

Medical and Social Aspects of Drug Addicts in Central Jail, Faisalabad–Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out at Central Jail, Faisalabad (Pakistan) on inmates involved in drug addiction. Most of inmates (83.29%) admitted to jail, had poor health conditions and were suffering from diseases like T.B., hepatitis etc. About 61% addicts had availability of drugs inside jail and prison staff was mainly responsible for the availability of drugs inside jail. There was no wholehearted effort on the part of administration for the reformation/rehabilitation of addicts.

Key Words: Drug; Addiction; Causes; Impacts

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse refers to the use of a drug for a purpose for which it was not attended, or using a drug in excessive quantities. Drug addiction is a state of physical or psychological dependence on a drug (Fisher *et al.*, 2000). All sorts of different drugs can be abused, including illegal drugs (such as heroin or cannabis), prescription medicines (such as tranquilizers or painkillers) and other medicines that can be bought off the supermarket shelf (such as cough mixtures or herbal remedies).

There has been some speculation that some people may be more prone to drug abuse and addiction than others. Research is being carried out into whether there may even be genes that predispose certain people to addiction. Social circumstances are important in drug abuse (<http://www.tayzanatc.org/News/>). Peer pressure, emotional distress and low self-esteem can all lead individuals to abuse drugs. Addiction is so dangerous because the brain becomes more and more dependent on drugs. Most drugs cause loss of appetite, sleep deprivation and lack of sex drive. These changes in the brain are the result of addiction, and these changes can often be fatal.

Whether a person is genetically or bio-chemically predisposed to addiction or alcoholism is a controversy that has been debated for years within the scientific community (Jellinck, 1960). One school of thought advocates the disease concept, which embraces the notion that addiction is an inherited disease and that the individual is permanently ill at a genetic level. Another philosophy argues that addiction is a dual problem consisting of a physical and mental dependency on chemicals, compounded with a pre-existing mental disorder (i.e. clinical depression, bipolar disorder, or some other mental illness), and that the mental disorder needs to be treated first as the primary cause of the addiction. This treatment philosophy is commonly referred to as dual diagnosis. A third philosophy subscribes to the idea that

chemical dependency leads to “chemical imbalances” in the neurological system, which would be a substance-induced imbalance. The fact remains that there is scientific research to support all of these concepts, but that none of these theories are absolute (McCann *et al.*, 1998).

The concept of drug addiction/dependence is being refined in light of new research on blood. All mind altering drugs, including alcohol, marijuana, heroin, other opiates, methamphetamine and cocaine, can produce addiction or dependence. Drugs develop intolerance and induce a withdrawal syndrome after cessation of chronic use. Putting all this together, persons dependent on drugs or alcohol may have any or all of the following problems at the time they enter treatment:

- Induced chemical imbalance
- Genetic chemical imbalance
- Social and psychological problems
- Inhibited life and/or coping skills

The present research plan was planned to evaluate the treatment and other medical aspects of drug addicts with a view to suggest some measures to control drug addiction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Central Jail, Faisalabad was selected for the present study because this jail has been declared as center for the confinement and treatment of drug addicts and T.B. Centre. In this study, 700 inmates were interviewed in respect of different social and medical aspects. The following aspects were taken into consideration while interviewing drug addicts (inmates).

1. Health Condition i.e. Poor, Satisfactory, Good
2. Medication i.e. treated or not treated
3. Availability of funds for medication
4. Re-Admission into the jail (after release)

5. Inclination to drug addiction inside jail
6. Availability of drugs inside jail
7. Rehabilitation / reformation
8. Occurrence of other diseases among drug addicts

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Drug addiction is an important problem in developing countries deteriorating the social and economic axis. The addicts are the people who need more attention than the normal and proper medication to make them valuable citizens. To study the treatment/medication aspects of drug addicts, this study was conducted at Central Jail, Faisalabad. As regards the health condition of drug addicts, 583 were in poor health condition (Table I), suffering from diseases like T.B., hepatitis, etc. Blood tests of prisoners showed that 13.29% and 26.71% were victims to TB and hepatitis, respectively (Table II). Only 329 prisoners (Table I) received treatment (but not up to the required level). Although the required funds were not available for medication, but even the available funds were not managed judiciously, thus further deteriorating their conditions. It was also noted that majority of the addicts were admitted to jail more than once (in the present study 589 prisoners were repeaters) and about 60% were readmitted to jail within only 2-5 months (Table I).

One of the important conclusions of this study is that majority of the prisoners (675) were inclined to addiction inside jail and among 700 inmates, 650 addicts had availability of drugs inside jail (Table II). Most alarming

fact of this study is that jail employees, particularly lower staff (close to the administration) was mainly responsible for the carriage of drugs, while other carriers were prisoners themselves and their relatives who come to see them at jail (Table II).

The objective of jail is in fact the care, custody, control, correction and reformation of inmates. Regarding addicts, only custody and control were being fulfilled and remaining objectives were completely ignored.

It may be concluded that majority of the addicts inside the jail had generally poor health conditions and there was no wholehearted effort on the part of jail administration regarding their treatment and reformation etc. Similar flaws in administration have also been reported previously (Julien, 1998). The inmates having availability of drugs inside jail had also detrimental effects on other prisoners, not confined under addiction ordinance.

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(Received 10 March 2003; Accepted 15 June 2003)

Table I. Medical aspects of drug addiction in inmates of Central Jail, Faisalabad

No of Prisoners	Health condition			Medication		Availability of Funds	Readmission
	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Treated</u>	<u>Not treated</u>		
700	583	62	55	329	371	Poor	589
Percentage	83.29	8.86	7.86	47.00	53.00		84.14

Table II. Social aspects of drug addiction in inmates of Central Jail, Faisalabad

Inclination to addiction in jail	Availability of drugs inside jail	Source of Drugs inside jail			Rehabilitation/ Reformation	Occurrence of other diseases among drug addicts		
		<u>Employees</u>	<u>Prisoners</u>	<u>Relatives</u>		<u>TB</u>	<u>Hepatitis</u>	<u>Others</u>
675	427	391	162	147	Negligible	93	187	520
96.43	61.00	55.86	23.14	21.00		19.00	26.71	74.29