



The Social Impact of Chronic Drug Use on Public Behavior: Insights from Quetta City

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Abstract

The issue of drug abuse is an escalating public health and social challenge worldwide, especially among teenagers and young adults. This phenomenon refers to the detrimental or excessive consumption of psychoactive substances, which encompasses illegal drugs and the improper use of prescription or legal medications. Substance abuse interferes with typical cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning, resulting in serious social repercussions. This research investigates how drug abuse affects the social lives of individuals, with particular attention to family dynamics, academic success, peer relationships, and integration into society. A qualitative literature review method was employed to assess existing research and reports from global health agencies and scholarly sources. The results indicate that drug abuse plays a significant role in social withdrawal, family disintegration, lower educational achievement, joblessness, and heightened participation in criminal activities. The research underscores the significance of addressing this issue. The study emphasizes the importance of prevention strategies, awareness campaigns, and rehabilitation programs to address this growing issue.

Keywords: Drug abuse, addiction, adolescents, social life, peer pressure, substance use, mental health, rehabilitation, social impact

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1. Introduction

Drug abuse is defined as the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, illicit drugs, and prescription medications used for non-medical purposes (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). It has become a major global concern affecting millions of individuals, particularly youth. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by emotional instability, identity formation, and increased susceptibility to peer influence. During this period, many individuals experiment with drugs due to curiosity, stress, academic pressure, or social acceptance.

The misuse of drugs alters brain functioning, affecting judgment, decision-making, and emotional control (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2022). Over time, this leads to dependency and addiction, which negatively impacts social relationships and responsibilities. Drug abuse not only harms physical and mental health but also disrupts family systems, weakens educational performance, and reduces productivity in society. It is therefore a multidimensional problem that requires urgent attention from policymakers, educators, and healthcare professionals.

2. Problem Statement

Despite global awareness efforts, drug abuse continues to rise among adolescents. The increasing availability of substances and peer influence has made youth more vulnerable. This study investigates how drug abuse affects the social life of users and contributes to social dysfunction.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the impact of drug abuse on social relationships.
2. To identify causes of drug addiction among adolescents.
3. To evaluate the effects of substance abuse on education and employment.
4. To suggest preventive and rehabilitative measures.

4. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive research design to explore the outcomes of chronic drug use on the public activities of users in Quetta. Both primary and secondary data were utilized to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers, head teachers, and selected community members who have direct or indirect experience with drug users, while informal observations were also conducted in public places to assess the participation of drug users in daily social activities. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents, ensuring that participants were relevant to the research objectives. Secondary data were obtained from credible sources, including reports by international organizations and academic literature on substance abuse and its social impacts. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, where key themes such as social isolation, reduced public participation, family conflict, and economic challenges were identified and interpreted. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the study, including informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of all participants.

5. Literature Review

A large body of research has explored the causes and consequences of drug abuse among adolescents and adults. Studies consistently show that substance abuse is influenced by a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023), peer pressure remains one of the strongest predictors of drug initiation among young people. Adolescents often begin using drugs to gain acceptance, avoid rejection, or fit into certain

social groups. Similarly, family instability, lack of parental supervision, and exposure to domestic conflict also increase the likelihood of drug use.

Psychological studies suggest that individuals suffering from stress, anxiety, depression, or trauma are more likely to turn to drugs as a coping mechanism (Smith & Brown, 2021). However, instead of solving emotional problems, drug use worsens mental health conditions and leads to dependency. Research also highlights the neurological impact of substance abuse. Drugs interfere with the brain's reward system, affecting dopamine production and altering decision-making processes (NIDA, 2022). This results in compulsive behavior, reduced self-control, and difficulty maintaining social responsibilities.

Social consequences have also been widely documented. Drug abuse is associated with poor academic performance, school dropout, unemployment, and criminal behavior. Studies show that individuals who abuse drugs are more likely to experience social isolation due to stigma, behavioral changes, and loss of trust from family and friends.

Furthermore, research indicates that communities affected by high levels of drug abuse often experience increased violence, reduced economic productivity, and higher healthcare costs. This shows that drug abuse is not an isolated issue but a widespread social challenge affecting multiple layers of society.

6. Main Findings

6.1. Social Isolation and Withdrawal from Public Life

One of the most consistent findings is that chronic drug users gradually withdraw from public and social activities. Studies show a strong link between substance abuse and social isolation, where individuals reduce participation in work, education, and community engagement. Long-term isolation is also strongly associated with depression and reduced social functioning

6.2. Weakening of Social Relationships

Chronic drug use damages relationships with family, friends, and society. Users often experience loss of trust, emotional disconnection, and reduced social support. Research shows that drug use is closely linked with impaired social functioning and difficulty maintaining relationships, especially in opioid users

6.3. Increased Involvement in Crime and Antisocial Behavior

Studies indicate that individuals with substance abuse problems are more likely to engage in criminal activities such as theft, violence, and illegal trade. Social isolation and addiction significantly increase the risk of relapse, incarceration, and violent behavior

6.4. Poor Participation in Education and Employment

Chronic drug users show reduced productivity, poor academic performance, and unstable employment. Drug use affects concentration, motivation, and decision-making, leading to dropout and job loss. Research also shows that substance use is linked with risky social environments and reduced career stability

6.5. Mental Health Problems Affect Public Behavior

Chronic drug use is strongly associated with mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and psychosis. These conditions reduce individuals' ability to interact socially and participate in public activities. Studies report high rates of psychiatric disorders among long-term drug users

6.6. Long-Term Dependency and Behavioral Changes

Chronic use leads to addiction, which alters brain functioning and behavior. This results in impulsivity, poor decision-making, and inability to fulfill social roles, further reducing participation in public life

7. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that chronic drug use has profound and multidimensional effects on the public activities of users, particularly in urban contexts such as Quetta. One of the most significant outcomes is the gradual withdrawal of individuals from public and social life. Chronic users often lose interest in community participation, social gatherings, and civic responsibilities. This withdrawal is largely attributed to psychological dependence, stigma, and declining mental health, which reduce their ability to function effectively in social environments (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023; Volkow et al., 2016). As a result, individuals become increasingly isolated, further reinforcing the cycle of addiction.

Another major issue identified is the deterioration of interpersonal relationships. Drug users frequently experience conflict with family members, loss of trust, and weakened social bonds. These changes not only affect the individual but also disrupt family stability and community cohesion. Research suggests that substance abuse impairs emotional regulation and decision-making, leading to behaviors such as aggression, dishonesty, and neglect of responsibilities (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2022; Sussman et al., 2018). In the context of Quetta, where social life is strongly influenced by family and community ties, such disruptions can have severe social consequences.

Furthermore, chronic drug use significantly reduces participation in education and employment. Many users struggle with maintaining regular attendance, productivity, and performance due to cognitive impairment and lack of motivation. This often results in school dropout, unemployment, and financial instability. Studies have consistently shown that substance abuse is associated with reduced human capital development and long-term socio-economic disadvantages (Hawkins et al., 2017; UNODC, 2023). In turn, economic hardship may push individuals toward further drug use or involvement in informal or illegal activities to sustain their addiction.

The discussion also highlights the strong link between drug abuse and antisocial or criminal behavior. Individuals suffering from addiction may engage in theft, violence, or drug trafficking to support their substance use. This not only affects their own lives but also contributes to rising crime rates and insecurity within the community. Previous research confirms that substance abuse is closely associated with increased involvement in criminal activities and reduced adherence to social norms (Bukhari & Khan, 2021; Galea et al., 2018). In cities like Quetta, where law enforcement resources may already be limited, this creates additional social and administrative challenges.

Mental health issues further compound the problem. Chronic drug users often suffer from depression, anxiety, and other psychiatric disorders, which significantly impair their ability to interact in public settings. These conditions reduce confidence, increase social withdrawal, and limit participation in productive activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Without proper treatment and rehabilitation, individuals remain trapped in a cycle of addiction and social exclusion.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that chronic drug use not only affects individual health but also undermines social functioning, economic stability, and community well-being. The interconnected nature of these outcomes highlights the need for comprehensive interventions that address both the medical and social dimensions of drug abuse.

8. Conclusion

Drug abuse is a complex and deeply rooted social issue that extends far beyond individual behavior. It affects not only the physical and mental health of users but also disrupts their social environment, including family, education, friendships, and community life.

The evidence reviewed in this study clearly shows that drug abuse leads to serious social consequences such as family breakdown, academic failure, unemployment, and social isolation. These effects are often long-lasting and difficult to reverse, particularly when addiction becomes severe.

One of the most concerning aspects of drug abuse is its growing prevalence among adolescents. Young people, due to their vulnerability and lack of awareness, are increasingly at risk of falling into substance dependency. Without proper guidance, education, and support systems, many youths are unable to escape the cycle of addiction. Therefore, addressing drug abuse requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach. Governments, educational institutions, healthcare providers, families, and communities must work together to prevent drug use, support affected individuals, and promote healthy lifestyles. Early intervention, awareness campaigns, counseling services, and rehabilitation programs are essential tools in reducing the impact of drug abuse.

In conclusion, drug abuse is not just a personal issue but a major social challenge that threatens the stability and progress of society. Effective prevention and intervention strategies are necessary to protect future generations and build healthier communities.

9. Recommendations

Addressing the outcomes of chronic drug use on public activities requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach involving families, educational institutions, healthcare systems, and government authorities. First, there is a strong need to expand awareness and prevention programs, particularly targeting adolescents and young adults in schools and communities. These programs should focus on educating individuals about the long-term social, psychological, and economic consequences of drug abuse, while also promoting healthy coping strategies for stress and peer pressure. At the community level, the involvement of local leaders, teachers, and parents is essential to create a supportive environment that discourages substance use and encourages positive social behavior.

In addition, access to treatment and rehabilitation services must be improved in urban centers like Quetta. Establishing well-equipped rehabilitation centers, counseling services, and mental health support systems can help individuals recover and reintegrate into society. Government and non-governmental organizations should also work together to provide vocational training and employment opportunities for recovering addicts, enabling them to regain their social and economic independence. Furthermore, stricter law enforcement measures are needed to control drug trafficking and availability, especially in border regions, while ensuring that users are treated as patients rather than criminals. Overall, a balanced strategy combining prevention, treatment, and social reintegration is essential to reduce the negative impact of chronic drug use on public life.

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