

Domestic Violence and Drug Addiction Among Adolescents: A Case Study of Union Council Bilitang-District Kohat

Tariq Aziz¹, Jan Alam², Saiqa Bibi³, Urooj Safdar⁴

¹PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

²Chairman, Department of Sociology, Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), KP, Pakistan.

³MPhil Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

⁴BS, Department of Sociology, Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), KP, Pakistan.

Correspondence: janalam@kust.edu.pk²

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The recent literature about drug addiction reveals several causes in the least developed societies. Very little attention has been given to domestic violence which is also a major contributor to this menace in developing societies. This study is designed to explore the role of domestic violence in promoting drug addiction among adolescents of District Kohat.

Methodology: The nature of the study was qualitative where the data was collected from 20 participants selected purposively through in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis was used for the data analysis which reveals that familial affairs such as conflict among parents, divorce, financial unrest, conflict among siblings, and disintegration among family members are the major contributors to drug addiction.

Findings: The finding highlights that a holistic and institutionalized approach needs to be undertaken with vivid policy implications at a societal and communal level to eliminate the increasing rate of drug use among adolescents in the study area.

Conclusion: The study concluded that a stable, nurturing family environment, free from violence and financial distress, is critical in preventing the onset of poly-substance abuse among adolescents. Interventions aimed at strengthening family bonds, improving economic conditions, and addressing cultural norms that perpetuate adverse childhood experiences are essential in mitigating the risk of drug addiction in vulnerable populations.

Keywords: Parental Conflict, Conflict among Siblings, Disintegration among Family Members, Qualitative Research.

Introduction

The use of poly-substance is the overall social issue across the globe which is rapidly districting each sector of the society. It has major implications for youth and adolescents in many societies.

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Precariousness inside the family design can prompt expanded pressure and diminished parental oversight, increasing the probability of openness to unfriendly encounters and the involvement of youth and adolescents in the use of drugs (Hughes et al., 2017).

Similarly, Felitti (1998) also reported that the behavior of parents such as style of parenting, self-control practices, and the process of development and caring relationships has significantly influenced the occurrence of harsh or inconsistent discipline methods, inattention, and emotive unavailability can contribute to the expansion of Poly-substance abuse which affect the holistically adolescent initial and later developmental socialization.

Parent's mental health issues, such as despair, substance abuse, or violence within the family can have a deep impact on children's well-being and increased risk of poly-substance young living in households where one or both parents struggle with intellectual health complications may experience abandonment, abuse, or exposure to distressing events (Bethell et al., 2014).

High stages of conflict or violence among parents can generate a hostile and unpredictable family environment, increasing children's weakness to opposing child experience which later influences poly-substance drug addiction. Observing the inter-parental conflict or experiencing family violence also causes significant emotional anguish and upsets the children (Finkelhor et al., 2007). Similarly, on the other hand, helpful, durable, and friendly parents can provide a platform to protect their children from several social and psychological traumas. Hence, positive parent-child association must be open communication, and the existence of stable and supporting caregivers can lessen the impact of harmful experiences on children (Turner et al., 2017).

It is also reported that families having traditional traits have also served as a possibility of risks in shaping drug use behavior. Berger et al. (2005) found that families whose members are involved in substance abuse have often lived hidden due to the loneliness and interdependency of rural communities. Kaminski and Stormshak (2018) discovered that family rejection due to the use of alcohol and/or other drugs affects physical health, and associations with people, and potential violence further boosts substance abuse in rural areas. The self-reliance of many rural families has discouraged individuals from pursuing medical and/or healing services. Hazards to economic security, due to inadequate employment prospects in rural areas, have caused specific stress on family members, thus possibly leading to higher substance use. Rural inhabitants are less likely to have employer-provided health care treatment or prescription drug treatment for themselves and their family members, and the rural poor are less expected to be enclosed by medical assistance than non-rural residents (Hetherington et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the an increase in the risk of addiction fallout from both genetic and environmental issues. While the parent has substance abuse complications, the family mostly becomes unsafe, unstable, hectic, confused, and chaotic. Parents with substance use disorder not only have limited parenting expertise but also have less control and guidance over their children. Moreover, parent-child collaboration is also poor and unsatisfactory, and mostly parent-child conflicts might be observed in such families. These problems can have negative consequences on the socialization process such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, confidence, and future planning. It also leads to the growth of depressive indicators such as no participation in school activities and games (Haugland et al., 2019). Hence, the unrealistic outlook can harm a child's self-esteem and self-worth, as they might consider that they can never meet their parents' values and principles. This can also result in a perception of failure and inadequacy (Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner, 2008).

Keeping in view the existing facts and figures, the current is designed to explore the relationship between domestic violence and adolescent drug addiction behavior, theorizing that domestic violence is the pull factor leading to substance abuse among adolescents by examining the psychological and social impact of domestic violence. Furthermore, the current research study aimed to uncover how such an environment

may predispose adolescents to seek solace in drug use, thereby contributing to a cycle of addiction. Understanding this link is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems to mitigate the risk of drug addiction in adolescents exposed to domestic violence.

Research Question

How does domestic violence (such as violence among parents, siblings, and cousins) push adolescents toward drug addiction?

Research Objective

To investigate domestic violence (such as violence among parents, siblings, and cousins) pushes adolescents toward drug addiction

Research Methodology

The nature of this research study was qualitative which best suitable for the understanding of participants' experiences with domestic violence and drug use in the study area as recommended by (Cresswell, 2008). The researchers opted intrinsic case study method to undertake this study. Intrinsic is a case study method in which the researcher/s only select special cases for investigation to analyze their knowledge and experiences about the issue at hand (Stake, 1995).

Keeping in view the nature of the study the primary data was collected from 20 participants who were using Poly-substances such as Cannabis, Ice (Crystal methamphetamine), and heroin in District Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The data was collected through purposive sample techniques who were admitted to the Rehabilitation Centers, and workshops as per analogy with Cresswell (2008) who considered such technique as the most appropriate in study where respondents/participants are of specific purpose. In-depth interviews were used to get the primary data. Thematic analysis procedure was applied the collected data was transcribed to initial codes, codes were form into categories and final themes were developed (Braun and Clark, 2006).

Discussion

This study focused on exploring domestic violence as a pull factor of drug use in District Kohat. The study explored that the involvement of adolescents in drug addiction has two major causes in the study regions such as familial setup and the economic position of the family. Family setup means the family setting such the inter-family relationships. It is found that adolescents of those families having conflicting relations are more vulnerable to drug addiction and get involved in it in the long run. Along with this, the lower economic status of the family is also a major contributor to violence in the family that causes drug addiction.

Family Setup

Many socio-cultural factors lead to adverse childhood experiences among these family setups is also of prime importance. The social setup such as parent-child relationships, interaction, motivation, and social bonds with children play a vital role in their positive personality. However, harsh parenting, abusive relations, and violence within the family can shape the behaviors and practices that contribute to adverse childhood experiences that lead to poly-substance addiction (such as smoking, cannabis, and ice usage). For instance, in some families' cultures, strict disciplinary practices are socially accepted, increasing the likelihood of physical or emotional abuse. Additionally, societal factors such as poverty, systemic racism, and community violence disproportionately affect certain groups, leading to higher rates of adverse childhood experiences. Children in marginalized communities often face multiple stressors, including inadequate access to education and healthcare, which can compound the effects of adverse childhood experiences and certainly cause poly-substance drug addiction.

A participant Javed Khan responded that.

"I've been living with a single parent since my childhood, living separately from my father, because my father desired for second marriage and my mom did not allow him, so he beat her daily, and later she left the home. This hostile situation led me to mantle trauma and depression; furthermore, my friends usually asked me about my parents and even more taunt me in school and playground. Therefore, I felt pressure and left the school at the age of 14 when I was in 8th grade. To get relief from such tension I started drugs for reduction of stress and anxiety, and later I started working in a mechanic shop."

Likewise, another participant Tausif also added that.

"You know when my mother passed away during my birth and my father got remarried. However, my stepmother did not like me and she used to ask my father to send me to work rather than invest in me in school. At the age of 12, my father took me to a motorbike mechanic shop and stopped my schooling when I was in 7th grade. I started to work there for a couple of years, I faced mental torture, my mechanic instructor also beat me meanwhile my mother tortured, me at home. This situation led me to run away from home. I started work in a factory and met some friends over there who were already poly-substance addicted later I started along with them. However, one day the police and drug rehabilitation officers arrested me, on a road and took me to the rehab center."

Likewise, another participant Nawaz also opined that.

"Alas! My father was a drug addict he used to beat my mother and sibling and ask them for money to buy drugs. My grandfather looked after the domestic needs, but when he passed away, I was compelled to work to serve my sibling and mother, during this time I faced hard struggles, and later my mother passed away due to chronic disease. I started hating my father and we fought on a routine basis. My father's cruel behavior and violence against my mother and the heart-rending death of my mother were unbearable for me. I could not control my psychological condition, and thus, became a drug addict."

Similarly, another participant Shakeel also responded that.

"I started drugs due to problems in my family. We lived in a joint family where there were frequent arguments and tension in our family for so many reasons like my mother and aunts fighting because of children, and a land issue between my parents which brought too much tension and depression among all family members. So, to curb this tension I started Hashish and later after sometime, I was automatically motivated toward ice/methamphetamine."

From the above discussion, it is evident that family setup and the adverse socio-cultural ideas and practices within the family compel the adolescent towards drug use. The social experiences and psychological well-being of the majority of participants reveal that conflict between parents and domestic conflicts among family members immensely affect individual social life, particularly adolescents.

Similarly, Hussey et al. (2006) also said that cultural beliefs and practices also shape the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences. Children growing up in single-parent households or households with frequent changes in caregivers may be at higher risk of experiencing Poly-substance. This Instability within the family structure can lead to increased stress and decreased parental supervision, increasing the likelihood of exposure to adverse experiences (Hughes et al., 2017).

Felitti (1998) argued that parental behavior, including parenting styles, discipline practices, and the presence of nurturing and supportive relationships, significantly influences the occurrence of harsh or inconsistent discipline methods, neglect, and emotional unavailability can contribute to the development

of Poly-substance abuse which affect the holistically adolescent primary and later developmental socialization. However, family plays a significant role in the primary socialization of the adolescent, but as the majority of participants revealed conflict between family (parents) and domestic violence distract human primary socialization.

Violence Due to Poverty

The study found that family poverty is also one of the major contributors to violence against adolescents that pushes them toward drug addiction due to their adverse experiences. This study shows that the economic position of the household increases the vulnerability of developing illicit drugs use in the later period life. Likewise Hjern et al. (2013) also indicated that poor families' adolescent are exposes to several problems including drugs usage. The adverse experiences may be due to insufficient nutrition, contaminated exposures, and anxiety that can negatively impact mental growth and succeeding cognitive functions in numerous ways.

A participant named Arshad responded that.

"Alas! We are so unlucky; my family is facing many hardships including poverty and financial instability. We often struggled for food and basic needs, and most of the time we could not get enough quality food. I could not send my children to school. My family is unable to pay the electricity bills, we cannot afford new clothes and don't have money to buy things of basic needs like clothes, shoes, etc. Such feelings caused serious distress in my personality and the only solution before me was to start using drugs."

Another participant namely Amjad further added that.

The only reason for drug use before me is economic inequality. In our society there is inequality, some people are living lavish lives while the majority are lacking the basic needs of life. Economic inequalities made me feel bad when I looked at the kids with good lifestyles, wearing beautiful clothes, and getting a high-quality education. it made me feel sad. It was the worst time, and I started drugs at the age of 15 with my friends to control my psychological condition such as stress and tension. Furthermore, sometimes I feel I should commit suicide, but after taking poly-substance (cannabis) I feel good, and I can work too."

Another participant named Naseem said.

"You know, I belong to a poor family my father worked on a farmland, which was not ours and it was not enough for us. Mostly, I thought about significant financial problems in childhood, we didn't have enough money to build our house properly and buy clothes, shoes, etc. My father cannot afford such expenses and sometimes my parents fight because of the family's financial condition. However, witnessing the disturbance in my family and comparing myself to rich families who have everything led me to feel bad in childhood because just thinking about the rich families and their kid's lifestyles discouraged me. However, I worked with my father in the farmlands my father was a drug addict and I got involved to see him later in life."

From the above finding, it is clear that lower family economic position badly affects adolescents' early life socialization and causes traumas to them if they are not properly handled, especially by their parents. The majority of participants claim that poverty snatches their adolescent lifestyle as compared to others and during the workplace, they find such friends who motivate them toward poly-substance use to prevent social and psychological disorders.

Hjern et al. (2013) reported that childhood socioeconomic position and failure in school have a significant relation with adolescents' use of drugs. It is also indicated that minorities with lower socioeconomic status had complex occurrences of lifetime use of marijuana, and higher frequency of past-year induction

compared with wealthy social groups in the populace (Gerra et al., 2020). Drug usage is grounded in the three indicators based on the background of the family such as income, wealth, and parental education (Patrick et al., 2012).

Conclusion

This study highlights the complex interplay between family dynamics such as family practices, parental and sibling relationships, norms and values of the family along with the economic status of the family. The findings emphasize that instability within the family structure, such as parental conflicts, hostility among siblings, frequent changes in caregivers, and parental mental health issues significantly increases the risk of adolescents engaging in poly-substance abuse. Moreover, harsh or inconsistent discipline methods, neglect, and emotional unavailability from parents further exacerbate this risk, as they negatively affect adolescent socialization and psychological development.

It is also found that financial factors also play a crucial role in influencing adverse childhood experiences. The narratives from the participants underscore the profound impact of domestic violence, financial distress, and social inequalities as the major contributors to drug use. The study concludes that a stable, nurturing family environment, free from violence and financial distress, is critical in preventing the onset of poly-substance abuse among adolescents. Interventions aimed at strengthening family bonds, improving economic conditions, and addressing cultural norms that perpetuate adverse childhood experiences are essential in mitigating the risk of drug addiction in vulnerable populations.

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Conflict of Interest

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ORCID iDs

Tariq Aziz ¹  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2236-4122>

Jan Alam ²  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6723-1351>

Saiqa Bibi ³  <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6652-8859>

Urooj Safdar ³  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0853-8465>

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