

The Impacts of Drug Abuse Across Individual, Family and Societal Dimensions

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Abstract

Drug addiction is a serious issue that affects not only individuals but also their families and society. This study aims to understand how drug addiction influences people's lives and their relationships with family, relatives, and others. The researcher spoke with 10 individuals from different age groups who are residing in two rehabilitation centers in Morang, Nepal. The researcher also spoke with two individuals who have completed their treatment and are now struggling to return to a normal life. Simple questions were asked to understand their experiences, challenges, and feelings. The findings reveal that most people start using drugs as teenagers, mainly due to peer influence. Many of them dropped their studies and got involved in harmful activities such as borrowing money from others and selling valuable household items to manage money for drugs. All participants expressed their regret for their past activities, acknowledging that their addiction caused emotional pain, financial problems, and loss of trust within their families and relatives. They also faced difficulties adjusting back into their society. The study clearly shows that drug addiction negatively affects their personal life, education, family relationships, and future opportunities. The study also reveals that the whole community should work together to protect young people, so they do not fall into the world of drug addiction.

Keywords: drug addiction, effects on the individual, family, society

Introduction

Drug addiction is a chronic, relapsing disorder in which compulsive drug-seeking and drug-taking behavior persists despite serious negative consequences. Addictive substances induce pleasant states (euphoria in the initiation phase) or relieve distress. Continued use induces adaptive changes in the central nervous system that lead to tolerance, physical dependence, sensitization, craving, and relapse. The addictive drugs discussed here are opioids, cannabinoids, ethanol, cocaine,

amphetamines, and nicotine (Camí & Farré, 2003). Three terms related to drug abuse are used commonly: tolerance, dependence, and addiction. Tolerance represents a reduced effect upon repeated exposure to a drug at a constant dose, or the need for an increased dose to maintain the same effect. Dependence is defined as the need for continued exposure to a drug to avoid withdrawal July 1992, 12(7): 2439-2450 School of Medicine, past, physical dependence was part of the definition of addiction. However, the requirement for physical dependence as a necessary or sufficient aspect of drug addiction is no longer considered valid. Many drugs with no abuse potential, for example, β -adrenergic antagonists, clonidine, and tricyclic antidepressants, can produce marked physical symptoms on withdrawal. On the other hand, many unquestionably severe abusers of some drugs have little or no physical withdrawal syndrome upon cessation of drug exposure (e.g., most marijuana or cocaine users). Similarly, not all drugs of abuse produce tolerance to all their effects. (Nestler, 1992).

People today still look to their families for social support, attachment figures, and connections they need. It is important to think about how substance use disorders (SUDs) affect people in a family setting. Financial problems, legal issues, emotional suffering, unfulfilled developmental requirements, poor connection, and physical aggression are just some of the far-reaching implications that a person's drug use may bring to their loved ones. Substance use disorder is also more common in young people (Hamid et al., 2024). Drugs have been around for ages, and they come in many different forms throughout their existence. With changes in technology and other environmental dynamics over time, the contributing factors and mentality behind drug abuse have evolved. For instance, advanced communication facilities contributed to the easy accessibility of drugs among the youth. Hence, the methodology used in curbing drug abuse needs to be upgraded to cope with the ever-changing technology used in drug peddling (Foo et al., 2012).

Young people abuse drugs due to complex social and peer groups' influence, frustration, depression, curiosity, sub-cultural and psychological environment that induce the youths to take drugs. The effects of drug abuse are felt on many levels: personal, friends, family, and societal. Drug addiction leads to the disintegration of family ties. Drug addicts pose a threat to the family because of the hostile behavior of the drug abuser; the family is at risk. Normal activities of the family are disrupted due to the antisocial activities of the abuser. The drug addict youth drop out of

school/college, or university. The service holder loses his job because of irregularities. Social isolation and alienation are very common. A family of drug addicts became isolated from the community. The drug abuser swallows the lion's share of the family income for buying drugs (Shazzad et al., 2013; Hasam & Mushahid, 2017).

Addiction is chronic, it is progressive, and if left untreated. The initial decision to take drugs is voluntary for most people. But repeated drug use can lead to brain changes that challenge an addicted person's self-control and interfere with their ability to resist intense urges to take drugs. Drug addiction isn't about just heroin, cocaine, or other illegal drugs. You can get addicted to alcohol, nicotine, opioid painkillers, and other legal substances (Kumar et al., 2019). It has been understood from different research that drug addiction becomes a chronic problem. Once people fall into addiction, it will be difficult for them to come out of it. It even spoils the economy and social reputation of the family. Youth are the major victims of drug addiction. They spoil their precious lives by avoiding their studies, forgetting their responsibilities towards their family, society, and nation. They destroy the dream of their parents as well as their bright future. They misuse the drug and enter the world of addiction, forgetting their life, family, and their future career. This research concentrates on finding the effect of drug addiction on individuals and families.

Methods

The questionnaire and qualitative analysis were employed in this study. The author has prepared 15 closed questions and one open question. In the closed questions, abusers were asked different questions based on their past and present lives. The questions were designed to assess various aspects of their start-up, from inception to regression. The researcher wanted to know their starting period, education status, social impact, financial management, re-establishment in society, their regression, their thoughts about their future generation, and so on. In the open-ended question, the abusers were asked to give suggestions to the upcoming generations. Their suggestions gave a positive message to the new generation. A total of ten abusers, aged 22 to 51, were chosen for this research. Among the abusers, eight were taken from two rehabilitation centers, and two were chosen from outside who had recently completed their course in rehabilitation centers. The abusers were staying there to be cured of their addiction. These two rehabilitation centers are located at Kerabari Ruler Municipality, Morang, and Sundarharaincha Municipality, Morang.

These are chosen for this study because they are the best rehabilitation centers in these localities. Many abusers are staying there to be cured from the problem of their addiction. Eight abusers are chosen from there because they are from the researcher's locality. Three of them had completed their course and are working as volunteers in the rehabilitation center. Five of them are under treatment to get rid of it. Two were chosen from outside who completed their course from the rehabilitation center and are struggling to adjust normally in society.

Here, the researcher collects the necessary data from abusers from the two rehabilitation centers by interviewing them and uses a closed questionnaire along with an open question. The questionnaire is formed mainly based on problems caused by abusers who cause trouble to their families because of their attitude and behavior. The open question is to give suggestions to the upcoming generations from individuals who have suffered from addiction. They want to make them aware of drug addiction. They have created a lot of problems for their family due to their habits. To analyze the problem created by the abusers, the researcher has asked different types of questions and analyzed them based on their experiences, thoughts, feelings, regression, and suggestions to the upcoming generation to know the facts and to know their real feelings.

Results

The result is based on the answers given by ten addicted people, who are interviewed and are staying in the two rehabilitation centers for their treatment. While observing the answer to the question 'When did you become addicted to drugs?', it has been known that six of the addicted people started using drugs in their adolescence period, whereas four of them started during their youth. It shows that during their adolescence, they are under the care of their parents and teachers. When they become young, their parents think that they are mature, and they don't take care of them as they did before. So, they fall into the world of drug addiction. In the second question, 'How did you become addicted to drugs?', it is found that eight of the abusers are influenced by their friends, but two of them are influenced by seeing their neighbor and other seniors taking drugs in front of them. It is known that bad company must be avoided by everyone to be safe from drug addiction.

'What was the status of your studies after you became addicted?' While observing their educational status, it has been understood that two of them are

continuing their studies to make their future bright after their treatment in the rehabilitation center. Two of them quit it after SEE (Secondary Education Examination; Completion of 10th grade), thinking that it is a burden in their lives, and two of them quit it after +2. But four of them are not interested in studies after falling into drug addiction. While observing the answers to ‘How did you manage the money required to use drugs?’, it has been understood that three of them manage money for drugs by asking their parents. One manages borrowing with their friends, relatives, and others. Five of them manage it by doing some income-generating activities, and one manages by selling valuable things in their house, such as gold, silver, and other expensive household items. Observing the answers to ‘Do you regret being addicted and feel like your life has been ruined?’, ‘What effect has your addiction had on society?’, and ‘What kind of effect has your addiction had on your family?’, it is observed that all of them regret their present situation. They feel that they have spoiled their precious lives, and nine of them feel that they have created negative effects in society, but one feels that he did not create any effect on society. They also feel that they have created a negative effect on their family members.

‘Do you feel that the dreams your family had seen for you have been fulfilled?’, and ‘What makes you confident that you can still do better in life?’, While observing the answers to these questions, it is found that eight of them become hopeful to fulfil the dreams of their family, and two of them are completely hopeless to do anything better for their family in the future to come. They are confident enough that they can come out of this life and do something better in their lives by quitting drugs and by keeping good company and following the suggestions, advice, and encouragement of their family and friends. They even think that they are unable to fulfill the dream of their family. They become hopeless in their lives because of addiction. They feel that it ruined their lives. In the question ‘Will it be easy for you to re-establish yourself in society?’, it is known that their previous attitude and behavior don’t allow them to live freely in society. But four of them feel that it will be difficult for them to re-establish themselves in society. But five of them think that they can easily re-establish themselves in society, while one feels that it will be difficult for them to be accepted in society.

While observing the answer to the question ‘How much trouble have you caused your family?’, it has been found that eight of them feel that they have given a

lot of physical, mental, and economic trouble to their family. But two of them feel that they haven't given any kind of torture to their family. In the question 'How do you feel that your current situation will affect your future generations?' They agree that their current situation affects the upcoming generations. They think that "as father, as son," their future generation might follow the path they had followed. They are very much worried about it. But seven of them feel that it has a completely negative effect on their future generation. 'What kind of person would you want to see the future generation be?' and 'Do you want your future generation to fall into drug addiction?' In these questions, they feel that they have ruined their precious lives, but they don't want their future generation to be like them. They want them to be safe from addiction and become successful and well-cultured in their lives. They want them to do something better for their society and nation. In the last open question, they all have suggested that all adolescents and youths should not fall into addiction. It is like a curse and very difficult to get rid of. They also suggested to them that parents are like God, and they should follow their suggestions because they never lead the way, which they should not follow.

Discussions

This study helps us understand how drug addiction affects people and their families in many ways. The answers from people in rehabilitation centers indicate that they are similar to what other countries find, but they also reflect the special social and cultural situations of Nepal. This part of the study brings together all the findings and explains what they mean in the bigger study of drug addiction. The research shows that most drug users first experimented with inhaling drugs during adolescence due to peer influence. (Kandel et al., 2007; Stone et al., 2016). Drug initiation during the teenage years, with peer pressure and social groups (Stone et al., 2016). This study also found the same situation in Nepal. People start using drugs when they are adolescents and young adults. In this growing age, they can easily be influenced by others. In the study, about 8 addicted people agreed that they started taking drugs because of peer pressure. They want to be accepted by their friends. So, they sometimes practice the things told by a peer to fit in the group. Others said they learned about drugs by watching their neighbors or older people who use drugs and smoke in front of them. This shows that when drugs are seen being used in a community, young people might start to think it is normal and good, and might follow

them too. Visible drug use in communities increases youth experimentation (Bohnert et al., 2009).

Drug addiction often contributes to school dropout and reduced academic engagement (Henry et al., 2012). The study finds the same scenario. Drug addiction causes many people to stop going to school. When someone drops out of school, they lose many opportunities for a better future. When people stop studying, they often feel lonely and become less active, which can make them use drugs even more to feel better. This shows that addiction can make school problems worse, and school problems can also make addiction worse. Addiction leads to financial loss, debt, and household stress (McKenna et al., 2017; Orford et al., 2013). This study also showed that people who are addicted to drugs often use bad or wrong ways to get money. Many of them borrow money, cheat others, or sell valuable household items from their home to manage money for drugs. These activities break the trust of the family and make life harder, especially for families who already have a financial crisis. Because of this activity, addiction not only hurts the person using drugs but also makes the whole family have problems with basic needs and the future. Financial crisis often causes quarrels at home, creates sadness, and makes family members feel isolated from each other.

Drug addiction creates emotional strain and psychological suffering for family members (Velleman & Templeton, 2007). The study discovered that drug addiction hurts families very badly. Everyone in the study said that their addiction caused sadness, worry, and disappointment in their families. Parents suffer a lot because it is very painful for them to see their children involved in addiction. As the addiction gets worse, families may feel ashamed, feel hatred from other people, and become isolated in the community. Many of them in the study felt guilty for hurting their families, and this feeling shows that they understand the problem they caused to their family and society. This understanding is an important lesson in getting better in their lives. Stigma reduces employment chances and social acceptance of recovering individuals (Livingston et al., 2012). The study also found that it is very difficult for them to join society again after rehabilitation. Some people are confident that they could live a normal life again, but many are worried that it would be difficult for them to be accepted in society. Because many people take drug addiction negatively, those who are recovering face a lot of problems, such as finding jobs, making friends again, or

gaining trust in their community. This shows that society needs to be kinder and more supportive of them so that they can start normal lives again. Communities should conduct such programs that help recovering people to feel welcomed in the community, judge them positively, so that they feel more at ease starting a better life.

Participants' concern for their children aligns with studies showing intergenerational patterns of addiction (Keeley et al., 2015). This study also found that many people were worried that their addiction might affect their children or future generations. They feared that their addiction might set a wrong example for their children or might put them at risk of using drugs. This worry shows that the recovering individuals are becoming more responsible towards their children. It also shows that raising awareness in children at an early age about the dangers of drugs is very important to prevent them from getting involved in drug addiction in the future. The open answers in the study show that it gives a strong message to the young people that they should never start using drugs. The respondents suggest that children must listen to their parents, remain close to good friends, focus on studies and physical fitness, and try to become good citizens. Their own experiences were full of regret, and they want to make sure that others do not go through the same path they followed. Overall, the study shows that drug addiction is not only a problem of an individual but a problem for the whole family and community. It affects a person's school life, money, relationships, and mental health. To recover, a person needs their own effort, strong willpower, support from their family and community, and help from good rehabilitation centers. To stop addiction before it begins, we need awareness programs, school and parents' counseling, strict laws, and community support about the dangers of drugs. Strong family love and open talking at home can also help parents see early signs and protect children from addiction.

Conclusions

At the end of this research, it is found that if the adolescents and youth are not controlled, they may fall into drug addiction due to their company, they spoil their creative period for managing the sources of drugs. Once they fall into it, they not only quit their studies but also concentrate on how to manage money for drugs. They even sell the valuable things from their home if their parents don't give them the money they asked for. It shows that they even resort to robbery to manage money for drugs. It not only gives mental torture but also gives economic torture to their family. They

regret their past, but it is too late for them, and they find themselves in difficulty re-establishing themselves in society, and feel worried about their future generation, whom they want to make well-cultured, and do something for their family, society, and nation. Finally, the researcher suggests that all adolescents and youth should not enter the world of drugs. It spoils their lives. It doesn't let them lead their lives on the path of success. It hinders them from fulfilling their own dream, the dream of their family, and their responsibility towards society and the nation. It gives their family physical, mental, and economic torture. So, the author suggests to them that it is hell and not to try to enter it.

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