

Original Article

Social Media and Methomania: Finding Cause and Effect of Increasing Alcoholism among the Adolescents in India

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Abstract: The goal of the current study is to better understand the role that social media plays in raising methomania, or alcohol dependence, particularly among young people in India through deceptive and substitute marketing strategies. In India alcoholism has been rampantly increasing among the early age groups which is certainly detrimental for wellbeing of society and the country. Over the years, various researchers have tried to access direct and indirect impact of social media in increasing methomania among the masses and this present study is an addition to the pertinent pool of literature, trying to find the cause for the burgeoning menace of alcoholism among the adolescents.

Keywords: Social Media, Alcoholism, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

The increased use of social media, particularly among teenagers and young adults, has not only changed human communication but also amplified its social impact. It has been proven via numerous studies that there is a direct link between using social media and drinking. Exposure of various social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, etc having visual depiction of alcohol beverages have a direct effect on youth. The pervasiveness of alcohol-related social media is unavoidable thereby making it critical to thoroughly comprehend the influence of such content on alcohol intake (Anderson and Jiang, 2018).

For centuries, alcohol has been used as a psychotropic material that has dependency producing properties. For years now, alcohol-based diseases have accounted for a substantial number of deaths worldwide. Nearly forty million individuals are disabled due to alcohol dependence and detrimental use of alcohol has caused around three million deaths worldwide in the year 2016. As per a report in 2018, alcohol usage is ranked among the top factors for diseases in south-east Asia region causing direct and indirect deaths (WHO, 2019).

Alcoholism or methomania among adolescents is a major issue in countries like India. Over 60 million people in India regularly consume alcohol, and at least 10 million of them are dependent users who have been hospitalised for problems and illnesses related to their alcohol use (Vaithianathan et al., 2018). According to a number of studies, the proportion of young people who consume alcohol excessively has climbed by more than 40% in Indian cities (Balamurugan, 2018). According to several studies, alcoholism typically begins in late adolescence and progresses to severe drinking and dependence, which causes subsequent problems including road accidents, vandalism, depression, etc (Vaithianathan et al., 2018).

A study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed a connection between alcohol consumption and domestic violence in India. It was found that among men who engage in spousal abuse, 33% were identified as alcohol consumers. Among these men, 51% consumed alcohol infrequently, 45% did so regularly, and 40% did so daily. Disturbingly, when their wives consumed alcohol, 94.5% of the women reported experiencing aggression from their husbands, resulting in acts of violence against them (World Health Organization, 2004).

Advertising, product placements, and narratives featured in various media platforms, such as movies, television, social media, and entertainment outlets, play a significant role in shaping societal attitudes and beliefs regarding alcohol. Despite laws restricting the sale and marketing of alcohol, people in the US are exposed to a variety of these advertising. Numerous public policy debates and in-depth studies on alcohol and consumer behaviour have examined the extent to which these commercials directly contribute to rising alcohol consumption. Recent studies have employed rigorous methodologies to evaluate the impact of advertisements on alcohol consumption (Koordeman et al., 2012).

The utilization of social media as a platform for alcohol marketing has grown in tandem with the evolving communication methods employed by adolescents and college-age individuals. Research demonstrating that internet platforms have the ability to affect adolescent behaviour is acknowledged in marketing methods used for a wide variety of items. Among



the various online platforms, social media outlets are most frequently utilized by young people, with over ninety percent of teenagers reporting daily online engagement and more than twenty five percent being online "almost constantly". Social networking sites like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook prominently feature marketing related to alcohol. The amount of alcohol consumed rises with the number of online connections to peers and the degree of social network interconnection. Over two-thirds of YouTube ads are still viewable by people under the legal drinking age, despite voluntary measures intended to prohibit minors from seeing alcohol promotions on social media (Barry et al., 2015).

Social media platforms often contain content that normalizes and glamorizes alcohol consumption. Adolescents may come across images, videos, and posts that showcase drinking as a fun and essential part of socializing. This exposure can influence their attitudes and beliefs about alcohol, making it more likely for them to experiment with or develop an addiction to alcohol. The connections and interactions with peers, which can lead to increased exposure to peer pressure. Adolescents may feel compelled to engage in drinking behaviours to fit in with their online social circles or gain acceptance. Seeing their peers posting about alcohol-related activities can further influence their own behaviour.

Alcohol companies and brands may utilize social media platforms for targeted marketing campaigns aimed at young audiences. They can use sophisticated strategies to reach adolescents with advertisements, sponsored content, or influencer partnerships, which can create a perception that alcohol consumption is cool, trendy, or necessary for social success. Adolescents who experience cyberbullying or face high levels of stress may turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism. Social media platforms can contribute to these issues by facilitating negative interactions, comparisons, and social pressures, which in turn may increase the risk of alcohol misuse to escape or cope with emotional distress.

It is important to note that social media is just one factor among many that can contribute to alcohol addiction among adolescents. Other individual, family, and societal factors also play significant roles. Preventive measures should involve education on responsible alcohol consumption, promoting healthy coping mechanisms, fostering supportive relationships, and encouraging critical thinking skills to navigate social media influences effectively.

II. RESEARCH GAP

Although there is a lot of research on alcohol and its impact but there is not much research on how alcohol usage has been directly and indirectly influenced by social media among the youth and causing detrimental behavioural change. Therefore, the present study was needed to access the impact of social media on young Indian population as social media is causing rapid increase in alcohol usage among the youth thereby altering the social fabric.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

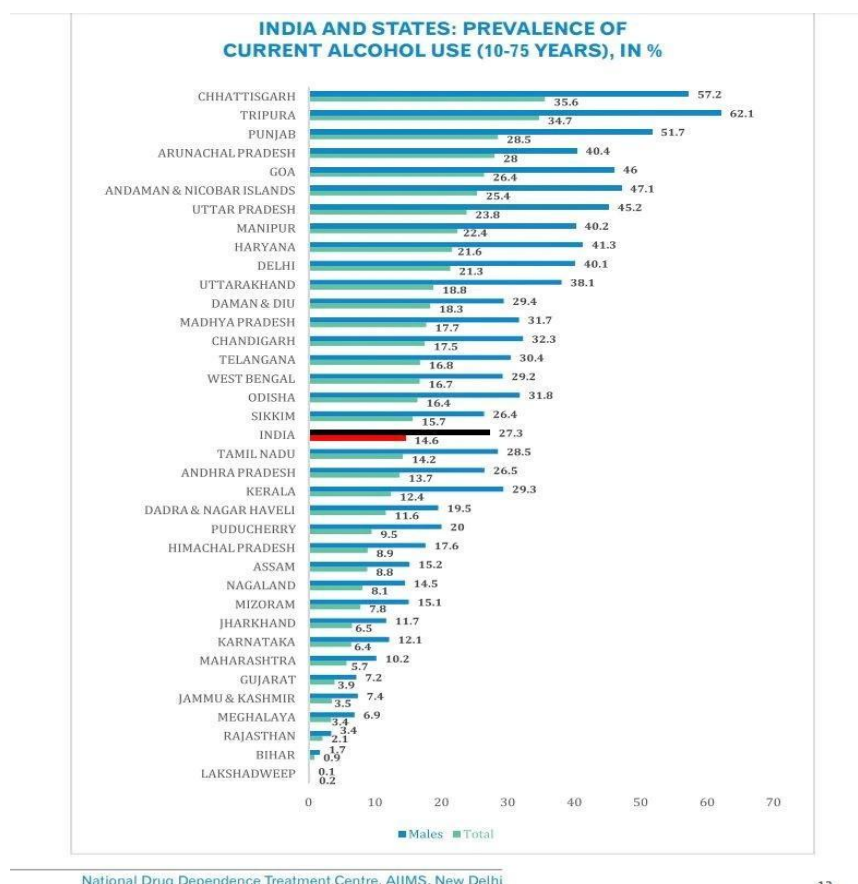
The purpose of this research paper is to add to the significant pool of literature, thereby trying to understand cause and effect of social media usage and its role in increasing alcohol consumption among youth in India.

A) Problem of Alcohol Addiction

Alcohol acts as a sedative, slowing down the functions of the brain and spinal cord. Alcoholic beverages have been used by people throughout history in various contexts such as meals, social gatherings, religious ceremonies, medical purposes, and formal events. When consumed, alcohol rapidly enters the bloodstream and spreads throughout the body within minutes. Alcohol is available in a variety of forms, with beer, wine, and hard liquor being the most common types. Top of Form

Alcohol is frequently consumed by individuals for various reasons, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. Positive motivations involve using alcohol to enhance the enjoyment of meals during social gatherings and to unwind in the company of family and friends. Conversely, negative motivations include using alcohol as an escape from family issues, to numb emotional pain, or as a substitute for intimate connections. The consumption of alcohol can sometimes induce feelings of guilt, which in turn can lead to increased drinking. The condition of alcoholism is one that can be treated with the aid of medication. From moderate drinking to binge drinking, there is a gradual process, and this change has an impact on the individual, their family, and the larger community. Top of Form

Numerous health issues, personality disorders, and dangers to one's own and society's well-being are all rooted in alcohol usage. It has been associated with criminal behaviour and suicide. The presence of alcohol often disrupts family dynamics, leading to conflicts and disharmony. Individuals struggling with addiction face a multitude of challenges across all aspects of their lives. The consumption of alcohol carries numerous detrimental effects for both individuals dependent on alcohol and society. Examples of the societal consequences include road accidents, difficulties in the workplace, family and domestic conflicts, and interpersonal violence. Ultimately, these incidents also impact economic productivity, as well as the needs and resources of individuals and families (Gmel et al., 2000).



Although alcohol has long been known to be a depressive, it is also closely linked to other illnesses and ailments. There are many different types of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, skeletal and muscular conditions, reproductive problems, and consequences from premature birth and low birth weight, in addition to physical injuries and mental illnesses. According to recent studies, the amount of alcohol drank over the course of one's lifetime, the frequency with which it is drunk, and the amount ingested per episode all raise the risk of alcohol-related harm, with the risk increasing in a dose-dependent fashion. There is an increased risk and severity of several disorders, such as cardiomyopathy, acute respiratory distress syndrome, and muscle damage, even at greater levels of alcohol intake. When excessive drinking occurs on occasion and involves substantial amounts of alcohol, such as in the case of coronary heart disease and stroke, there is an increased risk of harm and certain cardiovascular disorders. While light to moderate drinking may potentially have some preventive effects against ischemic illnesses, it is important to note that the overall impact of alcohol on the heart is predominantly harmful (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006).

An association between alcohol use and various cancers was discovered by the International Agency for Cancer Research in 2007. These comprise malignancies of the oesophagus, liver, colon, rectum, pharynx, larynx, pharynx, larynx, and female breasts. The risk of developing cancer appears to increase gradually with higher alcohol consumption across all these cancer types. However, the strength of the association between alcohol use and different cancers varies. For instance, ten grammes of pure alcohol consumed daily is linked to a nearly 7% rise in the relative risk of female breast cancer, and ingesting half that amount increases the risk of colon cancer by at least 20%. This implies a more direct connection between alcohol use and breast cancer. Conversely, the risk of laryngeal, pharyngeal, and oesophageal cancer is significantly higher with an average intake of alcohol compared to breast and colorectal cancer. Many different types of malignancies have been linked to the existence of the alcohol metabolite acetaldehyde (Baan et al., 2007).

Alcohol use is intimately linked to a variety of cardiovascular conditions, including high blood pressure, brain haemorrhage, and irregular heartbeat. The relationship becomes more intricate when considering conditions like blocked heart arteries and strokes caused by reduced blood flow. Drinking too much alcohol too often has traditionally been associated with poor cardiovascular health. While light to moderate alcohol intake may have long-term benefits in preventing blocked arteries, this applies to all types of alcohol, including beer and wine. However, it is increasingly evident that other factors contribute significantly to this effect, as moderate alcohol use often indicates better overall health and social connections. Any amount of

alcohol increases the risk of sudden blood vessel blockage, so this protective effect does not apply to young people. For older people, on the other hand, engaging in physical activity and adopting a healthier diet are more effective ways to reduce death from blocked heart arteries than heavy alcohol consumption. Alcohol usage has been shown to worsen blocked artery-related disorders' symptoms by encouraging blood clot formation and decreasing the occurrence of a risky cardiac rhythm known as ventricular fibrillation (Roerecke & Rehm, 2010).

Males in their forties and fifties are disproportionately affected by the mortality brought on by alcoholism. It is important to understand that young people's brains are especially vulnerable to the effects of alcohol, therefore delaying its use until later in life lowers the likelihood of alcohol-related illnesses and dependence in adulthood. When the risk of death from alcohol-related illnesses is taken into account, there is no level of alcohol use that can be considered safe. Men and women face comparable risks in many societies. Adults who habitually drink six drinks a day have a one in ten probability of passing away from alcohol-related causes (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2009).

B) Cause and Effect of Increasing Alcoholism among Adolescents

Young adults go through major physical, emotional, and lifestyle changes as they become adulthood. Alcohol use has been linked to developmental processes, including things like puberty and growing independence. Therefore, being an adolescent not only increases the likelihood of starting to drink but also the potential for engaging in risky drinking behaviours.

Research indicates that the brain continues to develop well into the twenties, during which time it establishes crucial communication connections and refines its functioning. This extended period of growth may be a factor in some of the typical actions of adolescents, such as their propensity to seek out novel and potentially dangerous settings. This might entail drinking experimentation for some youths. Additionally, developmental changes offer a physiological reason for why teenagers frequently act impulsively and engage in risky behaviour, such as drinking alcohol, without fully understanding the repercussions of their choices (Dunn et. al, 1998).

Individuals' drinking behaviours, such as whether they start drinking and how much they consume, are influenced by how they view alcohol and its effects. Adolescents who anticipate a pleasurable experience from drinking are more likely to engage in alcohol consumption compared to those with different expectations. Early-formed alcohol-related beliefs are crucial, according to research on how expectations affect drinking habits from childhood through adolescence and young adulthood. By the age of thirteen, expectations are more optimistic, which is consistent with a greater focus on the energising and positive effects of alcohol among adolescents who drink the most (Spear et. al, 2005).

The fact that many young drinkers can take more alcohol than adults without suffering immediate negative effects like tiredness, poor coordination, or withdrawal symptoms may be due to differences between the adult brain and the developing teenage brain. This increased tolerance may be a factor in young adults' propensity for binge drinking. Teenagers may consume more alcohol than adults due to these good social experiences since they appear to be particularly sensitive to alcohol's benefits, such as improved social comfort.

Children who start drinking alcohol at a young age, especially before the age of twelve, frequently have specific personality features that make them more likely to consume alcohol. Traits associated with conduct problems, such as being disruptive, hyperactive, and aggressive, as well as those related to depression, withdrawal, or anxiety, increase the risk of alcohol-related issues. Other behavioural issues associated with alcohol use include disobedience, difficulties avoiding dangerous circumstances, and many traits seen in people who show contempt for the law or the feelings of others. (disinhibition).

Some behavioural and physiological factors that contribute to an individual's susceptibility to alcohol problems, including alcohol tolerance, may be directly influenced by genetics. For instance, the probability of acquiring alcohol-related problems increases if there is a family history of alcoholism, such as being the child of an alcoholic or having numerous relatives who are alcoholics. Compared to kids who don't have any close relatives who are alcoholics, children of alcoholics (COAs) have a four to ten times higher risk of becoming alcoholics themselves. COAs also frequently start drinking at an early age and develop alcohol-related issues more quickly.

The increasing prevalence of alcoholism among adolescents can be attributed to a variety of causes, and its effects can have significant consequences on individuals and society. Primarily under peer pressure adolescents often face peer pressure to fit in and conform to social norms. This pressure can lead them to experiment with alcohol, even if they are initially reluctant or unaware of the potential risks involved. Family dynamics and parental behaviour play a crucial role in shaping an adolescent's attitude toward alcohol. If parents or close family members have a history of alcohol abuse, adolescents may be more likely to engage in similar behaviours. The portrayal of alcohol in media, including movies, television shows, and advertisements, can contribute to shaping an adolescent's perception of alcohol as glamorous or necessary for social success.

Adolescents may have relatively easy access to alcohol, either through older friends or family members, or due to lax enforcement of age restrictions at stores or bars.

Alcohol abuse at a young age can have severe physical and mental health consequences. It can interfere with brain development, leading to cognitive impairments, memory problems, and a higher risk of developing addiction later in life. Alcohol abuse also increases the risk of accidents, injuries, and risky sexual behaviour. Excessive alcohol consumption among adolescents can negatively impact their academic performance. Alcohol impairs cognitive abilities, attention span, and memory, making it difficult for students to focus and retain information. This may lead to poorer academic performance, a lack of motivation, and a greater risk of dropping out of school.

Mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders can all be influenced by alcoholism. Adolescents struggling with alcohol abuse are also more likely to engage in self-harming behaviours or have suicidal ideation. Alcohol abuse can strain relationships with family and friends, leading to conflicts and breakdowns in communication. It can also lead to involvement in risky behaviours and criminal activities, damaging an adolescent's reputation and prospects. Long-term consequences: The likelihood that an alcoholic adolescent will continue to struggle with alcohol-related issues as an adult is higher. Chronic alcohol abuse can lead to a range of health issues, including liver damage, cardiovascular problems, and an increased likelihood of developing other substance abuse disorders. It is essential to address the underlying causes of alcoholism among adolescents and provide early interventions to prevent the negative effects on their well-being and prospects. Education, support systems, and access to appropriate treatment are key components in addressing this issue effectively.

C) Role of Social Media in Increasing Alcoholism

Social media has undoubtedly had an impact on various aspects of society, including the potential to influence behaviours and attitudes towards alcohol consumption. While it is challenging to establish a direct causal link between social media and increased alcoholism, there are several ways in which social media may contribute to this issue. It's important to note that individual experiences and susceptibility to alcoholism can vary significantly.

Social media platforms are frequently used by alcohol brands for advertising and promotional purposes. Advertisements on social media can reach a wide audience, including individuals who may be susceptible to alcohol-related issues. Exposure to appealing and persuasive alcohol ads may contribute to increased alcohol consumption. Social media influencers, who often have significant followings, can play a role in shaping behaviours and attitudes. Some influencers may endorse or glamorize excessive drinking, portraying it as a desirable or trendy lifestyle. This can impact their followers, particularly younger individuals, and influence their perception of alcohol.

Social media can facilitate cyberbullying and peer pressure, which may influence individuals to engage in risky behaviours, including excessive alcohol consumption. Negative comments or pressures from peers on social media can have a profound impact on vulnerable individuals, potentially leading to unhealthy coping mechanisms like alcohol abuse. These platforms often showcase people engaging in social activities, including drinking alcohol. Such content can normalize excessive drinking and create a sense of social pressure to participate. People may feel compelled to conform to perceived norms, which could lead to increased alcohol consumption.

Social media offers a venue for the exchange and promotion of communities and content linked to alcohol. This content may include discussions, images, or videos that promote excessive drinking or encourage alcohol-related challenges. Such exposure may influence individuals to experiment with alcohol beyond safe limits. It's vital to recognise that social media can be a useful tool for promoting responsible drinking, spreading awareness of the risks of alcohol consumption, and offering support to those who are battling addiction. However, the potential negative impact on alcohol consumption should be recognized and addressed through educational campaigns, responsible advertising practices, and the promotion of healthier social media content.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the impact of social media on drinking among adolescents is a significant aspect to consider in understanding and addressing this issue. Through the examination of various studies and research findings, several key insights have emerged. Firstly, social media platforms have become influential channels for promoting alcohol consumption among young individuals. The pervasive presence of alcohol-related content, such as advertisements, endorsements by influencers, and user-generated posts, normalizes and glamorizes drinking behaviours. This exposure can shape adolescents' perceptions and attitudes towards alcohol, leading to increased curiosity and a higher likelihood of experimentation.

Secondly, social media platforms facilitate peer influence and social pressure related to drinking. Adolescents often encounter images and stories of their peers engaging in alcohol-related activities, creating a sense of belonging and a desire to conform. This virtual social environment can contribute to the perception that alcohol use is a normative behaviour among their

peers, intensifying the pressure to participate. Moreover, social media platforms provide easy access to alcohol-related information and online communities that promote excessive drinking. These platforms can facilitate the dissemination of misinformation, misconceptions, and harmful drinking practices. Adolescents may encounter content that encourages binge drinking, drinking games, or other risky behaviours, further increasing the likelihood of negative consequences associated with alcohol use.

However, it is important to note that social media can also be leveraged as a tool for prevention and intervention. Educators, parents, and healthcare professionals can utilize social media platforms to disseminate accurate information about the risks and consequences of underage drinking. They can also engage with adolescents through interactive campaigns, promoting healthy alternatives, and fostering discussions about responsible alcohol use. In conclusion, the impact of social media on drinking among adolescents is a significant concern. While it can contribute to the normalization and promotion of alcohol consumption, it also provides an opportunity for prevention and education. By understanding and addressing the influence of social media, stakeholders can work towards creating a safer digital environment that promotes responsible decision-making, encourages positive peer interactions, and provides accurate information about the risks associated with underage drinking.

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