Reasons of Drug Addiction in Pakistan

Overview

Drugs addiction phenomenon in Pakistani society is over neglected and taken as negligible problem by all. The lack of concern by society and eroding family system are the main causes besides numerous other factors. The terrible sufferings and destructive effects of drug addiction are only known to those individuals and families who have affected loved ones.

Many people have never experienced addiction of any sort. For these people it can be very hard to understand and grasp the logic and sufferings behind drug abuse. But with drug use getting more and more prevalent in the world in general and in our society in particular, it’s now common for people to dig deeper and look for the reasons why people use drugs and narcotics. This discussion is not meant to be a comprehensive analysis, nor is meant to be taken as medical advice, but I feel this article can shed some light for youth or family members of addicted patients dealing with this neglected social problem.

Some of the reasons why people use drugs

The reasons analyzed in this paper mostly pertains to Pakistani society, these may not be same reasons for other societies or countries. Let’s first understand main social changes in our society which are contributing these host of reasons.

Changes in Societal Norms and Ethics.

Over a period of last two to three decades, the evolving shift of population especially youth / human resource for better life opportunities from one region to others, busy life style, greater urge for wealth, introduction of cell phones
technology coupled with face book like trends, western style education system, religious terrorism and people getting away from religious norms, eroding family system and blind adoption of western life style by new generation are some of the major reasons which has brought changes in our society. This societal change phenomenon is more pronounced in major cities than rural areas. Now let’s analyze some of the broad reasons for increase of drug addiction.

This list of reasons has been compiled from experiences and survey many years of personal experience watching few addicted patients and their families who have been struggling with the darkest moments of addiction. Many times I asked and prodded to get answers from various addicts and their family members how and why they started using drugs. The answers have been highlight variety of contributing factors but i find one main reason for all, which is our eroding conservative family system. The important thing that I learned is that drugs alter the thinking patterns in your brain which can distort logic and rationality. Therefore an addict may not fully understand what a sober person can. So most of my analysis came from observing various drug addicts and their behaviors. So here is my list regarding the reasons why people use drugs and narcotics.

1. Youth follow their friends, role models or entertainers who use drugs.

In schools, colleges and universities, as youth, teenagers and young adults, it’s very easy to think that alcohol; drug and narcotics use can be handled and controlled, especially if they see their friends / colleagues doing the same thing. It can become easy to rationalize like: ‘hey my friend’s been doing this for a couple years and he seems fine to me.’ Entertainment and music is full of drug references and that can add to the rationalization that drug use is ok occasionally. Most of teenagers students, youth and adults start drugs as fun, enjoyment, to gain kick
energy under peer pressure. Individuals with a family history of drug or alcohol abuse are far more likely to develop an addiction than an individual with no family background of addiction.

2. Youth & Adults seek high pleasure / kick they once experienced.

Ask anyone who has tried drugs and they will tell you that it is one of the best feelings of their life. The highs from drugs are so much more extreme than regular everyday joys because most drugs overload the pleasure sensors in your brain. Once a person feels this extreme pleasure, it’s common for that person to become hooked on a drug simply chasing the initial high they once felt. As we all know, this is a viscous cycle that is extremely difficult to break. The highs are equally as powerful as the lows felt when coming off of the drugs.

3. Boredom, physical inactivity, lack of entertainment and sports facilities.

Lack of family attention, paucity of spots facilities and lack of physical entertainments, outings and busy routine of parents make teenagers lonely, aloof and bored. This Boredom is a big factor for drug increase / drug abuse in teens and young adults. People in this age bracket generally don’t have bills, jobs and
all the stresses that go along with adulthood. So it’s easier to become bored and want to try something new, fun, adventure and exciting. Drug use is often thought of as an easy way to escape the mundane world and enter an altered reality.


Our modern world is full of new strains and stresses that humans have never experienced in the past. Although many things in life are now easier than ever, the burdens are also very high. Lack of job, facilities, broken families, unrealistic following high status friends and such like many factors contributes dissatisfaction about life with immense stress. On the other side, simply having a family, maintaining a household, and holding a job are huge stress factors due to financial issues and lavish life style. The stress diseases are not recognized as serious illness by parents, family and friends for treatment of their loved ones. Thus, some drugs are viewed as a means of relaxation – a way to calm the storm in affected minds. Although drugs can be very effective at doing that, but have serious long term side effects.

5. Drugs to cover painful past memories and personality complexes.
Many people go through extremely traumatic events in their life, many times as children, and turn to drugs to cover the horrible memories. Children are extremely susceptible to trauma, whether physically or emotionally, and those feelings can haunt them into their adulthood. These people could benefit from working with psychologists to help repair their damaged mind. Drugs usually only further deepen and worsen the complexities and disorders.

6. Patients of anxiety, disorders, depression or other mental illnesses use drugs to forget/ ease their sufferings. Mental illness is such a serious burden for some people that they will try anything to relieve the pain. Drugs, narcotics or alcohol can temporarily make these persons feel ‘normal’ again, like they remember feeling in the past. Mental illness is scary for the individual experiencing it, so they are afraid to go to a doctor or family member for help and instead turn to drugs or narcotics to try and find solution or try to forget the problem on their own.

7. Misuse of prescription of medicine or no system of prescription.

In Pakistan, there is no culture or strict implementation of prescription of medicines which are misused openly. All kinds of restricted medicines and drugs are easily available in the markets. In developed countries, a doctor can diagnose a disease but a pharmacist is authorized to describe a medicine. Besides, it is very common for an individual to rationalize using a drug because it was once advised by a doctor. The thinking goes like this ‘it was prescribed to someone I know for the same problem I am using it, so it makes sense it should work for me too.’ The dangerous part about this rationalization is that this can lead to mixing of drugs, overdose, unintended side effects and/or dependency.
8. Urge to gain a high status, class or group to fit in by using drugs.

The growing false tendencies or complexes amongst youth, adults and elite class to gain high status or to join a cool group or elite class is another reason for using drugs. When hanging out with friends, it’s easy for people to desire to fit in group and become alike one of the member of "cool" / "Hot" / "Jiger" group. If others are drinking or doing drugs, it’s very likely for youth to fall into that trap. Peer pressure is a tremendous force causing friends to try things they would normally not try on their own.

9. People unintentionally get hooked on prescribed drugs.

The people at risk for this are physical laborers, elderly, and anyone with pre-existing injuries. Some people are born with chronic pain due to deformities –
others get injured. Doctors then prescribe drugs for what they are intended for and a person can quickly build a dependency. Especially if that drug is making them feel all better, they rationalize that it must be ok to keep taking the drug, which can result in dependency.

10. Availability due to Neighborhood of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, the epic centre of all narcotics and drugs, is neighbouring country to Pakistan with optimum production and factories of narcotics production. War torn state, war lords based tribal society, lack of means of earning / industry and big Narco money has made Afghanistan a Narco state. The porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan makes is easy for flow of drugs to Pakistan despite all government and Pak Army efforts against it. Although whatever quantity of narcotics flow through Pakistan for whole world, a portion of it also get consumed in local Pakistani society. Thus cheap availability of drugs is another reason for increased addicts. The federal agency "Anti Narcotics Force" is doing its optimum efforts with whatever meager resources to catch and arrest these Narco Mafia / Networks but problem is gigantic in nature.

11. Trends of Synthetic Drugs have created confusion between legal drugs and illegal drugs. Recently trends indicate that due stringent checks and measures adopted by ANF Pakistan, the trend of drugs is shifting from organic conventional drugs to synthetic drugs. These drugs are easy to be produced, confused with legal drugs and comparatively cheaper with easy availability. Beside, dependency on these drugs is lesser as compare to others. These drugs are mostly used for exclusive parties, drink and dance parties by exclusive participants. The dealer mafia
provides these pills during the parties. The effect is short term, thus youth use these during parties and parents do not get to know by late arrival back and late sleep off.


In society like Pakistan, there is serious lack of concern in society about spread of these drugs. All are busy in their respective lives, business and other concerns. Government is doing all it can but seeing the magnitude of problem, these efforts are not enough. Civil society has to feel the concern which is totally lacking. Only those families are concerned when their loved ones become chronic drug addicts. ANF is doing all kind of efforts to create awareness, operations against drug mafia / networks and free treatment / rehabilitation, but unless whole society feel concerned and join hand/efforts with ANF, the problem cannot be confronted.

Anti Narcotics Force (ANF), the leading Counter Narcotics and Drugs Law Enforcement Agency is not only conducting operations against Narco and Drug Mafia at national and international levels but is also working on a noble cause of community awareness at massive scale. Beside, ANF is providing free treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts throughout Pakistan, with its three Treatment and Rehabilitation Centers in Islamabad, Karachi and Quetta. These Treatment and Rehab centers are also being established in other cities with the help of respective Provincial Governments.

The most disturbing aspect of drug addiction is that it is spreading like an epidemic in the world society. People in our part of the world are increasingly becoming addicted to all kinds of drugs including street drugs such as heroine,
chars or hash and other synthetic drugs. The basic reason is that there are no collective social / community concerns to fight against this menace. Government, Community, family and in individual capacity all have to stand united against Narcotics / drugs.

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