardous outcomes and moderate the impact of

susceptibility to a risk (O'Leary, 1998). It implies that protective factors pave the way for positive repercussions as well as vigorous personality characteristics despite unfavourable situations in one's life (Bonanno, 2004; Ungar, 2004).

Some studies have demonstrated that young people are significantly more likely than others to experience poorer consequences as well as limited life choices. A study showed that human beings with lower resiliency were more likely to make use of inefficacious coping mechanisms such as resorting to drugs or alcohol (Benard, 1991; Block, 2002; Brady & Sonne, 1999; Grotberg, 1995). But, at the same time, it is not always the case that people who show higher risk factors would always do badly in their lives. Research on risky behaviour and resilience have showed that some people, regardless of being exposed to major risky behaviour, display greater resilience and coping skills (Fergusson & Horwood, 2003) ; Werner & Smith, 2019).

Dullius, Fava, Ribeiro and Terra (2018) examined the relationship between alcohol intake/ dependence and resilience levels among older adults with high blood pressure and it was observed that older adults who exhibit harmful alcohol use or have a probable dependence for alcohol intake have moderately low to moderate levels of resilience. In a study conducted by Wills, Sandy, Shinar and Yaeger (1999) among 1702 adolescents belonging to the age group of 12 to 15, it was observed that certain characteristics like being relaxed, positive affectivity, being concerned, feeling happy played a protective role against the risk of emotional affliction for alcohol or smoking as well as having marijuana.

Research questions

a) What is the relationship between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour, alcohol consumption and resilience?

b) Does alcohol consumption predict risk-taking behaviour among young adults completely?

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between alcohol consumption and risk-taking behavior.

H2: Alcohol consumption will explain a significant proportion of the variance in risk-taking behaviour.

H3: There will be a significant relationship between alcohol consumption and resilience.

Method

Sample

For the current study, survey was used to collect data from 100 participants who used to consume alcohol and belonging to the age group of 19- 28 years. All the participants consumed alcohol to some level regardless of being high, moderate or low on alcohol. The sample included 39 males and 61 females. Snowball sampling was used to find participants consuming alcohol. In this research, Pearson Product- Moment correlation and Simple Regression Analysis has been employed to explore the correlation between alcohol consumption, risk-taking and resilience.

Tools

For the current study, a shorter version of the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test developed by World Health Organization was used, which comprised of 5 items, with scores for each item ranging from 0 to 4. According to the World Health Organisation, for men, consuming alcohol between three to four units a day or less signifies no major risk to health. For women, consuming alcohol between two and three units a day or less signifies no significant risk to health.

In the current study, the Domain Specific Risk-Taking Questionnaire (DOSPERT) developed by Blais and Weber (2006) was used to assess the risk-taking behaviour consisting of thirty items.

The Brief Resilience Scale developed by Smith et al. (2008) was used to "assess how people quickly adapt to stressful situations, bounces back, resists illness and thrives in the face of adversity." This scale consists of six items with scores ranging from 6 to 30. The participants had to mark their responses on a 5- point Likert Scale (where, 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree). Out of the 6 items, items 2, 4 and 6 are reverse scored (for eg- a score of 1 becomes a score of 5).

Results

Data has been gathered from 100 participants through survey. Data, in the present study, has been analyzed at two levels: Correlational analysis and Simple Regression analysis. The relationship between alcohol Consumption and Risk-Taking Behaviour; Alcohol Consumption and Resilience was evaluated using Pearson-product moment correlation. In this study, Alcohol Consumption has been taken as the predictor (independent) variable and Risk-Taking Behaviour as the criterion (dependent) variable.

Table 1. Mean and SD of Alcohol Consumption, Risk-taking Behaviour and Resilience

Variable	Mean	SD
Alcohol Consumption	2.8	2.28
Risk-taking behaviour	108.96	24.38
Resilience	18.99	4.18

The descriptive data regarding alcohol consumption, risk- taking behaviour and resilience has been presented in table 1. Table 2 shows correlation between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour,

alcohol consumption and resilience. The correlation between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour is statistically significant and positive at 0.01 level of significance ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$). The correlation between alcohol consumption and resilience is positive but insignificant at 0.05 level of significance ($r = 0.05$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 2. Correlation between Alcohol Consumption and Risk-taking behaviour; Alcohol Consumption and Resilience

Independent variable	Dependent variable	r
Alcohol Consumption	Risk-taking behaviour	0.43**
	Resilience	0.05

**correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Table 3. Simple Regression for the predictor variable (Alcohol Consumption) and criterion variable (Risk-taking Behaviour)

Predictor	Criterion	R	Adjusted R^2	Beta	F
Alcohol Consumption	Risk-taking behaviour	0.43	0.17	0.43	22.60

In the current study, simple regression analysis has been used to study the impact of alcohol consumption on risk- taking behaviour. From table 3, it could be seen that 17% of the variance in risk- taking behaviour is accounted by alcohol consumption.

Discussion

The chief aim of the research was to study the relationship between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour; alcohol consumption and resilience among young adults. Data was collected through survey method from 100 participants belonging to the age group of 19- 28 years. Results showed positive and significant relationship between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour, whereas positive but insignificant relationship between alcohol consumption and resilience. It was also found that 17% of the variance in risk- taking

behaviour was accounted by alcohol consumption.

The findings of the current study showed that the correlation between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour among young adults is significant and positive, thereby implying a moderate positive correlation between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour. Thus, the hypothesis which states that there will be significant difference in the relationship between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour stands accepted. This aligns with a study conducted by O'Neill et al. (2015) which avowed that alcohol consumption is positively and significantly correlated with risk- taking behaviours such as unplanned sexual activity, drug abuse as well as smoking. According to a study conducted by Thoa et al. (2013), alcohol consumption is positively correlated with risky behaviours such as involvement in violence, playing computer games. Alcohol serves as the catalyst through which people can overcome their inhibitions and propels people to do things which they are not likely to do in a normal state. This could be a reason how alcohol causes the youth to engage in risky behaviours. Other non-mentioned factors that might account for the variability in risk-taking behaviour could be psychological traits, personality characteristics, social media, parental influence and institutions that may play a role in accounting for risk-taking behaviour. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive theory (1991), self- efficacy is an important constituent of self-regulatory behaviour which helps humans to determine which behaviours to perform and to judge the quality of their performance. As young adults, their awareness of their actions which might be risky or challenging makes them engage in risk taking behaviours. Personality factors could also account for variance in risk-taking behaviour. A study conducted by Gullone & Moore (2000) implicated the relationship between the Big Five personality factors and risk- taking behaviour; it was found that females who involved in risk- taking behaviour obtained higher scores on agreeableness, neuroticism and conscientiousness. The impact of social media in reinforcing risk- taking behaviour could be explained by the Facebook influence model proposed by Moreno & Whitehill (2014) which posits that connections over social media leads to formation of social networks, thereby influencing individual perceptions and further build community who share similar perceptions related to risk and behavioural norms as well as emulate behaviours perceived as being valued. Young adults might involve in risky activities-online or offline for conforming to social norms or to get acceptance from others.

Results showed that there exists positive but insignificant relationship between alcohol consumption and resilience. Hypothesis 3 which states that there will be significant difference in the relationship between alcohol consumption and resilience stands rejected. From the results, it is implied that although positive, the relationship between the two variables is weak. This result opposes the findings of some previous studies which showed that people having low resilience levels were more likely to apply inefficacious coping mechanisms such as engaging in alcohol use or drug abuse in order to deal with difficult situations (Benard, 1991; Block, 2002; Brady & Sonne, 1999; Grotberg, 1995). The finding of the current study indicated that resilient individuals also consume alcohol. As young adults, individuals are aware of their actions and also the consequences of the risks they engage in. This is in line with a study conducted by Bernstein et al. (2011) which stated that resilient individuals also consume alcohol but their coping mechanisms differ as they make use of social support, have reasonable life goals and care

about having mentors and peers to deal with problems. In that sense, the concept of resilience might vary from individual to individual and situation to situation.

Conclusion

The study assessed the relationship between alcohol consumption and risk-taking behaviour, alcohol consumption and resilience. Results implied moderate correlation between alcohol consumption and risk- taking behaviour but alcohol consumption accounted for 17% of the variance in risk- taking behaviour. It indicates that although there exists positive correlation between the two, alcohol consumption does not completely predict risk- taking behaviour of young adults. Other possible factors such as sensation- seeking, self-regulation, personality factors, social support systems might account for variance in risk- taking behaviour. Also, a positive but weak correlation was obtained between alcohol consumption and resilience. This implies that the participants do not rely on alcohol as a coping mechanism to handle difficulties of everyday life. Positive relationship between alcohol consumption and risk-taking behaviour indicates that responsible drinking needs to be taught right from school level by teachers in small steps which would help in building confidence in the youth towards developing the ability to become responsible for their actions. To reduce the involvement in risk-taking behaviours, young adults need to be educated from an early stage about the risks encountered in everyday lives and should be taught to analyze the costs and benefits associated with that. For further research into this domain, interviews could be conducted to get a holistic understanding of the various factors responsible for the findings.

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