

Drug Abuse in India : A Review

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Abstract

The usage of illegal drugs is referred to as drug abuse. Drug addiction is defined as a recurrent, chronic brain disorder marked by obsessive drug seeking and use, notwithstanding the negative effects. The decision to take a drug is voluntary at first, but continuous use leads to addiction. As any type of addiction is harmful, this storm primarily affects young children and teenagers. The majority of illicit drug usage begins between the ages of 16 and 17. It begins with simple cigarette smoking and progressively draws the individual into the trap of drug usage. It should make certain that effective preventative measures are performed. At an individual level, we should all work to effectively eradicate this problem. Furthermore, parents have a major responsibility to talk to their children and positively shape their minds. They should not overburden them academically or socially to the point where they succumb to this threat. Controlling drug addiction requires parental control, as well as a healthy home environment. Parents, as the guiding light, must instil empathy and compassion in their children.

KEY WORDS: DRUG ADDICTION, CRIMINALITY, DISORDER, PREVENTION, AND SYMPTOMS ETC.

Introduction

One of the scourges of modern society is drug abuse. It has afflicted all parts of our country and society. It can be found in both rural and urban places, among the poor and the wealthy, men and women, young and old. However, young boys and girls, particularly in hostels and practically all educational and technical institutions, practise it the most. As a result, drug misuse exists in practically every country on the planet. Alcohol is becoming more readily available and utilised on a daily basis[1,2].

Addiction has turned into a serious curse for people. It has an impact on not only drug addicts, but also on others, either directly or indirectly. It is a character flaw for ordinary individuals. Sociologists see it as an issue of virtue, while moral theologians consider it as a matter of vice. Some of the main causes of drug misuse include stress, worry, peer pressure, and poverty. "It's never too late," as the saying goes. As a result, we must all concentrate solely on this critical issue right now. The government should set goals to reduce drug abuse. It is a social issue, the religious folks regard it as a sin, but law enforcement agencies regard it as a crime. It's what a psychiatrist would call a personality disorder issue. They are referred to as patients by alcoholics anonymous groups and treatment clinics, and alcoholism is treated as a sickness. [3]

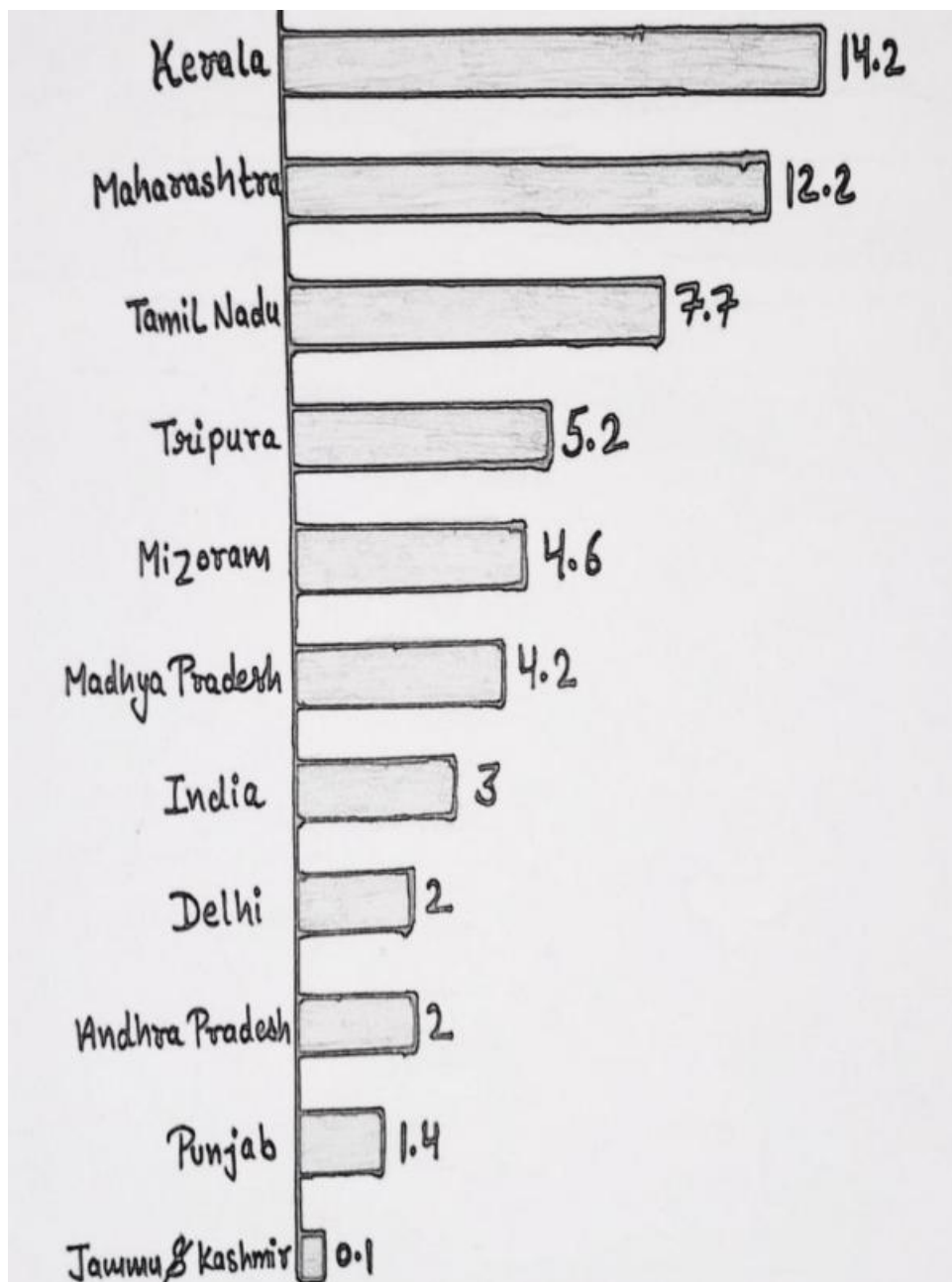


Fig.1. Drug-related suicide rate (per million population)

Drug abuse, also known as substance abuse, is defined as a pattern of drug use in which the consumer takes the substance in quantities or in ways that are detrimental to themselves or others. Substance dependency can be diagnosed when a person continues to use alcohol or other drugs despite concerns associated with their usage. As a result of compulsive and frequent use, tolerance to the drug's impact may develop, resulting in withdrawal symptoms when use is lessened or discontinued.

A drug is a chemical substance, a pharmaceutical preparation, or a naturally occurring substance that is used primarily to affect an existing process or state (physiological, psychological, or biochemical). In other words, a drug is any substance that modifies an individual's physical or mental functioning. Drugs

interact with each other to alter the body's metabolic processes [3]. A psychoactive drug is defined as one that modifies sensory perceptions, mood, mental process, feelings, or behaviour. The field of science known as pharmacology studies the effects of drugs. At the same time, some medications are lawful and others are prohibited. As prescription medications, alcohol and cigarettes are legal. Medically prescribed medications, however, can be abused as well. It can be overused, overly long,, overused, and so on As a result, tolerance and dependence are developed, and illegal drugs such as Heroin, Cocaine, and other similar substances are harmful to both the body and the mind[4] Other than medical reasons, some medications are used. Drug abuse occurs when these substances are taken for reasons other than medical, in an amount, strength, or frequency that harms an individual's physical or mental functioning. Its usage causes addiction, which leads to tolerance and dependency, whereas others create both physical and psychological dependence [5].

According to statistics, God's Own Country, Kerala, has a low rate of suicides connected to drug addiction or misuse in various Indian states.

Surprisingly, every component of the Human Development Index has a drug-related suicide rate ten times higher than Punjab[6]. The alarming statistics point to the urgent need for drug abuse prevention. Instead of a problem-centric approach, a solution-centric approach is necessary. The ready access to addicting content is what has led to such a serious problem. The availability of drugs over-the-counter is also a triggering factor. The majority of illicit drug usage begins between the ages of 16 and 17. It begins with simple cigarette smoking and progressively draws individual into the trap of drug usage. Drug misuse is caused by a variety of factors, including stress, anxiety, peer pressure, and poverty. There are those who rely on narcotics to get by, particularly in north India. These folks have turned to the streets and railway platforms as a last resort. Many rickshaw drivers spend the money they make throughout the day on drugs later in the evening or at night. They would rather use drugs than eat, which is a sad reality[7].

Drug Classification

Different drug classification schemes exist nowadays. It can be classified into two broad groups in general:

- **Legal Substances**
- **Illegal Substances**

Legal Substances

Legal medications are those that are made, produced, purchased, and sold within the legal framework. Aspirin cough syrups, laxatives, antacids, vitamins, and some contraceptives are examples of legal medications that can be bought without a doctor's prescription.

These non-prescription medications, which are produced and marketed for billions of dollars aThese non-prescription medications, which are produced and marketed for billions of dollars around the world, are used for hunger control, sedation, excitement, dandruff, constipation, and relief, among other things [8].



Fig.2. Drugs

Prescription pharmaceuticals are pills and medications that are dispensed by pharmacists based on prescriptions from doctors and dentists. Analgesics, contraceptives, antibiotics, medicated shampoos, stimulants, sedatives, antidepressants, anaesthetics, and other medications are among them.



Fig.3. Illegal drug

Simultaneously, several psychoactive prescription medicines such as amphetamines, barbiturates, narcotics, and others are abused to change awareness and pain sensitivity. Alcohol, smoke, coffee, and tea are all widely used, abused, and misused as social drugs[9]. They are psychotropic drug that are lawfully available. As a result, they are classified into three groups:

1. Non-prescription medications
2. Prescription medications
3. Nicotine, caffeine, and alcohol are examples of social drugs.

Illegal Substances

Drugs that are not legal .The term "illegal drugs" refers to substances that are not used lawfully but are abused. It can be further classified into two categories based on its ability to develop high and modest levels of dependence [10].

Amphetamines, cocaine, depressants, opioids, and other stimulants cause severe dependency but

marijuana and other hallucinogens cause mild dependency.

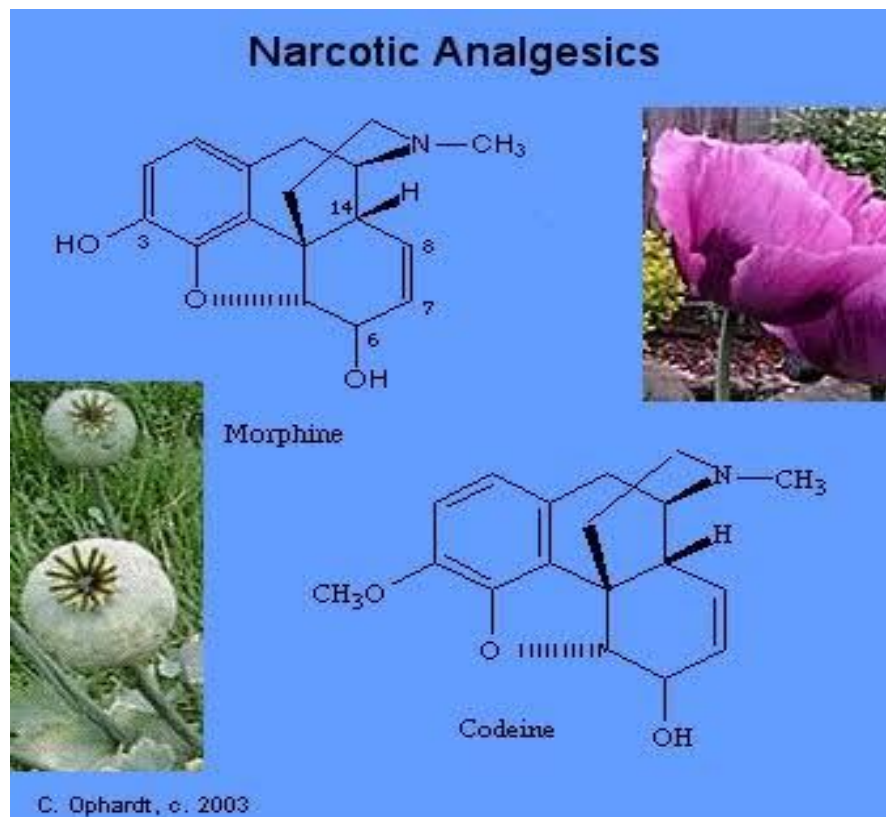


Fig.4. Narcotic Drugs

Illegal substances differ in nature based on their capacity to cause clinical dependency. Heroin, cocaine, amphetamines, barbiturates, and other highly addictive substances. Marijuana, LSD, Psilocybin, and other similar drugs produce weekly dependence[11].

Addictive Drugs Classification

The classification of addictive drugs is based on its type, origin, mode of action, and effects. They are classified into several categories, including:

1.Narcotic Analgesic

The prefix 'narco' signifies 'to deaden or to be numb' in Greek. Analgesic is a term that implies "pain killer" or "pain reliever." These medicines make a person feel euphoric and slow them down. Codeine, Morphine, Percodan, and other opioids are commonly prescribed by dentists and doctors as pain relievers[12].Narcotics include illegal drugs such as heroin and brown sugar. The term 'narcotics' refers to opium and opium derivatives, as well as synthetic drugs with opium-like effects. They are mostly analgesics with a significant potential for addiction[12].

2. Stimulants

Stimulants are substances that cause the body to react in a certain way. Stimulants are chemicals and medications that momentarily stimulate the mind and body and excite or speed up the central nervous system. "Pep" pills are substances that people ingest to gain amazing mental and physical abilities.

[13]. These are known as "uppers" because they elevate a person out of depression and provide mental balance, exhilaration, and a hyper sensuous experience of euphoria. Stimulants are recommended by doctors and come in the form of pills. Young males, on the other hand, abuse them to achieve a state of drunkenness and ecstasy. Nicotine and caffeine are two common stimulants. Cocaine and amphetamines are the active and strong stimulants. These substances have a strong appeal to the younger generation. They enter the brain via the bloodstream and disrupt the neurological system[13].



Fig. 5. Stimulant Drugs

3. Depressants

Depressants, sometimes known as "downers," depress or slow down mental activities, particularly the central nervous system, heart rate, and respiration. Chemicals are used by people to achieve relaxation, tranquillity, and proper sleep[14].



Fig.6. Depressants

4. Cannabis

Cannabis is a generic name for marijuana and other substances made from the Indian cannabis sativa plant. It's been grown for millennia in various regions of the world for its tough stem fibre, the oil in its seed, and its hallucinogenic effects. More than 60 cannabinoids may be extracted from the cannabis plant, with charas (hashish), ganja (marijuana), and bhang being the most common [15].

Drug Addiction Sign And Symptoms

Any drug addiction [16,17] can have the following characteristics:

- a. Having the impression that you require the substance on a regular basis in order to have fun, relax, or deal with your problems;
- b. Taking uncharacteristic risks, such as driving under the influence or sexually risky behaviour;
- c. Anger outbursts, acting irresponsibly, and overall attitude change;
- d. Sudden changes in work or school attendance and quality of work or grades;
- e. •Doing things one normally wouldn't do to obtain drugs, such as frequently borrowing money or stealing items from employers, home, or school;
- f. Taking uncharacteristic risks, such as driving under the influence or sexually risky behaviour;
- g. Associating with known users rather than spending time with individuals who do not use drugs;
- h. Engaging in clandestine or suspicious actions such as numerous trips to storage rooms, restrooms, basements, etc.
- i. Feeling fatigued, dejected, hopeless, or suicidal;
- j. Needing to use more of the drug of choice to attain the same results;
- k. Constantly talking about drugs and urging others to consume with him.

Drug Abuse Risk Factors

Teenagers are predisposed to drug misuse due to a number of variables. These include:

- a. a family history of substance misuse,
- b. a history of despair and low self-esteem,
- c. feelings of not fitting in and dropping out of the mainstream,
- d. Cigarette smoking has also been linked to substance misuse. Teens who smoke have an eight-fold increased likelihood of using marijuana and a twenty-two-fold increased likelihood of using cocaine[18,19].

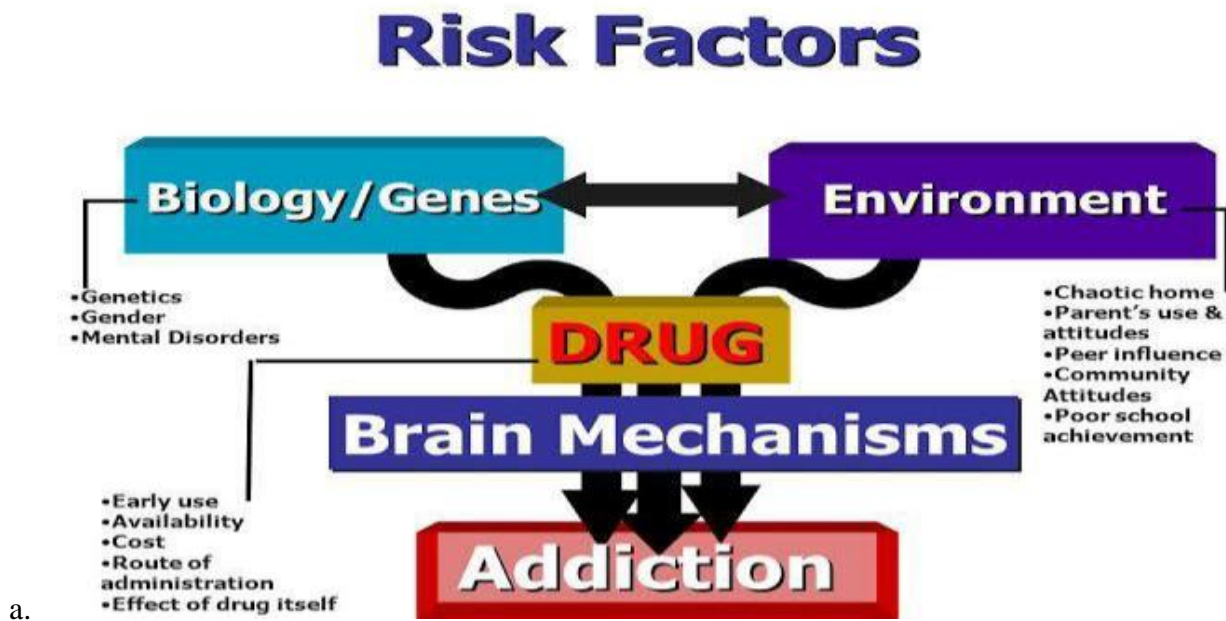


Fig.7. Risk Factors Drugs

Warning Signs of A Teenager Having A Drug Problem

- Physical Symptoms :** Fatigue, recurring health issues, red and glassy eyes, and a persistent cough
- Emotional Symptoms:** Personal changes, mood swings, irritation, compulsive behaviour, poor judgement, and a general lack of interest.
- Characteristics:** Starting fights, having a negative attitude, disobeying rules, relying on family, and secrecy.
- School Behaviours:** Lack of interest, a negative attitude, a reduction in grades, a high number of absences, truancy, and discipline issues.
- Social Issues:** New friends, legal issues, changes in clothes and music styles, abrupt disdain for physical beauty, and unusual requests for money are all examples of social issues[20].

Drug Abuse's Consequences

- Possibility of personal harm (danger of death or injury by overdose, accident or aggression)
- Negative health effects (including brain damage, liver failure, mental problems etc.)
- Legal ramifications (risk of imprisonment, fines and criminal record).
- Negative behaviours (harm to self, family and friends).
- Drug addiction is a common cause of financial troubles as well as challenges at work or education.
- In order to continue using the substance, people may lie or steal, and as a result, they may lose the trust of their friends and family.
- They may experience feelings of shame and guilt as a result of their recurrent failures to limit their drug usage [21,22].

The following are some drug abuse prevention strategies:

- a. Teaching and awareness initiatives
- b. Resisting social pressure
- c. Managing stress and anxiety
- d. Raising taxes on addictive materials such as cigarettes
- e. Youth-led campaigns
- f. Parental role is critical when it comes to over-the-counter medications[23].

The following are some of the several approaches to assist drug addicts:

- a. Ease of access to rehabilitation centres
- b. Employment prospects
- c. Widespread education
- d. Entertainment options
- e. Mandatory physical fitness programmes in schools and colleges
- f. Individual contributions to society to raise drug-abuse awareness [24,25].

It becomes evident that no region of the globe is immune to the scourge of drug trafficking and addiction. Drug misuse has become a severe problem that has touched millions of people, particularly the kids who are supposed to be the next generation's torch bearers. Drug usage has ruined the lives of millions of drug users around the world, forcing them to live in misery and unable to discern between life and death[26]. The world's drug statistics drug scenario reveals a grim picture of drug abuse.. It is the world's third largest company, after petroleum and the arms trade, with a \$500 billion yearly turnover. Approximately 190 million individuals around the world use drugs in some form or another. Drug misuse has a number of issues, including the fact that it causes a great deal of human suffering, as well as the fact that the illicit production and distribution of narcotics has increased crime and violence around the world[26].

The international community has launched numerous initiatives to educate people in general, and teenagers in particular, about the dangers of drugs. One such practise is the annual commemoration of June 26 as International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. In India, the situation is not much better, and the number of drug addicts is growing by the day. According to a UN estimate, India has at least one million heroin users, with unofficial claims claiming that the figure has risen to as high as five million.

The Indian government is dedicated to confronting and eradicating the threat of drug trafficking, and many actions have been implemented at both the national and state levels in this regard. To put the war against drug abuse/addiction/trafficking into action, adequate efforts have been taken, including innovative improvements in enforcement, legal, and judicial institutions. Some drug offences have been given harsh penalties in order to send a deterrent message to potential offenders. To combat this threat, the NDPS Act of 1958 was enacted, with all of its strict stipulations. To combat the threat, strict rules have been enacted,

including a minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, with a maximum sentence of 20 years, and a fine ranging from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh. The state has developed a comprehensive strategy comprising specific measures to reduce general drug usage, and many government and non-governmental organisations are working on this. [27]. To deter drug addiction and trafficking, measures such as offering education, counselling, and rehabilitation programmes are adopted. "It's never too late," as the saying goes. As a result, we must all concentrate solely on this critical issue right now.

The government should set goals for reducing drug abuse. It should make certain that effective preventative measures are performed [28]. We should all do our part to help eliminate this problem on a personal level. Furthermore, it is a big obligation of parents to speak with their children and constructively influence their thoughts. They should not put them under so much academic and social pressure that they succumb to this danger. Controlling drug addiction requires parental control, which includes a healthy home environment. Parents, as the guiding light, must instil empathy and compassion in their children. Addiction to drugs is a condition that can be avoided [29, 30].

Conclusion

Prevention programmes that incorporate the family, school, community, and media have been demonstrated to be helpful in preventing drug abuse. Drug usage trends are influenced by a variety of events and societal variables, but when youngsters view drug abuse to be dangerous, they minimise their drug use. As a result, it is mandatory to educate kids and the broader public about the dangers of drug usage, as well as teachers, parents, and health care providers. Professionals must continue to spread the word that drug addiction may be avoided by never abusing drugs. "It's not the drug that makes you a drug addict; it's the escape from reality."

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