



Impact of substance abuse in North-eastern states, India

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Abstract

In Northeast India, the epidemic of substance abuse among the young generation has reached alarming proportions. Changing cultural values, rising economic stress, and dwindling supportive bonds are all contributing factors to the initiation of substance use. The processes of industrialization, urbanisation, and migration have resulted in a loosening of traditional social control mechanisms, making an individual vulnerable to the stresses and strains of modern life. According to evidence, the magnitude of substance use is likely to be higher among Northeast residents who live in adverse geographical settings. It states that the increased use of substances in developing countries with the weakest health and economic systems is a major concern for W.H.O. While the lack of a comprehensive policy has been repeatedly emphasised, and various suggestions have been made to address the wide range of problems caused by substance use, much work remains to be done on the ground to prevent and address these problems. Keeping this in mind, the current paper examines patterns and correlates of substance use in India's Northeast states.

Keywords: North-eastern, drug abuse, substance abuse, alcohol abuse, rehabilitation

Introduction

Substance abuse is a global issue that directly affects physical and psychological health of the human being and affects their socio-economic and cultural identity. 'The individual's perceptions of their position in their life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns, it is a broad ranging concept, incorporating in a complex way the persons physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relations, personal beliefs, and relationship to salient features of the environment' (WHO, 1996).

The seven north east states of India having geographical contiguity which each others are Arunachala Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizorm, Megalaya, Nagaland and Tripura. The substance using behavior is a chronic deteriorating problem that is difficult to cure. To assess the impact of substance is important for the decision above how aggressively the problematic behavior made their environment to change and the administration can made the policy to control.

Alcohol, Cannabis, heroin and opium emerged as the most common drugs abused among the youth community. A substance abuse policy may help to reduce the harmful use of any substance for mood altering purposes that may lead to frequent and serious problems in their environment. It includes depression, loss of initiative, suicidal mental state, forgetfulness, increased risk taking and low self-esteem. The policy may lead the north east region district SGD index and Dashboard Baseline report 2020-2021 emphasis to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol. It has been proved to have a strong impact on physical and mental health as well social interaction of an individual.

As substance use is initially started at a young age out of curiosity, frequent use inculcates into a habit which later on may pose a threat to the global wellbeing of the individual. It is attributable to global burden of disease that is third highest risk of diseases. It is also associated with domestic violence, child neglect, and debt and encourages anti-social activities. so the North Eastern Region to achieve the international level to overcome this issues they had collaboration with private institutions and established de addiction centers for each one lack population. To sustain the Global SDG target of 3.5 aims to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol. The target has been set as the average of the 5 best scores.

North Eastern India has witnessed the rampant emergence of substance abuse due to the basic structural conditions such us unemployment, poverty, absence of role model availability and misleading the youth community. The adolescent stage may lead the person to induce or encourage to test and tasting the new entities; it made them to feel that they are independent and not controlled by others. It is imperative to understand the consequences of substance abuse on the wellbeing of an individual, institutions of family and the community at large.

Review of literature: The study of alcohol by other discipline and anthropology tends to differ in their ethnographic aspects. While 97 other disciplines' sole interest is usually alcoholism, the drinking problems and all its associated dependency treatment, anthropologists focus on the natural context of the community under studied (Heath 1987) ^[6]. Rice beer, an integral part of life of several aboriginal communities is known by different names in different places. It is known as saki in Japan, lao-chao in China, tape ketan in Indonesia, khaomak in Thailand etc. (Roy *et al.* 2004) ^[7].

Illicit drugs are substances that either stimulate (such as cocaine or amphetamines) or inhibit (such as heroin or sedatives) the central nervous system or cause hallucinogenic effects (such as Marijuana or LSD) to the effect that their use has been prohibited globally (International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences 2001). Illicit drugs can occur naturally as with marijuana or cocaine, or they can be prepared from naturally occurring substances such as the case with heroin, or they can be totally synthetic as is the case with amphetamines and prescription drugs (Houck & Siegel 2015) ^[8].

However, it is also possible that some products termed under illicit drugs also have some domestic use and does not come across as a danger unless to those who wanted to use it as something that altered their minds. Examples can be home or office products that contain fumes and solvents which can be inhaled, stationary items such as correcting fluid and glues which are all derivatives of illicit drugs that technically produce comparable effects (Des Jarlais & Hubbard 1997) ^[9]. Some of the illicit drugs that are commonly used in Manipur are discussed down below.

The aim of this study is to provide a right direction for the policy and for the academicians to develop and redefine their existing work towards control substance abuse. It should ensuring that Drug and Substance abuse are not just an individual problem but a Socio-Economic as well as Human Rights issue which needs a holistic and appropriate strategy to be developed in order to achieve Prevention, Treatment and Social Re-Integration of the addicts.

For this review, we have carried out a systematic web-based review of the Journal. The IJP search included search of both the current and archives section and an issue-to-issue search of articles with any title pertaining to substance use. This has included original articles, reviews, case series and reports with significant implications. Other publications related to substance use available on the websites of international and national agencies have also been reviewed. In this review, we focus mainly on publications selectively reviewed the literature from other sources.

For the sake of convenience, we discuss the publications under the following areas: Epidemiology, clinical issues (diagnosis, psychopathology, and co-morbidity), biological studies (genetics, imaging, electrophysiology, and vulnerability), interventions and outcomes as well as community interventions and policies. There is a vast amount of literature on substance use and consequences in international and national journals, but this is outside the scope of this review.

Domestic violence has often been linked to substance use. The substance use affects the family in a variety of ways like their structure of the family and their power dynamics, moral and societal outlook that the effects of different substances in the family may vary and these factors determine the manner in which substance use affects the family. The instances of domestic violence may vary and involve physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Between use of drugs and intimate partner violence was associated strongly. Mainly like India the country those who are more depended with the families are the most affected either psychologically and economically.

The violence also associated with lower education, unemployment of either spouse, lower family income and a nuclear family structure. Based on the above situation the factors relating to family members burden, psychiatric symptoms, co-dependents, stigma, financial issues, the stress of family members is comparatively higher than other relationship. They face status issues and stress on their children future and their coping status.

The family burden was more among injecting drug users than non-injecting drug users. The stress is associated with higher degree of patient's behavioral problems and a lesser degree of available support systems. Family members of substance users have been to have greater rates of psychopathology than relevant controls. Substance use disorder is often considered a stigmatizing condition, probably due to its association with delinquent activities, and presence of other stigmatizing health conditions like HIV.

Family members of the substance user are also likely to face courtesy stigma, due to being in association with the substance user. Stigma experienced by family members can depend on many factors like behavioral problems exhibited by the substance user, incarceration. The stigmas among family members are relatively restricted. It has been seen that the perceived stigma towards substance use was similar between consumers with the substance use disorder and their family members whom close relatives of the consumers adapt to substance use in a manner that facilitates the continuation of substance use.

The construct involves inter-relationship so dynamic so care taking, personality characteristics, psychosocial conditions, and interpersonal style of the individual. Presence of codependence impairs the quality of life of the codependent person, and is associated with low self-esteem, dependency, depression and anxiety, anger, fear of rejection, increased use of substance and stress-related difficulties. By prolonging the substance use behavior, such a relationship may intensify the substance related complications overtime.

Discussion

The deterioration in Northeast India's substance abuse problem runs deep. A recent study done by JNU shows that the prevalence of any type of substance abuse like smoking, smoking with tobacco products, alcohol in

North-eastern states is much higher than the rest of India. From the present study, there are various factors that trigger the people to start using various substances. Some of the major factors that attributed the use and eventual abuse of substances are as follows that Separation of parents, Death of a near one, Marriage problems, and early family responsibilities, Rebellion, Curiosity, Peer Pressure and Escape from reality. The indulgence of people in the drug arena could also be attributed to the fact that many of the families. The lower economic status or social status and by taking substances they found solace in being high, be in their own world and not think about anything else.

However, there are also some who started taking drugs because of curiosity, peer pressure and some who use it for recreational purpose and later on becoming addicted to it. The idea of an ideal people who are already in a pre-constructed frame of what a people must wear, do speak and act in the society act as the standard for judging these people and their character. When those ideas and criteria did not fit in into these people they are furthermore pushed aside from the society. This kind of notion that a people who is indulging them in drugs is of less morale and should be ostracized from the society needs a serious look back and discussing about what can be done to prevent this kind of further victim to drug users should be focused. These people are discriminated and stigmatized in the society.

They are looked down and frowned upon, for this reason coming home and living with the family was just not possible for them. For some they are disconnected from their family while for some of them just out of sheer choice they prefer to stay aloof from their family and society. It can also be said that their journey into the world of drugs was not easy for them either but due to certain circumstances and short coming they had to resort to these sorts when they are left with no other options.

Overall, the prevalence of substance use (any form tobacco, alcohol and opium) among the population was recorded high in general. However, the prevalence of substance use in general population of India was reported as 57% tobacco and 32% alcohol among men and 11% tobacco and 2% alcohol among women, respectively. The More commonly used substance among these communities is alcohol and its consumption is high compare to general population of India. It was possibly due to social acceptability of alcohol among them. Tobacco is cheapest and most easily available substance, shared commonly with friends and others, and used by smoking or chewing as a stimulant. It was possibly due to concerned of their privacy. An increasing pattern of prevalence of any substance use was recorded with age and it was significantly implies that substance use rates, in general, increase with age and highly associated with their social belief and practices.

Currently, under Section 27 of the NDPS Act, possession of small quantities for personal consumption of drugs is a punishable offence, and can attract a fine of ₹10,000 and imprisonment of six months or both. The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has recommended decriminalizing of possession of small quantities of drugs for personal use. The proposal under discussion sought to replace the word "consumption" with "other than personal consumption (in small quantity)" and also sought to replace the word "addict" with "person with substance use disorder".

The reason for this change was to help the courts take a more lenient view on people caught with small quantities, and to more strongly emphasize the difference between possession of drugs for personal consumption and possession of drugs for commercial use. Advocates of the proposal state that drug decriminalization is an important step towards achieving a rational drug policy that puts science and public health before punishment and incarceration. The proposal also suggests that mandatory treatment for de-addiction for 30 days for any person who has been found to have consumed or be in possession to consume drugs. It is comfortable to differentiate the ranges and made them to channel in a proper way.

The trafficking of drugs as follows;

1. The illicit cultivation of opium and cannabis
2. The smuggling of heroin and amphetamines from Myanmar in small quantities.
3. The trafficking of pharmaceuticals from other part of country into northeast India and their smuggling to neighboring countries.

Despite the existence of heavy security, the substance were transit the border and is therefore accessible to the local youth of these states. It may lead the youth to divert from their regular development.

There is a strong need for rehabilitation centre in these areas and this puts them who want to enter into rehabilitation in a difficult situation also need for Women only Rehabilitation Centres should be made available to women who want to avail these facilities. Although the numbers of women substance abusers are few in numbers, they cannot be neglected and marginalized in terms of seeking rehabilitation. In order that the women (also men) receive healthy and safe injection, a drug injection room should be made available with trained nurses so that there will be lesser chances of blockages and abscess in the body. This kind of safety rooms has been followed in many European countries and it has proved successful in guiding the injecting drug users from overdose and abscess management.

This study determines that, the prevalence of substance use among northeast, states was very high. The main reasons for high prevalence of substance use were substance use by younger age group, sex of person, economic status, social group and lower educational status. Younger people are most important group of income of family and society and they are easily influenced by habits and behaviours of substance use.

Therefore the information regarding the harmful effect of substance use should be targeted towards younger age group. As smokeless tobacco, smoke and alcohol use is very high among scheduled tribes population,

strengthening of IEC activities among Scheduled tribes regarding substance use and its consequences are necessary to minimize the effect. Government should take up initiative and incorporate the problem and the adverse health effects of substance use. There is also a need to advocate for the replacement of dangerous and harmful effects of substances use.

The prevalence of substance abuse is alarmingly high among Youths. Influence of peer pressure acted as the major precipitating factor for drug abuse among them. Abusive substances like, tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, inhalants, others were abused to get relief from pain, to get confidence initially. Prevalence of substance abuse was high among the age group between 12-19 years was influenced by their friends. They are well aware of the consequences including effect on health. Although time consuming and requires large sum of money, overhauling of youth support services are required which includes identification of root causes of the problem that is poverty and illiteracy of the parents. Awareness among shop keepers, strict vigil on availability of commonly used substances pay provides immediate relief.

Suggestions

1. Education and training the people on the drugs, uses, impaired behaviour patterns, effects and treatment.
2. Assisting chronic substance users in getting treatment etc.
3. Training on how to deal with drug abusing experts specially.
4. Rally against illegal drugs
5. Host campaigns and seminars on the negative effects of drugs on individuals and the community.
6. Posting posters and distributing handbills against the use of drugs etc.
7. Disciplinary action may be taken against a drug abuser who possesses a threat to the safety of the people and the community.
8. To motivate and encourage stakeholders, like. Community, parents, teachers, government departments, NGOs and Academic Institutions etc. in the challenges to fight against drug abuse.
9. To hold and continues awareness programmes and sensitises for students, youth in general and the community at large in order to educate them about the ill-effects of substance abuse on the individual, family, workplace and society.
10. To set up de-addiction centres in all vulnerable Districts for counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts that is affordable and emphasis the centres to conduct mini qualitative studies to understand the problems and faced by the respondents as well as the institutions.
11. By introduction of life skills training for all educational institutions and community centres to train the people with trained personnel.
12. To undertake study and research on the extent of drug abuse and in solving the problem of the issue.
13. To ensure that stigmatization of and discrimination against individual/group dependent on drugs is actively discouraged in order to improve behavioural change in the society and encouraging the addict and family to seek the much needed services at the right time.

Being the social work initiatives there is a need and essential for the implementation of new and advanced techniques to control these substances. The academic institutions have more responsibility to create or implement new and essential courses like diploma or certificate courses for the rehabilitation and concealing especially for this problems and need to invent more innovative methods to rehabilitate the person from the situation also need some fast-track method to come out the situation may bring the youth to normal and contribute for the nation development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the following suggestions can be put forward: the Women substance abusers are still very much neglected in the society as well as in the field of research. There has been very less studies that concentrate on the women substance abusers which could possibly be because they are lesser in number compared to the male substance abusers. The triggering influences and consequences that led them to lead this kind of lifestyle need to be uprooted from the core and more detail studies and analysis has to be done among these marginalised population. In comparison with the others the abusers are seen to be having faced harsher family attitude, domestic violence and lack of social support which in turn increase the vulnerability of them.

However, detailed narrative analysis and in-depth study into the life of north eastern substance abusers with a larger number of subjects in a cross-cultural setting could prove to bear better results in understanding the reasons behind their entry and indulgence into psychotropic substances. There is a need for a better facility with a day and night care for emergency services in the rehabilitation centres in risky areas. Since de-addiction centres are primary care givers, they theoretically function as the core agency. In such a situation, if the institution do not function up to its optimum or have a specific _open 'hours – it can no longer discharge the duties it is supposed to.

It may conclude with this Findings point toward that notwithstanding the existence of strict drug control laws and to increase to fulfil their objective relating to control and rehabilitation oriented professional agencies working towards drug supply control, a wide variety of the controlled drugs are being used and a sizeable number of Indians suffer from addiction to these drugs. Results also indicate a shift in demand for psychoactive substances, from traditional, low- potency, plant-based products.

Thus, there may be fundamentals of drug supply control which stimulus the pattern of demand. The non-medical, recreational use of controlled pharmaceutical products remains a concern. However, ensuring their adequate availability for medicinal purposes is vital for public health. It is important that laws and policies are aimed at provide health and welfare services to people affected by substance user anther than subjecting them to the criminal justice system. There is a need of fresh thinking and innovative solutions, as far as legal and policy measures aimed at drug supply control are concerned. More importantly, there needs to be an efficient coordination between the drug supply control sector as well as the entities involved in drug demand reduction and harm reduction.

Based on the scientific evidence and approach to generate and utilize the evidence need to continue some more surveys represents a comprehensive scientific approach to explore and document the dynamics of substances to utilize the evidence for providing to strengthen the policies and programmes. The person those who are affected or addicted this situation may very difficult to bring out from that situation and the challenging part may start for them is that rehabilitation only. Their highly problematic situations (Frame of mind) to maintain the person were not switchover to this environment. Subsequent surveys and scientific studies need to be conducted with incrementally enhanced refinement of methodology or strategy to control the worst situation.

This study recommended that the policy needs to include health education about substance use and its adverse effects, management of substance use incidents, communication among the person, specially who residing in adverse geographical areas in Northeast, India. There is a need for more NGOs to work for the cause of de-addiction in the state, particularly in the affected districts with no facilities for counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of substance and drug users in several parts of Northeast India.

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