

**ORIGINAL RESEARCH**

# To Study Domestic Violence among the Spouses of Men with Alcohol Use Disorder in Urban Setting

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Alcoholism poses a significant societal and medical issue, particularly in India, where approximately 62.5 million individuals consume alcohol (1). Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) often leads to severe interpersonal and social dysfunctions, particularly within marital relationships. Spouses of individuals with AUD commonly endure various forms of violence, resulting in psychological distress and psychiatric morbidities. **Method:** This cross-sectional study was conducted at the Department of Psychiatry, Sri Aurobindo Medical College and Post Graduate Institute, Indore, from September 2022 to February 2024. It involved male patients diagnosed with AUD according to DSM-V criteria and their spouses, who were screened based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data were collected using a semi-structured proforma, the Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire (SAD-Q), and a Domestic Violence Questionnaire. **Results:** The study found that a significant proportion of spouses were aged 26-35 years (80% of the total population) and about 60 % of the total spouses were engaged in unskilled occupations. Also, 50 percent of husbands with AUD were aged 26-35 years and about 50 percent had been consuming alcohol for 20-25 years. The SAD-Q scores indicated that 50% of the participants had severe alcohol dependence. There was association observed between SAD-Q scores and the occurrence of domestic violence, with the highest incidence of domestic violence reported among individuals with severe alcohol dependence (SAD-Q score of 31-60). **Conclusion:** The study highlights association between alcohol use disorder in men and domestic violence against their spouses. The findings suggest a need for targeted interventions to address alcohol dependence and provide psychological support for affected spouses to reduce violence and improve family outcomes.

**Keywords:** Alcohol Use Disorder, Domestic Violence, Spouses, Psychiatric Morbidity, Alcohol Dependence, India, SAD-Q.

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## INTRODUCTION

Alcohol use disorders (AUDs) has a prevalence of 12.5% among adults<sup>(2)</sup> and approximately 62.5 million individuals consume alcohol in India<sup>(1)</sup>. In India, alcohol use is higher among men, which is an ongoing stressor for the family<sup>(3)</sup>. 1.4% of the world's disease burden is accounted by the AUDs<sup>(4)</sup>. "Any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in that relationship" is defined as intimate partner violence (IPV). It encompasses coercive sexual behaviour, physical violence, psychological abuse, and controlling conduct<sup>(5)</sup>. 32% of incidents of IPV were committed when the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol<sup>(6)</sup>. Alcohol escalates the existing conflict<sup>(7,8)</sup>. According to the 2019–21 National Mental

Health Survey of India, 18.8% of adult males have AUDs.

Alcohol misuse by the male partner is associated with poor mental health and violence among married women<sup>(9,10)</sup>. Low marital satisfaction and poor social support are the other significant issues among these spouses<sup>(11,12)</sup>. There is a substantial correlation between DV and marital years. Wife's who experience physical abuse and alcoholism from their husbands are substantially more likely to have poor mental health and overall wellbeing<sup>(9)</sup>. The prevalence of male-to-female DV is over 50% in AUDs<sup>(14)</sup>. There is a three times higher risk of mood disorders and two times higher risk of anxiety and depressive disorders among female spouses of male alcohol abusers<sup>(13)</sup>. In addition, men with antisocial traits are at greater risk of binge alcohol consumption

and commit intimate partner violence (Brem et al., 2018).

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of the relationship between domestic violence and men with alcohol use disorder (AUD) and its impact on their spouses. Our aim of study was to assess and severity of Domestic Violence among the spouses of men with alcohol use disorder and also to assess association of socio demographic profile and severity of alcohol use with domestic violence.

## METHODOLOGY (MATERIAL & METHODS)

This cross-sectional study was conducted in the Department of Psychiatry at Sri Aurobindo Medical College and Post Graduate Institute, Indore (M.P). The study began in September 2022 and continued until February 2024, spanning a total duration of 18 months.

### Participants

The study included male patients who were diagnosed with Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) based on the DSM-V diagnostic criteria and who visited the psychiatry outpatient department (OPD). The inclusion criteria for patients were: being married for at least one year and living with their spouse for at least one year. For spouses, the inclusion criteria were: being married to the patient for at least one year, living with the patient for at least one year, and both being residents of an urban area.

The exclusion criteria for spouses included a past history of any psychiatric comorbidities and refusal to provide informed consent. For patients, the exclusion criteria were having any substance use disorder other than tobacco, refusal to provide informed consent, and residing in a rural area.

### Procedure

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee, the researcher, under the supervision of the guide, identified subjects who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The study procedures and rationale were explained to all potential participants, and informed written consent was obtained in their local language whenever possible.

Data collection was carried out over an 18-month period. Socio-demographic data and clinical information were gathered using a semi-structured proforma. The severity of alcohol dependence was assessed using the Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire (SAD-Q), which is a tool developed by the Addiction Research Unit at the Maudsley Hospital to measure the severity of alcohol dependence. Additionally, a 25-item Domestic Violence Questionnaire, developed by the Department of Psychiatry, Clinical Epidemiology Resource and Training Centre, Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram, was used to assess domestic violence.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Demographic details of spouses of men with alcohol use disorder.**

Variable	Categories	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)	Up to 25	1	3
	26-35	24	80
	36-45	5	17
Education	Illiterate	7	23
	Up to Primary	14	47
	Up to Secondary	6	20
Occupation	Graduate	3	10
	Skilled	5	17
	Unskilled	18	60
	Housewife	7	23

The demographic data for the participants is summarized as follows: Regarding age, majority of spouses, that is 80 % were between 26 and 35 years old, while 17% were between 36 and 45 years, and only 3% were up to 25 years old. In terms of education, 23% of the participants were illiterate, 47% had education up to primary level, 20% had

completed up to secondary education, and 10% were graduates. When it comes to occupation, 17% of the participants were engaged in skilled work, 60% were in unskilled occupations, and 23% were housewives.

This data highlights a predominant age group of 26-35 years and a high prevalence of spouses with primary education and unskilled jobs.

**Table 2: Demographic details of men with alcohol use disorder**

Variable	Categories	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)	Up to 25	1	3.3
	26-35	15	50
	36-45	14	46.7
Education	Illiterate	14	46.7

	Primary	7	23.3
	Secondary	6	20
	Graduate	3	10
<b>Occupation</b>	Skilled	13	43.3
	Unskilled	17	56.7
<b>Total years of alcohol use</b>	<10	1	3.3
	10-15	1	3.3
	15-20	9	30
	20-25	15	50
	>25	4	13.3

The demographic and clinical characteristics of men are as follows: In terms of age, 50% of the participants were between 26 and 35 years old, while 46.7% were aged 36 to 45 years, and only 3.3% were up to 25 years old. Regarding education, 46.7% were illiterate, 23.3% had completed primary education, 20% had secondary education, and 10% were

graduates. Occupation-wise, 43.3% were in skilled jobs, while 56.7% held unskilled positions.

Concerning the total years of alcohol use, 3.3% had used alcohol for less than 10 years and the same percentage for 10-15 years. A significant proportion, 30%, had used alcohol for 15-20 years, while 50% had been using alcohol for 20-25 years. Only 13.3% had used alcohol for more than 25 years.

**Table 3: SADQ scoring criteria.**

SADQ Score	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Mild (8-15)</b>	3	10
<b>Moderate (16-30)</b>	12	40
<b>Severe (31-60)</b>	15	50

**SADQ:** Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire.

Table 3 presents the SADQ (Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire) scoring criteria. The distribution of scores among the participants shows that 10% of individuals were categorized as having mild alcohol dependence, with a SADQ score ranging

from 8 to 15. In contrast, 40% of the participants fell into the moderate category, with scores between 16 and 30. The majority, 50%, were classified as having severe alcohol dependence, indicated by scores ranging from 31 to 60.

**Table 4: Magnitude of severity of alcohol use in men.**

Variables	Score	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Total years of alcohol use</b>	<10	1	3.3
	10-15	1	3.3
	15-20	5	16.7
	20-25	15	50
	>25	3	10

Table 4 outlines the magnitude of alcohol use severity among men with AUD. The distribution of total years of alcohol use reveals that 3.3% of the participants had used alcohol for less than 10 years and the same percentage for 10-15 years. A significant portion,

16.7%, had been using alcohol for 15-20 years, while half of the participants (50%) had been using alcohol for 20-25 years. Additionally, 10% had used alcohol for more than 25 years.

**Table 5: Distribution of Daily Doses Among Men with AUD**

S. No.	Daily Dose	No. of Patients	Percentage
1	0-1 Quarter	12	40
2	1-2 Quarter	13	43.33
3	Greater than 2 Quarter	5	16.66
Total		<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The table provides a summary of the distribution of daily doses among 30 men with AUD. It categorizes men into three groups based on their daily dose ranges: 0-1 quarter, 1-2 quarters, and greater than 2 quarters. The largest group, comprising 43.33% of the

men (13 individuals), falls within the 1-2 quarters range. The next largest group, representing 40% (12 individuals), receives doses in the 0-1 quarter range. Lastly, 16.66% of the men (5 individuals) receive a daily dose greater than 2 quarters.

**Table 6 - Distribution of Men Based on Time since Last Dose**

S. No.	Last Dose	No. of Patients	Percentage
1	0-10Days	14	66.66
2	10-20 Days	11	36.66
3	More than 20 Days	05	16.66
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The table outlines the distribution of patients based on the time elapsed since their last dose. The data is divided into three categories: 0-10 days, 10-20 days, and more than 20 days. The majority of patients, 66.66% (14 individuals), received their last dose

within the past 10 days. Another 36.66% (11 patients) had their last dose between 10-20 days ago. Finally, 16.66% (5 patients) received their last dose more than 20 days ago. The total number of patients considered in this summary is 30.

**Table 7: Association between SAD-Q Score and Domestic Violence**

SADQ Score	Domestic Violence	
	Yes	No
<b>Mild (8-15)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Moderate (16-30)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Severe (31-60)</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>

Table illustrates the relationship between SADQ scores and the presence of domestic violence. Among the participants, 1 spouse whose husband had a mild alcohol dependence (SADQ score of 8-15) experienced domestic violence, while 2 spouses did not. For those spouses with men having moderate alcohol dependence (SADQ score of 16-30), 7 reported of domestic violence as compared to 5 spouses who did not. The highest incidence of domestic violence in was observed in men with severe alcohol dependence (SADQ score of 31-60), with 12 experiencing domestic violence while 3 did not. This distribution highlights an association between alcohol dependence and domestic violence.

## DISCUSSION

The study on domestic violence among the spouses of men with alcohol use disorder (AUD) reveals several key findings that align with existing literature on the subject. Here, we discuss these findings in relation to other studies.

### Demographic Characteristics

The demographic data indicates that the majority of spouses are between 26 and 35 years old, with a significant portion having only primary education and engaged in unskilled occupations. This demographic profile is consistent with findings from other studies, which often show that younger women with lower educational status are more vulnerable to domestic violence, particularly when their partners have substance use disorders<sup>[15][16]</sup>. The educational and occupational status of these women may limit their economic independence, making it more difficult to leave abusive relationships<sup>[17]</sup>.

### Severity of Alcohol Dependence and Domestic Violence

The study highlights association between the severity of alcohol dependence in men and the incidence of

domestic violence in their spouse. Specifically, higher Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire (SADQ) scores are correlated with increased reports of domestic violence. This finding is supported by other research, which suggests that alcohol use exacerbates aggressive behavior, thereby increasing the risk of intimate partner violence (IPV)<sup>[18]</sup>. For instance, Hsu Wen-Yu (2024) found that individuals with higher alcohol dependence scores were more likely to engage in domestic violence<sup>[18]</sup>.

Also, Alcohol-related problems, such as social, physical, and legal issues, are prevalent among men with AUD. These problems are frequently cited in literature as contributing factors to domestic violence. Alcohol can impair judgment and reduce inhibitions, leading to increased aggression and conflict within households<sup>[16][18]</sup>. The presence of social and legal problems further complicates the situation, as these issues can strain relationships and increase stress, thereby escalating the likelihood of violence<sup>[17]</sup>.

### Psychiatric morbidity among spouses

Many researches indicates that spouses of individuals with AUD often experience significant psychological distress. Conditions such as depression and anxiety are common among these women, partly due to the stress of living with an alcoholic partner and the experience of domestic violence<sup>[15][19]</sup>. Addressing the mental health needs of these spouses is crucial, as it can improve their quality of life and potentially mitigate the impact of their partner's alcohol use disorders<sup>[19]</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the study reinforces the well-documented association between alcohol use disorder in men and domestic violence against their spouses. The findings show the importance of addressing both the alcohol dependence of the perpetrator and the support needs of the victim. Interventions should focus on reducing

alcohol consumption and providing psychological support to spouses to break the cycle of violence and improve outcomes for affected family.

**Conflict of interest:** None

**Limitations:** 1. Less number of sample size

2. The study did not include psychiatric comorbidities in spouses and other consequences related to alcohol use disorder

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