

Drug Addiction in Kashmir: Issues and Challenges

Sajad Ahmad Bhat^{1*} and Nasheed Imtiaz²

1 Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

2 Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

Abstract

Drug abuse is the patterned and chronic use of a drug in which the person consumes the drug in amounts or by ways which are very hazardous and harmful for him and others. According to WHO "substance abuse is persistent or sporadic drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice" The present paper is theoretical in nature and aims at high lightening the Issues and challenges faced by youth involved in drug addiction in the Kashmir valley of Jammu and Kashmir. According to a report published by United Nation, Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) around 70 thousand people are drug addicts alone in the Kashmir division among them approximately 31% are women. The youth is particularly involved in drug addiction as reported by Government Psychiatric Hospital Srinagar around 90% drug abusers belong to the age group of 17-35. The states circumstances from last two decades were considered by most people have contributed to various kinds of social and political issues including drug addiction. The lot number of youth has turned to drugs who have directly or indirectly affected by the turmoil in the state, but this is not the only reason behind this epidemic because there are other reasons as well, as reported by different studies that have been conducted in the state. Unemployment, relationship problems are naming a few. There are different measures taken by state government to eliminate this curb, including the J&K Police Department running a number of drug De-Addiction centres in the Kashmir valley.

Keywords: Drug abuse; Drug addiction; Kashmiri youth

*Corresponding author:

Sajad Ahmad Bhat

✉ sajadbhat.psy@gmail.com

PhD Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India 202002.

Tel: 7889620674

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Introduction

Individuals begin to use drugs with varied choices. Some people use drugs to relieve some medical condition but continue to use them after the medical condition is over. Some people who feel depressed begin to use the drug to self-medicate and get addicted to it. Sometimes a traumatized event or a relationship issue lead a person to drugs. Some other people use the drug to escape from the pressures of life or to experience the pleasure of drugs or to compliance with the peer group compatibility to have a different view of the world around them. This voluntary initiation into the world of addictive drugs has strongly influenced society's view of drug abuse and drug addiction and their treatment.

There is no fine line to draw a distinction between Drug abuse and Drug Addiction or when does drug abuse become drug addiction. Drug abuse and Drug can be thought of as point along a continuum. Abnormal and inappropriate use of mind altering

drugs when prescribed or over the counter is Drug Abuse but when it becomes Drug addiction is not much clear because different people reach drug addiction at different stages. The on-going scientific investigation is aimed at knowing the factors that contribute to this transitive period of drug abuse and drug addiction. Drug Addiction, on the other hand, is defined as the continued compulsive use of use of drugs in spite of their adverse health, social and emotional consequences. Once a person becomes addicted to drugs he loses his control over drug use and often become isolated from family and friends. They may also face difficulty at work and sometimes lead them to commit crimes and involve with Criminal Justice system. For a drug addicted person, persistent use of drugs is the primary focus in life and once the drug stops the person will have cravings, person's intense and strong desire for the drugs. Our physiological mechanism generates these cravings to maintain a state of equilibrium that relies now on these drugs. These

cravings have a physiological mechanism as they stimulate the area of the brain (amygdala) that controls the emotional memory in addicted persons as shown by PET scans done on an addicted person. A drug addict can experience a state of craving at any stage of drug addiction or abuse.

A drug to which a person becomes addict does not merely impair the person's cognitive skills and behaviour but also permanently damage certain abilities depending on the amount of a dose. Experts believe that certain changes due to the addictions disappear shortly after drug use while certain anomalies remain permanent. One of the first changes in the brain that may occur in response to repeated drug abuse is tolerance. Tolerance develops when a person requires a higher amount of drug to reach that leave of pleasure or a state of alteration of consciousness that he achieved previously through lower doses of drugs.

In addition to this impairment of brain, Drug addiction also makes people vulnerable to other health risks. For example, inhalant abusers are at higher risk of Heart problems like disruption of heart rhythms. Often Drug Addicts consume and inject drugs in a group for better experience also put them at higher risk of contracting HIV virus due to contaminated needles used in a group. Also, there are higher incidences of Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C among Drug addicts than the general population.

Drug Abuse spoils a number of human lives and also destroys the golden periods of life. As on 2012, 183000 drug related deaths have been reported and that figure corresponds to a mortality rate of 40.0 deaths per million among the population aged 15-64. In 2012 it was appraised that between 162 million and 364 million people about 3.5% and 7.5% of world population aged between 15-64 have used an illicit drug belonging to cannabis, opioid, cocaine or amphetamine type stimulant group at least once in a previous year (World Drug Report 2014 [1]). According to this Report, only one among six problem abusers has access to treatment related facilities or received de-addiction or detoxification services.

The overall global scenario is that people generally consider cannabis most little illicit harmful drug, there has been a considerable increase in a number of cannabis users seeking treatment for cannabis use disorders in last ten years particularly in Americas and Europe. As for as the question of injecting drug use are concerned United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) [1], the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World.

Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO), providing the recent data available that people injecting drugs is 12.7 million 0.27% of the population aged between 16-64. The problem of injecting drugs is predominantly prevalent in Eastern and South Eastern Europe where the rate is as high as 4.6 times higher as the global average. The sharing of injecting needles makes these people vulnerable to HIV and Hepatitis C. It is estimated that 13.1% of the abusers who inject drugs are diagnosed HIV positive.

Drug Addiction in Kashmir

Kashmir has been through the two decades of turmoil that

resulted in an increase of psychiatric illness and psychosocial disturbances. A number of psychiatric problems have emerged like Depression, OCD, PTSD, Drug Addiction, etc. As long as the problem of drug addiction in Kashmir is concerned it has observed that this conflict ridden region has a tremendous rise in substance abusers over the past decade. United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) reported that around 70000 people are drug addicts in the Kashmir valley alone among which 4000 are females. Several studies conducted in the valley revealed that youth particularly between the age group of 17-30 involved in this menace of drug addiction. Government Psychiatric Hospital only mental health hospital in the valley in one of its report stated that most numbers of drug addiction cases belong to a very young generation. The director of Drug De-addiction center Srinagar Dr. Khan [2] stated that "the trend of drug abuse is on the rise among school children as we have registered many such cases, where students of Class IX to XII are involved with drugs". A renowned psychiatrist in Kashmir Dr. Maqgoob and Dutta [3] in one their book has reported that around 2.11 lakh drug addicts are in Kashmir valley. The common Substance used by Drug Addicts in Kashmir are Cannabis, Brown Sugar, Heroine, SP tablets, Anxit, Alprax, Inhalants like Fevicol, SR solution, Thinner, Shoe Polish, Paint varnish and dirty socks are used as substances. The alarming rate of this menace in Kashmir leads the academicians and experts to comment that "We have lost one generation to bullets and we may lose another generation to drugs".

Margoob and Dutta [3] in one of their study conducted in the year 1993 stated that most drug addicts were males and mainly their substance of addiction is Cannabis.

Naqshbandi [4] in his paper "drug addiction and youth of Kashmir" interviewed 270 young Kashmiri people between the age group of 16-30 in different districts of Kashmir. His findings revealed that Conflict and unemployment were the mains reasons of drug addiction among the youth. Several studies had shown that 80% of drug addicts get this addiction before the age of 30 years. Another study conducted with related to awareness of drug addiction among college students in Kashmir valley shows that majority of students believe that people started to take drugs in the age group of 20-30 [5]. The study further revealed that smoking often acts as a door way to drugs or at least a starting point. This study conducted by Bhat et al. [6,7] further revealed that above 90% don't have any awareness regarding the drug De addiction process and only 8% know about the drug de addiction center in Srinagar, Kashmir.

In another important study conducted by Mushtaq et al. [8] reported that about 90% drug abusers are poly abusers. The poly abuser is one who takes two or more drugs at a given period of time, for example, a person who is taking cannabis also taking alcohol or Heroine or any other drug. They also reported that the period of initiation of the drug is between the ages of 11-20. Peer Pressure has been summated as the main reason of drug addiction with 78% drug addicts revealed that they have turned to drugs due to peer pressure while relief from negative or seeking pleasure is also reported as a cause of drug addiction.

To curb this menace and diminish this horrific picture of substance abuse [9]. The J&K Police have taken an initiative by conducted awareness programs in three districts of Kashmir Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag. These awareness programs lead the J&K Police to establish drug de addiction center at Police Control Room Srinagar [10]. According to the reports of Drug de addiction and rehabilitation center Srinagar, the total numbers of patients seen in the OPD from February 2008 to December 2016 is 15294 and were diagnosed with ICD 10 [11]. Among the 15294 patients 472, were diagnosed as alcohol abusers, 1359 as Opioid abusers 7860 as cannabis abusers, 352 cocaine abusers, 1080 as benzodiazepines users, 460 volatile abusers and 3741 were poly drug abusers. The drug de addiction center [12] is managed by a Clinical psychologist, Psychiatrists, de addiction Social workers, Counsellors, medical officers, and yoga trainer. The center admits a person for detoxification and rehabilitation only after his motivation and proper medical check-up. Usually, a patient is admitted for the period of 3 or 4 weeks. According to center's IPD report, a total number of 1332 patients has been rehabilitated among which 90 were alcohol abusers, 235 opioid abusers, 275 cannabis abusers, 222 benzodiazepines abusers, 25 cocaine abusers, 165 volatile substance abusers and 330 patients were multiple abusers.

The daily routine at the center for patients includes group sessions on weekends, morning sessions, recreational activities like singing, dancing, etc., evening sessions and detailed review of medical, psychological and social interventions. In the late evening, the medical round is conducted followed by supervised medication and the day ends with dinner. Two more drug de addiction center was also working under the Police supervision on the same pattern in other two districts of Kashmir Valley viz. Drug De-addiction and rehabilitation center Baramulla and Anantnag.

In addition to this J&K Police has also made efforts to stop the

trafficking of drugs within the valley. With regarding this J&K Police has seized 2574 kg of Cannabis and its derivatives 11,000 bottles and 17,000 tablets of psychotropic prescription drugs were seized in 2013 and in 2014, a total of 282 persons were arrested by J&K police under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act, 1985.

Discussion

This griming picture of drug abuse in the Kashmir valley [13,14] has put a lot of challenges for the people of the valley in general and for Government agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations in particular. The biggest challenge is the illegal trafficking and sale of drugs within the valley to which police and general have an important role to play. Some recent reports suggest that there is a large number of Opioid cultivation going on in Kashmir that makes it more readily available for consumption and others psychotropic medicines are also easily accessible. With full public support and cooperation, Police can work more efficiently towards this menace. The other challenge is the limited facilities available for rehabilitation of drug addicts. More drug de addiction centres are needed to rehabilitate the victims. Lack of awareness about both Drug Addiction and the process of detoxification and rehabilitation is also a challenge. Government Agencies, Educational institutes NGO's and other social work institutes need to educate people especially young generation about this problem. The awareness on the part of Parents and caretakers is also an issue to tackle so that they can detect this problem as early as possible and they can provide immediate help to the person. A large amount of the literature suggests that enhancing a victim's social support and inculcate in him or her some positive behaviours can help him get rid of this menace. Drug Addicts often feel isolated and sense of alienation, so providing them certain kind of social and moral support help them and make them more empowered to get over this problem.

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