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# Youth and Addiction: Drug Addiction in Youth of India

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## ABSTRACT

*Substance abuse, addiction, and overuse are a global problem these days, leading to crimes, jail and income cases hospital, and death. A 19-year-old college student a cocaine addict, died in front of his parents at the hospital after suffering from a cardiac arrest after consuming. Drug abuse is not just becoming common but also becoming a fashion amongst college-going students. They do not understand the ill effects of consuming drugs psychologically or physically and indulge themselves in a momentary dopamine rush. Drugs have a very drastic domino effect on any person using them from trying the drug once to becoming an addict is a journey with a very fine line and most of the youth who are still at the mental development stage cannot differentiate between the right and the wrong and end up as an addict. Lack of education, lack of guidance, and peers pressure are the most crucial factors playing a very important role in driving a teenager on the destructive path. Substance abuse is a very complicated and multi-dimensional problem that needs to be curbed in the swiftest way possible.*

**Keywords:** *Substance abuse, crimes, psychological effects, momentary dopamine rush, domino effect, mental development, Lack of education, Lack of guidance, addiction.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is a victimless crime, drug addicts are the victim of their own acts.<sup>3</sup> The misuse or overuse of any medically prescribed or illegally obtained drug to which the victim becomes prey can be termed as Drug Abuse. Drug dependence is highly prevalent in most societies of the world due to its relaxing and pleasurable effects on the human mind and body. Substance abuse is a public order crime as defined by Siegel as “the crimes which involve the acts which interfere with the operations of society and the ability of people to function efficiently”<sup>4</sup>, although it has been a general and strong belief that drug abuse is a

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<sup>3</sup> Prof. N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology (including Victimology)* 264 (Central Law Publications, Prayagraj, 18h edn., 2019 )

<sup>4</sup> Prof. N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology (including Victimology)* 264 (Central Law Publications, Prayagraj, 18h edn., 2019

victimless crime but the addicts mostly carry a secondary victim with them in the form of family, friends, dependents, etc. who are directly affected by the actions of the addict. In the case of youth drug addiction, the problem seems a bit more problematic as the drug abuse in youths of India is taking a horrific shape and is eventually growing with each passing day.

Drugs are medicines or other substances which have physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body and drug abuse is the habitual intaking or ingestion of drugs in the body. There are numerous reason for this which plays a crucial role in instigating youths to consume illegal substances and ultimately falls prey to the drug addiction and abuse. Anything beyond control is harmful to the person doing it as well as the surroundings of that person. Drug Addiction is a choice a person makes and there are certain circumstances regarding why that choice has been made. It is generally agreed that a human becomes a criminal due to mental depravity and emotional imbalance is a very crucial factor of mental depravity which leads them to take drugs beyond tolerance and control and generally the offenders consume drugs to overcome their inhibitions and emotional strain and the same applies with the youths as well because their brain and mental state is still in the inception and growth age they cannot distinguish between the right and wrong and sometimes end up being an addict without even realizing that they are an addict. These days and this century have taken drug abuse too far and in many societies, drug abuse is taken as a standard and fashion, it has become a method of enjoying life and having fun especially amongst teens and college students. They use these substances for many reasons like killing boredom, getting rid of studies and family pressure, increasing sexual pleasure and worst cases just to feel good and relaxed. They have taken drugs as means of getting relaxed and relieved.

## **II. CAUSES OF ABUSE AND ADDICTION OF DRUGS**

Drugs have been here for ages either in natural or in mad made artificial form. Let us first take the example of cannabis (bhang/ ganja), it has been part of our Indian culture for ages. Primarily it was used for medicinal and religious purposes. But in modern times Bhang and Ganja are a means of recreation and these are especially taken by the labour class after a hard day's work to lift their mood and enjoy life after work. In states like Punjab and other agricultural-dominated states, it has been seen that the consumption of ganja and bhang increases up to 50% during harvest season.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I. C. Chopra and R. N. Chopra, "The Use of the Cannabis Drugs in India", Issue 1 *Bulletin on Narcotics* 16 (1957)

Using drugs for recreational purposes by college students and youths in India is a very recent issue and there are numerous amount of reasons behind it. Adolescence is an age where a person usually makes irrational and impulsive decisions. They believe in living in the moment and present, without considering the consequences that may follow. It is a time in which many teens try drugs and alcohol for the first time. The average age of substance use initiation in India is generally between 10-17 years<sup>6</sup> when they don't even understand the consequences of the habit they are creating.

Youth are the young adults and juveniles who are between the age of (15-34) years and According to the report of the National Statistical Commission, 2017 on Youths in India, around 34.46% of the total population in India is youth and this number is showing a decline by 2030 to around 32.36%.<sup>7</sup>

The most common of all reasons behind drug abuse in youths are:

- **In an attempt to fit in:** Establishing oneself at college/ school or making new friends can be a difficult task for young adults and teenagers, and they have a fear of not being accepted by their fellow acquaintances or to fit in or to join the social circle around them the teenagers starts using and abusing drugs, to prove their worth and set the standard amongst their peers.

- **To Feel Good:** Thrill and adventure is a very common thing especially amongst the teenagers, who are full of energy and lacks motivation and focus in life they get bored easily and start to explore the things that can cause a thrill, drugs are the perfect gateway to thrill because they interact with our minds in a way the mind produces as much as ten times more dopamine and euphoria as a healthy normal human body should produce, this is unnatural extremely good and light feeling, and as soon as the body and mind feel the heavy amount of dopamine and euphoria, it creates a habit leading to craving and ultimately addiction.

- **Experimentation:** Generally in a normal human the brain development continues till the age of 25 years and the last part which completes the process of brain development is the prefrontal cortex which is responsible for focusing, anticipating events, predicting the consequences for action, managing emotional reaction, etc.

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<sup>6</sup> National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), "Magnitude of Substance use in India", Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India (2019) available at: [http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Magnitude\\_Substance\\_Use\\_India\\_REPsORT.pdf](http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Magnitude_Substance_Use_India_REPsORT.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> National Statistical Commission, Government of India, "Youth In India" 16 (Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India, [Social Statistics Division], new Delhi, 2017) available at: [http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication\\_reports/Youth\\_in\\_India-2017.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Youth_in_India-2017.pdf)

- **Competition:** The need to prove oneself in front of family, friends, classmates, and teachers is a very giant desire of teenagers. The constant desire to prove themselves can sometimes lead to abuse of drugs like in case of studies teenagers and students sometimes use smart drugs to improve their academic performance or sometimes they use unprescribed medicine to keep them awake and not sleep to devote time to study and perform well in school or college, these desires and competitive behaviour when takes a wrong turn end up in drug or alcohol abuse.

- **Peer Pressure:** Most teenagers and young adults are generally introduced to drugs by their friends and coeval and often they pressurise them to just try it together and these trials sum up into the addictions.

- **Addiction:** Some teens and young adults gets stuck amongst the cycle of using narcotics. They are more vulnerable at such young age and end up developing dependence and addiction. They get in over their heads at an early age and do not know how to get out, leading to an addict, who was not given proper help and care at his vulnerable times.

- **Lack of Parental Care:** Working spouses and nuclear family system are the contributing factors in encouraging drug dependence in a child/ youth. The lack of guidance and support to the child stimulates his brain which often ends up in wrong situations like alcoholism, drug addiction or even committing crimes.

- **Frustration and Emotional Stress:** Failures and emotional breakdown due to studies, romantic relationships or any other reason is a very crucial contributing factor in diverting the teens and young adults to join the company of addicts. They take drugs and alcohol as medicine to recover from the failure and stress momentarily, and in no time addiction

- **Hippie-Culture:** Hippie culture is quiet prevalent in the western countries where the teenagers and young adults indulge into the drug and alcohol as fun and enjoyment but gradually with time the frequency and quantity of consumption increases turning the hippie into an addict. Hippie culture is now becoming popular in India too. Cannabis related drugs are their primary source of intoxication, like weed, hashish etc.

- **Social Disorganisation:** Social disorganisation is also a contributing factor for the menace of drug abuse. Frequent family strifes and breakdown due to poverty, temperamental differences, neighbourhood influences etc. may divert a teenager or young adult towards

drugs and alcohol to overcome his family issues. Such people falls prey to the drug abuse easily.<sup>8</sup>

- **Lack of Knowledge:** Communication gap between child and parent can lead him to the path of addiction, the most crucial reason for this in country like India is lack of knowledge of child psychology.

### III. THE DOMINO EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE

Each and every drug, natural or artificial have its impact on the addict's health and mind, and this cannot be prevented if the addiction continues. The Domino Effect means chain reaction which is the cumulative effect produced when one event sets off a chain of similar events. Today it might just be a party drug and enjoying its effects but tomorrow it could be a case of overdose of the drug leading to various problems. Today it might just seem being rude and disrespectful to your teachers or parents but tomorrow it might turn into an aggressive conduct and getting arrested for it. Every action we do today contributed to our future and future of our family. *Mahatma Gandhi* once said: ***"The future depends on what you do in the present"*** and drugs are no different because addiction can make a person do some really ugly things.

Alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco based products are a blessing in disguise for the teenagers and young college going adults in India, the reason behind is, it is very easily available even to those who are under 18. Selling any kind of narcotics or drug to person below 18 is illegal in India, but that is just on papers. States like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab openly sell the alcoholic drinks to underage. Cigarettes are the most common tobacco based product and very easily available too because no shopkeeper is asking for a valid government ID or age proof to any person buying it, all these contribute to a mass destructive future of the youths. According to a report published in *Pubmed*<sup>9</sup>:

*"A survey was conducted at Agra (India) to study the extent and pattern of the non-medical use of dependence producing drugs among the post-graduate students of the local colleges and a number of medical students of other colleges of the state of Uttar Pradesh who were posted for training at the Mental Hospital. The study was confined to the academic year 1975-76 and covered 1,200 students. The present interim report is based on a sample of 564 students covered during 1975 (1st stage). The data on the*

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<sup>8</sup> Prof. N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology (including Victimology)* 266 (Central Law Publications, Prayagraj, 18h edn., 2019 )

<sup>9</sup> Dube KC, Kumar A, Kumar N, Gupta SP. Drug use among college students--an interim report. *Bull Narc.* 1977 Jan-Mar;29(1):47-61. PMID: 585581.

*total sample of 1200 (2nd and the final stage) are still being analysed. The results reveal that 73.88 per cent male, and 25.96 per cent female students had a drug experience at some time or another. Drug use was highest (80.66 per cent) among male medical students. The substances commonly used by males were: alcohol, barbiturates, Mandrax (methaqualone diphenhydramine hydrochloride), Vesparax (hydroxyzine hydrochloride), Equanil (meprobamate). Librium (chlordiazepoxide), pain killers (minor analgesics such as aspirin, and cannabis (bhang, ganja, and charas). The female students mainly used Equanil and pain killers. Among the 23 reasons offered for the use of drugs, the majority of students (50-59 per cent) stated that their main reason for drug use was "to relieve tension and facilitate relaxation". The next motivating factor for indulgence was "for the sake of fun" (30-39 per cent). The student drug users reported a number of effects produced by various substances. The most commonly mentioned effects were: excessive sleepiness, sluggishness, giddiness, inability to concentrate on studies, poor physical co-ordination."*

The drugs especially cannabis, Opium, morphine and heroin and are very easily available in the states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Punjab, country liquor is also a drug these days due to its speed of taking lives. According to a report published in BBC<sup>10</sup> around 60 people died from drug abuse in Punjab alone from January 2018- June 2018, Lt. Ricky Lahora was not so lucky either and give his life to drug abuse at the age of 25, he started using the drugs when he was still in school. AIIMS conducted a research in 2015 in Punjab and concluded that state had more than 200000 addicts. The numbers will keep surging up because by the time drug has become a fashion amongst the youth.

According to a report published by the Ministry of Social Justice, Government of India on Magnitude of Substance Use in India, 2019<sup>11</sup> about 0.9% children between the age of 10-17 years use cannabis and around 3.3% adults above 18 use the same, according to the same report use of BHAANG is more prevalent than GANJA or CHARAS.

Opioid use is quiet more than the use of cannabis amongst the children i.e. 1.7% children from age between 10-17 years use opioids and 2.1% adults above 18 use the same. Opioids contains opium, heroin, fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally without nay prescription.

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<sup>10</sup> Arvind Chhabra, "Punjab's drug menace: 'I wanted my son to die'", *BBC News*, 23 November 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-46218646> (last visited on- July-05-2021)

<sup>11</sup> National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), "Magnitude of Substance use in India", Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India (2019) available at: [http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Magnitude\\_Substance\\_Use\\_India\\_REPORT.pdf](http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Magnitude_Substance_Use_India_REPORT.pdf)

Inhalants are another very popular kind of drug available at stationaries in the form of diluter with the whiteners and they are very much prevalent amongst the children, around 1.17% children and 0.58% adults use Inhalants. Furthermore, There are about 10.7 lakhs current users of cocaine in the country and around 19.4 lakhs Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS) users in the country.

Another very alarming reason that is associated with the drug abuse that, their use leads to sexual excesses. Marijuana/ Ganja is believed to contain aphrodisiacal properties, which are responsible for increasing sexual attraction, desire and pleasure. A recent report on 13th February, 2020 where a father was alleged of raping his 13 year old daughter after smoking marijuana while her mother was gone. She was threatened, confined and raped by her father on multiple occasions.<sup>12</sup> This is just not one case there are thousands are unreported cases too from schools to colleges to the victim's own family.

A report published by United Nation (U.N.)<sup>13</sup> on a study among street children in Bangalore reported that 50% of street children were under the influence of drugs and were also practicing unsafe sex. Drug and alcohol are the very common amongst these children. 50% of them were habitual to inhaling the "solution" (typewriter correcting fluid), and about 46% of them, were consuming alcohol. Near about 61% of them were active sexually. Homosexuality was the most commonly reported sexual behaviour, followed by heterosexual (vaginal) sex. In another study about, 115 male street children aged 6 to 16 years were interviewed in New Delhi. More than half (57.4%) of the subjects had indulged in substance use before coming to the observation home. The agents consumed were nicotine (44.5%), inhalants (24.3%), alcohol (21.8%) and cannabis (26.4%). Substance use was found to be significantly associated with domestic violence, maltreatment of the child, nuclear families, running away from home, and the working status of the child.

Moreover, there are many unreported incidents and case which are not covered in this report or any report for that matter, The nation is going through a very critical phase and every second youth is under the influence of some kind of intoxication. Drug use or abuse brings with it several troubles, like, accidents, teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, rape, physical

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<sup>12</sup> "Gurugram: 13-year-old girl accuses father of smoking marijuana, raping her at knifepoint in mother's absence", *Times Now News*, 13th February, 2020, available at: <https://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/crime/article/gurugram-13-year-old-girl-accuses-father-of-smoking-marijuana-rape-her-at-knifepoint-in-mothers-absence/552832> (last visited on July 05th, 2021)

<sup>13</sup> Atul Ambekar, Gary Lewis, Subba Rao and the late Harinder Sethi of the UNODC Regional Office for South Asia  
*INDIA*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), September, 2005 available at: [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south\\_Asia\\_Regional\\_Profile\\_Sept\\_2005/south\\_asia\\_regional\\_profile\\_sept\\_2005.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south_Asia_Regional_Profile_Sept_2005/south_asia_regional_profile_sept_2005.pdf), p. no. 46

confrontations, rash driving, public nuisance, etc. and these all are not just made up problems, they do exist and they are the second step of the domino effect of drug abuse ultimately leading to the ruined future, family and life.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Drug addiction is complicated and multi-dimensional and is increasing at an all-time high rate in the youth especially college-going adults and teenagers, the drugs are initially introduced to the person are by their peers and friends who are already either addicted or on the way to becoming one. Trial of a drug is the only step a person needs to take and the rest is just a mind game and the irony is that every time a student/ child or teenager uses the drug he always thinks like, I am trying this for some time and he can leave it anytime he wants to but this is where the problem lies they cannot understand the fine line they have already crossed between, trying and becoming the addict. Addiction in the youths generally starts from the college nowadays schools are also the hub of drugs, and once they reach a certain age in their life they cannot just leave the ill habit they have created for a long time.

There is a dire need to start educating our youths about the dangers of drug use and abuse. There were programs against tobacco consumption in America in 1960 and as a result of those public programs around 2-3 million Americans stopped smoking. All we need is the right approach and correct method to be followed to teach and educate the youths about the ill effects of drug abuse.

The legal system must divert its focus from the sellers and consumers toward the procurers and manufacturers. A consumer can be tackled easily by medical treatment but if there will be drug producers in the society then the problem is not solved, we need to eliminate the drug producers, not consumers. Stricter laws regarding the selling of narcotics, alcohol to adults only. Educating the youths is our biggest weapon against these social demons and the government must focus on educating the youth.

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