

Factors contributing to the problem of drug abuse among the adolescents in Kashmir Valley.

Manzoor Ahmad Malla

Research scholar, MANUU, Hyderabad, Telangana

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ABSTRACT: *Drug abuse among the adolescents as a global phenomenon has several dimensions. It is both a problem and a challenge for developed as well as developing nations associated with multifarious factors. It has affected all sections of society including upper and lower class, young and old, students and non-students, males and females, rich and poor. The pattern and prevalence of drug abuse has been seen in high proportion among the adolescent which are the nation's most potent human resource as well as future citizens. The menace of Drug abuse among the adolescent particularly in Kashmir valley has grown into a grave social evil and posing a big challenge to public health as well as has become a matter of great concern in the present scenario of the society. The adolescent of Kashmir valley are becoming the largest hostage of the menace of drug abuse and their vulnerability is growing rapidly for few decades. The Kashmir disputes such as political turmoil, armed conflict, Militancy, violence, terrorism, psychological distress, unfavorable environmental conditions and rapid socio-economic problems like poor industrial and infrastructural development, mass unemployment, corruption, poverty, underdevelopment etc. have leading a rising number of drug addicts in Kashmiri society. The use of tobacco, charas, Ganga, cocaine, heroin, opiates cannabis, alcohol and inhalant substances etc. has been growing rapidly among the adolescents in Kashmir. The use of these illicit drugs posing a big threat to humanity, by deteriorating adolescents mentally and physically, damaging family relations, spoiling potentiality, dreams, degrading the social and moral values and becoming a hindrance in shaping their career as well as progress and development of the societies. The present study is theoretical in nature based on the various reviews attempts in order to addresses the various contributing factors of drug abuse among the adolescents population of Kashmir Valley. This study would help great extent to the law enforcement agencies, civil society, policy makers, government and other local agencies to make the necessary precautions, intervention and prevention of drug abuse among adolescents.*

Key Words: *Adolescents, Contributing Factors, drug abuse.*

Introduction

Drug abuse is a multi-dimensional problem, both in developed and developing countries associated with various factors and conditions which vary from nation to nation, society to society and culture to culture. But the growing and contributing factors of drugs abuse particularly among the teens as well as grown-ups in poor and economically unsound society like Kashmir is quite different and too extent as compared to population of other states. In Kashmir region the menace of drug addiction and drug trafficking has increased at an alarming level and poses a major health challenges for the adolescents as well as for the society. The problem of drug abuse not only affects the physical, mental and social health of the individuals but it disturbs and burdens the whole family. It also gives great threat to family happiness and creates individual, family, economic and social disorganization. The causation of the menace of drug abuse among the adolescents can be traced in the social, economic, political, psychological and environmental factors. The long pending Kashmir issue, political turbulence, armed-militancy conflict, psychological distress, socio-environmental conditions and socio-economic conditions like rapid unemployment, mass corruption, poverty, lack of industrial and infrastructural development, allied sectors, underdevelopment plus economic and social marginalization has drastically increased the problem of drug addiction and drug trafficking activities in Kashmir valley. The present generation, particularly the younger generation of Kashmir valley, passing through a critical stage which is characterized by identity crisis, violence, terrorism, strikes, tension, defiance, oppression and repression has accelerated the number of drug addicts and drug smuggling activities in the valley. The various research studies and statistics revealed that drug abuse in Kashmir valley particularly among the younger generation in the region is growing very rapidly for the past few decades. The prevalence of drugs abuse and drug peddling among the adolescent in Kashmir valley raises a most serious concern and a worldwide attention in the present scenario of the society. The United Nation Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) has estimated that there are more than seventy thousand drug addicts in Kashmir valley alone including four thousand women. The unreported cases would be many times more

than the recorded figure. The position is gradually becoming increasing. The Drug de-addiction and rehabilitation center Srinagar has reported that thousands of drug addict patients are diagnosed every year in which most of them are educated and unemployed youths. The illegal use of drugs and substance such as smoking ganja or hashish, tobacco, cannabis, heroin, cocaine, brown sugar, opium, morphine, alcohol, codeine, sleeping pills, sedative tablets, cough syrups, inhalants (like nitrazepan, fevicol SR, glue correction fluid, paint thinner, petrol, shoe polish) and other pharmaceutical substances etc. are the major common drugs and substances which have been frequently used by the young generation of Kashmir valley. A study conducted by the Rifat Khan (2008) has revealed that 80% of the younger generations in the state are victims of the menace of drug abuse which includes both males and females in the age group of 16-25 years. The adolescent youth in Kashmir are not consuming only single deadly drugs but ninety percent drug abusers in Kashmir are taking more than one drug at a given period of time. Many studies reported that younger generations of Kashmir region are becoming more addicted to various harmful drugs in order to minimize their depression, anxiety and stress which are caused by the prevailing socio-economic situation, lack of employment opportunities, and lack of moral and religious education, psychological depression and social environment conditions. Moreover there has been a sharp increase in the drug dealing and drug peddling cases in certain areas of Kashmir valley. Dr. Khan, the director of Drug de-addiction center Srinagar has reported that, "the trend of drug abuse is on the rise among school going children as we have registered many such cases, where students of class IX to XII are involved with drugs. The geographical proximity of Jammu and Kashmir with international and national borders as well as easy cultivation, production and distribution of illegal drugs has leading a rising number of drug addicts in the Kashmir valley. As a result, the drug and substance abuse in Kashmir valley has been increased rapidly which results a serious risk of health issue and affects almost every aspects of the Kashmiri society. In this regard there is a great need to study the various factors and conditions which have increased the menace of drug abuse among the adolescents in Kashmir valley. Therefore, the present study is theoretical in nature which analyses the various factors related to the prevalence of drug abuse among adolescents of Kashmir valley.

Objectives of the study

- The main aim and objectives of this present study is to find out the various contributing factors of drug abuse among the adolescents in Kashmir valley.

Methodology

The research article is based on the secondary data analysis. The author is trying to gather a theoretical understanding pertaining to the issue through the available substantive domain. The author, hence completely relies on the secondary data with diverse theoretical understanding and data available. The data has been mostly retrieved from different government official records, statistics and research paper data bases.

Factors leading to drug abuse in Kashmir.

The phenomenon of drug abuse in Kashmir continues to be detrimental problem for the adolescents as well as for the society. The Kashmir valley which has been called as paradise on earth and Switzerland of Asia for its scenic beauty and tourists attraction has become a new place of drug trafficking and drug peddling activities. Drug abuse is complex in nature and is associated with a number of factors varying from society to society and culture to culture, but in Kashmir there is no single factor that has contributed to the menace of drug addiction among the adolescent. For instance, socio-economic factors such as unemployment, mass corruption, lack of industrial and infrastructural development, poverty, terrorism, youth unrest, social disintegration, rise of individualism and value system, illegal production, easy availability, social disorganization, illiteracy and conflicts that are prevalent inside the valley such as political turbulence, violence, armed conflict, militancy, psychological conditions and other socio-environment factors etc. are responsible for the growing problem of drug abuse among the adolescents in Kashmir valley. Above all, the Kashmir conflict, socio-economic problems, psychological and socio-environment conditions are the main factors which have enhanced the problem of drug abuse and drug trafficking in the Kashmir valley.

1. Kashmir conflict

The Kashmir conflict/issue which is a flash point between India and Pakistan as well as peak conflict zone of South Asia has adversely affected all aspects/sections of the society. For the last few decades the armed conflict, militancy and socio-political turbulence has engulfed all the people of Kashmir which has badly curtailed the thinking of people. The military-militancy climate and consequential insurgency is a major factor in the lack of educational, social, cultural and economic development in Kashmir. The

political turbulence and ongoing conflict which is rooted since 1947 has been the most notable and foremost contributing factor in triggering an explosion in the drug abuse spread. The lack of overall development has adversely affected the masses particularly the younger generation. The prevailing situations in Kashmir society due to the long armed conflict, militancy and socio-political turbulence has given birth to a number of many new problems, such as unemployment, poverty, corruption, terrorism, violence, illiteracy, youth unrest, agitation, social disorganization and moral degeneration, drug abuse and drug trafficking. Among all these problems, the menace of drug abuse particularly among the adolescents raises a most serious concern and a worldwide attention in the present scenario of the Kashmiri society. The long pending Kashmir issue has brought a tragic/disastrous impact on the entire life of society in socially, morally, physically, mentally, culturally, economically, religiously and politically. The long pending issue has made the adolescents more violent and vibrant mainly due to the gross violation of human rights, mass innocent civilian killing, injuries, mass humiliation, harassment, inhuman torture, lathicharge, illegal detention, civil curfew, crackdown, treating Kashmiri as terrorists, destruction of property, forceful aggression, oppression, suppression and domination etc. has compelled them to indulge in many anti-social activities and other bad things such as drug addiction and drug trafficking. The Kashmir conflict which has destabilized the whole cultural, political, economic and social structure of the society has put the large pressure up on the adolescents and indulged them in many drug trafficking activities. **Sudan, (2007)** has suggested that, "Kashmiri youths are leading the fierce conflict as they left with no choice and thereby the violence leads them to the social and psychological difficulties, which shows them the way of drug addiction". The continuity of conflict in the valley has left the entire population of Kashmiri particularly the youths broken, crushed, discouraged as well as disheartened and has forced them towards the menace of drug addiction. **Sidiq M et al (2017)**, has revealed that "adolescent of Kashmir who were born and brought up during the past 20-25 years of the conflict are now falling in the menace of drug addiction". The continuity loss of human lives, strikes, hartals, civil curfews, mob violence, lathicharge, harassments and military-militancy encounters etc. put the large pressure on adolescents and compels them to involve in many illegal drug trafficking activities. (Leading to a rising number of drug addicts in Kashmir valley). For past few decades every individual, family and community in Kashmir region has been engulfed in the militancy inferno and later becomes the victims of harsh Para-militarization. The long conflict issue has made the civilian-military relationship hell, tensionful and conflicted-oriented and mostly leading clashes between them. All these negative social aspects and developments have contributed to moral-cum social tragedy in the conservative society of Kashmir. **Naqshbandi, MM (2012)**, has found that "conflict, ongoing violence and unemployment are the main reasons of drug abuses among the adolescents of Kashmir valley". The widespread danger and threat of drug abuse among adolescents in Kashmir valley is very alarming and worrisome. Majority of the young generations in Kashmir valley are falling easily into the menace of drug abuse. The various governments records, official data, research articles, magazines, newspapers etc. alludes to the fact that drug abuse and drug trafficking has become a very detrimental problem particularly among the adolescents in Kashmir valley, which must be coped immediately else it will destroy the future force/citizens of our society. So the present/prevaling conditions of Kashmiri society which is mainly caused/ influenced by the climate of armed-militancy and civilian conflicts as well as socio-political turbulence has often given a scope for drug abuse among the adolescents of Kashmir valley.

2. Socio-economic factors

The overall developmental scenario of Jammu and Kashmir in general and Kashmir valley in particular has been lagging always behind as compared to the other states of India. The low rate of socio-economic development, low productivity in agriculture, poor allied sectors, long term underdevelopment and inter-conflict rivalries has baffled the employment and income generation in Kashmir valley as well as has given birth to a rising number of problems. The socio-economic conditions such as unemployment, mass corruption, poverty, poor industrial and infrastructural development, poor sound fiscal management, lack of good governance and armed-military climate in the Kashmir valley has pushed the young generations in many bad and unexpected social activities like terrorism, violence, unrests, militancy, gambling, cheating, looting, counterfeiting, riot, robbery, burglary, theft, drug abuse and smuggling of illicit drugs. The economic development and employment opportunities in Kashmir region has not expand correspondingly, which leads to a rise in unemployment levels among the educated youths and later falls into the gun culture, terrorism, criminal and anti-social elements as well as smuggling and trafficking of illegal drug activities. The disillusionment and dissatisfaction among the youths caused by the socio-economic problems such as the rapid unemployment rate and mass corruption has forced them to involve in different kinds of illegal activities like violence, insurgency, agitations and unrests. The overall lack of development caused by the conflict is one of the most crucial barriers to the peace process in Kashmir. The rate of unemployment in

Kashmir valley which has reached an unprecedented level had directly affects individual's physical and mental health, their families and society at large. The total dissolutionment with the employment opportunities and lack of satisfactory conditions of work/occupation makes adolescent of Kashmir more prone to drug addicts. **Amin M P (2013)**, has found that "lack of occupation or employment is the main reason for drug abuse in Kashmir valley". It has been rightly said that "an idle's mind is devils workshop", having no other way out to relieve the psychological depression, stress and frustration youths are easily falling in many bad evils like drug abuse and illegal drug trading activities. According to National survey on drug use and health, one out of six unemployed workers is a drug addict. The increasing rate of educated unemployed youths in Kashmir drags them towards the heinous path of drug addiction and drug trafficking. Many research studies have found that there is a close relationship between the unemployment and drug abuse among the population, particularly the adolescents in the age group of 22-33 years. **Nagelhout G.E et al (2017)** has revealed that "economic recessions and unemployment increases psychological stress, which increases illegal drug use". The growing problem of unemployment in Kashmir increases the psychological distress of adolescent, which compels them to take various illicit drugs. The rising level of educated unemployment in Kashmir has put a large pressure and pushes them to involve in various bad activities. **J.O.Lee (2015)**, finding that "unemployment status has greatly influenced the menace of drug abuse among the younger generation". The lack of employment opportunities is a significant factor which directly involved the adolescent of Kashmir in drug taking behaviour and drug trafficking activities, mainly in order to avoid tremendous stress, depression and rejection. **Rather H. Y. et al (2013)** has also highlighted that majority of drug abusers in Kashmir valley belong to the poor/middle classes and low socio-economic background. On the nationwide, the illicit production, distribution and consumption of drugs tends to go up when the unemployment rate goes up, so youths feel more stressed and used drugs to cope. Majority of the young generations in Kashmir valley are facing the negative consequences of high rate of unemployment, which in turn leads them to the use of illicit drugs and drug trade. DGP of J&KSP. Vaid has also said that "Drug menace is a biggest challenge than militancy in Kashmir". For the past few years, reports of Jammu and Kashmir Police has showed that greater amount of illicit drugs as well as drug peddlers are seized and arrested in the Kashmir valley, which costs millions of rupees. The large number of adolescent has been arrested every year in connection and presence of drug trafficking and drug peddling. Many official reports have suggested that adolescents in Kashmir society are more prone to risk of development of drug abuse and drug trafficking mainly due to prevailing socio-economic conditions and present socio-political scenario of Kashmir valley, which forces the youths to join in drug trafficking and drug trading activities.

3. Psychological factors

The psychological conditions towards drug addiction refer to the characteristic within the addicts which promotes the use of drugs. The human behaviour which is a learned behaviour is also a too addictive behaviour through interaction with peers, persuasion, unconscious imitation, reflecting thinking and acquaintances with family members and other close sibling. The psychological conditions play an important role in individual's drug taking behaviour. The adolescents of Kashmir are psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, morally and mentally disturbed due to the present prevailing situations in the valley. The psychological problem such as depression, stress, tension, anxiety as well as heart diseases and high blood pressure has emerged/appearing as a permanent phenomenon in daily life of Kashmir. Many experts have suggested that Kashmiri youths are facing a more traumatic events like terrorism, agitation, stone pelting, killing, increased violence, deprivation, physical and mental harassment which showed them the way of drug addiction. **Housen T et al (2017)**, have reported that prevalence of psychiatric disorder, depression, stress and post traumatic disorder has been found in greater amount among the adolescents in Kashmir valley, mainly due to the killing of family members/loss of family members, loss of property, interrogation, lathicharge, inhuman mental torture, custodial killings, military and militancy attacks on family and property, crackdowns, displacement, forced separation and conflict oriented traumas. **Firdous A V (2011)** has suggested that, "Kashmiri youths are facing a multiple psycho-social problem including family, school, college, social and personal oversensitivity problems, which indulge them to many bad activities". Various psychologist and doctors has also found that younger generations of Kashmiri society are more vulnerable to the risk of drug taking behaviour as compared to the population of other regions. The stressful life and post traumatic events are considered to be the main factors towards the acceleration of drug abuse among the younger generations in the region. The growing mental stress and strains, rapid unemployment, ruthless exploitation, modern new ways of life, changing cultural values, fast life style, new thoughts, new ideologies, academic failure, peer pressure, failure in relationship, love affairs, family stress, feeling of isolation and deprivation etc. are the main psychosocial reasons pushing them into the menace of drug abuse and drug

addiction. According to Kandel, “Psychological variables, such as stress, low socio-economic status, low self-esteem, social anxiety, depression and poor coping skills etc. are the predominant factors for drug abuse among adolescents”. The extents of psychosocial problems that result from the mass exposure of traumatic events have led a rising number of drug addicts in Kashmir valley. The psychological distress among the adolescents which mainly caused by the reckless socio- economic disparities, rampage, brutalities, executions, human shields, harassment, family stresses, lack of freedom and movement and emotional deprivation has increased the menace of drug abuse among youths in Kashmir valley. **Syed Amin and Khan AW (2009)** have found that, “the ongoing conflict in Kashmir valley has increased the psychiatric morbidity among youths. The study also reports that prevalence of depression has been found significantly high in the age group of 15-25 years”. The daily normal life in Kashmir which is beginning with the stone pelting, curfews strikes, mob violence, agitation, encounters, vengeance/innocent civilian killing has significantly affected the whole young generations of Kashmir valley. The younger generations of Kashmir are consuming a deadly and multiple drugs and other substance primarily in order to relieving psychological depression, stress, anxiety, avoiding boredom, removing inhibition, pain, intensifying perceptions, feeling good and confident, avoiding family and educational stress. **Dr.Pirzada MA (2013)** has highlighted the, “reasons of drug abuse in Kashmir such as turbulent situation, satisfying curiosity, academic failure and breakup in relationships”. The drug abuse and drug addiction among the youths in Kashmir valley has reached an alarming level, which poses great threats to their physical and mental health as well as society at large. The psychological disorder, post traumatic disorder, traumatic events, social rebelliousness, armed violence, intensifying perceptions and to cope stress regarding failure, personal and family are the major common reasons, playing a great role in the general drama of drug consumption in the valley.

4. Environmental Factors

The environmental factors play a vital role in shaping the individuals drug taking behaviour as well as influences them greatly towards the reinforcing efficiency of drugs. Research studies shows that environmental factors had greatly influenced the people’s experiences in drug taking behaviour. The environment factors such as easy and availability of drugs, peer pressure, unstable family atmosphere, risk taking behaviour, low religiosity, lack of social and community control, low social status, social deprivations and victimizations, poor academic performance, parental and close sibling of drug history, low education level of parents, underprivileged situations etc. contributes to the development risk factors of drug abuses among the younger generations. **Lone GH H et al (2013)** have found that, “family environment, family background, nature of family control, parental interests in their friends, leisure activities, parental and other siblings use of drugs are an important factors in drug usage among the adolescents in Kashmir valley”. The socio-environment conditions of Kashmir valley which mostly remains disturbed, and upheaval by violence, strikes, curfews, outbreak military- militant violence, encounters etc. poses a major social issues in the Kashmiri society. The present prevailing situations in Kashmir valley has badly affected a large number of families in terms of loss of property, loss of parents and loss of beloved sons and daughters, which had put a number of negative consequences upon the mind of adolescent population. The family stresses, disruption in family system and parental relationships have strongly impacted the adolescents in many risk behaviour activities, including drug addiction. **Foo CY. Et al (2014)** has found that “family factors, peer pressure, curiosity and academic stress are the major factors that are responsible for the menace of drug abuse behaviour”. The family factors such as disintegration in family management, lack of neighborhood social control, lack of parental child relationship, history of physical and sexual abuse, impaired relationship, traumatic experience, parental drug abuse, family conflict, physical and verbal harassment, marital disruption, domestic violence, parental loss and inconsistency plays an integral role in encouraging the adolescents towards the menace of drug abuse. **Tahira Sidiq et al (2016)** have found that, “parental drug abuse and smoking like cigarettes, bidi’s and hooka’s shaping the individuals drug abuse behaviour. The study also finds that peer pressure, frustration, bad company and chance use are the major causes of drug addiction among youths of Kashmir”. Apart from family factors, the social influences like peer pressure, gang affiliations, bad companies, rebelliousness, close friends, school and college mates acts as predictor factors for drug abuse among the youths. Many research studies have found that influence of peer pressure, absentia; low school performance, truancy and expectations of failure are the leading factor of drug abuse. **Wani I A et al (2017)** has suggested that “people who smoke regularly with friends, companion and other close mates often acts as a door way of drug users”. The influence of local and peer groups as well as parental drug abuse behaviour are the most consistent and important factors associated with adolescent drug abuse behaviour. Besides these, the geographical location of Jammu and Kashmir State with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Punjab borders makes the transit/supply of drugs easily possible across the state. The easy availability as well as accessibility of drugs is another major reason that has contributed to the growing

menace of drug abuse among youths in Kashmir valley. When the accessibility, production and distribution of illicit drugs become easily available, the adolescent becomes more vulnerable to risk of drug abuse behaviour. In many parts of the south and north Kashmir, the production of drugs such as, charas, banga, opium and poppy are easily cultivated in the fields like other normal crops which had increased the menace of drugs abuses among adolescents population. Many children and young people in Kashmir are involved in the illegal drug trafficking and drug trade activities and have turned it into the sources of their income which gradually allows them to indulge in the addiction of the same, moreover, joining the gangs of drug peddlers they become an integral part of gang violence and other anti-social activities. The result of political turmoil, conflict, violence's, ruthless exploitation of humanity, rapid unemployment rate, mismanagement of the economy, lack of economic progress, lack of good governance, growing mental stress, social exclusion, curiosity to experiment with new drugs, socio-economic disparities, marginalization and underdevelopment, illicit production and distribution, illicit drug trafficking, drug peddling, easy availability of drugs, corrupted law enforcement agencies, low family and religious control etc. has increased the menace of drug abuse among the younger generations in Kashmir valley.

Discussion and Conclusion

Through the above discussion of various research studies, articles, journals, books, magazines, government records and other official statistic have clearly revealed that drug abuse among the adolescents in Kashmir region which has increased at an epidemic level is not caused by any single factor, but it is the result of the operation of multifarious factors. Therefore, the present study clearly indicated that menace of drug abuse has its roots in the individual's socio-economic problems, socio-political turbulence, cultural norms, psychological conditions as well as environmental conditions. Most of the studies have suggested that prevalence and pattern of drug abuse is quite alarming among the youths particularly the adolescent populations in Kashmir region. Thus, one many conclude from this that menace of drug abuse among the adolescents can be explained and understood only on the basis of a comprehensive approach rather than as a single factor approach.

So the problem of drug abuse among the adolescent in Kashmir has been growing rapidly and is a matter of serious concern which destroys all the plans of those who are addicted to it. Having a society where the youth, who are capable of doing anything possible for the betterment of the society, are a prey to the drug abuse is a blot upon the society, a stigma upon the community as well as for the nation which cannot curb its youth from getting destroyed. Therefore, the widespread of drug abuse in Kashmir region has become a growing threat to entire the humanity which affects not only the individuals who use it but it affects their families, community and society at large. The adolescent who take drugs in order to seek instant remedies to their socio-economic problems, environmental conditions as well as psychological depression, stress, frustration, trauma and tension are in reality putting themselves in the same states which they try to avoid and escape by taking drug substances. They should remember that drugs abuse makes them physically, mentally, morally, economically, emotionally, culturally and socially handicapped. Therefore the menace of drug abuse has to be tackled effectively and the drug addicts are to be persuaded to give up their deadly habits. Prevention, treatment and rehabilitation all require a positive and life-affirming campaign to cope the menace of substance abuse. Besides, it is the responsibility of every family, NGO's, religious leaders, civil society, local agencies, youth forums, awareness of policy makers, law enforcement agencies, police, judiciary and other stakeholders to curb this menace and prevent them from becoming the victims of this menace and bring them back into the mainstream of the social life.

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