

DRUG ADDICTION A MAIN SOCIAL ISSUE IN UT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR: A MINI REVIEW

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Abstract

This review article discusses the drug addiction and its social implications for the UT of J&K. Drug addiction is a global social phenomenon with negative implications. It becomes a main concern in many regions impacted by political instability, armed conflict and Jammu and Kashmir is one of them. Drug addiction, particularly in the Kashmir valley, has emerged as the major challenge facing society after political instability. It has brought detrimental impacts on the entire Kashmiri society, having implications for individual, psychosocial, healthcare, economics, and governance. The social impacts of drug addiction are main issues in Kashmir valley that often remains overlooked and neglected. Given this, the aim of this article is to examine the social impacts of drug addiction in Kashmir region. In order to accomplish the aims of the study, the secondary sources were mainly used. The study concludes that drug addiction has disrupted social life, healthcare system, social structure, domestic fabric and order of society. It has increased mental health issues, social isolation, anxiety, stress, suicidal thoughts, overdose deaths, violence and crimes rates. It has disturbed peace and stability, causing anti-national activities and putting law and order at risk.

Keywords: Drug addiction, political instability, social implications

INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction is a global phenomenon that has several dimensions. It is both a problem and a challenge for developed and developing nations. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, "drug addiction is a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences", (NIAAA, 2019). Addiction to various harmful drugs is increased on a global level and is becoming a new trend among youth (Carpentier, et al, 2019). Young people and adolescents form the majority of drug users, and they are also the most sensitive to the effects of drugs (UNODC, 2020). The world drug scene is very worrisome, as the world drug survey report estimated that over 284 million people used drugs globally, with over 38.6 million suffering from a drug use disorder (Vindobona, 2022). Drugs such as cannabis, opioids, narcotics, sedatives, hallucinogens, and stimulants are the most commonly abused drugs worldwide (SAMHSA, 2013). The problem has been

increased in many continents, including politically unstable and terrorism-affected regions such as Afghanistan, Jammu and Kashmir (UNODC, South Asia, 2009). Available literature reveals that that drug production and consumption may occur more in terrorist and conflict zones where the law and order are weak (Hanna, 2017; and Reitano, 2020). Similarly, due to the political turmoil and long armed conflict drug addiction has become widespread and resulting many implications on Kashmiri society.

Drug addiction is destructive to both the victim and those around them. Studies show that drug addiction is not merely an individual or personal problem, but rather a psychosocial problem that affects each and every part of society significantly (Ayoub, 2011). It has destructive consequences on individuals, social, economic, educational, environmental, legal, and physical and health issues (Darang, 2021). However, research has shown that the social and psychological consequences of drug

addiction are more severe and dangerous than those of other issues (Fox et al, 2013). A vast body of literature has highlighted the psychosocial implications of drug addiction that such as, social isolation, anxiety, depression, family disruption, domestic violence, crime rates, overdoses deaths, road accidents, suicides, and anti-national activities (WHO, 2012; Alhadi Hasan, 2019; and Rehman, et al, 2022). The prolonged use of drugs has an adverse impact on the overall healthcare system and frequently leads to health issues including overdose deaths, HIV infections, and other physical and mental health complications (Weinbaum, et al, 2005; Ritchie & Roser, 2018). Drug addiction leads to many crimes and anti-social activities including theft, burglary, robbery, violence, homicide, assaults, threats, and smuggling of illicit drugs (INCB, 2003; Bennet & Holloway, 2009). Suicide is another problematic issue associated with substance abuse (Ashrafioun, et al, 2017 & Borgschulte, et al, 2018). Literature reveals that drug addiction increases the risk of suicidal ideations and many negative thoughts among drug users (Poorolajal, et al, 2015; Chan, et al, 2016; and Breet et al, 2018). It impact on the entire social life of the community by destabilizing peace and stability, causing social disorder and posing a threat to national security (Patil & Pandey, 2022). In addition, studies found that drug addiction leads many psychological issues including stress, anxiety, depression, social phobia, fear, stigma and social isolation (Wani & Shankar, 2016; Jones, et al, 2019 and; Richert et al, 2020). Drug addiction in Kashmir is reaching a new height, imposing serious consequences on society. It has caused a wide spectrum of implications and issues that range from personal, social, economic, health, and educational to political. However, most of the studies being conducted in the region have focused on a few dimensions. Due to this, the psychosocial implications of drug addiction have often unnoticed.

Aim of the study

The main purpose of this review article is to study the psychosocial implications of drug addiction on Kashmiri society. The specific objectives of this study are:

- (a) To understand the problem of drug addiction in Kashmir valley
- (b) To critically examine the psychosocial implications of drug addiction on Kashmir.

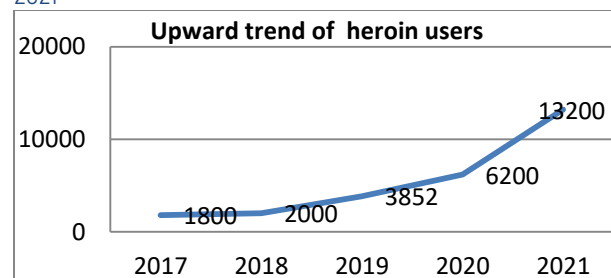
Methodology

In order to accomplish the aims of the study, the secondary sources were mainly used. Hence, the secondary sources including, survey reports, books, articles, magazines, newspapers and law enforcement reports were used to present the results. This article is divided into two sections, the first section presents the scenario of drug addiction in Kashmir, whereas, the second section is devoted to the psychosocial consequences of drug addiction on Kashmiri society.

Drug addiction: The current scenario

Drug addiction is a major concern in Jammu and Kashmir in general and Kashmir region in particular. The extent and magnitude of drug addiction in Kashmir has reached an epidemic level irrespective of age, sex, income, and living place. The widespread of drug addiction has its roots from the insurgency or terrorism related activities. The cross-border drug trafficking as well as political instability, armed conflict in Jammu and Kashmir has also led to an upsurge in drug trafficking, especially heroin, brown sugar, and cocaine, produced in neighboring countries (Das, 2012). This has led to an increase and easy availability, resulting more people easily attracted to this. Moreover, due to cross-border drug trafficking, the drug use scenario has changed from traditional cannabis substances to narcotics like heroin brown sugar, cocaine (Bhat et al, 2016). The use of narcotic drugs, including heroin, cocaine, and morphine, in J&K is reported to be among the highest in the country (Mohammad, 2022). It is reported that use of narcotic opioid drugs has increased from 15 per cent in 2015 to 90 per cent. Further, over the past few decades, nearly 90% of the drug users approached for treatment were mostly heroin users (Lone, 2021). The number of heroin drug users over the past few years has increased rapidly, as shown in fig 1.

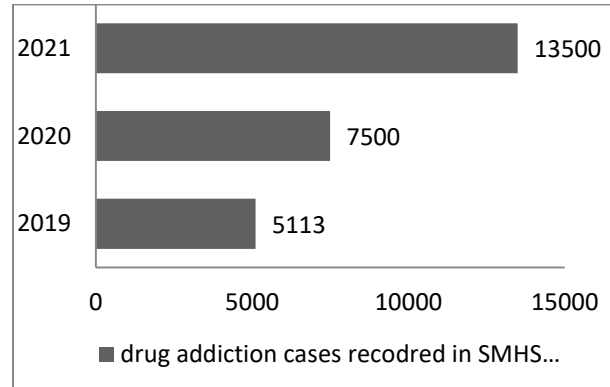
Fig 1: Heroin drug users increased in Kashmir from 2017-2021



Source: Data compiled by author from newspapers and police reports

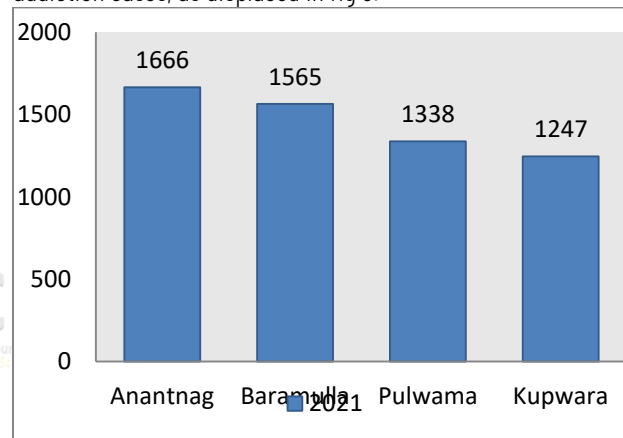
The scourge of drug addiction has spread to all sections of society, with educated, sound families and young people from all socio-economic backgrounds included in this grip. The various surveys conducted in the regions have reported an alarming increase in drug addiction. The international surveys reported that there are 70000 thousands drug users in Kashmir (UNODC, 2008). Similarly national survey conducted in 2019 has revealed that there are 6 lakh drug users, which accounts 4.6 percent of the total population (MOSJE report, 2019). One of the surveys estimates that illicit drugs worth Rs. 3.7 crore are sold every day in Anantnag and Srinagar districts alone, which is highly concerning.

The number of drug addicts in these two districts has reached 18000. This includes both males and females (Bazaz, 2021). Additionally, there is an extensive literature that identifies illicit drugs such as heroin, brown sugar, cocaine, morphine, codeine, and benzodiazepines (spasmoproxyvon, alprax, and valium), depressant drugs, tranquilizers, barbiturates, and inhalant substances as widely used by the youth of Kashmir (Naqshbandi, 2012 & Pirezada, 2013; and Bhat et al, 2016). In addition, statistics from various official government agencies show that the number of drug users has increased dramatically in recent years. Data from the drug addiction centre (SMHS) Srinagar displays that 15294 drug-using patients sought treatment between February 2008 and December 2016. Further, the number of people seeking treatment for a drug addiction problem has increased by more than 1500% (Majid, 2021). According to another study, 13, 638 drug users sought treatment at drug addiction centres in Srinagar between 2016-17 and November 2019 (Sidiq, 2020). The valley has seen a massive increase in the use of different harmful drugs over recent years. Several drug de addiction centers managed by the state's police, show a similar escalating trend of drug addiction in Kashmir. The report shows that 10,000 drug users were treated from 2008 to 2019 (Wani, 2020). The number of drug addiction cases in the valley has been recorded to have doubled in the last few years (Nissa, 2021) as shown in fig 2.



Source: data compiled by author

The prevalence of addiction is not confined only to Srinagar and its adjacent areas, but other districts in the Kashmir valley also show a rapid increase in drug addiction cases, as displaced in fig 3.



Source: Data compiled by author

Drug addiction has crossed all barriers in Kashmir. It has particularly engulfed younger generations, with studies showing that 90% of drug users are between the ages of 17 and 35. It is also shown that the majority of the drug users are from the student community (Bhat, & Imtiaz, 2017). Experts, law enforcement agencies and health professionals claimed that thousands of Kashmiri teenagers are becoming hooked on drugs. The increasing menace of drug addiction has led to complicated social, economic and health challenges and issues to families, law enforcement agencies, and the welfare of society and security.

Psychosocial implications of drug addiction

Drug addiction has impacted Kashmiri society including economy, education, governance, polity, Justice System, security, public safety, health and social structure of the society. Among these, the psychosocial impacts of drug

addiction are the main challenges faced by the Kashmir society.

Psychological health issue

The young people of Kashmir are the most impacted portion of the community. It is reported that the majority of the drug users in Kashmir are very young and face many socio-economic and psychological health challenges (Bhat & Imtiaz, 2017). Drug addiction is not a problem of those whole are involved in it, but causes countless psychosocial problems, which family and society have to face. Drug addiction has disturbed the psychological milieu and has caused mental health issues including stress, depression, fear, anxiety, and loss of behavioural and emotional control (Wani & Singh, 2017). It has provoked social difficulties, helplessness, disillusionment, deprivation, alienation, social phobia and isolation among the drug users (Yaqoob & Ashraf, 2022). Research studies found have that depression, hypertension, strokes, lack of motivation, mood swings, post-traumatic stress disorders, forms of anxiety and phobias are common among the people having with drug and substance use disorder in Kashmir (Ali, 2022). Studies has found that large number of youth of Kashmir region are experience a psychological and mental health problems, in which drug addiction along with conflict related issues are the reasons associated with it (Jong de, et al, 2008; Mansoor et al 2010). The report of Kashmir Mental Health Survey (KMHS) have "showed that 1.8 million adults (45% of the adult population) in the Kashmir valley are experiencing symptoms of mental distress, with 41% exhibiting signs of probable depression, 26% probable anxiety and 19% PTSD". The armed conflict related incidents and traumas such as loss of family members, physical and mental torture, death of bread winners, displacement, interrogation, missing and innocent killing as well as human rights violations are considered to be the main reasons (Muntazar, 2015). Drug addiction put an extra burden to the healthcare institution.

Increase in suicide and domestic violence

Prolonged use of drugs and other substances affects the brain and behavior. It changes the cognitive function and damages the structure of the brain circuit (Juárez-Portilla, 2018). Research found that drug and alcohol users are 14 times more likely than others to commit suicide (Bernstein, 2021). International literature reveals that drug addiction and substance abuse are risk factors for suicidal behaviour and action (Dragisic et al., 2015; Hesse et al., 2020). Drug addiction has increased suicide rates in

Kashmir. Like drug addiction, suicide rates have also been found more among young people between the age groups of 16-25 years (Afshana, 2021). It has become the second major cause of death in Kashmir, in which drug addiction is considered to be the main reason after domestic violence and relationship issues (Shoib & Arafat, 2021). The trend of suicide has become a main public health concern in Kashmir after terrorism and drug addiction. Over the past few years, suicide death has increased at an alarming level (Qayoom, 2020). It is reported that suicide rate in Kashmir has increased 26-fold, from 0.5 per 100,000 before the conflict to 13 per 100,000 now (Bhat, 2019). The emotional and psychological issues associated with drug abuse have pushed the youth into a state of dilemma, which subsequently results in suicidal thoughts and death. So, each suicide is a tragedy that impacts families, communities, and entire societies, as well as those left behind.

The domestic violence against women, including dowry death, cruelty, sexual and physical harassment, threats, torture, rape, and murder, has risen in Kashmir. Reports of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) present frightening figures about the increasing incidence of domestic violence cases. The report shows that 9.6 percent of women in Kashmir have experienced domestic violence. Drug addiction by either the husbands or other family members has been linked to a significant number of these cases (Dar, 2022). According to studies, drug and substance abuse are strongly linked to domestic violence against women (Fals-Stewart et al., 2003; Moore et al., 2011). Over the last few years, the Kashmir valley has witnessed a surge rise in domestic violence cases in which demanding money, dowry, extramarital affairs, and drug use are considered to be the main reasons, as experts observe. Demanding money for buying drugs, stealing valuable household things, neglecting family responsibilities, spending money on drugs, and creating disturbance in the neighbourhood led by the users are the frequent issues faced by families that often lead to constant violence in the family.

Impact on Public health care system

In addition to this, drug addiction has impacted the healthcare system. It has increased significant health issues include HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, skin infections, respiratory problems and overdose deaths in Kashmir (Majid, 2019). The number of people addicted to drugs and the number of fatalities caused by drug addiction have

skyrocketed since the last few years. The heroin addiction has reached frightening proportions and the number of drug overdose deaths has risen rapidly. New synthetic and opioid drugs, like heroin, have contributed to this rise (Nissa, 2022). The reports of drug de-addiction centre SMHS Srinagar reveals that more than 90% of people seeking treatment for drug addiction are using intravenous (IV) heroin, a dangerous and life-threatening narcotic drugs. This injecting mode of heroin has led to the widespread transmission of HIV/AIDS and other infectious and transmissible diseases like HCV, Hepatitis C, HBV, etc. Research identified that the number of people showing up for HIV tests in Kashmir has been increasing steadily, but the number of actual cases has remained static (Kashmir life, 2019). According to the J&K State AIDS Control Society, 127432 people were tested for HIV in 2017-18 year (JKSACS (2019). HIV/AIDS cases are rising with each passing year, in which drug abuse through injecting mode is considered one of the reasons. Drug addiction has caused an overwhelming challenge to the public healthcare system

Rise in crime and anti-social activities

Drug abuse and crime share a complementary relationship (Bennet & Holloway, 2007). Research has highlighted that, illicit drugs can lead to the formation of criminal gangs, organized crime, violence, gangsterism, fire arms, and suicidal and terror attacks (Swant, 1999; and Björnehed, 2004). Studies revealed that drug users may engage in a diverse range of criminal behaviours (Buddy, 2009). Drug addiction is one of the main causes of the various criminal activities in Kashmir. The Kashmir region has witnessed an alarming rise in criminal incidents, as police officials claim that 90 percent of the crimes are committed by drug users (Hassan, 2022). The Kashmir region, which is known for its hospitality, has lost its credibility due to social disorder, criminality, and unpredictable occurrences linked to drug addiction (Beigh, 2021). The menace of drug addiction has resulted in various crime rates ranging from violent, organized, to property crimes. Over the years, organized and property crimes, including shoplifting, motor vehicle theft, pickpocketing, cattle theft, robbing banks and ATM machines, gangsters, street fighting, and trafficking, have increased significantly, and drug addiction is found to be the primary reasons (Masoodi & Masoom, 2022). Available data from the crime branch reveals that Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed 6,375

incidents of property crimes in the last two years (Iqbal, 2018).

The state crime branch reported that crimes including robbery, burglary, and theft account for 24% of all crimes committed. Further, the second-greatest form of crime against women includes harassment, sexual assault, rape, desertion of women, and dowry deaths, which account for nearly 19% of all crimes. This clearly shows that the UT of Kashmir and Kashmir is one of the most criminalized states in the Indian Union (Singh, 2014). Studies show that crime rates in Jammu and Kashmir increased by 15% in 2020 (Hussain, 2021). It is well known that addiction to expensive drugs can push users to do everything to keep the habit going. Considering this, there is a high possibility that crime in the UT may have escalated. As a Muslim-dominated region, nothing in the valley is any longer considered safe; even religious shrines have been looted and targeted by drug users, making the valley the most insecure. The rapid increase in drug addiction problems has disturbed the peace, stability, and safety in Kashmir.

Conclusion and suggestions

Drug addiction is a major psychosocial challenge in Kashmir valley. It is emerging as a serious social issue next to terrorism itself. The impacts of Drug addiction extend beyond the individual and their families. It is a social crisis severely impacting the existing social order, psychological health and thereby affects the society at large. It contributes to numerous issues such as poor social health, overdose deaths, high crime rates, increased suicidal tendencies, social deviance, crimes and anti-national activities. The need of the hour is to educate the masses about the adverse consequences of illicit drugs on individuals, families, and society as a whole. To tackle this growing menace, more focus should be given to actions and resources that address the root causes of the problems prevalent in Kashmir society, such as terrorism, cross-border drug trafficking, high demand, production of illicit drugs, and socio-economic challenges. In addition, the cooperation of civil society, religious leaders, the general public, and NGO's with government particularly law enforcement agencies can all help to prevent the spread of the drug menace in Kashmir.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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