ABSTRACT

Alcohol dependence is a chronic disorder, accompanied by neuropsychological deficits due to harmful effect of alcohol in the brain. Executive functions; abilities to engage successfully in independent, purposive and self-serving behavior; and memory is the ability to encode, store and retrieve information. Purpose of the study was to indentify the cognitive dysfunctions particularly the executive functions and memory among patients with alcohol dependence syndrome. The study followed descriptive design and recruited participants (Male = 54, Female = 8) with age 39.24±9.08 years from inpatient services of the Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health by convenient sampling. Measures used were the Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire, Frontal Assessment Battery and the PGI Memory Scale. Majority of the participants were married, had secondary level of education and service holders. Duration of alcohol consumption was 13.93±8.74 years and period of dependence was 2.97±2.23 years. 56.5% of the participants had moderate level of alcohol dependence. Executive functions were impaired in 33.9% of the participants; conceptualization, programming and mental flexibility were the most impaired functions. 38% variance in executive dysfunctions were explained by illness variables; period of alcohol dependence (β=-.362, $p<0.01$) and education (β = .284, $p<0.01$) were significant predictors. Visual retention, remote memory, verbal retention of dissimilar pairs and delayed recall were impaired in majority and 54.8% had significant memory dysfunction in general. Memory dysfunction differed significantly among the age groups ($F=10.22$, $p<0.01$) and age was the significant predictor (β=.542, $p<0.001$). 19% variance in memory dysfunction was explained by illness variables, where the duration of alcohol consumption was a significant predictor (β = .485, $p<0.01$). Findings indicate that cognitive dysfunctions are prevalent among patients with alcohol dependence. Hence, routine neuropsychological assessment is of particular importance for early detection and management of underlying deficits, which completes the treatment of alcohol dependence.

Keywords: Alcohol Dependence, Cognitive Dysfunctions, Executive Functions, Memory