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TRENDS AND ISSUES OF OPIUM ADDICTION IN KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Background: Drug use is widely recolonized phenomenon in Pakistan. It is a serious concern and a big threat to our country. There are different kinds of drug abuse is reported in Pakistan.

Objective: To determine the frequency of drug abuse and factors related to opium addiction in Karachi, Pakistan.

Method: A cross sectional study was conducted from June 2014 to January 2015 in Karachi. Karachi. About 197 subjects were interviewed from four drug abuse sites by using a semi-structured questionnaire after taking verbal consent and assuring confidentiality.

Result: About 31 % of individuals were taking Cannabis Sativa (Charas), 52% were taking Diacetylmorphine (heroin), 3% were injecting morphine, 1.5% codeine, 6.5% were taking cocaine and 5% were using other pharmaceutical products like diazepam and kins. Majority of the participants (43.1%) were of 26 to 30 years of age. About 98.4% were male and only 1.5% were females. Forty two percent were married and 58% were unmarried. About 35 % drug addicts were unemployed, 26% were labor, 19% were drivers, 7.6% servants and 11% were doing other low paid jobs.

Conclusion: This concluded that Cannabis Sativa (Charas) and Diacetylmorphine (heroin),were commonly used drugs. The age group involved is of low paid jobs male youngsters, unemployed and illiterate. There is a strong need to reduce existing demand and supply of drugs and uplifting of socioeconomic status of young males in our country.

KEY WORDS: Drug Addiction, Drug Abuse, Heroin

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INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction is wide spread phenomena all over the world and the problem is increasing at rapid rate in Pakistan[1]. The present situation of drug abuse in Pakistan is serious and has grave consequences. According to a survey conducted

in 2005 showed that 3.5 million drug abusers in Pakistan and the number is growing at annual rate of 7 percent[2]. In late 70's a new drug Diacetylmorphine (heroin) was introduced and its abuse grown rapidly. Heroin is a derivative of Opium, a dried juice obtained by unripe capsule of poppy. Its activity is due to phenanthrene and isoquinoline group of alkaloids. The poison acts on CNS causing first stimulation and later depression followed by narcosis. The effect can be described in three stages excitement, stupor and narcosis[3]. The other drug commonly used for its aphrodisiac, hypnotic and analgesic action called Cannabis Sativa commonly known as Charas or Hashish. This is a stimulant of CNS leading to initial euphoria followed by narcosis. It can cause severe psychological dependence and intense craving[4].

In its North West Pakistan has a long unsecured border with leading opium producing region in the world, so Pakistan is more vulnerable for opium trafficking and abuse[5]. Northern regions of Pakistan are famous for cultivation of opium[6]. Narcotics of worth 30 Billion US Dollars are smuggled from Afghanistan via Pakistan to the world[7]. Easy availability of drug abuse become a public health concern and according to the drug abuse survey of Pakistan there is a significant increase in use of heroin, opium, barbiturates and other drugs in Karachi[8].

Drug addiction is related to many factors like poverty, unemployment, bad company, lack of awareness about effects of drugs, stress, illiteracy, easy access to drugs, lack of parental supervision[9][10]. According to the survey the most commonly abused drugs in the society are Diacetylmorphine (heroin), Cannabis Sativa (Charas),Opium, Leaves and buds of females cannabis plant (bhang) and alcohol[11].

This study is aimed to explore the frequency and types of drug addictions and factors related to its use.

METHOD

A cross sectional study was conducted during June 2014 to January 2015 in four known drug heavens of Karachi by using a semi-structured questionnaire. Karachi is one of the largest cities of world in term of population around-18.876 million. The detailed questionnaire was developed to evaluate trends of addiction in urban city of Karachi. About 197 were included in this study after taking informed

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE SAMPLE DRUG USERS (□ = 197)

VARIABLE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE %
AGE		
18-25 Years	26	13.3%
26-30 Years	85	43.1%
31- 35 Years	51	26%
36-40 Years	25	12.7%
41-45 Years	10	5.1%
SEX		
Male	194	98.4%
Female	03	1.52%
MARITAL STATUS		
Married	83	42.1%
Un Married	114	57.8%
RELIGION		
Muslims	151	76.6%
Christians	23	11.6%
Hindus	19	9.6%
Others	04	2.0%
OCCUPATION		
Unemployed	70	35.5%
Labour	52	26.3%
Driver	38	19.2%
General duty servant	15	7.6%
Others	22	11.16%

TABLE 2
TYPE OF SUBSTANCE USED ROUTE OF DRUG ADMINISTRATION AND FREQUENCY OF DRUG USED OF THE SAMPLE DRUG USERS (□= 197)

VARIABLE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE %
TYPES OF SUBSTANCE USED		
Diacetylmorphine (Heroin)	103	52.2%
Cannabis Sativa (Hashish/ Charas)	62	31.47%
Cocaine	13	6.59%
Morphine injection	06	3.04%
Codeine	03	1.52%
Any other	10	5.07%
ROUTE OF DRUG INTAKE		
Smoking	134	68.1%
Injection	38	19.2%
Snuffing	09	4.56%
Ingestion	08	4.1%
Inhalation	05	2.6%
Any other	03	1.3%
FREQUENCY OF INTAKE		
Once a day	80	40.6%
Twice or more a day	24	12.1%
Once a week	22	11.3%
occasionally	53	26.9%
When need it	18	9.1%

consent. The addicts were interviewed by health care professionals using a questionnaire with Urdu version for better understanding. The questionnaire comprised of 23 questions, about the demographic profile of the drug users, the pattern of practice and beliefs about the drug use.The data collected was entered and analyzed by using social sciences package SPSS version 16. Frequencies and percentages were calculated.

Inclusion criteria:

Drug users above 18 years of age.

Drug users fully conscious at the time of interview.

Exclusion criteria:

Drug abusers who were in state of narcosis and not fully conscious at the time of interview,were excluded.

RESULT

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

Out of 197 participants majority (98.4%) were males and only (1.52%) were females. Most of the participants (43.1%) were found of age between 26-30 years. About 87.7% of participants had monthly income of 10,000 or less PKR and only 12.3% had monthly income more than 10,000 PKR. The employment profile of the drug users show that 35.5% of the users were unemployed 26.3%, labor 19.2% driver, 7.6% general duty servant and 11.16% others. Regarding their level of education half of them (55.3%) had no education, 18.3% had primary education, 10.1%

FIGURE:1
PROBLEM FACED DURING WITHDRAWL

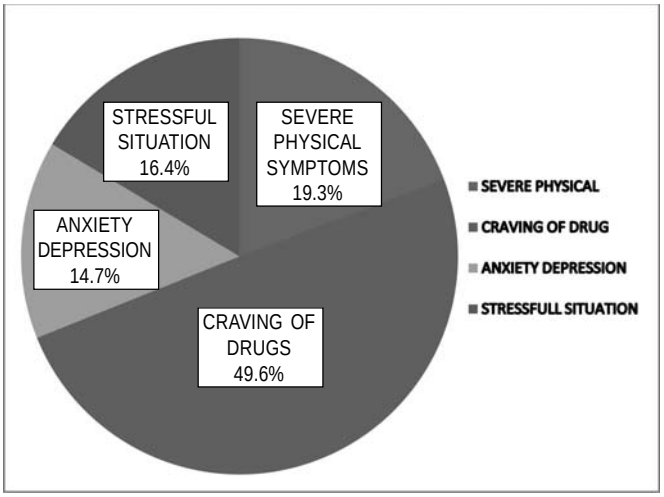


FIGURE:2
SOURCE OF MONEY FOR BUYING DRUGS

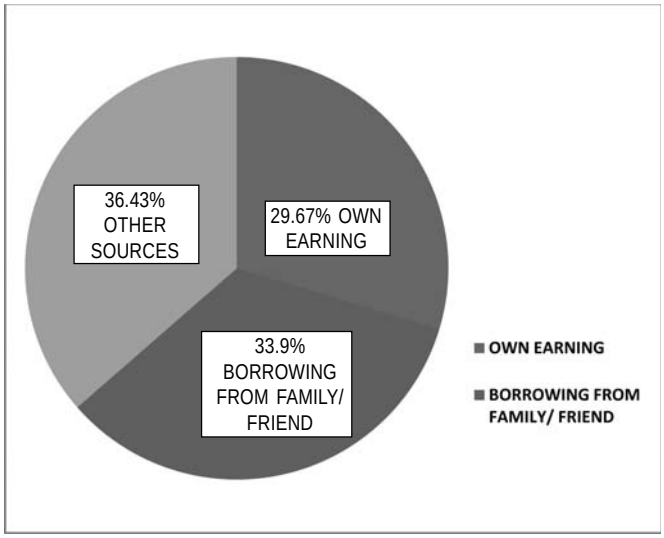


FIGURE:3
RESPONSE OF FAMILY

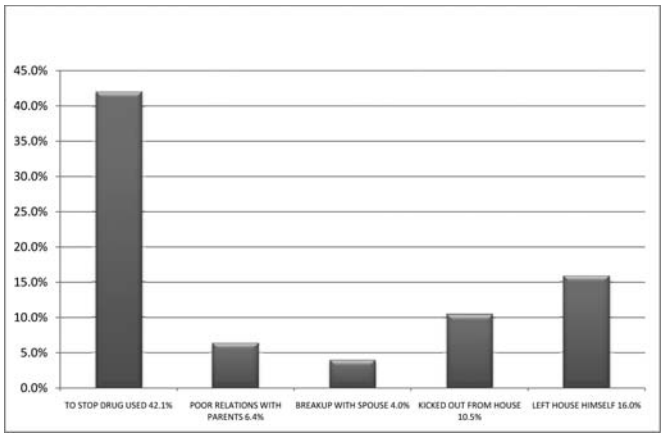
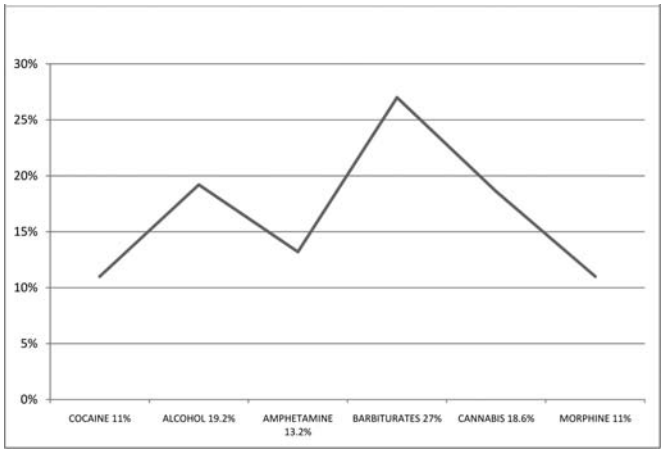


FIGURE:4
GRAPH SHOWING PERCENTAGES OF COMBINATION DRUGS



had secondary education, 4.5% have college education and 11.8% had attended madarsas (Table-1)

PATTERNS AND PRACTICE OF DRUG USE:
The most commonly used drug was Heroine(52.2%) followed by Charas (31.47%),Cocaine (6.59%),Morphine injection 3.04%,Codeine (1.52%) and others (5.07%).Most common mode of intake is smoking(68.1%) followed by injection (19.6%),snuffing(4.3%),ingestion (4%),inhalation Dragon chasing (2.7%) and others (1.3%).The frequency of intake is 40.7% of the users take the drug once a day,12.1% takes the drug twice or more a day, 11.3% take it once a week, 27% take it occasionally, 8.9% take the drug when they felt the craving. 32.2% of the users were dependent on the drug for more than 2 years, 28% for more than 5 years, 8% for more than 10 years, 12.3% for 6 months and 19.5% reported to have just started the drug. 58.92% of the participants are not using any combination drugs and 41.08% reported of using combination drugs. Barbiturates is most commonly used combination drugs (27%) followed by Alcohol (19.2%), Cannabis (18.65), Amphetamine (13.2%), Cocaine (11%) and Morphine (11%). 57.3% of the users take the drug in company of friends while 42.7% reported to take the drug alone (Table-2)

BELIEVES ABOUT THE CAUSE OF DRUG USE:
Most of the drug users (44.1%) started taking the drug due to family/ financial problems, 34.4% started due to bad company of friends, 8% developed this habit after prolong use of prescribe narcotics, 4% reported the reason as failure in love and 9.5% said there was no reason to start taking the drugs. In terms of the benefit gained by using the drugs 42.1% respondents believes that they feel their all problems are solved, 33% reported to feel calm and relax, 16.8% reported to take the drug to escape from worries and 8.1% respondents believe that the drug make them physically active.

EFFECTS OF DRUG USED ON MOOD:

- *Mood before taking drug:* 27.4% of participants reported headache, 22.8% complain restlessness, 18.2% complain depression, 16.2% felt anxiety and 15.2% reported body ache.
- *Mood after taking drug:* 25.8% feel relaxed after taking the drugs, 23.8% felt physically active after taking the drug, 23.3% experience themselves to be psychologically strong, 16.2% experience release of stress and 10.6% reported to feel elated.

RESPONSE OF FAMILY AND SOCIETY:
Response of family: Family members of 42.1% drug addicts wanted them to stop taking the drug.,10.5% of the addicts were kicked out from their house, 16% left their house themselves, 6.4% have poor relation with parents and 4%

breakup with spouse (Fig-3)

Response of society: In 43.5% of cases the response of society is insulting, in 28% cases the society responded by social boycott, in 22.5% cases the response was hostile and in 6% cases the response was sympathetic.

SOURCE OF DRUGS:

As far as the continuous availability of the drug is concerned 73.06% respondents said that the drug is easily available from the area, and the response of 26.94% addicts was negative in this regard.

Regarding the source of drugs, 65.9% of addicts respond that the drug is available in the area, 22% received the drug from a supplier, 7.3% get the drug from friends and 4.8% get the drug from other sources. The source of money for getting the drug 29.67% addicts said that they used their own earning to get the drug, 33.9% borrow the money from family/friend and 36.43% use other sources to generate money. (Fig-2)

ATTITUDE TOWARDS DRUG WITHDRAWL:

About 73.09% of the respondents agreed that they have tried to give up drug use and 26.91% of the users have never tried to quit this habit. When asked about the problems they faced during withdrawal 49.6% of the users said there was intense craving of drug, 19.3% faced severe physical symptoms, 16.4% faced stressful situation and 14.7% faced anxiety and depression (Fig-1)

DISCUSSION

According to world drug report 2000 cocaine was most commonly used drugs in Pakistan; later in 2013 Cannabis was reported to be most commonly used drug used by 3.6% of adult population[12]. The difference in result is due to the fact that this study was conducted in those areas of Karachi which were known for Heroin addiction. Most of the drug users were found of age group of 27 to 30 years. Similar findings were reported in other studies conducted on heroin abusers in Pakistan[13] and in China[14]. More than 50% of the drug users were illiterate and high proportion of them were unemployed. Most of the drug users reported to start taking the drug due to family or financial problems and they believe that after taking the drug they feel relaxed and stress free. A high proportion of the users reported that the drug is easily available in the area and most of them use their own money to buy the drug and some of them either borrow or steel money. Less than half of the participants reported using combination drugs with barbiturate being most commonly used combination drug. Contrary findings were reported in a study were the Benzodiazepines are found most common combination drug[5]. High majority of respondents have tried to give up the habit but they felt intense craving for the drug during withdrawal.

According to National assessment report 2006 the majority of opiate users were using Heroin and most of the opiate users were using more than 01 substance at a time. According to this report the average age of users is 35.5, around one third of them were unemployed and uneducated[6]. Similar findings are observed in another study conducted in Karachi[15] and in Lahore[16] on IV drug users.

These findings are consistent with the result of this study. In another study conducted in Karachi showed that most drug users take the drug to escape from stressful life events. About the attitude of quitting it was observed that high proportion of addicts want to quit this habit and are willing to quit if their financial problems are solved[17]. Another study showing consistent findings with this study state that most users started taking the drugs to cope with stressful situation[2].

CONCLUSION

This concluded that Cannabis sativa (Charas/Hashish) and Diacetylmorphine (Heroine) were commonly used drugs. The age group involved is of low paid jobs male youngsters, unemployed and illiterate. There is a strong need to reduce existing demand and supply of drugs and uplifting of socioeconomic status of young males in our country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education should be provided as getting aware and adequate knowledge about consequences of drug abuse will improve the drug abuse scenario in Pakistan. It is suggested that policy should be designed for comprehensive employment promotion and manpower development to deal with the problems of youngsters in Pakistan.

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