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Dr. Shamshir Singh Dhillon
Assistant Professor, Central
University of Punjab,
Bathinda, Punjab, India

Gurpreet Singh
Lecturer, Army Public School,
Bathinda Cantt, Punjab, India

Dr. Ranjit Kaur
Associate Professor,
Chaudhary Devi Lal
University, Sirsa, Haryana,
India

Drug abuse and its underlying causes: A case study of farmers in Bathinda district

Dr. Shamshir Singh Dhillon, Gurpreet Singh and Dr. Ranjit Kaur

Abstract

The recent outbreak of the problem of drug addiction has been recognized as one of the most menacing problems in the developing and the developed countries. India is also affected by the problem of drug abuse. The issue of drug abuse is no longer limited to small part of the population but has hit the people from all walks of life. The poor people use it to escape from the awful realities of the life, and the rich people use these drugs as an extension of the western culture. The problem of drug addiction has spread its tentacles in the society at an alarming pace and is destroying the very youth of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. The labour class including farmers are also taking drugs from past few years in different regions of Punjab. The most widely used drug in the Punjab by farmers is synthetic drug called Chitta and poppy husk. There are some social, economic and political element that have also contributed to the spread of drug addiction problem in the youth of Punjab. In this study 100 farmers of selected from 10 villages were taken as the sample of the study. As per the questionnaire developed in consultation with the supervisor (Drug abuse analysis questionnaire, DAAQ) responses collected from the addicted farmers were analyzed. The findings of the study revealed that most common drug used by the farmers of Punjab was Chitta, Heroine, poppy husk and post followed by other natural drugs and there was a great impact of drug abuse on families of drug addicted farmers. Drug addicted farmers have completely neglected their families and have sold their household items and jewellery items of their spouses for the purchase of drugs and there was a widespread problem of broken homes and divorces. The farmers have even mortgaged or sold their land at throw away prices and some of them have even committed suicide because of this menacing problem of drug addiction.

Keywords: Drug abuse, problem of drug addiction, synthetic drugs and farmers

Introduction

The modern society is in the search of peace, freedom and wealth. But the ways of getting these goals varies from individual to individual. Some try to achieve it with a real effort, while others pursue through means which lack social sanctions, and hence destroyed the fabric of a good and healthy society. It had given rise to social disturbances and terrorism which were unknown concept in the first half of the century. The unemployment problem, modern family set up has led to frustrations amongst the youth. This had provoked individuals to fall victim to drugs which give them temporary relief. The so called modern society had provoked many individuals to take drugs as a "demonstration effect" in order to keep culture with the friend circle. Politicians also provide procreation ground for the growth of these adverse habits for the sake of political power. Individuals have a narrow-minded belief that the drugs would give them peace and safety but through drug addiction they reaches such a pitiful position where drugs become responsible for their impaired physical and psychological functioning. Once a person gets addicted to a drug, his necessity goes on increasing and the concept of "law of diminishing return" in economics does not apply in such a situation.

Article 47 of the constitution of India no doubt directs the state to enforce the prohibition of consumption of intoxicating substances. Even though the state had enacted such social welfare legislation, yet for the purpose of earning revenue encourage consumption of liquor. Drug peddling and illicit liquor manufacturing have become very lucrative business as there is no dearth of consumers. Majority of the drugs are harmful to the individuals with varying intensities. The use of natural drugs exceeds other varieties of drugs because of easy availability. It is very difficult to determine the incidence of other type of drugs as their uses

Correspondence

Dr. Shamshir Singh Dhillon
Assistant Professor, Central
University of Punjab,
Bathinda, Punjab, India

are secretive without having any 'demonstration effect'. On the other hand, the use of drugs is done openly and the impact on the society is easily ascertainable. The researcher confined his study mainly to Punjab to explore the causes responsible for drug abuse among the farmers of Punjab.

Drug addiction is a severe problem in the region of Punjab. One of India's most prosperous states, the fertile land of the five rivers has to struggle with a serious problem that is now reaching epidemic proportions. So much so that drug addiction has now become a key poll issue. It is estimated that four out of ten men are addicted to some or other drug and that up to 50% of those are young farmers. While 15% of those are addicted to poppy husk (known as bhukki), 20% are addicted to synthetic drugs churned out by pharma companies in Himachal Pradesh. It isn't just people from the fringes of society that are addicted; students from "good families" are often caught in the toils of drug addiction. A study by the Guru Nanak Dev University suggested that 70% of young Punjabi men could be addicted to the drugs that are easily available, particularly in areas close to the borders. Children as young as 14 years of age are seen to be involved in the drug trade. Drugs are openly sold and easily available. The reasons for widespread drug addiction in Punjab are many: unemployment and frustrated economic expectations are among the reasons.

There is also the fact that pharmaceutical products such as pain relieving opioids and sedatives are easily available from chemists; without prescriptions. According to some researchers it is the Punjabi culture of heavy drinking and partying as well as the habit of landowners supplying raw opium to farm labourers to encourage them to work harder that has contributed to the problem of drug addiction. Most rural households in the state are thought to have one addict. The fact that there is a steady supply of drugs from across the border is another reason. Heroin is smuggled from Afghanistan and Punjab is a part of the transit route for drugs. This fact is evidenced by frequent seizures of illegal drugs by the authorities. Cannabis, heroin, and Indian-produced pharmaceutical drugs are the most frequently used and abused drugs in India. As per latest data produced in the Lok Sabha (2014), Mizoram tops the list of states where drugs were seized: 48,209 tonnes over the past four years, followed by Punjab with seizures of 39,064 tonnes. Some of the drugs seized include amphetamine, cannabis plant, cocaine, ephedrine, ganja, hashish, heroin, ketamine, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), acetic anhydride, methylene dioxy-N methyl amphetamine (MDMA), methamphetamine, methaqualone (mandrax), morphine and opium.

Drug scenario in Punjab

Drug addiction is a severe problem in the region of Punjab. One of India's most prosperous states, the fertile land of the five rivers has to struggle with a serious problem that is now reaching epidemic proportions. So much so that drug addiction has now become a key poll issue. Punjab is now witnessing a major thrust in addressing the problem of drug dependence and as new deaddiction centres are coming up in the state, newer trends and patterns of opioid abuse are coming forth, much to the surprise of mental health professionals. Bhukki is the most common substance of drug abuse in patients seeking treatment in these centres. It is estimated that four out of ten men are addicted to some or other drug and that up to 50% of those are young farmers.

The worst affected areas of Punjab are Majha, Malwa and Doaba. According to news published in newspaper Dawn on 28th September, 2012, a local psychiatrist quoted that out of the O.P.D. of roughly 130 patients a day, 70-80 percent were battling with drug (Dawn, 2012). The percentage of households affected by drug abuse is 61% in Majha, 64% in Malwa and 68% in Doaba. Every third male student and every tenth female student in Punjab has had drugs on some occasion. While 15% of those are addicted to poppy husk, 20% are addicted to synthetic drugs churned out by pharma companies in neighbouring Himachal Pradesh. No-one knows exactly how many new addicts there are, but a study by the Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar suggested that as much as 70% of young Punjabi men were hooked on drugs or alcohol.

The Punjab Opioid Dependence Survey, which was conducted between February and April 2015, found that 230,000 people in the state were drug users. Consider the number of crimes reported under the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. There were on average 7,524 instances of crimes related to drugs in Punjab annually between 2005 and 2014. That's second only to Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state (Dipti, 2016). Maqboolpura, a small village close to Amritsar, epitomizes the problem. It is a village of widows, all the men having died due to substance abuse (Phillip, 2007). News reports claim that drugs are easily available in this village and sold by children as young as 14 years (Yardley, 2012). The reasons for widespread drug addiction in Punjab are many i.e. unemployment and frustrated economic expectations are among the main reasons. There is also the fact that pharmaceuticals such as pain relieving opioids and sedatives are easily available from chemists; without prescriptions. According to some, it is the Punjabi culture for heavy drinking and partying as well as the habit of landowners supplying raw opium to farm labourers to encourage them to work harder, that has contributed to the problem. Most rural households in the state are thought to have one addict. The fact that there is a steady supply of drugs from across the border is another reason. Heroin is smuggled in from Afghanistan and Punjab is a part of the transit route for drugs. This fact is evidenced by frequent seizures of illegal drugs by the authorities.

Review of related literature

Singh (2000) conducted a survey of 300-odd women from 15 districts of Punjab and reported a telling comment of where our youth are going. Nearly 50 percent male adults in villages are addicted to one or the other drug or intoxicant out of which 23 percent are habitual. The range of drugs varied from opium to bhukki; morphine to alcohol; charas to jarda and cough mixtures. On an average, per household the expenditure per month on drugs is Rs 734. At least 12 per cent spent up to even Rs 3000 per month

Mahi, Sharma, Sidhu, B.S. (2011) found in their study that the prevalence of drug abuse in rural population was 39.3% out of which single substance abuse was 32.1%, two substances 4.9%, three substance 1.3% and four substances 1% of the surveyed population. 17.9% of population was single substance dependent while 3.7% of population was two substance dependent. 0.4% and 0.6% of the population were dependent on three and four substances respectively. Average age of onset of substance abuse was during the age 15-24 years.

Kalra and Bansal (2012) ^[8] study showed that a significant amount of time and money were spent in drug abuse by addicts. NDPS Act 1985 was not being successful in stopping drug abuse. Strong policies have been made and more importantly implemented. More over there had been wide spread use of information, education and communication in rural areas so as to oppose the mythology about drug use.

Advani (2013) found in his study that the state of Punjab in India is suffering from severe drug addiction problem. The kind of drug being used (such as injectable drugs which were more commonly associated with urban contexts), and the extreme extent to which it has occurred, not only in terms of the number of addicts but also in terms of the intensity of the addiction. Drug abuse in the state has led to serious health consequences such as death and the spread of AIDS

Gupta and Kaur (2013) ^[15] study showed that youth of Punjab is falling in vicious trap of drug abuse at early age with high rates of relapse. There is urgent need to cover all schools and colleges and universities with awareness programmes to warn the youth population against drugs. Educated youth is falling in bad habit of drug abuse which is an alarming situation and due to this, his/her studies is affected and whole academic carrier is destroyed. Support for substance abuse education, prevention and treatment must come from all sides including families, community groups, schools, policymakers, and health professionals. A vocational rehabilitation like training in tailoring or computer courses must be financed and supported at all (drug deaddiction centres) to reintegrate the de-addicted persons into social mainstream. It is recommended that all DDCs should be supervised periodically by government authorities from the office of Civil Surgeon/Deputy Commissioner

Bansal, Sidhu and Singh (2015) found that Punjab was now witnessing a major thrust in addressing the problem of drug dependence. Bhukki was the most common substance of abuse in patients seeking treatment in the centre. One previous case study had reported that mean consumption of bhukki per person was 2.453 kg per month. The current case was inimitable because such a high dose of Bhukki abuse had not been reported before and it shown the hasty change from low amount to such a huge quantity of bhukki consumption. This expected transition from onset to dependence in opioid use had been observed in earlier studies also. This transition carried a prediction with a 2% risk of dying every year and a high mortality rate of about 50% in a 30 year follow-up and also corroborated by a 20 year follow-up study. This remains a major concern in such persons who continue to abuse substance knowing well the physical, psychological, social, occupational and legal implications of it.

Sharma (2016) stated that Drug abuse in the state of Punjab was up to 40% according to a survey conducted by Department of Social Security Development of Women and children (2012). But the most wicked report which came out through this survey stated that 67% of the rural households in the state have at least one drug addict. 15% of them are

young farmers, Most of addicted take poppy husk while 20% of addicts were addicted to synthetic drugs only, This report further stated that once an well off village in the heart of Amritsar, Maqboolpura had come to be known as a 'Widow Village' where almost every home had lost male members to hazard of drugs.

Justification of the study

Drug addiction is a major problem in India, defined as a disease in 1956 by the WHO (world health organization) and the American Psychiatric Association, substance abuse is "the illicit consumption of any naturally occurring or pharmaceutical substance for the purpose of changing the way in which a person feels, thinks or behaves, without understanding or taking into consideration the damaging physical and mental side-effects that are caused. The common drugs of abuse among farmers in Punjab are *alcohol, opium, and poppy husk (BHUKKI)*. A new trend has emerged in drug and substance abuse with farmers now taking a cocktail of drugs through injection, and often sharing the same needle, which increases their vulnerability to HIV infection. In Punjab approximately 30 percent of suicides are related to alcohol abuse.

Hence keeping all these facts in mind the investigator felt the need to study the causes behind this drug abuse among the farmers of Bathinda District. This would enable the researcher to understand the underlying causes for drug addiction. The study area was confined to 10 villages of Bathinda district situated in the Malwa region of Punjab and sample was selected with the help of snowball sampling.

Objectives

- To analyse the socio economic profiles of the drug addicted farmers including their pattern and level of income and consumption.
- To explore the various factors responsible for drug abuse among farmers.
- To study the impact of drug abuse on family environment of drug addict farmers.
- To study the extent and growth of suicides related to drug abuse among farmers in Bathinda district.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in 10 villages of Bathinda district situated in the Malwa region of Punjab. There are total of 272 villages in the district Bathinda. Sampling area was restricted to the villages of Jassi pau wali, Bhaagu, Gulabgarh, Katar singh wala, Phoos mandi, Kotshameer, khemoana, Gehri bhaagi, Shergarh, Chak heera singh. 10 farmers from each village were selected with the help of snowball sampling. A rapport was established with the farmers and they were ensured that this data will be not shared with anybody. A self-made questionnaire (DAAQ) was distributed among the farmers for the purpose of data collection. A number of farmers were illiterate so the researcher himself read the questions to the farmers.

Analysis and interpretation

Table 1: Socio Economic Profiles of the Drug Addicted farmers including their level of Income

S. No.	Income (Annually)	No. of Farmers	Percentage (%)
1	Rs. 50000/- to Rs. 1 Lakhs	34	34
2	Rs. 1 Lakhs to Rs. 2 Lakhs	41	41
3	Rs. 2 Lakhs to Rs. 3 Lakhs	16	16
4	Rs. 3 Lakhs to Rs. 4 Lakhs	5	5
5	Rs. 4 Lakhs above	4	4

From Table No.1 it was found that 41% of drug addicted farmers were having annual income between 1 - 2 lakhs annually

Table 2: Socio economic profiles of the Drug Addicted farmers including their Level of consumption

Item No.	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
6	Do you spend more than 150 Rupees per day on drug abuse?	53%	11%	11%	6%	19%
7	Whether you are spending more than 250 Rupees per day on drug abuse?	9%	7%	17%	14%	53%
8	You are spending more than 350 Rupees per day on drug abuse	2%	2%	20%	24%	52%

From the table 2 it was found that 53% of farmers strongly agreed that they were spending more than Rs.150 per day on drug abuse. 9% of farmers strongly agreed that they were

spending more than Rs.250 per day on drug abuse and 2% farmers were of the opinion that they are spending more than Rs.350 per day on drug abuse.

Table 3: Various Factors responsible for Drug Abuse among Farmers in Bathinda district.

Item No.	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
9	Whether drugs are taken by you for medical reasons?	37%	12%	11%	13%	27%
10	Have you used drugs to escape from family tensions and problems?	35%	15%	12%	21%	17%
11	Drugs provide alternative solution to keep away from stress and anxiety	38%	17%	8%	11%	26%
12	Whether drugs are taken by you to get away physical tiredness?	45%	10%	4%	23%	18%
13	Do you use drugs to show your status symbol in the society?	27%	12%	17%	19%	25%
14	You use drugs to build self confidence	36%	16%	9%	24%	15%
15	Do you use drugs to relieve the effect of another drug?	15%	20%	16%	32%	17%

From table 3 it was analyzed that 37% farmers were of the opinion that drugs are taken by them for medical reasons, 35% of farmers strongly agreed that they used drugs to escape from family problems, 38% farmers strongly agreed that Drugs provide alternative solution to keep them away

from stress and anxiety 45% of farmers agreed that they are using drugs to overcome physical tiredness. 27% of farmers strongly agreed that they use drugs to show their status symbol in the society. 36% of the farmers were of the opinion that they use drugs to build self-confidence.

Table 4: Impact of Drug Abuse on the Family environment of Drug Addicted Farmers

Item No.	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
16	Whether your family complains regularly about your drug abuse?	22%	24%	11%	28%	15%
17	Drug addiction is making your life unhappy	18%	18%	20%	13%	31%
18	Drug abuse creates problem between you and your family members	18%	14%	43%	9%	16%
19	You have beaten your wife because of drug abuse	3%	10%	27%	20%	40%
20	You have beaten your children because drug abuse	6%	8%	36%	20%	30%
21	Drug abuse effects your agriculture production	11%	16%	18%	21%	34%
22	Have you neglected your family because of drug abuse?	19%	12%	33%	20%	16%
23	Drug abuse effects your marital life	17%	22%	17%	28%	16%
24	Your wife divorced you because of drug abuse	9%	3%	28%	10%	50%

From Table 4 it was analyzed that 22% farmers strongly agreed that their families regularly makes complaints about their habit of drug abuse.18% farmers strongly agreed that drug abuse is making their life unhappy.18% farmers strongly agreed, that drug abuse created number of problems between them and their families. 11% farmers strongly

agreed that their habit of drug abuse effected their agriculture production also. 19% farmers strongly agreed that they neglected their family because of drug abuse. 17% farmers strongly agreed that drug abuse affected their marital life.9% farmers strongly agreed that their spouse has divorced them because of drug addiction.

Table 5: Extent and Growth of suicides related to drug abuse.

Item No.	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
25	Have you started taking drugs because of financial problems in agriculture?	51%	21%	4%	11%	13%
26	Has anyone committed suicide because of drug abuse in your family?	2%	2%	33%	29%	34%
27	Whether family members were aware of person's habit of drug abuse?	2%	2%	23%	30%	43%
28	Whether the addict was taking natural drugs like Afeem, Bhukki, Post etc.	2%	2%	39%	23%	34%
29	Whether he was cured after getting admitted to any drug de addiction Centre?	14%	2%	30%	28%	26%

N=100

From table 5 it was found that 51% farmers strongly agreed that they started taking drugs because of financial problems in agriculture. 2% farmers strongly agreed that a suicide has been committed by a member of their family because of drug abuse. 34% farmers strongly disagreed with the statement that they were taking natural drugs. 26% farmers strongly disagreed that they were cured after getting admitted to drug de-addiction centres.

Drug abuse has led to a detrimental impact on the society. It has led to increase in the crime rate. Addicts resort to crime to pay for their drugs. Broken marriages, shattered families, Incidence of eve-teasing, group clashes, assault and impulsive murders increase with drug abuse. Apart from affecting the financial stability, addiction increases conflicts and causes untold emotional pain for every member of the family.

Conclusion

This study has been specifically aimed to provide an exploration of various causes responsible for drug abuse. The rural areas of Punjab are very much affected with the problem of drug addiction. The unique aspects of drug addiction in rural Punjab explored in this study including the socio-economic profile drug addict farmers. Large number of farmers were paying rupees 150 per day for drug abuse. Natural drugs were less favourable among the farmers. Some of the farmers were involved in the production of natural drugs like poppy husk, opium or some of the farmers bought these natural types of drugs from suppliers. Farmers believe that opium and poppy husk is good for health. Other common reason is that farmers are using drugs to keep away from stress and anxiety. Family problems and maintaining the Status symbol is also a cause. Drug abuse has led to a detrimental impact on the family. Some of the farmers have been divorced by their wives because of drug abuse. Production of agriculture is also affected by drug abuse. Four cases of suicide were also reported in this study related to drug abuse.

Suggestions

- Farmers are very big part of our society. Farmers were highly addicted to natural drugs as found in the present study also. Drug abuse is a growing problem in Punjab especially in the rural areas of Punjab. People of villages can be made aware with the help of education by conducting seminars or rallies on drug abuse in villages.
- Drug addiction is a problem that is not limited to the farmers. It includes the large number of Punjab's youth also. So, the youth should be well informed about drug abuse in the schools, colleges as well as universities.
- The present study found the great effect of drug abuse on the families of drug addicts and the families of drug addicts have to suffer from both physical and mental torture. So, counselling services should be started for those families.
- Government should make some strict policies and adopt stringent measures for checking drug smuggling across the border.
- Drug de addiction centres can be opened in the villages also and it should be free and accessible to all.

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