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Substance Abuse in Contemporary India.

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Abstract

Drug abuse is one of the most serious challenges which is faced in this contemporary society. It is a multi-layered phenomenon with combined effects of social, familial, mental and psychological factors. It is a type of behaviour whose manifestation depends on the intricate drug-individual-society relationship and is very much deep rooted in the socio-economic-cultural fabric of the society. Today, there is no part of the world that is free from the curse of the epidemic of substance abuse in this young generation. It is consumed by millions of people in lump sum quantities all over the globe, especially in alarming dimensions in India. Why do people consume drugs can be related to many reasons. When an individual finds himself isolated because of societal or personal reasons, his desire for belonging leads him to some similar kinds of people who feel the same way and consuming drugs become their comfort zone to find an escape from the reality. Once a person gets the taste of it, it makes him/her weak both mentally and physically causing lots of side effects and it gets very hard to cut off the addiction which they have been pursuing for so long. In the last 2 decades the branches of drug abuse have spread in a huge amount and it has resulted to be so alarming that it is causing serious concern to the whole of international community. The drug abuse disorder is becoming worse gradually by the emergence of a new paradigm to the already existing problem. This plague is spreading rapidly among the youths of rural areas and even school children. Unlike any other type of disorder, this addiction is said to be a peculiar “contagion” or “infection” in that a special problem exists. This phenomena in addiction is the introduction to the use of drugs and thereby expanding the social network of addiction. Therefore substance abuse is absolutely a major concern within humanity which has taken its toll on a whole generation,

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KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

perhaps more, as it is expected for more people to be its victims and all indications point to the fact that the conflict against drug abuse is to going to be grim in the upcoming years.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the human era, man has been trying to seek shelter to alter his body and consciousness by consuming several substances like herbs, alcohol and drugs. Out of this practice, it has sprung into various important contributions to science and culture resulting in the development of modern medicines and making of certain fine wines and liquors. Addiction does not happen overnight but people who are introduced to the drugs such as heroin, cocaine, marijuana, meth, alcohol, etc. are gradually desensitized over a period of time. They may initially enjoy it and use it for any entertainment purpose or to release stress after work or as a relief after some tiring day and if used within limit some may control their health both mentally and physically but if it becomes a daily habit for people who consume it quite often then it will cause problems in their life in future.

Now a days both men and women not only consume drugs on their own but have also started innovative ways to spread it more among other people which is said to be dealing in drugs for commercial purposes. Not only this affects a person physically and mentally but also affects their finance because all kinds of drugs are expensive. If the process continues for long enough, it may become tough or rather impossible for an individual to lead a healthy life, balancing both professional and personal life. They may even seek a short way out through various criminal activities such as robbery, prostitution and drug dealing so that they can maintain a continuous access to the drugs. Those activities may lead to injuries of people or killing them while being intoxicated or not and may also pass diseases to other people; and if this does not continue then, in maximum cases, people commit suicide or any type of self-injury. Basically, if we look through this perspective, it holds up a grim picture how this all leads to destruction either way. It may seem fun and breezy at first but would end up in disastrous effects.

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

What is Substance Abuse?

WHO defines, substance abuse as *'the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances including alcohol and illicit drugs'*.

Consuming substances which are not legal is termed as substance abuse. Substance abuse is different from addiction. The major difference lies in the quitting factor; people with substance abuse are able to quit or change their unhealthy behaviour themselves but the ones suffering from addiction of a substance can't seem to stop even when their health condition deteriorates. Thus there are different rehabs which are established to help a person walk into a normal lifestyle again.

Substance abuse or drug abuse is a patterned use of drugs in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to themselves or others, and is a form of substance-related disorder. Drug abuse' is no longer a current medical diagnosis in either of the most used diagnostic tools in the world, the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), and the World Health Organization's International Statistical Classification of Diseases and ICRIS Medical organization Related Health Problems (ICD). Substance abuse has been adopted by the DSM as a blanket term to include 10 separate classes of drugs, including alcohol; caffeine; cannabis; hallucinogens; inhalants; opioids; sedatives, hypnotics, and anxiolytics; stimulants; tobacco; and other substances.²

Causes of Substance Abuse

In India, drug abuse has become wide-spread and a reason for worry for individuals and the administration. The significant reasons for drug abuse and addiction are given beneath:

² <https://www.disabled-world.com/medical/pharmaceutical/addiction/> (Visited on 20th February 2021 at 1:29pm)

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

Loneliness: It is to be noticed that despair frequently drives numerous people to chronic drug use. Students who stay far away from their parents and live in hostels become preys of the abuse.

Wrong Company: Young adults staying in contact with the wrong people are pushed more to be addicts. These people sell drugs to the young crowd at high rates in turn dooming their future.

Society: It is seen that in a number of cases because of peer pressure the youth are inclined into this abuse. The educational system and rate of unemployment also creates an influence, the young adults who are unable to find a job or prospective career option turn towards drugs for solace.

Kinds of Substance Abuse

Substance abuse in fact is quite different than addiction. There are four types of drugs that are highly dangerous to human life namely Heroin, Cocaine, Meth, LSD and all these four types of drugs possess invincible dangers in return for a short termed euphoria. Some of the types which are held under this category are –

- **Alcohol –**

Alcohol is something which affects everyone differently but if a person drinks too much of it and too often then it causes severe harm to his/her body. For a man, more than four drinks a day or more than 14 in a week is a sign of drinking too much and for a woman, 3 drinks in a day and seven in a week is considered to be more than enough.

- **Heroin –**

Heroin is an opioid drug which is made from morphine, a natural substance that is taken from the seed pod of various opium poppy plants that grow in Southeast and Southwest Asia, Mexico and Colombia. It is often consumed by injecting, sniffing, snorting or smoking. Some of them even mix heroin with crack cocaine, a practice which is called *speed balling*.

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

- **Cocaine –**

This drug speeds up the whole body and while using it, the person may move, talk or think very fast and may experience a feeling of happiness and may feel full of energy but later may shift to anger. It leads to extreme cravings or addiction for it.

They consume it by snorting it through nose or rub into their gums and while others dissolve the powder and inject into the bloodstream. It is also made through rock crystal which is called freebase cocaine.

- **Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD)-**

It is available in the form of tablets or gelatine squares and is derived from the ergot fungus that grows on grains like rye. It has no medical use. It creates a bizarre state of hallucinations causing the user to lose touch with reality.

- **Crystal Meth-**

It is a highly addictive and powerful drug that causes central nervous stimulant. Crystal meth is a crystalline form of methamphetamine which is manufactured illegally.

- **Marijuana –**

Marijuana is also known as weed, pot, dope, grass which comes from a plant named cannabis. It can be smoked, vaped, drunk or eaten. It is something that affects both a person's brain and body. It can be both addictive and harmful to some people's health.

- **Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products–**

Tobacco has a chemical called nicotine that gives a little rush of pleasure and energy; this effect can wear off fast and leave you wanting more just like other drugs.

Recent Case Developments

In 2020 two major cases created a sensation in India and raging debate over the use of narcotic substances in the country.

- **Sandalwood Drug Case-** A massive drug scandal came into light in Karnataka after a top actress was arrested for alleged involvement in drug trafficking.

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

On 21st August, Bengaluru Nikoo Homes which is an upscale gated community was raided by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). During the raid they recovered and seized MDMA and LSD. The details of those associated with the drugs racket were mentioned in a diary that was found. It included the names of actors, musicians, reality show stars, and models from Karnataka. The police also seized a large quantity of marijuana. The Karnataka film industry is known as ‘Sandalwood’ and the people found in this racket were mostly people from the Kannada industry thus it was named as Sandalwood Drug Case.

Ravishankar was arrested by the CCB on 3rd September, after whose questioning a cell phone which included digital evidences was recovered. In the FIR that followed, the police had named 12 accused, including Bollywood star Vivek Oberoi’s brother-in-law Aditya Alva. According to the police, those named in the FIR are part of a network of people who organised parties where drugs were supplied. The other persons accused and mentioned in the FIR include Prashanth Ranka, who is accused of supplying drugs at big parties; Viren Khanna, who is accused of organising the drug parties; and Rahul, who is accused of sourcing drugs from peddlers.³

The FIR also mentions the names of Vaibhav Jain, Prashanth Raju, Ashwin, Abhiswami, Rahul Thonshe and Vinay; however, their role in the case has not been disclosed by the CCB.

The accused have been booked under Sections 21, 21C, 27A, 27B and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, and also for criminal conspiracy.⁴

It was alleged that the drugs were procured through other countries like Africa which opens up the window of a cross country drug racket. On 5th September, an African national, Loum Pepper Samba was arrested by CCB for supplying drugs to the accused. A Kannada actor Ragini Dwivedi was also arrested in this regard who provided information of drug peddlers from

³ <https://www.thequint.com/explainers/bengaluru-drug-racket-case-with-its-roots-in-sandalwood-actors-arrested> (Visited on 20th February,2021 at 7:44pm)

⁴ <https://www.thequint.com/explainers/bengaluru-drug-racket-case-with-its-roots-in-sandalwood-actors-arrested> (Visited on 20th February,2021 at 10:24pm)

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Goa and Mumbai and also suppliers who are from foreign countries settled in various parts of India.

This drug scandal's investigation is still ongoing under the CBB and NCB.

- **Sushanth Singh Rajput Death Case – Drug Angle**

The entire nation was shook on 14th June, 2020 after the untimely demise of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. It was initially taken to be a suicide but later the actor's father filed an FIR against the late actor's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty and her family and others for abetment of suicide and money laundering.

The case was initially handled by the Mumbai Police but it was later transferred to the CBI for investigating whether it was a suicide or murder and also to the Enforcement Directorate to enquire about the money laundering aspect. Amidst ongoing investigation, several chats between Rhea Chakraborty, her brother Shouvik Chakraborty, Manager Samuel Miranda, Sidharth Pithani, Shruti Modi and others emerged discussing drugs and also procuring and consuming them.

This led to the involvement of the NCB in this matter who, after investigation, arrested several drug peddlers across Mumbai and Goa who were procuring drugs and supplying them in parties. Actor Rhea Chakraborty was also arrested after investigation and after digital evidences of her procuring and consuming drugs but she is on bail now along with her brother Shouvik Chakraborty who was held in custody after his sister's bail as he was charged under multiple sections of the anti-narcotics law. He is out on bail now under the ground that statements or confessions which are made before an NCB officer is not admissible evidence; here the Mumbai High Court cited a recent Supreme Court judgement. Others including Samuel Miranda were arrested too. They were arrested under Sections 20A, 20B and 27 of the NDPS

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

Act, as per NCB officials. Other prominent figures of Bollywood like Deepika Padukone, Sara Ali Khan, Shraddha Kapoor and Rakul Preet Singh were also called by NCB for questioning regarding the drug use.

These two cases brought into limelight how widespread the problem of substance abuse is in India; starting from the youth of the nation to the high end celebrities, all are falling prey to this abuse.

Laws prevailing in India regarding Substance Abuse

There are 2 major laws relating to drugs in India, they are:

1. Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1985); and
2. Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1988).

The first Act i.e. the NDPS Act came into force on 14th November, 1985. According to this Act, it is illegal for a person to produce/manufacture/cultivate, possess, sell, purchase, transport, store, and/or consume any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.

Punishment⁵

Anyone who contravenes the NDPS Act will face punishment based on the quantity of the banned substance, as follows-

- where the contravention involves small quantity(<1 kg), with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to 6 months, or with fine which may extend to ₹10,000 or with both;

⁵ § 22 of NDPS Act

<http://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A1985-61.pdf> (Visited on 20th February, 2021 at 11:00pm)

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

- where the contravention involves quantity lesser than commercial quantity but greater than small quantity, with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years and with fine which may extend to ₹1 lakh;
- where the contravention involves commercial quantity, with rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than 10 years but which may extend to 20 years and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than ₹1 lakh but which may extend to ₹2 lakh.

The second Act i.e. The Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act is a drug control law which was passed in the year 1988 by the Parliament of India. The purpose of establishing this Act is to enable the full implementation of the NDPS Act of 1985.

Justification of the Present Study

The nature and extent of drug and substance abuse vary from country to country, and from community to community. The substances, the people and the circumstances vary from place to place, and from culture to culture.

In many instances, the perceived characteristics of particular group of people using drugs vary and their supposed reasons for using them vary widely. It is therefore imperative for each community to take steps to identify its own drug abuse problem. The present study is a step in this direction.

The causes of drug abuse have been recognized in several international forums. The Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline (CMO) of the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (ICDAIT) observed that to give attention to the fundamental causes of the problem of drug abuse, the social, economic and cultural factors must be taken into account. The conference went on to suggest that research be undertaken to identify causes

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

so that they could be eliminated. It suggested the social and family circumstances, housing, employment and level of education as potential contributory causes.⁶

Whatever the cause may be for abusing drugs, a problem is perceived and a solution is sought. Effective problem-solving requires careful definition of the problem in descriptive rather than emotional terms, and evaluation and selection of methods, tools and strategies relevant to the problem. One must acquire a vantage point from which to view drug use and the phenomena associated with it and the lens through which to view drug, man, society and the interactions among them, the number and kinds of discrimination made within each factor, the nature of the response and the relative ability of various institutions and professions to intervene most effectively.

A study of social and psychological correlates of drug abuse among drop-outs in Mizoram will put major emphasis on the individual as the active agent in the drug-individual context formulation. It will help in highlighting the social and psychological factors present in the socio-economic and environmental conditions which lead to psychological stress. The socio-economic status, housing, family, education, peer-factor, urbanization, etc. are seen as the breeding ground of the more personal factors as poor living conditions, broken homes, parental deprivation, low achievement, negative peer influence, prejudice, discrimination, etc., all of which add to the stress and strain of living giving rise to anxiety, tension, frustration, depression and other psychological maladies.

The psychological make-up of drug abusers who have dropped out from the normal stream of academic life are studied in terms of specific personality traits because psychological disorders are explained in general, through personality characteristics. Addictive behavior is one which is manifested in personality structure as drug dependence is in itself a serious psychological disorder. Despite the tendency to see undesirable behavior always as the result of undesirable

⁶ <https://books.google.com/books?id=oxYWgRMxincC> (Visited on 20th February, 2021 at 9:07pm)

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

aspects of the social system, one must acknowledge that much of what is disapproved is essentially linked with things that are approved of and valued.

The main purpose of the study is to identify the social and psychological factors responsible for drug abuse with reference to drop-outs in Mizoram. Although several studies have been conducted both outside and within the country on drug abuse, very limited studies are available in Mizoram especially on the social and psychological correlates of drug abuse; and those which specifically cover the drop-outs are not available.

Moreover, most of the studies conducted on drug abuse were done ten or twenty years back. In a rapidly changing world where the youth is exposed to a variety of social, psychological and economic conflicts, the use of such studies become limited and lose their relevance to present-day situation.

The present study would enable one to examine the varied aspects of drug abuse both from the point of view of psychological aspect and that of social aspect which will be useful in making out proper diagnosis of the drug-abusing drop-outs. The study is aimed at focusing on the correct diagnosis through social and psychological factors which will be of great help in working out a short term and long term program for its prevention and cure. A study taking up a single factor or approach would not be able to provide a dependable understanding of the phenomenon of drug abuse and its relation to dropping out.

The effort of understanding the phenomenon of drug abuse and its disruptive influence on educational careers through the study of social and psychological factors will, one hopes, shed light on the dark areas of human errors and weaknesses, particularly in the educational sphere. Such a study is urgently required in Mizoram to prevent further escalation of the problem. The youth must be brought back to the main stream of cohesive educational growth and development.

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

Analysis

Today the drug culture is very wide and extensive and has become a serious problem eating into the very fabric of our society. It is wrecking the Indian society and the future citizens of the country, namely the youth, from within. It is a grim reality which one cannot afford to ignore or overlook. The main social menace of drug abuse is that it results in mental degeneration which is a cause of great concern. Potential talents which could have been actualized in course of time are destroyed because of drug involvement. Drugs destroy human motivation and willpower, making the victim afraid of shouldering normal human responsibilities.

The presence of the problem in schools and among youth is a symptom of social conditions and personality problems. It is a part of the larger problem of the adult drug culture. What should be subtle, subdued and kept within reasonable decent standards-especially in the presence of children, is blatantly talked about and unabashedly practiced in public. This naturally arouses curiosity and incalculable damage to the psyche of the children and the immature.

In modern times, the use of drugs has wreaked havoc, affecting generation after generation of young boys and girls. Newer and more dangerous drugs are appearing on the scene and what is alarming is that they are filtering down to highly vulnerable sections of society including school and college students. The majority of drug victims are youths, the lifeblood of our Nation, studying in schools, colleges and universities. Once used to drugs, they begin to skip school, college or university. Educational careers are thus disrupted, resulting in increased number of drop-outs. The wastage in terms of money, time, talent and human resources is tremendous.

The extent and nature of the problem of drug abuse among the young people of Mizoram today is serious and there are disturbing signs which show that the situation is likely to worsen and get out of hand, if adequate measures are not adopted to curb the evil. The problem to be

KnowLaw Journal

Socio-Legal and Contemporary Research

A Publication of KnowLaw

Volume 01 Issue 01

KnowLaw

investigated can thus be specifically put as "A study of the socio-psychological factors of drop-outs (13- 18 years) in relation to drug abuse in Mizoram".⁷

⁷ http://ijsrr.co.in/images/full_pdf/1554956577_190.pdf (Visited on 20th February,2021 at 11:51pm)