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Influence of Social Factors on Drug Use Behavior in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract: Drug use is one of the most important social problem having very bad implications for family and society. Therefore the study was designed to investigate the prospective relationship between various socio factors and drug use behavior. The study is based on 500 male drug users and data was collected from five Government Model and rehabilitation centers that were situated at Civil Hospital Faisalabad, Mayo Hospital Lahore, Victoria Hospital Bahawalpur, Nishtar Hospital Multan and General Hospital Rawalpindi. A proportionate sample of 500 respondents was interviewed randomly from among the lists of addicts available in these centers. Bivariate results indicate that peer pressure affected 26.30%, loneliness 46.03% and parental coldness 16.35% to the addicts and were the major social factors that influence the behavior to become drug addicts. The data thus suggest that an inclination towards drug taking might be embedded in the social matrix itself.

Key words: Drug use behavior, social factors, substance use

INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction has infested in the Pakistani society through a long time. Today this common menace prevails in all segments of society and most men and women of every age group are addicted to one drug or the other. Thirty years back a woman smoking tobacco was considered a big deal but these days many women and young teenage school girls will admit to smoking hashish and heroin. A few young people just take these drugs out of mere fun and end up becoming serious addicts.

There is a growing concern that there is no single reason for a person to being using drug, no single pattern of abuse and no single unavoidable outcome. In short compulsive drug users are a heterogeneous group in which multi factors interact to sustain drug and predispose to repetitive replace.

Poor social and economic conditions in Pakistan also have an abroad impact on Pakistan's overall health situation and increase vulnerability of general population to drug problem. Recent estimates indicate that 40% of population lives below the poverty line. Poverty is inextricably linked to an array of difficulties that reduce the life chances of individual and overall health and well being of households and communities. Poverty sometimes influences people to make choices that make them more vulnerable to infection, for example, the frustration related to poverty can drive people to the abuse of drugs. A number of socioeconomic and psychological factors such as youth, crises due to large disparity between income groups, urbanization and loneliness, peer pressure are known to be linked to drug abuse (National Household Survey, 1998).

It is fact that up till 1979, no single heroin incident was reported in Pakistan but now there are 500,000 heroin

users among the working class, students and young in general, 40% are living in urban areas and 60% living in rural areas. They are consuming 4800 kg heroin daily. In 1985 the official figures of drug abusers was about 2 million whereas, it is now estimated to be 15 million or more with heroin abuser claiming the highest percentage.

Addicts always want to be alienated from society, social norms, values and problems. An addict is always a non earning member of the family or if he is earning, he uses his money to continue his habit. His addiction becomes so compulsive and impulsive that he becomes helpless in doing any thing. If the drug to which he is addicted is not available to him, the addict orientates his life around acquiring to it. The drug abuse also produces social crisis and weakens the socio-economic fabric of nation (Nazish, 2007).

The objective of this study therefore was to investigate the drug use behavior and its relationship with social characteristics of the addicts in Punjab province of Pakistan.

To achieve the objectives of the study following material and methods were applied.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was carried out in five Government Model drug abuse and rehabilitation centers that were situated in civil hospital Faisalabad, Mayo hospital Lahore, Victoria hospital Bahawalpur, Nishtar hospital Multan and General hospital Rawalpindi.

A proportionate sample of 500 respondents was interviewed randomly from among the lists of addicts available in these centers. A comprehensive interview schedule was developed, encompassing almost every aspect of the study. The conceptual design of the

questionnaire was framed with three independent variables (Peer Pressure, Parental coldness, Loneliness) and one dependent variable (drug use behavior). Association between the independent and dependent variables was investigated by chi-square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section different social factors associated with drug use behavior are discussed and its relationship with Social characteristics of the addicts in Punjab province of Pakistan is presented.

Table 1: Association between peer pressure and drug use behavior

Peer pressure	Drug use behavior		
	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
To great extent	68.3	22.7	10.0
To some extent	23.0	39.1	20.0
Not at all	08.7	38.2	70.0

$\chi^2 = 26.300$; d.f = 4; p-value <0.001

Table 2: Association between parental coldness and drug use behavior

Parental coldness	Drug use behavior		
	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
To great extent	42.1	31.8	26.1
To some extent	30.0	50.1	19.9
Not at all	07.8	32.2	60.0

$\chi^2 = 16.375$; d.f = 4; p-value <0.001

Peer pressure and drug use behavior: A positive relationship was found between peer pressure and drug use behavior. The association between these two variables was significant (Table 1). Peer pressure was a vital factor that implanted the habit of drug use. Addicts followed their friends just enjoy the company of friends. This is also supported by Akhtar (1974); Sudbury (2005) in their research findings on drug addiction.

Parental coldness and drug use behavior: The association between response of addicts towards parental coldness and drug use behavior was significant (Table 2). Addicts agreed that neglectful behavior and coldness of parents resulted in highest rate of drug use. Drug users mostly come from those families which lacks affection by parents. The reason of drug use was to release tension. All addicts were took rescue under the cover of drugs as a result of rejection by their families. The same was found by Cloutier and Renaud (1990).

Table 3: Association between loneliness and drug use behavior

Loneliness	Drug use behavior		
	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
To great extent	60.0	27.3	26.1
To some extent	17.4	31.3	06.0
Not at all	22.6	40.9	67.9

$\chi^2 = 46.031$; d.f = 4; p-value <0.001

Loneliness and drug use behavior: Relationship between loneliness and drug use behavior was significant. Loneliness has caused feelings of loss, distress, separation and isolation which started by the loss of a spouse or companion, ignorance of parents due to their working activities and that caused a change in young people's minds and they got motivated for drugs addiction. Grief was big reality which motivated them for drug addiction (David, 2000; Stephen, 2003).

Conclusion: Based on the result of this study, following major conclusions are drawn. Respondents were using the drugs due to some social reasons. The major sources of availability of these drugs were their friends and they were spending 4-6 hrs daily in their company to maintain this habit. Parental love is essential but majority were facing the harsh and cold attitude of their parents and they started addiction. Working parents created loneliness due to their working activities which motivated them for drugs addiction.

In all, peer pressure, parental coldness and loneliness positively influenced the behavior of drug addicts.

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