



## SUBSTANCE (ALCOHOL) ADDICTION AMONG MALE TO FEMALE TRANSGENDER IN CHENNAI CITY

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### Background of the study

Available evidence suggests the need to address substance abuse among Male to female Transgender. An unknown but significant proportion of this community consume alcohol possibly to forget stress and depression that they face in their daily life.

### Objectives of the study

To explore the socio demographic details of the respondents, to study the substance addiction, reasons for addiction.

### Method

From 1300 M to F transgender who were registered under three registered CBOs in Chennai, 299. M to F transgender were included in the study. Mixed method and consecutive sampling technique was used to collect data..

### Finding

Two fifth (40%) of the respondents were from the age group of 23yrs- 28yrs, only one fifth of them had completed their higher secondary education . Substance abuse was found among 20% (60) of the respondents and isolation from family, influence of friends, to handle stigma of being transgender and to handle shame of being sex worker, to handle rough clients, peer pressure and alcohol as recreation were some of the reasons for abusing alcohol

### Conclusion

Social isolation combined with the pressure to survive and make a living has forced many of the Male- to – female Transgender to be abuse substance. Stigma and discrimination should be addressed. Acceptance by the family members, education and employment opportunities would minimise situations that lead to addiction.

**Key words:** Substance abuse, male to female transgender, condom Usage.

## **Introduction**

India has the greatest number of HIV infections in Asia and the second highest total number of infected persons globally<sup>(1) (2)</sup>. Heavy alcohol consumption is associated with increased sexual risk-taking behaviours in many cultures, in particular among Male to Female Transgender. Male to female transgender are one of the vulnerable and key risk group for HIV and many studies has shown an increase frequency in the prevalence of HIV infection<sup>(3)</sup>. Understanding risk factors, such as alcohol use, among 'bridge' groups, especially among this community, may be important in developing effective HIV prevention interventions.

## **Objectives of the study**

To explore the socio demographic details of the respondents, to study the substance addiction, the reasons for addiction and effects of addiction on their life.

## **Method**

From 1300 Male to female transgender who were registered under three registered CBOs in chennai, 299 Male to female transgender were included in the study. Mixed method and consecutive sampling technique was used to collect data. A semi structured interview schedule was used to collect the data. Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) was used to explore the alcohol addiction was used for quantitative data and in depth interview guide<sup>(12)</sup> and focus group discussion (3 groups with 6 members in each group) was used for qualitative data collection.

**Analysis-** Informed consent was obtained from all the respondents. SPSS version 20 was used to analyse the quantitative data and the In depth interviews and focused group discussions were audio taped and were transcribed. Codes were derived and thematic content analysis and constant comparative techniques were used to analyse the data.

## **Finding**

Two fifth (40%) of the respondents were from the age group of 23yrs- 28yrs, only one fifth of them had completed their higher secondary education .Only three percent of the respondents stayed with their parents. Majority (87%) of the respondents either stayed with their friends if not Gurus. Majority(89%) of them had taken up sex work and less than ten percent of them

had their own business (tailors, auto driver, dancer, writer, junior artist). Sixty seven percent of the respondents had undergone sex reassignment surgery.

Majority ninety three percent of the respondents consumed alcohol. Substance abuse/addiction was found among 20% (60) of the respondents. When exploring the reasons for consumption, isolation from family, to handle stigma of being transgender, to handle shame of being sex worker, to handle rough clients, peer pressure and alcohol as recreation were some of the reasons for abusing alcohol. Twelve (n) of the respondents disclosed their positive status and eleven percent of the respondents were infected with STI. Forty five of substance respondents do not use condoms. There was strong association between transgender's living arrangement and alcohol consumption, lack of condom usage and HIV positive status and alcohol consumption and condom usage.

### **Qualitative Finding-**

**Living Arrangement-**From the sample size of 32 respondents, only one of the respondents was living with her family. All the others either stayed alone if not lived with friends and gurus. This shows that the stigma and discrimination faced by them from the family members and from the society.

**ID- 1- Resp-** *my parents did not send me out of house, but they did not like me being like this..... so they beat me, cut my hair..... I had only then straighten it spending 4000 Rs., they poured wax in my newly pierced ear.... So I ran away "*

**ID- 4- Resp-** *My father hated me but my mother was ok ..... but due to be she was beaten and she was teased by my relatives and neighbours...I use to sweep floors and I use to put rangloi ... I use to good.... I did not want my mother to suffer so I came out"*

**ID-10Resp-** *"I could not bear the scolding and beating any more..... and I was pushed out of my*

### **Education**

Nearly half (15- n) of the respondents had completed their tenth standard and only one of the Respondent was able to complete her under graduation.

**ID-3 resp-** *“I was not able to concentrate on studies... all I wanted is to leave home and be with my own community people”*

**ID-5- resp-** *“don’t call it as a school it was hell. Every second I was mocked and pulled up... both by the teachers and the students “*

**ID-7 resp-** *almost every month my mother was called to school .... Most of the time I was either outside the class if not in the principal’s room”*

**.ID-10-rep-** *I used to be scared even to go to the bathroom.... Boys use to be there hiding to touch me..”*

### **Reasons for Alcohol Consumption**

All the respondents expressed that they drink to forget their rejection and loneliness in life. Nine of the respondents were addicted to alcohol.

**FD-4resp-** *“it was not easy to beg on the streets, I had finished by UG and I come from a respected family.... I was horrible to be in the street and to beg....so overcome this I began to drink..”*

**ID-9 Resp-** *“ There is nothing good about living... we feel good when we drink. It gives me happiness”*

**FD-8 Resp-** *my husband... he use to drink and I use to drink with him... then his parents wanted him to marry and have children ..... so he left me and I began to drink a lot ....”*

**FD- 10 Resp-** *“my clients force me to drink and sometimes there are many clients and they are drunk if not they are very violent .so I have to have courage to handle them.*

### **Reason for not using condoms**

Of the 20 respondents who were married, majority (n-16) of the respondents do not use condoms with their husbands and neither did the 12 respondents who had permanent partners. Majority (24- n) of them said that men using alcohol thugs and police were challenging in using condoms. Only two of the respondents who were HIV positive used condoms.

**FGD-7 Resp-** “ *how can I use condom with my husband... I donot use with him... with clients I sometimes use..”*

**ID-6Resp:**“ *I get more many when I don't insist them to use condoms... I need lot of money for surgery...”*

**ID-5 Resp-** “*when client are drunk... when we have to have sex with thugs.... And at times police men.... We cannot use condoms”*

cathyJ.Rebaca points out that 57% of her respondents shared high usage of alcohol. According to the current study addiction was found in a lesser percentage (20%).

### **Conclusion**

The negative effects such as social isolation combined with the pressure to survive and make a living has forced many of the Male- to – female Transgender to be abuse substance. Stigma and discrimination should be addressed. Acceptance by the family members, education and employment opportunities would minimise situations that leads to addiction. Educational institutes needs to be sensitive to this community’s issues and motivate them to complete their education. Health care service should be willing to treat this disorder (addiction).

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