



RESEARCH PAPER

Prevalence of Drug Abuse among University Students in Lahore City, Pakistan

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PAPER INFO

ABSTRACT

Received:
March 25, 2018
Accepted:
June 24, 2018
Online:
June 30, 2018

Keywords:
Drug Abuse,
Lahore,
Pakistan
Students,
Universities

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This paper highlights the use and availability of drugs which has almost gotten out of hands in Lahore, and university students are the most affected one. Call it an emotional instability or curiosity, majority of the students have tried out what a drug tastes like, even if it is just a cigarette. To resolve the issue of drug abuse amongst university students, a collective method should be started by the parents, university administration, public as well as government. This research is qualitative and exploratory cum analytical method of research is being used in this research paper. Primary data was collected through interview method of research. Semi-structure questionnaire was formulated. Population of the study was students of six HEC recognized public and private universities of the Lahore. Participant of the interviews were selected through snowball sampling technique of the research. The authors of this paper analyzed data after conducting interviews of 10 male students from different universities of Lahore. No audio was recorded, as per the request of the students, only detailed notes were written.

Introduction

Drug Abuse is a social issue which is affecting millions of people across the globe. Every year, thousands of precious lives are engulfed by this heinous curse. The victims of drug abuse belong to all social classes and ages. However, the youth of university students particularly fall into this abyss. One should be well aware of the fact that the future progress of any nation depends upon its youth. Youth are valuable assets of every country. However, if the same youth get involved in evil activities like drug abuse then the future of such nation is definitely a bleak one. Drug Abuse' is the habitual involvement in drug related activities. Since 2002, with

the revolution of mobile phones and internet technology drug abuse has become a growing problem for university administrations all across Pakistan and especially Lahore, where students ignore the rampant drug related policies of their respective universities and still find a way to indulge in drugs. It is the most rampant disease that youth of university students waste their talent, money, health and time in its intoxicating activities. The biggest problem is not only to stop the supply of these drugs, but finding a way to reach out to these drug afflicted students. Unfortunately, Pakistani universities have failed in this regard. Yet, they have many warning related policies vis-à-vis drug abuse and some expulsion and fine related policies too, but to diminish this problem to its very core a new policy has to be formulated, where university administrations have to psychologically reach out to their students and create awareness related to drug abuse. The state also has to play its role in this regard. It's the state responsibility to stop the growing supply of drugs in Pakistan. The National Antinarcotics Policy 2010 specifically states that it's the state job to stop drug trafficking, drug reduction, and create awareness on its abuse all across Pakistan, but unfortunately these goals and aims are only there on paper as no one really don't see these policies being implemented, and thus showing results (Khaled, 2013).

Before discussing the factors that led the university students towards using drugs, one should be well aware of the flaws that existed in Pakistan's drug control policy. The loopholes that helped the drug market to flourish in Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is Pakistan's most affected province in terms of drug abuse. The Province shares its boundaries with Afghanistan. 75% of world heroin is produced in Afghanistan and through the north western borders, it is smuggled to Pakistan. Mega cities such as those of Quetta and Peshawar are the biggest drug markets in Pakistan (Glaze, 2007). Punjab which is the biggest province in terms of population is the second most drug affected area in Pakistan. Cities such as those of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad are crowded with notorious drug café's that deceive people into adopting drugs as a westernized gift. Some of the commonly used drugs in Pakistan are as follows:

Heroin, Cocaine, Methadone, Alcohol, Ecstasy, LSD, Magic Mushrooms, Amphetamine, Methamphetamine, Barbiturates, Cannabis, anabolic steroids. At the moment, there are currently above 1 million active cannabis users in Pakistan. The ratio is the second largest after Heroin. All of these drugs in one way or another calm the senses of an individual and directly attack his/her nervous system that in most of the cases leads an individual towards death or a life plagued from psychological disorders (Shafiq, & Naqvi, 2006). All of the above mentioned drugs are considered illegal by the Pakistani Government and are illegally sold in Pakistan.

As per the UN report, 7.6 million people in Pakistan are drug addicts. The ratio can be divided as 78% males and 22% females. At an alarming rate of 40,000 people per year, the number of drug addicts is increasing in Pakistan. The most disturbing thing pointed out in this report was probably the fact that a wide range

of “heroin addicts” fall under the age of 24. These reports submitted by the UN to government entities outline 1/3rd of the actual number of drug addicts. The ratio of drug addicts can be higher than that specified by the United Nations. But, it does alarm the Pakistani Government to adopt precautionary measures before it’s too late.

During 2012, an extensive national investigation was carried out in Pakistan. The Report revealed that 6.7 million youngsters in the country have consumed drugs and most of them aged between 24 -39 years. Treatments and expert interventions were pretty hard to find for these people and only 30,000 people per year, had proper access to treatment. Among the ones who received proper treatment, majority consisted of that of women. In a country where per day earning of a common person is less than 1.25 dollars, there is no doubt that health facilities cannot be attained by everyone.

According to the current Pakistani Government officials, majority of school going kids are using drugs and these drugs are provided to these students by none other than some of the members of School administrations themselves. The ratio keeps on increasing as we advance towards colleges and universities. The Current Pakistani Government looks determined enough to tackle the crisis but so far, it seems like a utopian dream. The drug trade network is spread all over Pakistan and its roots are deeply drenched in the Pakistani Society. The government can never diminish them wholly and even if it succeeds in doing so, it has to identify those factors first that are forcing the youngsters towards using drugs.

Factors leading University Students towards using Drugs

Western Trend: Especially among the youth of university students, it has become more of a trend to follow the western trends and norms. In order to prove themselves, a part of the elite sociological order followed by the developed nations of the world. Many youngsters of the university students don’t even think twice before adopting any bad norm as a part of their lives for as long as it serves them under the tag of modernized school of thought.

Stress

In most of the cases, Pakistani youth of university students are forced to Participate in an unasked for competition. Whether it is acquiring education or maintaining a better life style. Youngsters are forced to go beyond their potentials. Devoid of having different capabilities and working capacities, youngsters are forced to run after the same sociological concept of success as specified by the society and those who fail to follow it; are continuously reminded of the shame that they have brought upon themselves and their families. This factor alone has forced a wide range of youngsters to suffer from lack of confidence, distress and continuous feel of guilt. People who generally fail to over tackle this feel fall prey to the evils of drugs. They look forward for anything that takes them away from reality and drugs do that in an efficient manner.

Disturbed Family Environment:

Majority of Pakistani households don't provide an adequate environment to the children to grow and nourish fully. Growing among the likes of domestic abuse, parents often neglect the fact that their behavior will impose a negative impact on the child's mentality. Parents often work day and night to earn enough money to make their children acquire education but the mental health and the environment of the workplace where the child is going to study is ignored. These factors are totally neglected by the parents. Children who are disturbed mentally from their home environment usually run after anything that guarantees them slight freedom. And while doing this, youngsters often fall prey to the likings of a bad company.

Drug Mafia and bad Government Policies

Drug Mafia's have become so common within Pakistan and its roots are so well drenched within Pakistani society that preventing them now is pretty impossible now. Drug dealers can be found almost everywhere, in every second street and most of the times these guys have direct relations with respectable institutions and departments and public offices and these Mafia's use them as a cover to practice all of their activities. Government's ignorance and lack of interest in this subject in the recent eras has helped them grow. Lack of policies to shut off the drug trade has widely affected the Pakistani society.

Interviews of different University students of Lahore

1. P1 was 20 years old BSC (Hons.) university student and he has an addiction of weed, garda and charas. He lives in hostel. His family belongs to very well off class. He knows almost 25-30 students from his university that are involved in weed drug addiction. He has the point of view after taking weed his understanding regarding studies become increase and this is not a drug. Government should wave off weed in prohibited drug list.

2. P2 was 28 years old and enrolled in university MPhil program. He lives in university hostel. He told that he loves to take all type of drugs except heroine. His family belongs to the upper middle class. He is alcoholic and taking many other drugs on regular basis. He has many female university student friends who are involved in drug abuse. He replied, taking or not taking drugs is one's personal own choice. He knows almost 100 university students who are drug abusers.

3- P3 was a 22 years old university student. He lives with his friends in a rent house. His family belongs to middle class and he has an addiction of heroin. The average age of heroin addicts among university students that are under 24 years of age. He knows only 2 university students who use heroine. He told that drug is available in all Lahore. The main places are Data Darbar, Ghari Shaoo, Railway Station, Moon Market and Niazi Ada.

4- P5 was a 19 years old university student. He lives in apartment with friends. His family belongs to elite class and he is a cannabis user commonly called recreational drug. After inhalation he used to dance in the parties and enjoy. He knows 15 university students who inhale cannabis on weekly basis not daily.

5- P5 was a 25 years old university student who takes anabolic steroid for body shaping and relaxation. His family belongs to business class and he lives with his parents. He does not know any university student who has the addiction of anabolic steroid.

6- P6 was a 23 years old university student. He lives in private hostel. His family belongs to below middle class. He is an addiction of ice drug. He knows almost 25 university students who are involved in ice drugs.

7- P7 was a 21 years old university student. He lives with his uncle. His family belongs to poor class. He is an orphan. He has the addiction of sniffing glue. He does not know any university student who is involved in sniffing glue but he knows many youngster male students who are regular user of this drug.

8- P8 was a 26 years old university student who takes cocaine on regular basis. His family belongs to below middle class and he knows 07 university students who have an addiction of cocaine adductors.

9- P9 was a 24 years old university student. He lives in private hostel. His family belongs to below middle class. He is an addiction of ice drug. He knows almost 15 university students who are involved in ice drugs.

10- P10 was a 27 years old university student. He lives in university hostel. His family belongs to middle class. He is an addiction of weed and ice drugs. He knows almost 12 university students who are involved in weed and ice drug. He told that drugs are very easily available in Lahore. Mostly, drug abused university students live away from their family. They are using drug without understanding the side effects of the drug even some participant has the view there should be permission in universities for smoking, alcohol, etc.

Reasons of Drug Abuse

According to many researches, the biggest cause of drug abuse is environment as your environment influences behavior. Among these environmental factors, the most predominant are absence of social support, use of drugs among peers, socio-economic status, stress and ability to cope with it, parental and familial involvement, history of abuse or neglect, and history of compulsive behavior. There is variability about the causes of drug abuse among the university students. The effects are as devastating as the drugs themselves. It is wrong to brand one student on his drug abuse as there are variety of factors responsible for his predicament, and when university administrations bash one student without taking variety of factors, the student becomes more of a victim of

his environment. There are also many biological reasons for drug abuse. University administrations also have to take into account the biology of drug addiction. They have to become aware that an addict won't stop by their warnings and fines. In this regard, they have to develop a two-way strategy, firstly, they should start an annual university campaign against drug abuse where they should adopt a more inclusive behavior that those students who are suffering from drug abuse should talk to the university psychologists and seek their help to make amends. Secondly, they should hire more professional psychologists and engage their psychology department to talk to students in relation to drug addiction and reach out to students in a polite manner.

Although, among all these environmental factors and biological factors, the biggest reason for drug abuse is mental health problems. If one suffers from a mental health problem, whether or not it has been diagnosed, and whether or not he takes medication for it, he is at higher risk for addiction. Mental health problems include anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, bipolar personality disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) etc. The university administrations should also ask their psychologists or student relations team to highlight students who are suffering from mental health disorders as they are more prone to getting indulged in drug abuse. Now, the effects of drug abuse are as devastating as the causes. Prolonged drug abuse has huge physical, mental, and social ramifications. These social ramifications should constantly be part of the awareness campaigns run by universities or the HEC. They should make students aware that the social end of drug abuse is disownment by society. The society will alienate and disown you if he further indulges in these kinds of activities. Pakistan is one of the few states in the world that has no public rehab centers for its youth. It doesn't have any ordinance or law that deals with abuse of drugs by teenagers. It doesn't conduct any drug awareness campaign for its youth. It has a blind eye towards the victims of drug trafficking in Pakistan.

The law enforcement agencies are doing their jobs to the best of their capabilities. Recently, a large amount of methamphetamine was recovered by the Islamabad authorities. Large amount of this methamphetamine was being used hiked to university students in the capital. Until, most recently a federal minister raised the issue in the parliament no one was even aware of this particular drug and its abuse in universities that too in the capital. Therefore, government in order to completely stop the use of drugs has to give a national drug awareness policy. That makes both parents and students with poor judgment aware of the pushbacks of drug abuse. It is about time that the blind eye becomes rehabilitant gaze. The government is accountable for its people and especially its youth.

The Antinarcotics Agencies should visit schools and universities annually all across Pakistan to highlight their program as well as spread awareness. They should conduct activities as NAB does every year by conducting essay writing, debates, and dramatic competitions to highlight anti-corruption. The same pattern should be followed by our national anti-narcotics agencies. The government

should allot a special fund for these kinds of activities. This will help the state to develop an anti-drug sentiment in the public.

Institutions like HEC, provincial HECs, PMDC, and other governing educational bodies should impart a broader policy framework to their respective nexus of universities in relation to drug abuse. It is a pity that the biggest victims of drug abuse are school, college, and university going children and teenagers and still there isn't a greater policy by the governing bodies. These governing bodies should get together and make a broader drug abuse policy and then further move towards its implementation. This policy should make compulsory for schools, colleges, and universities to have at least one student counsellor or psychologist. Furthermore, this policy should also include annual awareness campaigns in universities that includes variety of activities.

Conclusion

Drug abuse is a worldwide problem. So, it must be solved globally. Whatever be the reasons, it is essential to understand that drug abuse only aggravates the problems rather than solving them. It is thus wise to stay away from it. Those who have already fallen prey to this problem can seek expert guidance to overcome it. Proper medication, support from beloved ones and strong will power can take one out of the dark world of drug abuse. It is suggested to stick to a healthy lifestyle. It is a grave problem especially common among youth of the university students these days. The sensitivity of the issue must be recognized. It is necessary to spread awareness about the negative repercussions of drugs to discourage their use. One should educate students, promote alternative lifestyles, emphasize academics, support them and should provide recovery programs. Everyone deserves to live a clean and healthy life.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this research paper are as follows.

First, university administration and students should involve in drug awareness campaigns and alike activities through media campaign, registered student health profiling, construction of student rehab centers. Second, educational monitoring bodies should play their role and should give a drug abuse policy; and lastly, universities being having more understanding and inclusive towards their drug abusing students should engage professional psychologists and counselors to deal with them. According to a report published in *The News*, edition 27 June, 2016; around 8.9 million people in Pakistan are drug addicts and 700 people per day, lose their lives due to drug-related complications. The high death ratio caused by the usage of drugs makes it a threat greater than that caused by terrorism.

Better relationship between parents and children

The United Nations on 26th of June, every year observes international day against Drug abuse and it's illicit trafficking. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) selects theme for the day, every year. The theme for 2018 as opted by UN was "Listen First". It is an initiative that'll help increase support for the prevention of drugs. It is scientifically proven and is considered to be a useful investment if society starts talking about the problems faced by youth more frequently, specifically children. If there is a better connection established between children and parents, children will get a chance to express themselves in a better manner. They will not fall prey to the evils of insecurities and self-doubt and will readily receive the answers to the questions that keep them disturbed.

Drug abuse in the emerging youth is a detrimental phenomenon which is shoved under the rug because the stake holders and those in power are helpless in the face of tremendous challenges that surround it. The increasing percentage with which the young adults are addicted to this menace is growing ascending. It is the availability of these narcotics on schools and campuses and academia that is fueling the profits for the mafia; where Anti-Narcotics forces are sitting dormant as if crippled from the high dose of chastisement from higher authorities. However, the youth is seen with the drug-induced effects in their behavior and the crumbling relations with their society.

The first phase of adulthood is a hard time. The old ways of pubescence do not seem to work anymore and the challenges of practical life are overwhelming. Maturity is still another milestone in life to achieve. And an individual in the face of utter bafflement seeks "escape" from the pathos caused by this. This is where the drugs get introduced in their lives. The usage of the word "introduced" is crucial in this respect because it is surprisingly the charm that is added with the smoker smoking and the exhaling a thick smoke, which seems as an antidote for the suffering. This comes mostly from someone close: a friend, a classmate, or someone that you know through the first two. Small quantities increase to bigger ones and later into the part of life. Until it reaches the point where its moral and ethical constraints cannot withhold it.

Modern world is in the tightening reigns of capitalistic economy. Where everything becomes a commodity, not even our truest human connections could outrun this specter; education, which is power in the face of adversity, also gets the brunt. Government policies that are created to combat with issues such as drug abuse are unable to take incentives because the profit-mongering mafia is so powerful and their roots are so deep that they have a monopoly in every department. That is essentially the reason for the silence observed in the times of crisis.

In the world that is misunderstood as administered in the cause-and-effect loop, singular solutions to the problems are often not the case. This must be

understood in the dialectical way; wherein every prevailing problem has to have more than just a single answer. Let's take one question into an account: Why is the ratio of drug abuse found more in the youth? Most of us, in the spur of a moment, would point our fingers back to the increase in their availability; or some of us may reduce it to the parental mistreatment in the family. Be it any of these suggestions, but the focal point from where the answer to the riddle is being looked at is flawed. One should look at things in a holistic way and dialectically.

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