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PATTERNS OF DRUG ABUSE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN INDIA

Education

Supriya Karmakar Research Scholar, Department of Education, University of Kalyani, West Bengal, India.

Deb Prasad Sikdar* Professor And Dean, Department of Education Life Science Division, Faculty of Education, University of Kalyani, West Bengal, India. *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

The virtual epidemic of drug abuse among youth has occupied dreadful dimensions in India. Despite the devastating effects of drug addiction on health, family and all aspects of the society, different kinds of drugs are abused by the people of all classes of socio-economic strata. Even prevalence of drug abuse among women is a common phenomenon in India. To prevent drug addiction, literacy rate should be increased and also health awareness should be increased among the people of all classes of society through different medias like T.V., newspapers and other social medias to relieve from this curse of drug addiction.

KEYWORDS

Drugs, Drug abuse, Devastating effects, Health awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Drugs refer to the chemical substances that can be potentially abused such as licit drugs (alcohol, tobacco), illicit drugs (heroin, marijuana) and prescribed drugs. Here, the 'abuse' means the use of drug when it is not medically prescribed or when it is used too much so that it can cross the socially acceptable limits. Most people start to take drug voluntarily but in addiction, they cannot control the use of drugs. Addiction is a chronic disease. In addiction, the individual is unable to control or cease intake of drugs. The effects of drug addiction are harmful for the individual's personal life, his family and also for the society. It seems to be an extraordinary threat for the quality of human life. It engulfs the young generation throughout the world. A report showed that more than fifty million people throughout the world were dependent on various kinds of drugs[1]. In world, alcohol as a risk factor provokes 4.0% of the total liability of disability respectively[2]. In India, the substances that are used for abuse among adolescent as well as children include alcohol, tobacco, bhang, opium, ganja, heroin, pain relief ointments, cough syrups etc. About 50% of the ninth-grade boys tried at least one of the gateway drugs[3]. Gateway drug is a kind of habit-forming drug that drives towards the use of more addictive and dangerous drugs. The most common gateway drugs are alcohol, nicotine, prescribed medicines etc. Such type of drugs can open the door to use more addictive drugs like meth, cocaine, heroin etc. Marijuana is a kind of gateway drug because use of marijuana triggers the use of other kind of licit and illicit drugs[4].

Drug addiction can destroy the family and society. It breaks the supportive bonds between the family members. Family finance is also affected by drug addiction. Drug addicted people can steal valuable things from his own house or from other's house to get the money so that they can bear the expenses of drugs. They also need the money for treatment as the drug addiction causes several types of health problems such as lung or heart disease, cancer, stroke or mental health conditions. According to Kelly and Daley, drug addiction can cause mental disorders like anxiety, depression or schizophrenia[5]. Addicts develop the inability to take the right judgment. Due to impaired judgment, the unsafe sex and needle sharing leads the spread of infectious disease like HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C[6,7]. The infection of the heart with its valves and skin infection may develop among intravenous drug users[8]. Drug abuse in pregnant mother often results in neonatal abstinence in which symptoms like tremors, problems with sleeping and feeding and even seizures may appear[9].

Despite the good knowledge about the devastating effects of drug addiction, people are still addicted with different kinds of drugs like nicotine (tobacco), alcohol, cannabis etc. Drug addiction is not confined to a particular segment or specific group of society, it is spreading among all the religious, communities and castes. The prevalence of drug abuse is widely spreading across age, class and gender. With this background, the present study was conducted to focus the different patterns of drug abuse and its consequences in India.

Different Types of Drugs

Based on the effects of drugs on users, it can be divided into seven categories. These seven types of drugs are stimulants, depressants, inhalants, cannabis, dissociative, opioids and hallucinogens[10].

The different terms of drugs that are very familiar to everyone are illegal drugs, narcotic drugs, illicit drugs etc. People can know about these drugs through different medias like T.V. news, newspaper etc. The concept of such drugs is given below -

a) Legal Drugs: Doctor's prescribed drugs and various other drugs like nicotine, alcohol, caffeine etc. are the legal drugs. Such types of drugs can be legally produced, bought or sold. But there are some restrictions on using of these drugs.
b) Illegal Drugs: These drugs cannot be legally made, bought or sold. There are some other drugs of which legality is dependent on specific situation that is the kind of using drugs. When the drugs are abused illegally then those drugs are illegal drugs. Illegal drugs are forbidden by law. Marijuana, cocaine, heroin, opium etc. are of illegal drugs.
c) Narcotic Drugs: A narcotic drug is a drug that in moderate doses dulls the sensibility, relieves pain and produces profound sleep but in excessive doses causes stupor, coma or convulsions. Morphine, heroin, opium etc. are of narcotic drugs.
d) Illicit Drugs: Illicit drugs are highly addictive drugs. These drugs alter the way of brain works of the addicted person. The way of thinking and acting of addicted person are also changed. Some illicit drugs are cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, hallucinogens, marijuana, meth etc. Illicit drugs are not legally produced, sold or used[11].

Different Ways of Taking Drugs

Different methods are used for taking drugs. People can take the drugs into the body by five methods. These are smoking, swallowing, snorting, through suppositories and injecting[12].Tobacco smoke is of three types. These are first-hand smoke, second-hand smoke and third-hand smoke[13].

Prevalence of Drug Abuse

In India, a large number of people use psychoactive substances but there are wide variations in taking substances across different states. The most commonly used drug in India is alcohol. After alcohol, cannabis and opioids are the two next commonly used drugs in India[14]. Some people use other drugs like Inhalants, Stimulants, Cocaine and Hallucinogens.

i) Alcohol abuse in India

According to World Health Organization, an individual drinks about 6.2 liters of alcohol per year and based on alcohol consumption per capita, India is ranked 101 in world[15]. In the world, the third largest market for alcoholic beverages is India due to its large population[15]. Alcohol is used in almost every state of the India. The people of Indian states like Chhattisgarh, Tripura, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh and Goa consume alcohol at a high level[14]. In India, the highest alcohol consuming state is Assam[15].

The proportion of alcohol users is greater in town and slum area compared to the rural area[16]. 87.5% of urban males use alcohol daily in Amritsar, Punjab[17]. More than half of the male population of Tripura, Chhattisgarh and Punjab consume alcohol[14].

The prevalence of alcohol use does not appear only a male phenomenon, but female persons also use alcohol in almost all the states of country. A higher prevalence of alcohol use occurs among males compared to females[18]. Mehra, *et. al.* also showed in their studies that the number of males who consumed alcohol was more than alcohol consumed females and male consumed alcohol at a higher rate than female[19]. Consumption of alcohol is considerably lower among women (1.6%) as compared to men (27.3%)[14]. It has been reported that alcohol is used among children aged 10 -17 years but the largest prevalence of alcohol consumption is men aged more than 18 years. The mean age at which the alcohol consumption is initiated has reduced from 23.36 years in 1950 - 1960 to 19.45 years in 1980 - 1990[20]. But in West Bengal, the prevalence of alcohol intake is 65.8% at which the mean age for initiation of alcohol consumption is 20.8±9 Years[21].

Previous studies showed that a higher prevalence of alcohol drinking and alcohol-use disorders occurred among the college students than non-college youths[19]. The prevalence of alcohol intake is increased among college students[22]. 20% of the college students use alcohol[19]. The prevalence of alcohol use differs among students pursuing different academic streams[23].

A study revealed that the prevalence of alcohol intake among the 26 - 45 years age-group was 67.4%[16]. About 14.6% of the Indian population aged between 10 - 75 years consume alcohol[14]. About a third of the population in India drinks alcohol on a regular basis and about 11% of the Indians are moderate or heavy drinkers[15].

ii) Cannabis abuse in India

In India, the people abuse cannabis drugs mainly in three forms and these are bhang, ganja and charas bhang is also known as siddhi sabji or patty. Bhang is always taken in the form of a drink or a mixture or by chewing but ganja and charas are taken by smoking. The use of cannabis drug is not confined only in India but it is also abused in Persia, Southern Siberia and China[24].

According to World Drug Report, one of the most commonly abused illicit drug is cannabis in world[25]. About 192 million people globally abuse cannabis[26]. "Global burden disease", 2010, reports that more than 10 million people globally are cannabis dependent. According to the recent national survey, more than 30 million people abuse cannabis in India and many of them suffer from cannabis use disorder[14].

At the national level, about 2.8% people aged 10-75 years are current users of any kinds of cannabis products, 0.66 % people ages between 10-75 years need help with their harmful use of cannabis product[14]and 0.25% people are the cannabis dependent[14]. The highest prevalence of cannabis abuse is found among adolescents and young adults[27].

There are state wise variations in the use of cannabis. The people of states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh and Delhi use cannabis at a higher-level than the national prevalence of cannabis[14].

As bhang is a legal drug, it is available in many states of India and it is used by a greater number of people (2%) as compared to ganja / charas (1.2%)[14,28]. But in some states like West Bengal, Sikkim, Bihar, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram, ganja and charas which are illegal products[14,28] are used by a greater number of people as compared to bhang[14]. Among states, Sikkim is the highest cannabis consumed state whereas the lowest prevalence rate is found in Puducherry (0.0%)[26].

iii) Opioid abuse in India

Opioids refer to the substances which are used as moderate or severe pain relievers. Opioid is a kind of narcotic drugs. It includes opium, heroin and pharmaceutical opioids[14]. Opioids are generally used as pain relievers and its use is safe when it is taken for a short time as per doctor's prescription. But this drug can be misused when it is taken without a doctor's prescription or taken in a larger quantity than prescribed by doctor.

The prevalence of illicit opiate intake in India is two-fold of the average of global opiate intake[29]. According to 'World Drug Report 2020', the overall opioid abuse in India has been increased five-fold compared to earlier opioid abuse estimated from a survey in 2004[30]. A survey report published by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) showed that in 2018, about 23 million people aged 10-75 years abused opioids[30]. There are approximately 77 lakh people with opioid problem in India[14]. Among all the opioids, heroin is used by a greater number of people as compared to other opioids[14,30]. Heroin also has the highest harmful use whereas the pharmaceutical opioid has relatively less harmful use and opium has the lowest harmful use[14]. The prevalence of opioids consumption is much higher among male than female and about 1.8% of the people aged 10-17 years consume opioids[30].

Regular use of opioid, even prescribed by doctor, can lead to opioid dependence. Opioid dependence is a disease in which the regulation of opioid use is disrupted due to continuous or repeated use of opioids and in opioids dependence, patient feel strong internal urge to use opioids[31]. Due to misuse of opioid pain relievers, addictions may result which may lead to overdose incidents and deaths[32]. In India, about one million people are the opioid dependent[33].In a study, it has been found that Punjab alone has around 232,000 people who are opioid dependent[34]. So, it can be said that opioid dependency among people is found in many parts of India. There are state wise variations in the use of opioids in India. The states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujrat have the highest number of people who have opioid use problems. Based on the percentage of population affected by opioids, the top states in India are Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur along with Haryana, Punjab and Delhi[14].

iv) Tobacco abuse in India

One of the leading causes of preventable death is the tobacco smoking in developing countries[35] and about 6 million people globally are died due to tobacco smoking in each year[36]. In India, 267 million people use tobacco[37].

The mean age at which tobacco consumption is initiated is 16.9 ± 1.9 years[38]. The students of school, college and even university level students also abuse tobacco. 8.6% of the pre-university of college students of Bangalore abuse tobacco[39]. The prevalence of tobacco smoking is also found among female students. The overall prevalence of tobacco abuse among adolescent is 45.42%[40] and tobacco consumptions among male students is higher than that of female students[40,41].

Tobacco consumption is more in males[42,43]**.** But the female smoking rate is growing faster than the male smoking rate; the female smoking rate has doubled from 1.4% to 2.9% from the time period of 2005 to 2010[44].

In India, people consume three types of tobacco products. These products are smoking tobacco (bidi, cigar, cigarette, cheroot etc.), chewing tobacco (zorda, sukha, dokta or gundi etc.) and inhaling tobacco (snuff). The chewing tobacco and inhaling tobacco, both are called smokeless tobacco. Majority of the male and the female adolescent pre-dominantly abuse smokeless tobacco[40] and many people are died due to smokeless tobacco in world[45].

About 30% tobacco users consume tobacco by smoking, 35% consume smokeless forms and 35% consume both forms[46]. Number of tobacco chewers are more than that of tobacco smokers[43].About 15.8% tobacco users consume tobacco in chewable form and 25.3 % children consume betelnut / arecanuts[47]. It has been found that one of the smokeless tobaccos**,** mishri is consumed by 45% of the female tobacco users and 36% female use quid[48]. The smokeless tobacco is used at higher level among urban women from lower socio-economic strata[49]. The regular use of tobacco among the rural students is higher than the urban students[41]. Tobacco consumption is more in illiterate persons. About 54.55% of tobacco users are illiterate[48]. Poor and less educated people consume tobacco more than rich and higher educated people in India[50,51]. The Indian states like Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu having high literacy rate have low female smoking rates and the states having low literacy rate like Bihar, Manipur, Nagaland smoke more

Consequences of Drug Addiction

Drug addiction has the devastating effects on health, family and all aspects of society. It increases diseases, crime, accidents, child-abuse, job-loss, domestic violence and homelessness. Many precious lives are lost due to drug addiction. It results in mass economic and social consequences.

Drug addicted people may have one or more health problems like stroke, heart or lung disease, cancer or mental health conditions. Nerve cells can be destroyed by drugs like inhalants. Mental disorders like anxiety, depression or schizophrenia can be developed among drug addicted people. In India, one-third of males and one-fourth of females who drinks alcohol on a regular basis face problems to their physical

health and also to the finances and household responsibilities[15]. The symptoms of chronic alcohol consumption are observed among the 62% of the alcohol dependents[21]. According to World Drug Report, 2018, about 7.7 million people of opioid users in India suffer from serious health problems and a drug use survey in India, 2019, showed that about 2.5 million people suffer from pharmaceutical opioids use disorders[30]. Due to smoking, the risk of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, several forms of cancer increase. There is direct relationship between the smoking and cancer. In West Bengal, most of the patients with gastric carcinoma are bidi smokers[52]. The risk of some infectious disease like AIDS, Hepatitis C etc. can be increased by the use of drugs due to sharing of injection equipment. About 2% of the intravenous drug users was positive for HIV but no non-intravenous drug users were HIV positive; these non-intravenous drug users were positive for syphilis[53]. Drug addiction has the hazardous effect on people's health which leads to pre-matured death[54].The death rate is increased due to overdose of opioid abuse; the deaths rose from 46,802 deaths to 49,860 in the time period between 2018-2019[32]. In India, an additional 200, 000 people are died due to use of smokeless tobacco in each year; this amount is the 74% of the smokeless tobacco users in world[45].

Koza showed in his study that there were 39% families that have school/college drop-outs due to drug abuse[54]. When a student is addicted with drugs, may become turbulent with guardians, parents and siblings. Drug addicted people may have unreasonable anger and may hurt others verbally or physically. Thus, the relationship between the family members is broken due to drug addiction. Drug addicted person lose their attention in school, sports or work. There are 20% college students who report different type of academic outcome from alcohol such as missing class, bad achievement in exams and getting lower grades overall[23].

From newspaper, it is known to us that drivers of truck, public transportation has drug addictions. When drug addicted drivers drive their car, many road accidents occur and several lives are lost. Even many doctors abuse different kinds of drugs and they are accused of malpractice due to drug addiction.

Crime rate is also increased by drug addiction. Drug addicted people need money for purchasing their drugs. Gradually their requirement of money is increased and they become ferocious for money to buy their drugs. Ultimately, they become involve in serious crime like murder, robbery and assault. Thus, drug addiction breaks the stability of the society.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it is clear that the people of all classes of socio-economic strata consume different kinds of drugs. From several studies, it is clear that female smoking rate is growing faster than the male smoking rate. Even the prevalence of smokeless tobacco abuse is higher among the women than that of men. Majority of illiterate persons abuse drugs. Even educated people like school going students, college going students and university level students abuse different kinds of drugs. So, to prevent the hazardous effects of drug addition, we must pay attention not only in education but also in health education from school life. Health awareness should be increased among the people of all classes of society through different medias like T.V., newspaper and other social medias to relieve from this curse of drug addiction.

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