

Review of drug abuse patterns and their association with some individual and social variables among addicts

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ABSTRACT

Background and objectives: The high prevalence of addiction imposes a lot of physical, mental, and psychological problems on society. Beside these problems, transmission of HIV can be named, which is caused by injecting drugs. **Methods:** This descriptive-analytical study was randomly conducted based on the information obtained from 710 addicts using a demographic information form. **Results:** According to the results, the mean age of the addicts was 33 years, and 95.5% of them were male. Moreover, the mean age of the onset of drug abuse was obtained as ≥ 22 years. In total, 71.8% of the addicts were in the age range of 20-39 years, and a minimum number of this population was under 20 years. Regarding marital status, 69.6% of the addicts were married, and in terms of occupational status, 35.9% and 31.1% of them were worker and unemployed, respectively. In addition, 95.6% of the subjects did not have a high school diploma. The most prevalent type of used drug was opium (45.1%), followed by a crack (18.3%). Furthermore, the results revealed significantly higher levels of opium ($P=0.05$), refined opium ($P=0.03$), and crack consumption ($P=0.04$) among males than in females. The data were analyzed using SPSS software (version 18). **Conclusion:** As the findings indicated, opium and crack were the most commonly used drugs among the addicts. The higher prevalence of addiction was among the young, unemployed, and insufficiently educated individuals, which necessitates the development of plans for the prevention of drug consumption in this population.

Keywords: Addicts, Demographic, Drug abuse.

Introduction

Addiction can be defined as compulsive desires for the overuse of drugs despite the awareness regarding the disastrous consequences [1]. Drug abuse is among the international community problems accompanied by catastrophic damages to the community and individuals. One of the factors contributing to the risk of addiction is quick and easy access to drugs.

According to the evidence, addiction is an increasing trend.

Drug users may begin with "soft" drugs with little negative effects at the beginning but making the consumption of "harder" drugs easier. Drug addiction leads to the instability of one's personality, health status, and personal life [2]. In some cases, individuals already suffer from numerous psychological and personality disorders before addiction, which get intensified and more destructive after addiction.

Therefore, in all studies conducted on addiction, the personality traits of individuals have been presented as one of the predisposing factors for addiction. In other words, the majority of addicts are suffering from personality disorders [3]. The results of several studies investigating the effect of personality traits on addiction behavior are indicative of the role of personality characteristics on the initiation, deterioration, and continuation of dependency on drugs [4].

Personality includes the combination of distinguished features and properties that refer to a collection of characteristics, such as thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and attitudes [5]. The personality characteristics are completely unique to each individual; in other words, they vary among people.

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Moreover, personality traits can significantly affect one's reactions, stress assessment, and stress management strategies [6]. Addiction and drug abuse complications are considered critical issues worldwide. The prevalence rate of addiction is over 50% across the world; moreover, this debilitating practice accounts for a growing increase in mortality rate [7].

This review was targeted toward investigating the demographic characteristics, patterns of drug abuse, and the association between some individual and social variables among drug addicts using a statistical analysis method. Furthermore, this study was also aimed at providing a background regarding the issue under investigation and raising questions and hypotheses for future studies on the basis of the obtained information. It is hoped that the results lead to the development of programs targeted toward the prevention of drug consumption among the young, unemployed, and illiterate individuals based on scientific observations.

Methods

This descriptive-analytical study was randomly conducted on 710 addicts. The data were collected using demographic information including age, gender, birth date, marital status, and educational level. The items in the forms enquired about the circumstances under which each individual initiated drug, which ultimately drove the individual toward addiction. The last items sought information about the factors encouraging the addict to refer to a rehabilitation center in order to receive treatment.

The data were analyzed in SPSS software (version 18). Moreover, the qualitative data were analyzed and the correlation between the nominal variables was evaluated using the Chi-square test. After confirming the normality of the quantitative data, ANOVA test was applied to make comparisons. In case the data were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests were applied in this study.

Results

According to the results, the mean age of the addicts was obtained as 33 years, and the mean age of the onset of addiction was 22 years. The majority of the addicts (71.8%) began drug abuse at the age ranging from 20 to 39 years. Moreover, the majority of the females (77.8%) and males (71.6%) initiated drug abuse at the age range of 20-39 years. Only 1.9% of addicts began drug abuse under the age of 20 years (Table 1). According to the results, there was no significant difference between males and females regarding age distribution at the onset of addiction ($P=0.39$). In addition, no significant statistical difference was observed between males and females in terms of age distribution ($P=0.67$).

Table 1. Frequency distribution, age, gender, marital status, educational level, and occupational status of addicts referring to rehabilitation centers

Variables	Number (%)	Percent (%)
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< 20 (year)	13	1.9
20-39 (year)	510	71.8
40-59 (year)	172	24.2
≥60 (year)	15	2.1
Male	678	95.5
Female	32	4.5
Single	216	30.4
Married	494	69.6
Illiterate	35	4.9
Elementary	151	21.3
Under high school diploma	278	39.2
High school diploma	214	30.2
Bachelor's degree	28	3.9
Master's degree	3	0.4
Doctorate degree	1	0.1
University Student	8	1.1
Housewife/Husband	18	2.5
Worker	255	35.9
Employee	29	4.1
Self-employed	151	21.3
Unemployed	249	35.1

Table 2. Frequency distribution and number of drug abusers based on gender

Type of drug	Males	Percent (%)	Females	Percent (%)	Sum	P-value
Hemp	92	13.5	2	7.4	94	0.08
Refined opium	77	11.3	1	3.7	78	0.03
Opium	306	44.8	14	51.9	320	0.05
Heroin	62	9.1	1	3.7	63	0.7
Cocaine	23	3.3	2	7.4	25	0.1
Crack	123	18	7	25.9	130	0.04

The most commonly used drug was opium (45.1%), followed by a crack (18.3%), hemp (13.2%), refined opium (11%), and heroin (8.9%). The use of opium ($P=0.05$), refined opium ($P=0.03$), and crack ($P=0.04$) were more prevalent among males, compared to females. The mean drug abuse initiation age was 22 years. According to the findings of this study, the mean age of quitting drugs was 33 years. In this regard, there was an 11-year interval between initiating of drug abuse and making a decision to overcome addiction and referring to a rehabilitation center.

Discussion

The results obtained from the mean age of the addicts in this study, conducted in Iran, are consistent with the findings reported in another study [8]. In a study conducted in Italy, the mean age of the onset of drug abuse was lower than 28.8 years [9]. Furthermore, the results of several studies in Iran revealed that 99.5% and 4.5% of addicts were males and females, respectively. It can be noted that in eastern communities, there

are significant differences between males and females regarding addiction behavior and a tendency toward addiction. This difference is due to the cultural and social structures, which cause females to encounter fewer risks and dangers in the communities; therefore, they account for 0.5% of the addicted population^[8, 10].

On the other hand, there are discrepancies between the results obtained from the studies performed in Iran and those conducted in other countries regarding the prevalence of addiction among the female population (25-43%). The differences between the eastern and western communities regarding the number of male and female addicts can be attributed to diversities in cultural and social structures. With respect to the marital status, the results of this study revealed that 69.6% and 27.2% of the addicts were married and single, respectively. These findings are in line with the results obtained from other studies^[9-12].

Social problems and mental disorders are respectively the most common reasons for deciding to refer to rehabilitation centers. A limited number of studies have investigated the main determinants of referral to these centers. However, personal desire is considered as the most common reason for such decisions; in addition, the majority of addicts claim that they are tired of being addicted to drugs^[8].

Conclusion

As the findings indicated, opium and crack were the most commonly used drugs among the addicts. The higher prevalence of addiction among the young, unemployed, and insufficiently educated individuals necessitates the development of plans for the prevention of drug consumption in this population. The considerable gap between the age of the onset of drug abuse and that of referral to rehabilitation centers for overcoming addiction indicates the need for informing the young population about the catastrophic consequences of drug abuse. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to develop and implement persuasive and effective plans to raise the awareness of these people regarding the detrimental effects of addiction on both physical and mental well-being.

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