

A Comparative Investigation of Emotional Maturity Among Individuals with and Without Alcohol Dependence

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore and compare emotional maturity among individuals with and without alcohol dependence and further examined whether significant difference exist in emotional maturity levels between individuals diagnosed with alcohol use disorder and non-alcohol dependent controls. A descriptive-comparative research design was employed and quantitative data were collected using standardized psychological assessment tool. The sample consisted of 80 individuals diagnosed with alcohol use disorder recruited from rehabilitation centers, along with a comparison group of 80 non-alcoholic participants matched for age and gender. Emotional maturity was assessed using the Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) developed by Singh and Bhargava (1990), while alcohol use severity was measured using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT). Data were analyzed using the independent sample t-test. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in emotional maturity between individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence ($P < 0.05$), individuals with alcohol dependence obtained significantly higher score on the Emotional Maturity Scale; as higher scores on the EMS indicate lower emotional maturity, this indicates that alcohol-dependent individuals

exhibit poorer emotional maturity compared to their non-alcohol dependent counterparts. The result indicate that alcohol dependence may negatively influence emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, personality integration and independence.

Key Word: Emotional Maturity, Drinking behavior, Compulsive alcohol consumption, Alcohol abuse, Alcohol-dependence

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol is a toxic, psychoactive substance with dependence -properties. In many contemporary societies, alcoholic beverage has become a common feature of social life and are frequently integrated into social interactions across different population groups. Alcohol-related disorders, including Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) and alcohol dependence, are widely acknowledged as significant global public health challenges. Harmful patterns of alcohol consumption are associated with mental health disturbances, impaired cognitive and occupational performance, and an elevated risk of chronic diseases as well as premature mortality. These effects are especially significant among adolescents and young adults populations, where alcohol use has a considerable impact on overall health status and quality of life.

According to World Health Organization (2026), alcohol consumption is responsible

for approximately 2.6 million deaths annually and contributes substantially to global morbidity and disability. Overall, harmful use of alcohol accounts for around 4.7% of the global burden of disease. The burden is disproportionately higher amount males, contributing to approximately 6.9% of total disease burden in men compared to 2.0% in women. Alcohol remains the leading risk factor for premature mortality and disability among individuals aged 20-39 years, accounting for nearly 13% of all deaths in this age group. Furthermore, the World Health Organization (2026) highlights that alcohol-related harm disproportionately affects disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, who experience higher rates of alcohol-attributable mortality and hospitalization.

Alcohol dependence, clinically referred to as Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), is a chronic relapsing mental and behavioral condition characterized by compulsive alcohol consumption, impaired control over drinking behavior, and continued use despite harmful consequences. Beyond its behavioral symptoms, AUD has been widely associated with significant disturbances in emotional functioning, including poor emotional regulation, heightened impulsivity, and maladaptive coping patterns. A substantial body of psychological and neurobiological literature has highlighted the strong relationship between alcohol dependence and emotional dysregulation. Gratz & Roemer (2004), in their foundational work on emotion regulation, conceptualized it as a multidimensional construct involving emotional awareness, clarity, acceptance, and impulse control. Deficits in these domains have consistently been linked with substance use disorders.

Empirical research has further demonstrated that individuals with alcohol dependence often struggle with managing negative affective states. Fox et al. (2007) found that stress and negative emotions significantly increase alcohol craving in abstinent individuals, suggesting that alcohol is frequently used as a maladaptive coping

mechanism. In a subsequent study, Fox et al. (2008) reported that alcohol-dependent individuals show significantly greater difficulties in emotion regulation compared to non-dependent individuals, particularly in areas related to emotional awareness and impulse control. Koob & Volkow (2010) proposed that chronic alcohol use leads to long-term dysregulation of brain rewards and stress systems. This results in persistent negative emotional states, reduced stress tolerance, and impaired ability to regulate affect, which collectively contribute to compulsive alcohol-seeking behaviour. Grant et al. (2006), in the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC), reported that individuals with alcohol dependence exhibit significant impairments in emotional and psychosocial functioning across diverse populations. These impairments often coexist with affective disturbances.

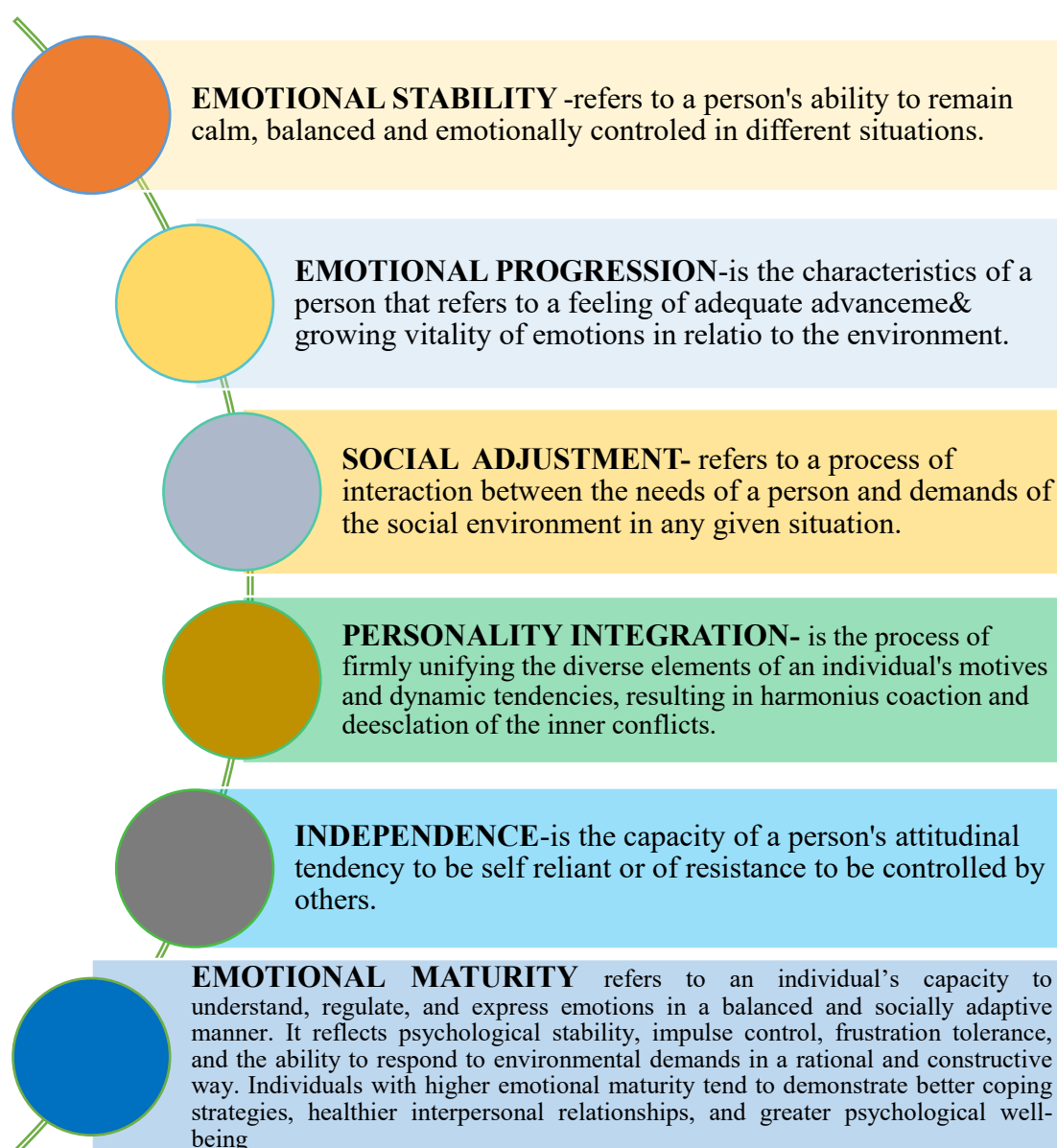
Further, petit et al. (2015) demonstrated that deficits in emotion regulation are closely associated with increased alcohol craving and higher relapse risk, indication that emotional functioning plays a crucial role not only in the development but also in the maintenance of alcohol dependence. Individuals with poor emotional control are more likely to rely on alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism, thereby reinforcing addictive behaviour patterns. Similarly, Foisy et al. (2007) found that such individuals often show reduced accuracy in recognizing emotional facial expressions, indicating broader deficits in emotional cognition. These impairments may contribute to interpersonal difficulties and reduced social functioning.

Moreover, impulsivity and decision-making deficits have been widely documented in alcohol dependence. Evenden (1999) highlighted impulsivity as a core feature of addictive behaviours, while subsequent studies have shown that alcohol-dependent individuals exhibit poor behavioural inhibition and increased risk-taking tendencies. These characteristics are closely related to emotional maturity deficits,

particularly in term of self- regulation and delayed gratification.

Despite extensive research on emotion regulation, impulsivity, and coping in alcohol dependence, relatively fewer studies have directly examined emotional maturity as a unified psychological construct using standardized tool. This gap is particularly evident in comparative studies involving both clinical and non-clinical populations,

especially within the Indian socio-cultural context where empirical evidence remains limited. Therefore, the present study aims to explore and compare emotional maturity among individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence in order to contribute to the existing literature and provide deeper insight into emotional functioning differences between these two groups.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the level of emotional maturity among individuals with alcohol

dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence.

2. To compare emotional maturity between individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence.
3. To examine whether a significant difference exists in emotional maturity between the two groups.
4. To examine whether a significant difference exists in Emotional Stability, Emotional Progression, Social Adjustment, Personality Integration and Independence between the two groups.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is a significant difference in level of emotional maturity between individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence.
2. There is a significant difference in level of emotional stability between individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence.
3. There is a significant difference in level of emotional progression between individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence.
4. There is a significant difference in level of social adjustment between individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence.
5. There is a significant difference in level of personality integration between individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence.
6. There is a significant difference in level of Independence between individuals with alcohol dependence and individuals without alcohol dependence.

METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to assess and compare emotional maturity among individuals with alcohol dependence and

individuals without alcohol dependence. The total sample consisted of 160 individuals, including 80 individuals diagnosed with Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) selected from de-addiction and rehabilitation centers of Nainital district, Uttarakhand and 80 non-alcohol dependent individuals selected from the general population of the same district using simple random sampling method. The age range of participants was 21 to 24 years, and both group were matched on age, gender and socioeconomic status. A Personal Data Sheet was used to collect participants demographic information, and Standardized questionnaires were administered through face-to-face interactions in both rehabilitation centers and community setting to ensure consistency in data collection. Descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were computed to summarize the data, and an independent-sample t- test was conducted to examine differences in emotional maturity between the two groups.

RESEARCH TOOLS

Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) developed by Singh and Bhargava (1990) was used to collect data in the present study. The scale consists of 48 items designed to assess five dimensions of emotional maturity, namely emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, personality integration and independence. It uses a standardized rating format in which higher scores indicate lower emotional maturity. A Personal Data Sheet was used to collect demographic information of the participants. In addition, screening of alcohol-use severity in both group was conducted using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT).

RESULT ANALYSIS

Table No.1 Comparison between Alcohol dependent individuals and normal controls on emotional maturity

Group	Mean	S.D.	df	C.R. value
Individuals with alcohol dependence	115.23	13.73	158	9.78*
Individuals without alcohol dependence	97.02	9.36		

* Significant at 0.05% Level, ** Significant at 0.01% Level

An examination of Table 1 reveals a statistically significant difference in emotional maturity between alcohol-dependent and non-alcohol dependent individuals. The mean emotional maturity score of the alcohol- dependent group was 115.23, whereas the non-alcohol-dependent group obtained a lower mean score of 97.02 since lower scores indicate higher emotional maturity, the findings suggest that non-alcohol dependent individuals are significantly more emotionally mature than

alcohol- dependent individuals. Furthermore, the calculated C.R. value from independent - sample t test revealed that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the observed is unlikely to have occurred by chance. These findings suggest that alcohol dependence is associated with lower emotional maturity and less effective management of emotional responses. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Table No.2: Comparison between Alcohol dependent individuals and normal controls on various dimension of emotional maturity

Dimension of Emotional Maturity	Group	Mean	S.D.	df	C.R. value
Emotional Stability	Individuals with alcohol dependence	24.2	4.42	158	5.33*
	Individuals without alcohol dependence	20.4	4.59		
Emotional Progression	Individuals with alcohol dependence	22.60	5.07	158	4.06*
	Individuals without alcohol dependence	19.76	3.70		
Social Adjustment	Individuals with alcohol dependence	22.33	4.18	158	3.31*
	Individuals without alcohol dependence	20.32	3.47		
Personality Integration	Individuals with alcohol dependence	23.31	4.39	158	8.23*
	Individuals without alcohol dependence	17.80	4.06		
Independence	Individuals with alcohol dependence	22.78	4.93	158	6.16*
	Individuals without alcohol dependence	18.73	3.19		

* Significant at 0.05% Level, ** Significant at 0.01% Level

An examination of Table 2 reveals a statistically significant difference in emotional stability between alcohol-dependent and non-alcohol dependent individuals. The mean emotional stability score of the alcohol- dependent group was 24.2, whereas the non-alcohol-dependent group obtained a lower mean score of 20.4 since lower scores represent higher emotional stability, this suggests that non-alcohol dependent individuals are more emotionally stable than their alcohol – dependent counterparts. Furthermore, the C.R. value obtained through the independent t- test was found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the observed difference is significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in emotional stability between

alcohol dependent and non- alcohol dependent individuals; consequently, Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Table 2 reveals that, with respect to emotional progression, alcohol-dependent individuals obtained a mean score of 22.60, whereas non-alcohol dependent individuals obtained a considerably lower mean score of 19.76. since lower score represent higher emotional progression, the findings suggest that non- alcohol dependent individuals are more emotionally progressive than their alcohol- dependent counterparts. Furthermore, the calculated C.R. value from the t- test comparing the two groups was found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the result demonstrates a significant difference in emotional progression between alcohol – dependent

and non- alcohol dependent individuals; accordingly, Hypothesis 3 is accepted.

The analysis of Table 2 reveals that, with respect to social adjustment, alcohol dependent individuals obtained a mean score of 22.33, whereas non- alcohol dependent individuals obtained a considerably lower mean score of 20.32. since lower scores represent higher social adjustment, this suggests that non- alcohol dependents individuals are more socially well-adjusted than their alcohol dependent counterparts. Furthermore, the calculated C.R. value from the t- test was found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating a significant difference between the two groups. Accordingly, Hypothesis 4 is accepted. Similarly, the T able 2 reveals that, with respect to personality integration, alcohol dependent individuals obtained a mean score of 23.31, whereas non-alcohol dependent individuals obtained a lower mean score of 17.80. since lower scores indicate higher levels of personality integration, the findings suggest that non- alcohol dependent individuals are more integrated than alcohol dependent individuals. The t-test results further indicated a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is accepted.

Finally, with respect to independence, alcohol dependent individuals obtained a mean score of 22.78, whereas non- alcohol dependent individuals obtained a lower mean score of 18.73. Since lower scores indicate higher level of independence, the findings suggest that non- alcohol dependent individuals demonstrate greater independence than alcohol dependent individuals. The t- test result confirmed that this difference was statistically significant, indicating that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Consequently, hypothesis 6 is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine and compare emotional maturity among individuals with and without alcohol dependence. The findings clearly indicated a

significant difference between the two groups, showing that individuals with alcohol dependence have lower emotional maturity than non-alcohol dependent individuals. This suggests that alcohol dependence is associated with poor emotional development and difficulties in managing emotions effectively. These findings are in line with the emotion regulation framework of Gratz & Roemer (2004), which explains that difficulties in understanding, accepting, and controlling emotion led to psychological maladjustment. Emotional maturity depends on these same abilities, so lower emotional maturity in alcohol dependent individuals can be understood as a reflection of weak emotion regulation skills. The present results also receive indirect support from previous studies. Fox et al. (2008) reported that alcohol dependent individuals show poor emotional control and higher impulsivity compared to non- alcohol dependent individuals. Similarly, Grant et al. (2004) further reported that people with alcohol use disorders experience emotional instability, poor stress management, and difficulties in social and personal adjustment. In addition, Petit et al. (2015) found that poor emotion regulation increases craving and relapse risk, showing that emotional difficulties not exist but also maintain alcohol dependence over time. Overall, all these studies provide indirect but consistent support for the present findings.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that emotional maturity is significantly lower among individuals with alcohol dependence compared to those without alcohol dependence. This finding indicates that alcohol dependence is associated with emotional instability, underdeveloped emotional progression, poor social adjustment, weak personality integration, and lack of independence.

Declaration by Authors

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